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Žižek and Peterson: Demonstrating the Importance of Higher Order Dialogue

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ABSTRACT:

Slavoj Žižek is one of the most influential philosophers of our current age. His work as a whole largely draws from Platonic, Cartesian, Hegelian and Lacanian thought, and has been applied to the analysis of empirical sciences, political-economic theory, as well as contemporary spirituality and theology. Jordan Peterson is a well respected clinical psychologist and has recently become one of the most influential public intellectuals of our current age. His work as a whole largely draws from Christian, Nietzschean, Jungian and Piagetian thought, and has been antagonistically situated in contemporary debates on the nature of gender identity, sexual expression, communist ideology, and the importance of responsibility for a meaningful life. During Peterson's rise to global fame these two thinkers have often been symbolically positioned by those familiar with their work as figures in an oppositional determination (A=B): Žižek standing for the future of the progressive left and revolutionary communist values (A), and Peterson standing for the future of the conservative right and traditional patriarchal values (B). In this work it is argued that the difference internal to this antagonistic positioning can be put to a productive utility. Towards this end I first attempt to use Christianity, Postmodernism and Psychoanalysis as thematic structures to focus on their core differences. Secondly, I attempt to summarize the major points of agreement that emerged from their public debate/dialogue/discussion. These two goals are established to demonstrate the importance of higher order dialogue capable of reconciling opposed figures of consciousness. Such reconciliation would not represent a synthesis to erase all differences, but rather a reconciliation that would open new spaces of productive discourse capable of approaching the nature of psychology and society.

1. Introduction

Slavoj Žižek is a Slovenian philosopher who has become an intellectual and cultural sensation over the past few decades. His work is widely read and interpreted in many different disciplines, primarily situated within the humanities (e.g. philosophy, cultural theory, anthropology), but also in popular culture at large. Throughout his career he has brought academic attention to the structural importance of Hegelian philosophy and Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis for cultural theory (Žižek 2012, 2014); and popular attention to the importance of understanding the nature of ideology and rethinking the underlying presuppositions of communist theory (Žižek 2010, 2016). This has led to the production of wide ranging academic interpretation on the meaning of the 'Žižekian' moment in philosophy (Myers 2003, Pound 2008, Johnston 2018).

Jordan Peterson, on the other hand, is a Canadian clinical psychologist who has risen to global fame over the past few years. His scientific work has been influential in the development of personal and social psychology (DeYoung et al. 2005, Hirsh et al. 2012), and his popular work has been situated within crucial cultural antagonisms of our era (Peterson 1999, 2018). Throughout his career he has helped establish the "Big Five" personality metric (DeYoung et al. 2007), identified crucial markers associated with high creative achievement (Carson et al. 2003), and attempted to outline the importance of the link between responsibility and meaning (Peterson 1999). In recent years his political stances on the importance of free speech on academic campuses have led to international debate on issues of gender, sexuality, identity and progressive politics.

Over the past year Žižek and Peterson have engaged indirectly in theoretical critiques of each other (via blog articles and social media comments). Žižek often notes Peterson's tendency to reify gender and class differences in social structure with ideological presuppositions derived from evolutionary and cognitive science; and Peterson has noted Žižek's tendency to support political-economic theory (Marxist, communist theory) which has led to historical catastrophes. However, the point of this work is to put these two

figures into a closer connection in order to facilitate the emergence of a higher order dialogue capable of holding a new difference (which we may even say was “performed” in their public debate/dialogue/discussion). Thus the central idea or motivation of this work is that the perceived theoretical antagonism between Žižek and Peterson can be utilized in a productive way to understand the difference as such.

2. Pre-Public Dialogue

Here in order to structure this analysis we presuppose the “difference as such” as “the real” in the form of an “unsymbolizable X” which prefigures and prestructures all figures of historical consciousness subject to the vicissitudes of the symbolic order (“speaking beings”). As Žižek has noted, this may be a useful way to view sociopolitical antagonism in a general form. For example, when we analyze the modernist political field dividing the “Left” and the “Right”, it is not something that can be symbolized (formalized) from a “neutral-objective” position. The whole field can only be viewed as an “anamorphic distortion” from one of the two positions which are already in-themselves divided by the unsymbolizable difference as such (“X”) (which is “real”) (Žižek 2012, p. 613):

“The difference between Left and Right is not only the difference between the two terms within a shared field, it is “real” since a neutral description of it is not possible - the difference between Left and Right appears differently if perceived from the Left or from the Right: for the first, it signals the antagonism which cuts across the entire social field (the antagonism concealed by the Right), while the Right perceives itself as a force of moderation, social stability, and organic unity, with the Left reduced to the position of an intruder disturbing the organic stability of the social body - for the Right, the Left is as such “extreme”.”

To further demonstrate this difference as real we can utilize an often quoted example deployed by Žižek in relation to Claude Levi-Strauss’s *Structural*

Anthropology on political division in tribal society (Žižek 2011, Lecture 6 (Part 2)):

“[Levi-Strauss] asked members of the village to draw the village, each group divided a totally different disposition of houses, one group made a more organic (fascist), another group divided by a half (communist)[.] [...] Where is the real here? The real is not the way the houses really were (this is just reality); the real is each of the half members of the tribe projected into their visions, how the houses should be, to introduce a partial stability. What is real is not the reality, but the traumatic social antagonism.”

In this sense Žižek’s insistence that Peterson reifies social order through a certain scientific frame reflects Žižek’s own position within a progressive field which sees things as fundamentally within an asymmetrical division (“Right” obfuscating class antagonism identified by the “Left”, “Man” (conservative-traditional culture) obfuscating sexual difference identified by the “Woman” (progressive-feminist culture)). On the other hand, Peterson’s insistence that Žižek dangerously points us into a direction of communist revolution reflects Peterson’s own position within a conservative field which sees things as fundamentally within a more organic unity (“Right” and “Left” have their natural positions within a well functioning political totality, “Man” and “Woman” have their natural positions within a well functioning familial totality). While both thinkers as well as their followers could more or less agree with the positioning of these symbolic orientations, the “real” question is what to do, or how to put to use, the “real” of the difference?

Figure 1: Social antagonism as real

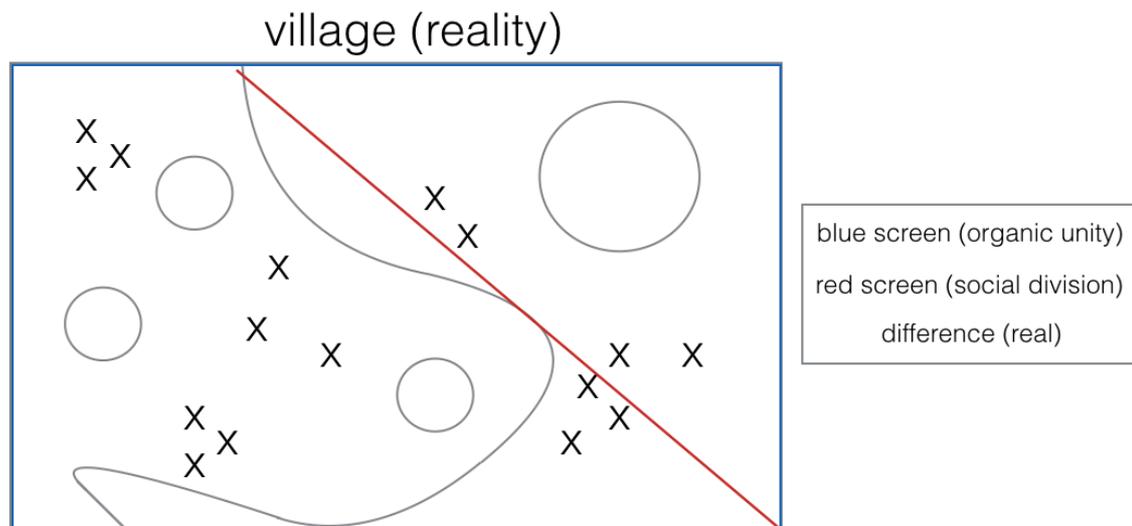


Fig. 1: the above representation attempts to precisely capture the conceptual difference between “reality” (often colloquially referred to as “external objective phenomena”) and the “real” (here referred to as the difference constituting a social antagonism). The blue frame represents the way the conservative or fascist frame perceives society (as a harmonious totality) and the red line represents the way the progressive or communist frame perceives society (as a divisive cut). The interaction between these two frames is determined by the “real” as an impossibility to reconcile the problems of social organization. For example, the conservative frame wants to keep society together (to conserve what has been built), whereas the progressive frame wants to improve society (to progress beyond a certain inequality, e.g. between men and women, or between rich and poor).

We can start by claiming that the “real” between Žižek and Peterson is some traumatic social antagonism which causes us to view their difference in a way that may not be the most productive for philosophical reflection. Indeed, this difference, ultimately, may only be possible to read through the lens of sexual and political difference within one’s own intimate geometry (Last 2018). In other words, when it comes to the sexual and political field objectivity is inherently “partial” or “partisan”, with some positions “dissimulating” conflict and others “revealing” conflict (Zupančič 2017, p. 4)

The point moving forward in this article is to propose some structural contours of discourse that may be productive for a new philosophical reflection on this difference. This would not eliminate or erase the “real” (replacing it with a “clear total narrative”) but, perhaps, allow us to see this same real from a space capable of more mature disagreement and, potentially, a generative novelty in our collective understandings of sexuality and politics. In other words, although Žižek and Peterson have differences, these differences could

be framed within broad theoretical similarities revealing the form of new perspectives for theory. The structural contours for this frame could be classified in the following way:

- (1) The emphasis on the importance of rethinking Christian metaphysics
- (2) the emphasis on the importance of overcoming postmodern deconstructive philosophy as structuring the metaphysics of humanities programs, and
- (3) the emphasis on psychoanalysis as a fundamental discovery of the nature of the human mind that needs to be properly integrated into the future sciences of mind in order to help us understand the nature of dreams and drives

Here it is argued that the following structural contours are divided between Žižek and Peterson in the following “partial” objectivity:

- (1) Žižek’s relation to Christianity is structured by dialectical materialism (movement of reason); Peterson’s relation to Christianity is structured with psychological realism (suprasensible meaning)
- (2) Žižek’s relation to Postmodernism is a negation in the form of an affirmation of phallogocentrism (real of the symbolic order); Peterson’s relation to Postmodernism is in a negation in the form of a critique of Neo-Marxism (revitalization of Marxist dialectics of bourgeoisie/proletariat)
- (3) Žižek’s psychoanalytic theory is informed by the Lacanian Real as a gap-lack internal to the symbolic order; Peterson’s psychoanalytic theory is informed by the Jungian presupposition of an eternal collective unconscious

From this perspective, it is hoped, that despite their very real differences, we may see a new way to put these thinkers into conversation.

2.1 Christianity

Let us start with a crucial theoretical similarity between Žižek and Peterson: their emphasis on Christianity and the Christian tradition as necessary to re-interpret for the future of philosophy and society.

Žižek's approach to Christianity is structured by dialectical materialism (motion of historical reason). He uses dialectical materialism to invoke a negation of the contemporary Western spiritual trend of becoming enamoured with "Western Buddhism", other eastern spiritual traditions, and also anti-institutional Christian gnosticism. Such a tendency reflects our contemporary cultural hysteria regarding social structures and patriarchal hierarchies which are perceived to thwart or block the realization of subjective-spiritual freedom. His reason for negating this spiritual trend is because it is precisely the inclusion of the dimension of institutionalization that enables the establishment of new rules and regulations (or Law) that develop the collective spiritual body of historicity proper. In the absence of such rules and regulations there is no 'phenomenology of history' in the Hegelian sense because our wild untamable spiritual excess is never disciplined and educated for real work (Žižek 2012, p. 338).

Thus, Žižek's fundamental claim is that when religion or spirituality regresses to the level of individual spirituality focusing on "inner experiences" we miss the fact that we have yet to deal with the core problem of how to structure civilization around social antagonism (spiritual "social contract") given that this collective excess of spirituality is irreducible to the existence of spirit-in-the-world as such. In that sense the modern tendency to individual spirituality is a failure to confront the "real" of social antagonism, and an immature "recoil" into abyssal interiority which imagines-idealizes the antagonism away. Consequently, in this dualism between institutional religion and individual spirituality, Žižek looks for a synthesis between the two forms. Take, for example, this quote which clearly criticizes the gnostic "mystical" tradition over the critical importance of formal institutionalization (ibid, p. 81-82):

“The point which the self-erasing mysticism of ecstatic love cannot properly grasp: when mystics talk about the “Night of the World”, they directly identify with this Night (the withdrawal from external reality into the void of pure innerness) with the divine Beatitude, with the self-erasing immersion into Divinity; for Christianity, in contrast, the unbearable and unsurpassable tension remains.”

What Žižek interprets as immanent in this “unbearable” and “unsurpassable” tension is the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. According to Žižek, institutional Christianity (with all of its rules and regulations) paradoxically identified and actualized around this tension itself with the metaphysics of the death of God (Jesus on the Cross). The individual is a void located at the very “X” (cross, mark) which we experience as our suffering and in our separation from the absent “Father” (God). We may say that this is the location of Žižek’s “theological atheism” or “materialist spirituality”.

However, the “concrete object” (universal) of this theological atheism is not an actual substantial other worldly Father but the community of Love which he sees as the “materialist level” of the Holy Spirit. In the community of Love we have achieved a synthesis between individual spirituality and institutional religion because we are not merely affirming an abyssal interiority (“Western Buddhism”) or negating dogmatic religious authority (“New Atheists”), but attempting to understand the crucial dialectical necessity of social communal bonding that can hold spiritual excess (freedom of our Love).

Towards the actualization of this synthetic spiritual community of Love Žižek emphasizes the radical ontological nature of Absolute Love as something that must be externalized (against abyssal interiority) but at the same time something which must be externalized without any a priori guarantee from a “big Other” (i.e. subject “supposed to know” “the way”). Here the big Other is a type of twisted mortification (death interior to life) which functions as a transcendental screen or frame obfuscating the real of social antagonism. One may think of radical belief in the idea of a fully substantial God, an idealized Marriage, or a utopian vision of the State, as one of the many

manifestations of this (imaginary) transcendental guarantee that would protect us from the “Real”. According to Žižek, Absolute Love is only truly experienced in relation to the core of internal desire coming from within that holds onto its highest expression in the world even when everything in the external environment is lost, and everything is a tragedy (antagonistic).

The first connection we can make between Žižek’s Christianity and Peterson’s Christianity is that Peterson also starts with the importance of the “death of God” and the social antagonism which challenges phenomenal historicity proper. However, Peterson’s work in relation to Christianity is much more informed by the importance of “psychological realism” in the sense of the psychological “significance” of “Biblical Stories” (for example) for the human mind in history as an “archetypal reality” (reflecting his Jungian psychoanalytic stance). In Peterson’s view if we discard with these stories as an archetypal reality then we discard with the fundamental substructure of our culture and lose all collective meaning responsible for the motor-organization of society.

From these presuppositions Peterson is convinced that a crucial historical moment for Western culture can be identified with the Nietzschean critique of Christian institutional structure and his assertion that “God is Dead”. For Nietzsche, “God is Dead” is not the “Dawkins” form of critique of Christianity in the sense of ‘God as delusional fantasy that we should discard with’ (2006); but rather something like: ‘we can no longer seriously believe in the metaphysical structure of our culture and the remaining void is an impossible problem for the future requiring the emergence of super-human consciousness’ (on the level of ‘transvaluation of values’).

Peterson himself seems to attempt to embody-enact such a motion towards attempt to straighten out his own internal contradictions and becoming a higher-order Christ-like archetype. Thus, the importance of such a break, for Peterson, can be understood in the idea that one should accept the monstrous archetype of Christ which reflects the most intense possible realization in the overcoming of death for immortal resurrection. This recommendation of a “personal responsibility” for the “death of God” would be

over an approach to Christianity which blindly gives oneself to the institutional structure of the Church. By giving oneself to the institutional structure of the Church over and above embodying-enacting the archetypal reality reflected in Christian doctrine one risks embodying-enacting an extreme contradiction where one's actual embodied-enacted state is a poor reflection of higher ideals.

In other words, what Peterson finds in Nietzsche is the idea that the true message of Christianity is the radical becoming of the individual in the form of the "Overman" or "Superman", and that such a becoming should be confronted fearlessly without any recourse to the "big Other" (we may say) of the Church structure. In this formula the Church in its traditional guise would hide from us the void or abyss at the core of our being, and also the source of our radical potential becoming as responsible individuals (Peterson 2017a):

"For all intents and purposes I believe the Logos [symbolic order] is divine, of ultimate transcendent value, it is associated with death and rebirth, because the Logos dismantles you and rebuilds you (sometimes it is a sacrifice, sometimes it is a big part of you, sometimes it is such a big part of you that you die, instead of being re-born). What is the ultimate extent of that? That is a good question. What happens to the world around you as you increasingly embody the Logos? We do not know. We do not know what the ultimate level is. The hypothesis is that there were one or two individuals that managed that and in their management of that they transcended death itself. [...] Was the resurrection [of Jesus] real? Well his spirit lives on, that is certainly the case. A spirit is a pattern of being and we know that patterns can be transmitted across multiple substrates. Christ's spirit lives on, it has had a massive effect across time. Did his body resurrect? I do not know. I do not know what happens to a person when they bring their self completely into alignment. We do not understand the world very well. We do not understand how the world could be mastered if it was mastered completely. We do not know what transformations that might make possible."

This emphasis on the transformations of the Logos (Symbolic Order) as of transcendent value (Holy Spirit) in relation to the externalized world (Natural World) can be connected to how Žižek deploys the necessity of a synthesis between interior spirituality (e.g. Western Buddhism) and institutional critique (e.g. New Atheists). Indeed, like Nietzsche, Peterson does not simply deconstruct Christianity as an anachronistic historical relic and cognitive delusion as most Western critics do today (“Western Buddhists”, “New Atheists”). Instead he recognizes that there is an incredible historical importance to the nature of Christianity and its narratives, symbolism and archetypes. These narratives, symbolisms and archetypes, according to Peterson, were primarily responsible for training the Western mind on one transcendental object (God), and that this was a necessary training for what became modern science. Thus far from conceiving religion as the enemy of modern science, Peterson conceives religion as a necessary precursor establishing institutional rules and regulations that persist in the scientific tradition vis-a-vis the one transcendental object (Nature) (Peterson 2017b):

“The scientific revolution never would have gotten off the ground if it were not for Catholics: the European mind had to train itself to interpret everything that was known within a single coherent framework, focus on the truth and the spirit of the truth, which was essential for switching critique to understand the natural world as an object. The ritual lasts longer than the reason for its establishment.”

In that sense, for Peterson, there was the contingent notion of God itself which was the integration of an Idea necessary to prepare the mind for an application to the Natural World in-itself. In Hegelian terms, this could be seen as the Idea or Notion being externalized into Natural otherness in order to (ultimately) better understand itself in the logical necessity of this process. We could connect this to the idea that in the very difficult attempts of the Freudo-Lacanian tradition to articulate psychoanalysis as a science, there is always a tendency to view psychoanalysis as not a science (like the “brain-

cognitive sciences”) but as depending on science for its own emergence (critical denunciation of religion, mystical illusions, etc.).

In other words, in the same way that Peterson views monotheistic Religion as a necessary precursor to natural Science (training the mind on one integrated coherent framework), we could make a similar gesture to the relation between natural Science and Psychoanalysis: the emergence of natural Science is a necessary stage to eventually lead to the emergence of a form of knowing capable of approaching the psychological drives of subjectivity in-itself (each psychological agent is capable of driving with (embodying, repeating) its own-most impossibility). Thus psychoanalysis becomes more of a real-lived practice with the lab being the entirety of the becoming of the psychological-linguistic field and its vicissitudes.

Of course, as mentioned, Peterson’s approach to Religion can be found on a strange retroactive revisiting of the “psychical significance” of “biblical stories”. Peterson believes that when we apply the tools and perspectives of psychoanalysis to *The Bible* (and to religious thought in general) there is an emergent significance in the meta-level pattern of the stories written by ancient peoples (a symbolic truth about the real of their past) which can potentially help or aid us in dealing with our own suffering and lack. Indeed, Peterson believes that this emergent significance has to do with the fact that our world, including nature, society and mind, are far too complex for us to make sense of it ‘All’ (this is an impossibility). Thus, the only way we have been able to make sense of it ‘All’ is to repetitively tell stories about being itself (and the paradoxes-contradictions of its inherent impossibilities) which allow us to gradually come to understand ourselves clearer.

In this way, Peterson believes that when we turn our back on religious stories (‘they are just illusions of mystic pre-modern peoples’), we become unconsciously susceptible to ideological pathologies (desires constituting the age of neoliberal capitalism, for example). This is because we are fundamentally narrative creatures that need a coherent story in order to act

sensibly, meaningfully and ethically in the world and religious stories provided such a narrative framework for historical subjectivity (Peterson 2017b):

“*The Bible* exists in the space between the dream and articulated knowledge. And that is why we should bother reading those stories. Without the corner stone that the book provides we are lost, susceptible, to psychic pathologies. People who are adamant anti-religious thinkers seem to believe that if we abandon our immersion in the underlying dream then we would all of a sudden become rational like Descartes and Bacon, intelligent clear thinking scientific people, but I do not think there is any evidence for that. I think we would become so irrational, so rapidly, that the weirdest mysteries of Catholicism would become rational by contrast, and I think that is already happening.”

In other words, we could say, if one of the principal discoveries of the Freud-Lacanian tradition is the emergence of an impossible relation inherent to subjectivity (analyzed in the nature of the unconscious), then Peterson is claiming that such an impossible relation is precisely what constitutes the narratives of biblical stories, and that the logical patterns of such stories can help us to cope with our own holes (sufferings, lacks). This is anyway how we could interpret the meaning of the “self-authoring” program. In articulating a self-narrative against positive and negative points of impossibility (heaven and hell, respectively), the “self” gains a coherent and meaningful consistency across time that can help straighten itself out against pathological capture from ideology. To say this in another way, it could be that through repetitive “self-authoring” against points of impossibility, one comes face-to-face with one’s own impenetrably mysterious *cogito*, or the unconscious itself.

In this sense Peterson’s philosophical deployment of “Religion” is in a sense very close to trying to transform the gap or hole in materialist Science itself into a proper psychoanalysis of the subject where we can read and interpret the materiality of meaning and objection (resistance) to our desires. Indeed, Peterson’s philosophy starts with the presupposition that everything we

experience is the most real thing there is, that our experience is fundamentally shaped by a horizon of meaning, and that we can detect this meaning in the things that shine forth on our subjective horizon (Peterson 2017b):

“Objective reality is not how we experience reality. What matters is that things have meaning, even scientists do not think scientifically. How we think is in terms of the meaning of things, the significance of objects, the flow of time.”

To ground this “Science” he proposes two axioms that we may find useful:

“The world is not made out of objects, the world is made out of what objects”;

“The world is not made out of matter; it is made out of what matters.”

In the Žižekian sense we may say that this is the same as identifying the centrality of the *objet petit a*, and the way in which it constitutes the horizon of meaning for subjectivity in a partial object. This is the location where a partial object comes to fill an impossible void as real that is subjectivity, the “unbearable” and “unsurpassable” tension that remains even after one has experienced the inner Beauty in a withdrawn state from the world.

2.2 Post-Modernism

The second connection I would suggest is productive to explore between Žižek and Peterson is their mutual rejection of the postmodern horizon. The postmodern horizon is usually analytically structured by deconstruction of a priori norms, values, traditions, and reductions of social system dynamics to power games. In this way the postmodern horizon removes any sense of a common phenomenal horizon and a common narrative articulation of the historical human condition. In other words, postmodernism suggests that most forms of modernism are naive in positing common norms, values and traditions that could be structured within a grand historical narrative uniting all of our action and dreams (e.g. “Religions” like Christianity or Islam; “Sciences”

like physics or evolution; or “Nations” like United States or Great Britain). From the postmodern perspective what replaces naive modernist visions totalizing our action is a multiplicity of individuated psyches free to posit other non-totalizable frames of reference.

Žižek has always engaged with this horizon and its paradoxically totalizing and powerful instantiation in academia in a type of antagonistic form (2017):

“It is very fashionable for [academics] to paint us [me and my friends as] some kind of an eccentric phallic dogmatic power discourse.”

What Žižek would emphasize against (or opposite of) this world of free multiplicity outside of any totalizable frame or narrative is the Lacanian Real and the way in which it overdetermines the undeconstructible movement of the signifier. In this analytic structure all symbolic orders (pre-modern, modern or postmodern) are effects of the Real. The Real is not external reality but a type of anti-ideal or non-ideal tension or antagonism internal to the symbolic order.

Here we are offered to think the idea that the movement of the signifier is a type of excess which strives for totalization in-itself (e.g. the ‘All’ of Religion, Science, Nation) and the Real is a type of lack which prevents the desired closure of the signifier (rendering the Real, ‘non-All’). In this structure Žižek claims to move beyond the horizon of deconstruction and social power games by articulating the psychoanalytic drive as an *eppur si muove* (“and yet it moves”), a movement which ‘enjoys’ itself for itself, independent of any external reality. Thus even if you “deconstructed” the whole symbolic edifice of Religion, Science and Nation, this ‘Signifier All’ would continue to move (as happens in postmodern academic departments, for example). Interestingly, the ontological consequences of such a movement are instantiated in a properly dialectical understanding of the movement of the Holy Spirit by merging an ‘atheist’ reading of Christianity with the symbolic structure identified by Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis (Žižek 2012, p. 4-5):

“Eppur si muove should thus be read in contrast to many versions of the extinction/overcoming of the drive, [...] even after we reach the end of this critical overcoming of desire-will-subjectivity, something continues to move. What survives death is the Holy Spirit sustained by an obscene “partial object” that stands for the indestructible drive.”

Žižek explicitly states that the Real of this drive (“an obscene “partial object””) is beyond both the scientific noumenal Real (some impossible external natural outside) and the Foucauldian power regime Real (some impossible external social outside), and thus transcends both of them. This is a Real that represents an impossible otherness within our self (like the nature of a dream while we are sleeping; or the nature of the way our dreams come to overdetermine engagement with “reality”). One may say (connecting with the reflections above) that it is the Real of an absence that causes as an effect the presence of a psychical drive aiming for Relation (Unity) with “It” (*das Ding*). The existence of this Real is, for Žižek, proof that we cannot simply deconstruct all of human history and construct it in a radically other form, or reduce all of social life to power games, since all human history and all social life are always-already being mediated by ‘It’ (the Real).

In this way Žižek’s philosophy (always about the mysteries of desire) suggests that the true focus of our academic attention should be on the nature of love, attachment, and even addiction (as opposed to brute reductions of everything to power games and hierarchies of patriarchal exploitation). Thus, on an even more important level, Žižek attempts to reverse the claims of postmodernism today which suggest we live in a cynical, nihilistic and post-ideological era, and that only in the past we lived in an authentic world governed by true belief. In contrast to this Žižek believes that it is the ancients who did not believe too strongly, keeping belief at a distance, and it is the postmodern peoples who in fact believe stronger than even the ancients (2015):

“The first myth to be abandoned I think is the idea that we live in a cynical era where nobody believes, no values, and so on, and that there was some more traditional time where we still believed in religion

or some substantial notion of belief. I think it is today that we believe more than ever, and the ultimate form of belief is deconstructionism [which always erects a fearful distance between the way we identify things with words]. Why this fear? [...] We believe in it.”

In this mode the idea that we should deconstruct Religion, Science, Nations; and the idea that all such forms of society are mechanisms of social power; could be ways for us to repress in our self-consciousness that we believe in these structures more than ever, and that we need our social webs more than ever. Thus, the person who would want to “deconstruct” “Christianity, “Physics” or the “United States” (as white heteronormative patriarchal social power games, for example) may in fact love and need these structures more than anyone. In that sense deconstruction could be read as the ego’s failure to come to grips with the pressure of the Real, which demands a type of sacrifice, since the ego is located on the register of the Imaginary in relation to it.

A more sophisticated “Žižekian” interpretation of “Christianity”, “Physics”, and “United States” (for example), may thus be to locate the “kernel of the Real” in these structures, which may be identified by identifying the “obscene partial object” sustaining their symbolic motion. In the case of Christianity we may point to the partial object of the “crucified body of Jesus” (signifying our finitude and mortality), in the case of Physics we may point to the partial object of the “quantum particle” (signifying the probabilistic void of identity), and in the case of United States we may point to the partial object of the “Constitution” (signifying the divinity of the individual citizen over state power). In each case the “partial object” (crucifixion, quantum particle, constitution) stimulate the motion of psychical drives which sustain the instantiation of these historical discourses. If they are to be replaced, then one must do the hard work of figuring out why psychical drives “love” their attachment to such objects and what could be gained by replacing them with a different object.

Of course, it is much easier to understand Peterson's rejection of postmodernism considering that he has in some sense structured his entire public persona around a negation of postmodernism. He believes that the humanities have become dominated by adherence to (now dead) "French intellectuals" (Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze etc.) who aimed to undermine the hegemonic order of our civilization. He supports this argument, as already discussed, with the idea that these thinkers introduce a metaphysics of social power where all "absolute truths" are replaced with relativity to various discursively mediated power regimes. The "crucifixion", "particles" and "constitutions" are not "truths" (about our being, nature and politics) but "power games". Thus all historical forms can be deconstructed because their only function is to uphold pathological and oppressive power structures.

For Peterson this is a disaster because we are unknowingly blowing out the metaphysical substructure of our culture which is not only tyrannical and oppressive (one side of archetypal civilization reality), but also wise and enabling (the opposite side of archetypal civilization reality). Thus, for Peterson, we should not deconstruct our civilization but attempt to live so that we deserve the civilization that we are lucky enough to have. In other words, as an emotional response to our current civilization, we should as a rule tend to gratefulness instead of bitterness, and we should learn the art of discerning the positive benefits of structure and order instead of assuming that all structure and order is a threat to freedom. The basic idea is that young naive progressive intellectuals (often operating on Marxist-feminist presuppositions) may be totally wrong to demand the dissolution of the basic foundations of our civilization (e.g. belief in monotheism, objective reality, nation states). In the process of this deconstruction we may lose everything that we have fought so hard to build and maintain over the past few centuries and millennia.

Peterson also critiques the postmodern idea that the world is subject to infinite interpretations and that means that our grand narratives about reality are just social constructions that have no inherent meaning for history. Peterson often uses an evolutionary logic useful for those working in artificial intelligence and

cognitive science to counter this point by emphasizing that although the world is technically subject to infinite interpretation (i.e. the Moon could be a physical external object or an indigenous spirit force or a reptile alien spaceship), only a finite number of interpretations are viable for certain desired actions. In other words, there is a fundamental practical and ethical constraint on interpretation if you want to survive and live a fully self-actualized existence, and if you care about other people living a fully self-actualized existence (Peterson 2017c):

“There are many constraints on interpretation: Constraint number 1 -- Interpretation should be aimed to avoid suffering and death (unless you are suicidal). Constraints number 2 -- There is a necessity of cooperating and competing with others which also constrains your interpretation of the world. You also have to cooperate and compete with the same people across time, which is an extraordinarily important constraint. Constraint number 3 -- We have aims in mind (things that we want more than other things) and so we aim at those, and then constrain our interpretation so that the probability that what we want to happen will improve. All of these constraints operate simultaneously.”

This logical progression of overlapping constraints on interpretation is essential and important to also understand the meaning of the Lacanian Real as an absence. In very specific and precise technical terms absence and constraint can be seen as similar notions (and both poorly understood by the natural sciences) (Deacon 2011). The fact that our interpretations of the world must (1) avoid suffering and death, must (2) help us compete and cooperate with others, and must (3) help us achieve our aims means that we have a delimiting sense of what interpretations will be viable across time, and what interpretations will lead to unnecessary suffering, death, conflict, war, and ultimately lead us away from where we want to be in terms of desire (hell instead of heaven).

All of these points by Peterson ultimately amount to how we should approach notions of viable interpretations of our ethical acts which are the ground of

historical consciousness. Peterson is correct to suggest that the postmodern scholars have failed to provide us with a clear answer to this serious historical problem. To be specific, Peterson makes these theoretical moves by relying on the philosophical turn from Kant to Piaget, a turn which emphasizes that Kant's ethical maxim of "the categorical imperative" ("Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law") needs to be extended indefinitely across time and in as many games as possible. The major difference here between Peterson and Žižek, is that Žižek would attempt a similar move with the shift from Kant to Lacan, where Lacan was interested in how our ("obscene") unconscious desires may interfere with the instantiation of such an ethics (the infamous "Kant avec Sade") (Lacan 2005). In this difference as real, can we see where Lacan and Piaget may disagree on the ethical dimension of our actions in relation to desire? Such a question may be central to thinking our way out of the postmodern horizon.

Finally, Peterson emphasizes that because you actually cannot live a life under a postmodern worldview, postmodernists end up using an old grand narrative structure (Marxist dialectics) to ground a foundation of their worldview: identity politics (Fraser 1998). In this structure the Master-Slave structure of the Marxist dialectics organized around the rich (bourgeoisie) and the poor (proletariat) is retooled by an intersectional gender, sexuality, and race matrix of analysis where everything can be situated as a zero-sum competition between identity groups (like Women against Men; or Black people against White people). In such a structure unnecessary antagonism and tension rises because people start to think that there is no chance to actually collaborate fairly across time with different kinds of people. For example, Women and Men feel they cannot cooperate with each other because their desires are "zero-sum" oppositions (Matriarchy versus Patriarchy, for example); or Black and White people feel they cannot cooperate with each other because their desires are "zero-sum" oppositions (race based ethno-states for example).

Here we should emphasize that such a claim is grounded in an important “twist” in the postmodern intellectual game. The intellectual founders of what has become postmodernism in the anglophone world never supported or instantiated an ideology that resembles “intersectionality” (although the groundwork of such an idea may be implicit). This explicit articulation of intersectionality emerges in the late 1980s and 1990s due to a certain logical exhaustion of deconstruction: when you have ripped the symbolic architecture out of our culture what do you do? Do you simply return to the world and continue playing the games that you have “deconstructed”? Or do you instead posit that all such games are “pathological tools of oppression” instantiated by a certain identity networks (straight white men)? Of course, the latter has been the option that has actualized the motion of postmodernists. In this situation we may say that the “obscene partial object” of the postmodern edifice may in fact be the “figure” of the “straight white man” who everywhere represents an “impossible phallic domination” against all “subaltern” identity categories (Crenshaw 1989).

2.3 Psychoanalysis

The third connection I would emphasize between Žižek and Peterson is related to their mutual reliance on psychoanalysis and the psychoanalytic tradition in informing contemporary cognitive (“brain”) sciences. Žižek relies heavily on psychoanalysis and specifically the Freudo-Lacanian tradition (2012). In this tradition Žižek emphasizes that psychoanalysis is a crucial break from traditional morality and thus a crucial break from traditional beliefs about what constitutes a good individual and a good social life. In this he attempts to build on Lacanian ethics with the maxim that “the only thing of which one can be guilty is having given ground relative to one’s desire”. In this maxim Žižek does not mean a reduction of desire to liberal hedonism (of giving into simple pleasures), individualist immoralism (doing what you want independent of others feelings), or western buddhism (of happiness as telos); but instead, of really freeing yourself from the constraints of any social moral force that would seek to pre-figure a dream that motivates your action, or the big Other. In that sense his move to Lacanian ethics is deeply connected to

the notion of the big Other as an invisible and unnecessary constraint presupposed by most humans.

In other words, the central aim of Žižek's most sophisticated philosophical works is to operate within the "double move" of first removing desire from the totalizing form of the big Other ("there is no Other"), and then secondarily moving desire towards the core of "the Real" (which is "for consciousness") ("there is a non-Other"). Such a "Real" is of course much different from scientific reality which is presupposed to exist independent of subjectivity or consciousness. For science subjectivity or consciousness is a glitch or a bug in the system of explanations referring to external objective reality. This is why scientists attempt to engage in a passionless analysis where abstract reason can discern universal properties of being (e.g. general relativity, evolutionary theory, neuroscientific connectivism). However, Žižek may suggest that all such notions are forms or figures of the big Other, and that all such forms or figures mask the underlying Real which has no specific identity, but rather exists as the space where something new can emerge from a consciousness which gives itself (sacrifices itself) to the Real.

The second reason why Žižek relies on psychoanalysis, following from the first, is to articulate a new vision of what is "most real" or "the Real". In this view Žižek repetitively makes the argument that the Real is not external reality or some pre-symbolic substance; but rather a gap/rupture internal or extimate to the symbolic order itself: the Real is what prevents the symbolic order from closing in and completing itself. In other words, the Real is what prevents the symbolic order from realizing itself (Žižek 2012, p. 480):

"[The] Lacanian Real is not a pre-symbolic substance; rather it emerges through the redoubling of the symbolic, through the passage from alienation to separation."

Crucially, this is a Real which is not recognized by the cognitive sciences. The cognitive sciences do not base themselves on a Real of "separation" internal to the symbolic mechanisms of desire (where a "non-division" or "non-

Other” appears to the subject). The cognitive sciences base themselves on a “reality” of neurological processes (“connectivism”). The difference is essential if we want to approach the realm of subjectivity in-itself in the 21st century (Last 2019). To give a specific example, if one is “high” on some addictive substance, or “lost” in the depths of a dream, or experiencing some “transcendental” “psychedelic” states of consciousness, or “mad” in the context of sexual-romantic love or infatuation, the “neurological connections” which are “mediating” this state on a reductionist materialist sense, are in some sense “beyond the point”. The point of these states can only be read from a Real from a perspective that is “for consciousness”. This is the “core of the Real” or the “non-Other”.

Third the reason why Žižek relies on psychoanalysis is that he sees in it the knowledge we need to articulate a force beyond the Buddhist negation of desire. Of course, Buddhist philosophy sees only illusion in desire and for Žižek this fails to capture the way in which the Real and illusion overlap with each other (the second move where the fantasy is “traversed” in relation to the big Other and becomes instantiated in a “true” form). In other words, for Žižek, it is not reality versus fiction; but the Real that emerges internal to fiction. For example, even if one “deconstructs” “Santa Claus” as an impossible imaginary figure; or “God” as an impossible imaginary figure (a “delusion”) (Dawkins 2006), the human mind does not merely interact with “flat reality” devoid of fantasy and fiction. Instead the human mind continues to interact with reality through a fantasy frame of some form (consider the way someone like Elon Musk interacts with reality through the scientifically legitimized fantasy of colonizing Mars; or the way Ray Kurzweil interacts with reality through the scientifically legitimized fantasy of merging with artificial intelligence and other super technologies). Žižek often plays on this relationship between fiction and reality and the virtuality that continues to move independent of any negation of desire (ibid, p. 131):

“And therein lies the difference between Buddhism and psychoanalysis reduced to its formal minimum: for Buddhism, after Enlightenment (or “traversing the fantasy”) the Wheel no longer turns, the subject de-

subjectivizes itself and finds peace; for psychoanalysis on the other hand, the wheel continues to turn, and this continued turning of the wheel is the drive.”

For Peterson, likewise, he finds psychoanalysis as fundamental to our knowledge of the mind. To be specific in his lectures on Freud he states that modern psychology is fundamentally unfair to Freud by only focusing on his mistakes and not properly recognizing the way in which he fundamentally structured our contemporary models for the mind. Furthermore, Peterson believes that even when Freud was wrong he was wrong in an interesting and productive way which makes him all the more valuable to read. In that sense, Peterson himself is a believer (to some degree) in a (Lacanian) “return to Freud”. The point of the Lacanian “return to Freud” is not to “repeat Freud” exactly, but to find the “truth in Freud” which “Freud himself was unaware”. That is why you will find a totally new symbolic architecture in Lacan inspired by metaphors derived from structural linguistics.

In any case, Peterson gives massive credit to Freud on the discovery of the unconscious which questions or challenges the basic Cartesian axiom (a cognitive foundation for science) of “I think therefore I am”. What this axiom presupposes is that you can have a complete awareness of your mind and a complete control over your mind. What the Freudian revolution suggests is that the abstract rational cogito is in fact a small tip of a much larger unconscious reality that has its own logic, but it is a logic that is constantly informed by positive and negative emotional valences (i.e. suffering, desire, etc.). Thus, the ultimate reality for Peterson is not the self-certain rational cogito but rather the cognitive relation to emotional states that are beyond its control. This is why Peterson emphasizes so strongly the Freudian idea that our minds have an autonomous unconscious dimension:

“It was a Freudian idea that people are made out of sub-personalities, and those sub-personalities are alive. There are “many active consciousnesses”. Psychologists have still not come to terms with the fact that these “unconsciousnesses” are living things; [psychologists]

describe the cognitive unconscious with machine-like metaphors which are not reasonable. The sub-components that make up people are much more intelligently viewed as personalities; they are uni-dimensional personalities in some sense, so that if you're angry, you are nothing but angry; or if you're afraid or hungry, you are nothing but afraid or hungry. Moreover, Freud was the first to synthesize a coherent theory of the multiplicity of personality that was not immediately accessible to your awareness. You can formulate ideas, you can act out things, for [emotional] reasons that you don't understand."

Thus, with the Freudian unconscious as the ontological ground of analysis, Peterson seeks to understand how 20th century politics led us into nightmarish territory with the most intense levels of suffering imaginable (i.e. Fascist and Communist catastrophes). The only reasonable alternative to this direction would be to try to understand our emotional underground so that we could potentially navigate our society in the opposite direction, even if that opposite direction is difficult to think (it is harder to think what utopia would actually look like, than what dystopia did look like). Perhaps here we could interject the Lacanian modification to Descartes axiom: "I think where I am not". The axiom of "I think where I am not" is a significant modification of the cognitive foundations of the sciences informed by the psychoanalytic discovery of the unconscious which affirms the fact that, not only are we not fully transparent to our self (rational cogito), but this lack of transparency is an irreducible feature of our cognitive system. We may even say that if we were fully transparent to our self, then (what we call) the world would cease to exist.

However, and finally, we must identify perhaps the most important or crucial difference between Peterson and Žižek. This is in regards to the way in which Peterson emphasizes the psychoanalytic transition from Freud to Jung very heavily (over Žižek's emphasis on Lacan). What productive analysis can be derived from this difference? We may say that the main differences between Freud and Jung is that Jung emphasized the collective unconscious as a seat

of universal primordial images: the archetypes. For Jung, these archetypes represent a hyper reality where all religious symbolism in our historical reality can be explained. For Freud, in contrast, the place of Jung's archetypal images was the place of a gap or a void in being which had no a priori transcendental container within which we could find a reservoir of religious images. The idea that such a reservoir of religious "transcendental" images exists was, for Freud, a way for Jung to cope with the deadlocks of sexual libidinal energy. For Jung, in contrast, Freud's theories of the unconscious were too much emphasizing the central reality of sexuality in structuring the deadlocks of identity. Thus, Jung continued to develop the theory of archetypes, namely, that they are not the fruit of individual experiences, but rather are universal to all human beings, as a type of neo-Platonic "world soul".

Žižek, as mentioned, fundamentally disagrees with this interpretation of psychoanalysis because he does not believe the truth of the unconscious can be "reified" in "eternal substance" (collective unconscious), but rather is something that "emerges" contingently from historically engaged actors (from a void, *ex nihilo*, as Lacan always emphasized). In other words, where Peterson reifies eternal substance in archetypes (divine masculine and feminine, for example), Žižek is fully committed to the "abyssal void" of our actions. This is the meaning of "there is no big Other" and also "there is a non-Other". "There is no big Other" represents the void at the core of our being (not the archetypes), and "there is a non-Other" represents the potential "productivity" of this void (that something new can emerge). The Lacanian unconscious (versus the Jungian unconscious) is this a place of the radically other.

In summary, Žižek and Peterson both have lots of points of convergence and divergence vis-a-vis Christianity, Postmodernism and Psychoanalysis. The convergences do not eliminate difference, and the divergences do not necessitate useless antagonism. If I were to synthesize a symbolic locus for future research on these convergence and divergences I would offer the following formalization. In regards Christianity, Žižek utilizes dialectical

materialism, whereas Peterson utilizes a form of psychological realism; in regards Postmodernism, Žižek would affirm a form of phallogocentrism, whereas Peterson would negate or critique Neo-Marxism; and in regards Psychoanalysis, Žižek starts and ends with the Lacanian Real, whereas Peterson would start and end with Jungian Archetypes. These differences, I argue, can be productively mobilized for a new understanding of all of these intellectual fields.

3. Post-Public Dialogue

Although the aforementioned intellectual points of convergence/divergence still stand, the actual meeting point for the first dialogue between Žižek and Peterson did not revolve directly around Christianity, Postmodernism and Psychoanalysis, although all such forms of knowledge played a key role in structuring discourse. As is well known, instead of such a debate, we were treated to a discourse that focused on “Happiness” and its relationship to Marxism and Capitalism. I think this central focus gave clear sense of what could be expected from their discourse, and also, potentially, what was at stake in their dialogue.

The first thing to note about the structure of this dialogue is that the concept of happiness for both Žižek and Peterson appears to be a central negativity. In other words, neither thinker believes happiness should be the aim or telos of a human being or a human existence (although it may be a by-product of other aims). Žižek is on the record stating that happiness is a “conformist category”, and Peterson is on record criticizing the positive emotion movement as ill-informed to an “embarrassing” degree.

The reasons for the dismissal of happiness as an ultimate value in-itself is derived from both of the intellectuals engagement with deeply historical and deely psychoanalytic thinkers. Žižek is influenced by Hegel’s insistence that only the “blank pages” of history are happy, and Lacan’s insistence that the end of analysis is focused on uncomfortable truth, and not ego-happiness. Peterson is influenced by Dostoevsky’s insistence that a happy human would

self-sabotage their own state, and Nietzsche's insistence that a true human life is focused on self-power and not self-happiness.

Thus if we could unify Žižek and Peterson theoretically it would be in relation to the fact that both thinkers accept the basic Freudian break identified as the "beyond" of the pleasure principle. For Freud a human life was first regulated by the pleasure principle but secondarily came to integrate its own unconscious underground, which was related to the truth of the id, and not the pleasure of the ego. Accepting this basic lesson leads to the life of the drives which ride tension and antagonism in the same way that the desires of the ego aim for harmony and happiness. In this way accepting the life of the drives makes one's life more difficult, but simultaneously, more meaningful.

Now their dialogue on "Happiness and Marxism" opens the possibility for new high level theory. In this section of the paper I want to structure the way in which we can think new high level theory through the lens of four different major categories. These four different major categories include:

1. End of Neoliberal Pleasure Principle
2. Affirmation of Intense Psychological Vicissitudes
3. New Discourse on Individual-Collective
4. Integration of Historical Darkness

Neoliberalism is not just a problem for reasons of economics, but also for reasons of simple pleasure. In the age of neoliberalism we instantiate ethical axioms that revolve around the pleasure principle, leading us to a society of immediate gratification and low self-constraint.

Affirming psychological vicissitudes is necessary because we are entering new psychological territory in our world. This psychological territory cannot be navigated with only positive emotions, but must dialectically balance positive and negative emotions. Negative emotions are necessary and must be integrated to reach new levels of self-consciousness.

Discourse on the individual and the collective needs to be transformed because the old political dialogue between rights and responsibilities, progressivism and conservatism, is totally dysfunctional and broken. Both rights and responsibilities are necessary for a functioning society, what those basic rights and responsibilities are is not clear. This could be in part because of globalization, corporatization, automation and any other number of forces that have dramatically transformed the world we live in today.

Finally, integration of historical darkness or shadows is something we must reconcile inside our own hearts. Human beings are capable of the worst atrocities conceivable. There is evil that runs along each of our hearts. If this is left unacknowledged and unreflected upon we run the risk of replicating the worst disasters that structured the 20th century.

Now I think that throughout the dialogue between Žižek and Peterson there was a broad consensus on these major themes and I think going into depth with this consensus can help our culture to articulate a new horizon for our historical becoming.

3.1 End of the Neoliberal Pleasure Principle

In our current society we are all the time aligning our self-action and goals in life with simple pleasures. Whether it is the “Tinderization” of our dating lives (so-called “hook-up culture”), the abundance of low quality food and drink, the comforts of ubiquitous mindless entertainment, or any other forms of immediate gratification that comes without work, we are immersing our self in little “bubbles of happiness”.

Of course, these “bubbles of happiness” come at a huge cost. The first cost is enslavement to actual work functions that merely serve the excesses of capitalist reproduction at the expense of real humanist value. The second cost is an inability to really appreciate the meaning that comes from self-positing struggle and challenge.

To this point both Žižek and Peterson agree that a truly meaningful life can only come if one determines one self in relationship to a “Cause” above pleasure. In this model pleasure or happiness will come as a by-product, but not as directly aiming for this as a central goal. When one determines one self in relationship to a higher “Cause” above pleasure one is willingly assuming a responsibility for a tension or challenge that will prove difficult and possibly even painful. However, this difficult and painful path is the only path of meaning, and real self-definition.

To connect to this point such a pathway is a form of self-responsibility that allows us to overcome internal and unconscious pathological prohibitions. In the old traditional world we had “Master Figures” (embodying the moral superego) to tell us what to do in relation to a “Cause” which transcended pleasure. Now such “Master Figures” (embodying the moral superego) are negated. However, this negation did not open up a world of free subject’s enjoying their simple pleasures (as presupposed by 1960s counter-culture), but instead a world of self-enslaved subject’s who become frozen or static in relation to internal and unconscious pathological prohibitions coming only from their own head. Such a world can only be transcended through self-responsibility (not more rights), from becoming aligned with the inhuman Master (Death).

In the end what is at stake by ending the neoliberal pleasure principle is not only the negation of simple pleasures and alignment with capitalist exchange, but also an opening into real love. Real love is not contained by a little safe bubble of pleasure. Real love is uncontainable, real love is radical, real love is riding the crazy ups and downs that come with deep passionate commitment to something greater than one self. From this perspective we should see the end of the neoliberal pleasure principle as connected to the terrifying opening into the abyss of love where the absolute is self-evident.

3.2 Affirm Intense Psychical Vicissitudes

We may then say that the neoliberal pleasure principle is a shield (possibly self-imposed) guarding us from the immanent real of an intense, unpredictable, and chaotic becoming. Human beings in the end are free (despite all of the academic papers that would posture in the negative). However, this freedom, as known by some of the greatest 19th and 20th century philosophers, is not a romantic freedom where we get whatever we want. Our freedom is in the real of a terror or fear. The human subject is so radically free that we often do whatever we can to hide this fact from our self. What will we do with our freedom? It is a burden that we must carry into the future *we have no choice but to be free*.

The key to understanding this immanent terrifying freedom is by reflecting on the strange nature of our “instincts”. In the biological world organisms are regulated by instincts (genetic programmings from natural selection). However, in the human world, all of our primordial instincts become retroactively channelled through the symbolic order of our language and thus “gain” a strange and paradoxical metaphysical dimension. Whether it is related to eating, sex, home building, sleeping, or socializing, humans do not simply engage in such acts through the lens of genetic programming, but rather through the lens of a unconscious irrational passion. We develop complex rituals for our eating, sex, home-making, sleeping, social life, and true freedom is not deconstructing this dimension, but developing a full responsibility and ownership of this dimension.

The big problem we may seem to have here is in relation to happiness. In all of our traditional rituals there was an explicit grounding of these forms in divinity. Divinity was often conceived (at least in the West) as a singular unified all-knowing entity. Now that we no longer have such a belief we deconstruct the metaphysics of our basic instinctual drives without knowing that they continue to move independent of our self-conscious negation. Towards addressing this problem we are separated, fundamentally. We are not on some climb back up to a unified God, we are separated, and so is God.

This could be one of the reasons why happiness or pleasure as a direct goal does not work, we can only reach true happiness and pleasure indirectly by affirming a Cause beyond it which necessitates a struggle, a tension (a Fall).

3.3 New Discourse on Individual-Collective

One of the central tensions in all of this mess is failing to articulate a discourse in regards to the individual and the collective. The premodern world was grounded in the collective, the modern world is grounded in the individual (to roughly simplify). Any attempt to develop a large-scale collectivist ideology, like communism, ended in absolute tragedy. The best solutions to this tension have tended to be “bottom-up” solutions that emphasize the individual and then work up from this foundation. However, there are paradoxes when we operate in this framework because there are serious collective problems that require real attention and organizing principles.

One “symptom” of this situation is political correctness. In our contemporary social universe this manifests in our postmodern individualist ideology which reactively and hyper-moralistically categorizes everything in terms of identity categories. Of course “white cis males” are the “evil” force in this structure and various other identities are situated in opposition to this “heteronormative” category. The ultimate paradox of this structure is that it is often times middle class or upper middle class western white people who most vocally embody this perspective on the world. It could be that in a failure to confront serious collective issues (economics, ecology, etc.), ideology has condensed around surface level identitarian issues as an impotent reaction.

What seems to be structuring the tension on a more fundamental level is the battle between “leftist equality” and “rightist hierarchy”. In simplistic terms the extremist left emphasizes absolute equality where all identity categories need to be equally represented in all sectors. In simplistic terms the extremist right emphasizes absolute hierarchies where all traditional orders should be safeguarded and protected from de/re-construction. The synthesis of this binary opposition can be found in a discourse which emphasizes equality of access

and opportunity; and also a discourse which emphasizes dynamical spatial hierarchies that emerge from the expression of different potentiality.

What prevents this vision from becoming a reality is the large-scale regulation of capitalism. Capitalism as a universal international force transforms all traditional cultures (Protestant or otherwise) and subsumes all activity into a commodified market activity. This is a tragedy for the hallmarks of leftist thinking, universal health and education, for example. This is also a tragedy for large-scale ecological and social problems which have no resolution when profit is the sole motive for real action. In this sense, solving the problem of a collectivist narrative which does not infringe individual rights is a problem of the commons: how to create a common world that is equal access and opportunity, and also open to expression of radically different potentials, while at the same time ensuring the activity of our socioeconomic structure does not destroy our planetary foundations?

3.4 Integrating Historical Darkness-Shadows

In order to approach this problem we have to confront what lies beneath the narratives we tell our self about what we are and what we do: our actual action. There is most probably a gap or a distance in the large majority of people between what we say we do and what we actually do. Or at least there is a gap or a distance in the narrative we emphasize and choose to highlight and the uncomfortable real darkness that gets left out of our self-narratives. In this sense we need to work on a cognitive mapping process that includes the real of our darkness. Our narratives cannot be masks of the real, but must be tools to confront the real as a fundamental negativity. Otherwise the negativity will explode to the surface when certain social stressors reach a breaking point.

The ultimate philosophical point here is that we should not underestimate the force of evil. Of course we should strive to the good and we should develop narratives that help us reach the highest good we can: individual, familial, community, international and planetary (and across time as well). However,

evil is a very potent force and always underlying any potential for good action. In fact, goodness is often a reaction to a horrible evilness. People are usually not good for goodness in-itself. People are usually good out of a fear of evil and its ubiquitous threat. Here is the location of politics and religion proper, the battle to maintain our goodness in the face of an irrational evil power that structures our species. Here we should definitely be skeptical of good sounding narratives, and pay close attention to actions.

This brings us to the climax of this network of issues: Marxism. The central problem with Marxism is its teleological nature. The Marxist knows the ultimate goal but does not have it and does not know how to reach it even if s/he thinks that s/he does know how to reach it. This makes the Marxist doctrine dangerous because the ends (World Communism) will always justify the means. According to Marxism the history of our species is regulated by laws that we know and by actions that are self-transparent. Any psychoanalytically informed thinker knows this to be false. This is why returning to Hegel over Marx is so important for today. In Hegel's philosophy the truth of action is always in its constitutive failure. When we act, we don't know what we are doing. History is not teleologically determined. That is, paradoxically, the meaning of absolute knowing.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper as a whole was an exploration of how we could put the "Real" of the difference (the gap, the lack) between Žižek and Peterson into some new productive discourse. The "hypothesis" or simply the idea in the first part of this work is that Christianity, Postmodernism, and Psychoanalysis, would be three good places to start to facilitate this new discourse. Both Žižek and Peterson, it could be argued, are unique in their relations to these topics in modern academia. Christianity is generally viewed negatively or critically in contemporary academia; Postmodernism is generally utilized as an underlying theoretical thought structure in contemporary academia; and Psychoanalysis is generally seen as an obscure pseudoscience within contemporary academia. Thus, even though there are important differences

between Žižek and Peterson's engagement with these topics, as mentioned, they are at the same time fundamentally aligned on the idea that these topics require new academic discourse.

In this sense would it not be most useful to put the "Real" of the difference between Žižek and Peterson to use instead of creating somewhat unnecessary ideas that these thinkers are "divided"? Of course, they are divided in the sense that Žižek is far more "progressive leftist" (viewing the social whole from the perspective of abyssal antagonism, tension); and Peterson is far more "conservative rightist" (viewing the social whole from the perspective of natural cohesion and coherence). However, this is a divide which has no "neutral" "objective" solution. If we think from the perspective that "Žižek is correct and Peterson is incorrect" or "Peterson is correct and Žižek is incorrect" then we massively simplify a much more complex and nuanced situation which requires higher order discourse.

Thus, in as simple a form as possible, the first part of this paper presents the idea that there are various important nuances in the differences between Žižek and Peterson in regards to Christianity, Postmodernism and Psychoanalysis. In regards Christianity we may say it is in relation to how we should interpret the institutional future of the Church and the ontology of the Holy Spirit vis-a-vis individuation (dialectical materialism and psychological realism); in regards Postmodernism we may say it is in relation to how we should interpret ethical acts and the problems or paradoxes of desire (phallogocentrism and neo-Marxism); and in regards to Psychoanalysis we may say it is in relation to the nature of the unconscious itself and the status of something and nothing (Lacanian Real or Jungian Archetypes). All of these problems are absolutely critical to the future of philosophy (as I have articulated elsewhere in this journal, (Last 2018)). Now the question is whether or not our culture can start to see the larger benefit in higher order discourse capable of approaching the Real.

As far as the second half of the paper is concerned we focused on the consequences of the live debate between Žižek and Peterson as filtered

through four major themes: end of neoliberal pleasure principle, affirmation of intense psychical vicissitudes, new discourse on individual-collective, and integration of historical darkness-shadows. This horizon points towards new high theory that focuses on going beyond pleasure for a Cause, enjoying the struggle-tension-vicissitudes of real becoming, thinking the dimension of common social discourse which synthesizes equality and hierarchy, and integrating the historical darkness which represents the real negativity of our existence. This is not necessarily a light and happy horizon. This is not an easy pill to swallow. But it is a real pill.

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