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Rancière and Contemporary Political Problems

The Political: Relational or Foundational?

Through a critical interrogation of the relation between political philosophy and politics Rancière elaborates a notion of the political characterized in terms of division, conflict and polemic. For Rancière the received view which sees relations between systems of speculative thought and the real world of politics as necessarily divergent is misleading. Despite claims to the contrary each side of the relation shares a common understanding of politics as epiphenomena of an originary unity which each seeks to maintain against the persistence of conflict and division. In effect, philosophy ‘puts an end to the political, by employing metaphorical resources which at once distance it utterly from empirical politics and allow it to coincide exactly with it’.¹ For Rancière the solidarity of philosophy and politics is subsumed within the notion of the police which designates an activity through which each individual is maintained in an allotted place within the order of society. Thus: ‘The basis of the politics of the philosophers is the identity of the principle of politics as an activity with that of the police as a way of determining the partition of the perceptible that defines the lot of individuals and parties’.² In short, the solidarity of philosophy and politics is the coincidence of an order of being and an order of ruling derived from and reducible to a unity prior to both. One might say that for Rancière the relation between philosophy and politics is a response to the problem of the political in which philosophy comes off worst. At best philosophy enjoys a distinctly under-laboured relation with politics.

Against the identity of philosophy and politics Rancière affirms a notion of the political as the primacy of irreducible conflict between the police and the paradoxical ‘part which has no part’. Rancière provides a positive expression of this paradox by reactivating the *proletarii* as the Latin word for ‘prolific people—people who make children, who merely live and reproduce without a name, without being counted as part of the symbolic order of the city’.³ The political is a conflictual relation which arises from the limit or exhaustion of

the police, or from the inevitability of the fact that there is always one more to be counted and placed in some way within the symbolic order. Here Rancière relies on a mathematical principle of equality in which each is one and only one and which is opposed to a geometrical principle of hierarchy which distributes some ones as more important and powerful than other ones, and which is represented through the symbolic order in which each one finds its place within the unity of the One. Hence the political is a conflict between two heterogeneous processes in which mathematics dislocates geometry. Rancière refers to the location of the encounter between these two processes by reference to a further paradox of 'the nonplace as place' (PIS: 66), and which is not a matter of counting or proportion. Furthermore, to indicate the dimension of agency Rancière links the problem semantically and pragmatically to a term from an even older language, the Greek *ochlos* as the turbulent, disruptive and indeterminate mass or mob which serves to verify that the existence of the *demos* is never unified and homogeneous (OSP, 31–9). The *demos* is always more or less than itself as it does not require the guarantee of a ground to which it could be reduced or a transcendental place from which it could be derived. Hence the *ochlos* demonstrates that the *demos* is not one or One.

If the above massively condensed and partial summary of Rancière's position is reasonably accurate with respect to at least some of its decisive elements then an issue arises which stems from the importance given to the relation between philosophy, politics, police and 'symbolic order' on the one hand and *proletarii*, *ochlos*, 'non-place as place' on the other. The issue is that Rancière's position seems to imply that the political arises from the existence of that which cannot be symbolized by the police, or which can only be symbolized through terms that succeed in designating its anonymity. One might go even further and suggest that for Rancière the political is that which cannot be symbolized by the coincidence of being and rule. If this is the case then it is open to the accusation that disagreement is little more than an objection to the indignity of being overlooked or misnamed, motivated by the sense that some undesirable politically ordered disadvantages are built into the predicament. In other words, the relational notion of the political would simply be subsumed as an interruption in a prior consensual dialectic of recognition and obligation from which it is otherwise excluded. In fact, this is the view of Deranty: 'Rancière's fundamental political concern is the denial of recognition experienced by the dominated'.⁴ Deranty argues

sensitively and in detail that Rancière's political thought makes a positive contribution to the 'ethics of recognition' but concludes that a certain ambivalence remains. Referring to the subjectivization of the political Deranty points out:

Obviously, the disruptive subjects could not achieve the reconfiguration of the field of communal experience in the same ontological, organized, hierarchical manner that social configuration is achieved. *They must retain their disruptive status.* They appear as subjects only in the pragmatic reconfiguration of the field of experience, through the disruption of the ontology of the social order. They appear here and now as subject of word and action, but they are not ontological entities (JRC, 151, emphasis added).

Or, we might add, not entities as such. Not one, and not the other.

Deranty's point uncovers a problem which is not pursued. For recognition to matter the non-ontological and non-symbolic status of the political must be denied. How then is the political to be thought of in a way which maintains its non-ontological and non-symbolic or aleatory status? The question is posed in order to deny the possibility that disagreement is merely a claim to the enjoyment of the advantages of the symbolic order through subordination to the police. That is to say, to maintain the paradoxical dimension of the political. The stakes of the problem are laid out in Žižek's recent sympathetic criticism of Rancière's work. Along with Badiou, Balibar, and Laclau and Mouffe, who are lumped together on the basis of a common Althusserian inheritance, Rancière's notion of the political seems 'to fall into the trap of "marginalist" politics, accepting the logic of momentary outbursts of an impossible radical politicization that contains the seeds of its own failure and has to recede in the face of the existing Order'.⁵ For Žižek the function of Rancière's notion of the political is self-limiting in that it must maintain a residual marginal character as the demonstration of its own authenticity which entails 'an ambiguous attitude towards its politico-ontological opposite, the police Order of Being: it has to refer to it, *needs* it as the big enemy ('Power') which must be there in order for us to engage in our marginal/subversive activity', adding immediately that 'the very idea of a total subversion of this Order ('global revolution') is dismissed as proto-totalitarian' (TS, 234). In short, for Žižek the notion of the political which Rancière proposes is compromised because mathematical equality requires to be recognized by geometrical hierarchy and thus needs a place within it. The relational notion of the political is merely an effect and not a cause.

Ultimately Žižek rejects a relational version of the political as merely a 'game of hysterical provocation' (TS, 238) which is inferior to the heroic revolutionary task of establishing a new positive symbolic order. This can be done on the basis of the knowledge that the apparent ahistorical status of the existing symbolic order is itself an illusion because the truth of the order of Being which it establishes rests on a prior political moment, a foundation in which a positive order of being is instituted. Hence for Žižek the political is the invention of the One and politics is about which one is the better One. The justification for Žižek's critique and the foundational notion of the political which it affirms is the presumption of the coincidence of the authority of the symbolic, the capacity of the police to order as a basis of rule, and the philosophical elaborations which support it. In other words, the issue concerns the presumption of a miracle which, for Rancière, is perhaps more properly understood as a historically specific response to the political. This paper will begin by looking at the elaboration of the political in Rancière's thought to see if such a miracle has a place, a task which will help us to assess the validity of Žižek's criticisms. The paper will then go on to discuss some contemporary accounts of the components of this miracle in order to assess whether Rancière's relational notion of the political and Žižek's foundational criticisms have a place.

The political is not symbolic

Žižek's foundational account of the political is animated by the conviction that a symbolic order of being is necessary in order to guarantee both social reproduction and its pathological consequences, and a lot more besides. For Žižek the capacity of the symbolic to order derives from an ability to mediate metaphysics and politics or, in more formal terms, that which is general and that which is particular. This seems to be the assumption underlying Žižek's notion of the political, wherein Hegel's subordination of the symbol of German Romanticism to the conventional nature of the sign purged of any naturalism, intuition or sensuousness is combined with the transformation of the Durkheimian anthropology of the symbolic through structuralist semiotics. The symbolic is an order of signs which establishes the objectivity of the social and which, through Lacan's account of mis-identification, is translated into the subjectivity of experience. By reactivating the strict Althusserian doctrine that ideology is necessary and eternal even if its content is contingent, Žižek commits to a

politics of producing illusions through which subjects are reconciled with their epistemological poverty.

Immediately it should be noted that it is unlikely that Rancière's thought can be entirely assimilated to the assumptions with which Žižek's critique makes sense. After all, one of Rancière's deepest criticisms of the Althusserian project was that it attempted to establish 'the *coexistence* of two heterogeneous conceptual systems: that of historical materialism and that of a bourgeois sociology of the Durkheimian type'.⁶ These two systems were opposed politically and ideologically through the insistence that a properly Marxist theory of ideology was derived from *The Preface to the Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* and was concerned with the forms in which a struggle is fought out, and had nothing to do with an eternal structure in which a 'metaphysical theory of the subject (in the form of a theory of illusion) is linked with a sociology of systems of representations'. A Marxist theory of ideology 'is no more a theory of the subject, than a theory of science or a theory of "society"' (OTI, 9). Although it would be crude to try and derive Rancière's recent political thought from an earlier position it would be fair to say that the thematics of struggle is continuous with a relational notion of the political as division and polemic. Nevertheless, given this distance it is important to try and specify what it is about Rancière's recent political thought that provides a basis for Žižek's criticisms. Attempting to do so requires a more direct analysis of the way in which the notion of the symbolic is used.

We can begin by pausing and rewinding to take a closer look at Rancière's explanation of the political. The ambiguity of Rancière's notion of the political is condensed in the following statement which offers three reasons why there is politics:

First, because there are names which deploy the sphere of appearance of the people, even if in the process such names are apt to become separated from 'things'; second, because the people are always too numerous or too few compared with the form of their manifestation; and third, because the name of the people is at one and the same time the name of the community and the name of a part of—or rather a split in—the community. The gap between people as community and people as division is the site of a fundamental grievance. At the outset, it is not the king but the people who have a double embodiment. (OSP, 96–7)

Arguably the first and second reasons are compatible with the structuralist logic of 'symbolic efficiency' because a finite economy of signs is restricted in comparison with the possibilities of signification and is

thus empirically destined to fail. But is the conflictual aspect of this failure automatic, a necessary component of the dialectic of recognition and obligation? That is to say, where is the non-ontological political dimension? Rancière provides it with the third reason which introduces the notion of division and which does not follow from the first two reasons but interrupts them. There is no logical link between the notion of the symbolic, including that which is not symbolized, and the notion of division. By itself there is no reason why a grievance should arise in the gap between the name of the community and its divided referent. Either the connection is made through a metaphysical equivalence between the possibility of non-symbolization and the existence of division, which would entail a common reference to a foundation, albeit negatively, or the connection arises from the force of the evidence of an empirical example. In which case, symbol is subordinated to allegory and the ontological status of the symbolic in both Romanticism and Durkheimianism is relegated. In fact, this is exactly what happens in Rancière's argument with the introduction of the notion of a 'double embodiment' to qualify the third reason for politics, and which is borrowed from Lefort's use of Kantorowicz's thesis of 'The King's Two Bodies' in order to explain the emergence of the modern form of the political from a pre-modern structure of order centred on the institution of monarchy.⁷

It is worth looking at Lefort's argument in a little more detail in order to uncover how it produces a specific relation between the symbolic and the political. The circularity of divine right establishes the fact that the King is simultaneously spiritual and temporal by way of analogy: 'You are to me, as I am to God'. The body of the King grounds a proportional geometrical rule of order. It is both mathematical one and geometrical One in which each other one finds its place. Yet Lefort's analysis of the political does not locate its origin within the double embodiment of the King. Rather, the political is something which happens to this structure which has the effect of demonstrating both a distinction between the spiritual and temporal properties of the body of the King and the arbitrariness of their link. This is the revolutionary act in which the physical body of the King is split, introducing a gap which demonstrates that the King is not One but only one. There are two major consequences. Firstly, a foundation or centre is displaced by a relation as the act does not originate from within the structure of double embodiment but from something external to it which does not have any positive designation. Secondly, the distinction between the spiritual and the physical becomes the

distinction between the symbolic and the real, empty markers without positive properties. For Lefort, this literal dislocation gives rise to the following decisive features of political modernity:

Power appears as an empty place and those who exercise it as mere mortals who occupy it only temporarily or who could install themselves in it only by force or cunning. There is no law that can be fixed, whose articles cannot be contested, whose foundations are not susceptible of being called into question. Lastly, there is no representation of a centre and of the contours of society: unity cannot now efface social division.⁸

The place of power is empty, a gap which separates the symbolic and the real. Emptiness cannot be symbolized precisely because it is a literal event which symbolizes nothing, but it can be depicted, represented, allegorized. Hence strictly speaking power is not symbolic. Consequently, modernity dislocates the relation between power and authority. There is no longer a generality of power. Henceforth the political becomes the polemicization of the symbolization of power. Indeed, Lefort promotes this activity as one of the democratic virtues of modernity although recognizes that it can easily fall into its opposite, the totalitarian menace in which the substantial body of authority is reinvented and power is symbolized. Democracy is all about preserving the gap between the symbolic and the real.⁹

Rancière does not follow the logic of Lefort's argument completely, instead transposing it as an attribute of the people itself prior to the institution of the King. In so doing it is hard to see how a political dimension goes with it. By themselves, irrespective of how they are named, and irrespective of the referential failure of their names, the notions of community and people do not entail any dimension of power and authority and thus the possibility of a grievance predicated on division. It is only when one realizes that the division between the name of the people and the name of a part of the people is a division which is not named because both people and its part possess the same name that a political dimension becomes thinkable and the doubleness of the people makes sense. The political becomes thinkable insofar as 'the part which has no part', the *ochlos*, demonstrates the sameness of the name of the people and a part of the people. Which means that *ochlos* is a name for the division within the name of the people. The *ochlos* transforms a spontaneous experience of shared living-together into an order of being, a symbolic order, which reveals the difference between the name and its referent, the general and the particular. So for practical purposes it doesn't really matter which came first, the

people or the King. All that matters is that the political establishes a polemical relation which reveals the difference within either of these names.

Yet Rancière does not follow Lefort's argument to the letter simply because of a wish to affirm the priority of the people over the King. According to Žižek, the reason for Rancière's reluctance to emphasize the modern form of the political is an opposition to the idea and practice of a 'para-politics' which emerges as a consequence. In modernity politics is depoliticized as a competition to occupy the symbolic place of power (*TS*, 192). This point seems otiose, given that in light of the distinction between the political and politics the latter is 'depoliticized' by definition. Indeed, both foundational and relational notions of the political seem to agree on this point. In fact, Rancière's opposition is to an even deeper consequence of political modernity which is that society cannot be established by reference to a positive determination and entails, in Lefort's memorable phrase, 'the dissolution of the markers of certainty' (*DPT*, 17). Even though Lefort affirms the priority of division Rancière is reluctant to endorse the consequences of the 'catastrophe in the symbolic linked to the disembodiment of the "double body" of the king' which takes place in a 'theater of sacrifice' (*D*, 100). The opposition is not that this is something that cannot be done, but that to do so, which means to have done so, displaces a polemic between a social body and 'a body that now displaces any social identification' (*D*, 100). In other words, the notion of the political as a conflict between the police and a 'part which has no part' becomes untenable. Yet without the interruption of *ochlos* no such polemic ever took place and it would not be possible to think of the people as the division between that which can be named and that which cannot. So the ambiguity in Rancière's argument stems from locating the distinction between the people as One and people as division as prior to the interruption of the *ochlos*, when in fact it is this event which produces the distinction. The catastrophe does not occur within the symbolic. Rather, the catastrophe is that the symbolic occurs in order to produce the coincidence of philosophy and politics.

Interestingly, Lefort came to a similar conclusion on the basis of his own analysis, which was expressed as an ambivalence about the status of the symbolic. At one level it is a purely functional requirement which prevents the atomization of society and thus preserves the vocation of what Rancière calls the police. Yet at the same time the symbolic does not establish social closure but gives rise to 'an

endless series of questions' which have become the agency of the political (*DPT*, 228). At which point Lefort reaches a conclusion posed in the form of a question which Rancière takes as a point of departure. Thus: 'We have to ask how the philosophical idea of the One colludes with the image of a united society' (*DPT*, 229). For Lefort this is a matter of the persistence of the 'theological-political', a term commensurate with the coincidence of philosophy and politics or a foundational notion of the political. Lefort provides no answer to the question but instead suggests an answer to be avoided because it would liquidate the political itself. Such an answer would be one which relegates the political form of modern society to illusion and replaces 'the fiction of unity-in-itself with that of diversity-in-itself' (*DPT*, 232). So the reluctance to follow Lefort is a strategic decision which prevents the consequences which for Rancière inevitably arise from political modernity. Yet this is at the price of turning the response of philosophy and politics into a cause, and which provides the opportunity for Žižek's criticism.¹⁰ Yet as the regicide has taken place perhaps we should have a look at how these consequences have played out in order to try and determine if they have any political dimension of value. To do so we shall conclude by examining the contemporary status of each element of the miraculous trinity of the police, the symbolic and philosophy in turn.

The end of the police

Here we can turn to consider some orthodox accounts of the decisive features of contemporary empirical politics. For example, in a review of texts by some then 'nouveaux philosophes' published in 1978, one year after punk, and translated into English in 1979, Donzelot essayed some themes grounded in Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' which proposed a diagnosis of 'the dominant problem of the moment, the loss of credibility of political culture'.¹¹ The force of this situation was characterized in terms of the 'dedramatization of social conflicts by eliding the question of assigning *responsibility* for the origin of "social evils" and shifting the issue to the different technical options regarding variations in different parameters required to "optimise" employment, wages, allowances etc.' (*PPC*, 81). Through the collapse of moral causality the political is progressively subsumed within the social and the political force of the symbolic becomes obsolescent. Hence the 'detachment of the political class from the messianic discourse of the old politics' is accelerated such that 'the efficiency of government

has more to do with an approach based on expertise rather than with an ability to rouse audiences' (PPC, 83). Politics becomes a matter of maintaining a minimum level of cybernetic equilibrium within circumstances which it does not authorize and disagreement is reduced to the status of a practical problem in search of a solution. This does not entail the elimination of 'ruptural practices' (PPC, 84) although their consequences are unintended. The persistence of the 'sullen resistance of the silent masses or the spectacular resurgence of the crowd in demonstrations is an opposition to the cultural and political management of society' which reinforces the default position of the State as 'the guarantor of processes of social regulation' (PPC, 85). Of course, the politicization of blame plays a huge part in this scenario.

Recently this analysis has been reinforced by an advocate of the invention of 'mediation mechanisms' managed by the State, such as the institution of individual mobility restrained by the commitment to personal financial investment with which to regulate the conflict between capital and labour.¹² For Aglietta, although authority 'can no longer be legitimized by a symbolic figurehead or by the invocation of a transcendent moral value or religious belief' (CTC, 57) social inclusion 'must become' the 'categorical imperative of the state' in the context of the randomization of the causality of wealth and status respectively (87). On reflection it is apparent that Aglietta's moral optimism is unwarranted as the notion of inclusion entails that the state must somehow create the conditions for its own legitimacy, yet it must do so legitimately. In presupposing what has to be established, the project of 'inclusion' replicates one of the core paradoxes of political modernity, for example the figure of the social contract which presupposes agreement to subjection in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of the subjection which it formulates. Yet Aglietta's scenario adds a further disabling twist in that without the symbolic dimension there is no order to be included within. At best inclusion would be a temporary contingent relation subordinate to the effects of the actions of finance capital, and this would also hold for its logical correlate, exclusion. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that relations between political systems and their environments are often described in terms of 'reinvention'. One can conclude that to establish an order of being within which each is placed requires an investment that will never be returned. By the same token, to accept such an obligation would suggest that the imperative of inclusion is superfluous precisely because it is imposed by the failure of a causality

of moral indebtedness, and thus, for Aglietta, of the financial economy on which its success is supposed to rest, and the games with sticks and carrots through which the 'regulative' imperative is embedded.

The end of the symbolic

What these examples show is that politics proceeds as the attempt to manage the absence of the One as a place of rule, and thus the absence of a predetermined distribution of places. Not surprisingly the consequences of this condition are legible within the symbolic itself insofar as its function is understood as establishing the identity of the idea of the One with its referent. These developments serve to reveal the limits of Žižek's positive affirmation of a foundational notion of the political. The standard objection to this position is that it cynically replaces one form of terror with another. Žižek is indifferent to such complaints. Rather, Žižek's anxiety is that the 'symbolic efficiency' of the Order of Being has dissolved in the reduction of politics to the generalized management of the 'smooth *service des biens*'. Although Žižek's evidence is drawn from the literature associated with the sociology of 'risk society', the argument is pretty much commensurate with the diagnoses of Donzelot and Aglietta.¹³

The broader implications of Žižek's explanation of the situation shifts the stakes away from the hackneyed sixty-eightist problem of incorporation, commodification and 'repressive desublimation', in which self-authenticating vanguard forces compete with each other to demonstrate their authenticity, towards a grumpy and curmudgeonly lament over the passing of the conditions in which the post-Althusserian notion of the political as foundational 'act of institution' could make sense. Žižek regrets that the conditions for the construction of a new symbolic order of Being and thus of the necessary mediation of ideology have dissolved because the mechanisms of subjectivization through mis-identification which support it have collapsed. As a psycho-Marxist Žižek points to the withering of the Oedipus complex as evidence that 'the paradigmatic mode of subjectivity is no longer the subject integrated into the paternal Law through symbolic castration, but the "polymorphously perverse" subject following the superego injunction to enjoy' (*TS*, 248). In the face of the risks of contemporary capitalist consumer culture there is no longer any authority to oppose, as the force of 'symbolic efficiency' has been liquidated in the institutional collapse of the modern bourgeois patriarchal family. Social capitals are degraded by the absence of

‘any symbolic point of reference that would serve as a safe and unproblematic moral anchor’ (*TS*, 332). The knowledge that the symbolic is contingent is no longer the exclusive possession of revolutionary cadres but is embedded reflexively within the post-punk culture of everyday life. Subjectivity lacks nothing, as an index of plenitude has become immeasurable. Desire is replaced by drive, crash, and burn.

The end of philosophy

Lastly we should consider the third term in the trinity of the miracle of coincidence. Although philosophy’s regret over its own impotence or lack of practical significance is for Rancière little more than a deceptive ruse which defines the genre from its classical Greek origins, on the basis of evidence consistent with the empirical political examples given above some influential contemporary versions of the topic are characterized by the acceptance of the absence of any expectation that the situation could be overcome. For example, as recently as 1958, at least two years after the invention of Rock and Roll, Arendt developed the Heideggerian complaint that ‘authority has vanished from the modern world’ because there is no universally agreed method that would fill the causal and logical gap between speech and action, or what Arendt called ‘metaphysics’.¹⁴ In this example, the problem was posed in order to renew political philosophy through a return to its heritage in order to confront the ‘elementary problems of human living-together’ (*WA*, 141), and which elsewhere Arendt famously argued should be solved by the subordination of speech and action to a shared common account of an ‘inaugural moment’ precisely because metaphysics is lacking.¹⁵ Thus according to a logic which Žižek replicated, albeit unknowingly, the order of the One is invented in a historical moment in order to compensate for an absent metaphysical foundation, but to which is attributed a causality and authority which metaphysics would possess if it was available. In this case empirical politics is subordinated to a description of an example which is authoritative because it most approximates a philosophical ideal of politics.

As they say, ‘things have moved on’. Contemporary post-metaphysical political philosophy recognizes the problem of the gap between speech and action which Arendt observed, but generally tries to take a very different tack in order to avoid the doubtful solution to which it otherwise leads. For example, by building on the experience of undecidability as a description of deconstruction, the gap itself

functions as a limit at which the political begins. This direction ends up with a notion of the political as the point in which being and authority are without foundation and the solidarity of philosophy and politics dissolves. Yet it would not be sufficient to confine this position to the outcome of a critical interrogation of the relation between political philosophy and politics as it is interrupted by a temporal dimension which neither can master. Derrida illustrates the point in a recent interview about the dominance of the media construction of 'artificiality', by reference to the technologically-driven production of a 'practical *deconstruction* of the traditional and dominant concepts of the state and citizen (and thus of "the political") as they are linked to the actuality of a territory' which is currently taking place.¹⁶ Under these circumstances a notion of the political grasped as a foundation which institutes the solidarity of being and authority no longer makes sense, even if such a thing had actually happened. Importantly, neither does the police understood as the distribution of places within the symbolic order, which is why Derrida refers to the political stakes of 'practical deconstruction' in terms of 'multiple configurations of mastery without mastery' which are conditioned by a logic of 'exappropriation' (*ET*, 37). That is to say, without the authority of propriety to keep things in place the vocation of the police is redundant. Typically, for Derrida this is neither a good nor bad thing in itself. It simply serves to emphasize the contingency of any 'part which has no part' and the impossibility of its reduction to a measure of political probability.

Conclusion

Under these circumstances a foundational notion of the political is Quixotic. Is Rancière's relational notion of the political as division a victim of the same fate? Of course, what has been deconstructed is a political ontology or order of being, the coincidence of philosophy, the symbolic and politics. This does not mean that deconstruction is *ochlos*, but it does mean that it is something to add, although not something that can necessarily be counted as one. Perhaps recognition of the consequences of this point moves the political in the direction of rhetoric insofar as it suggests a notion of the invention of places, albeit without an inventory. To explore such an opportunity would show that the symbolic is only the symbolic and not a diagram of social relations. This does not make philosophy any more practical but by the same token it might make it a lot more relational or, to say the

same thing differently, open to relations which do not pre-suppose any miraculous coincidence. After all, it is only with respect to the absence of such an event that one can really talk about the political.

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NOTES

- 1 Jacques Rancière, *On The Shores of Politics*, translated by Liz Heron (London, Verso, 1995), 15. Hereafter *OSP*.
- 2 Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, translated by Julie Rose (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 63. Hereafter *D*.
- 3 Jacques Rancière, 'Politics, Identification and Subjectivization', in *The Identity in Question*, edited by John Rajchman (London and New York, Routledge, 1995), 63–72 (67). Hereafter *PIS*.
- 4 Jean-Phillipe Deranty, 'Jacques Rancière's Contribution to the Ethics of Recognition', *Political Theory* 31:1 (2003), 136–56 (137). Hereafter *JRC*.
- 5 Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: the absent centre of political ontology* (London, Verso, 2000), 232. Hereafter *TS*.
- 6 Jacques Rancière, 'On the theory of ideology (the politics of Althusser)', *Radical Philosophy* 7 (1974), 2–10 (3). Hereafter *OTI*.
- 7 Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957).
- 8 Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, edited and translated by John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986), 304.
- 9 Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, edited and translated by John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988), 233. Hereafter *DPT*.
- 10 If there was time and space one could show the same problematic in a slightly earlier work of Rancière's which addresses the relation between revolution and modernity more directly, and where Hobbes is shown to be the name for a specific invention of the solidarity of philosophy, politics and the symbolic. See Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On The Poetics of Knowledge*, translated by Hassan Melehy, foreword by Hayden White (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994)
- 11 Jacques Donzelot, 'The Poverty of Political Culture', translated by Couze Venn *Ideology and Consciousness* 5 (1979), 73–86 (79). Hereafter *PPC*.
- 12 Michel Aglietta, 'Capitalism at the Turn of the Century: Regulation Theory and the Challenge of Social Change', *New Left Review* 232 (1998), 41–90. Hereafter *CTC*.
- 13 See also Slavoj Žižek, 'Risk Society and its Discontents', *Historical Materialism* 2:1 (1998), 143–64.

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- 14 Hannah Arendt, 'What is Authority?' [1958], in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York, The Viking Press, 1961), 91. Hereafter WA.
- 15 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, The Viking Press, 1965).
- 16 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, translated by Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002), 36, original emphasis. Hereafter *ET*.