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**A Critique of Political Self-Deception:
Kant and Freud at the Edge of Critical Theory**

A Dissertation
Presented in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

November 3 of 2011

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Abstract of Dissertation

Psychoanalysis as Political Critique

In the spirit of Kantian critique this dissertation pursues the enlightenment project of examining the limits of reason and its political ramifications. Beginning from the claim that psychoanalysis is the inheritor of the Kantian project, this dissertation argues the limits of political reason lie beyond the concepts of overcoming and mastery. While traditionally this conversation has been occupied with the concept of ideology, this dissertation draws on the Freudian concept of self-deception. It contends the concept of ideology contains the seeds of its own overcoming, and thus cannot represent the limits of political reason. In contrast to ideology, this dissertation claims the Freudian concept of disavowal indicates the limits of not only rationality, but also political rationality. As such, the political ramifications of a critique focused on the limits of rationality must grapple with the phenomenon of disavowal, a phenomenon that blatantly defies the logic of non-contradiction. This dissertation concludes that this form of critique would demand turning political thought toward historical manifestations that continue to exist but are not recognized, such as the relationship between slavery and prisons as articulated in the 13th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

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Citation Abbreviations

The texts of Karl Marx:

CW: *The Collected Works of Marx and Engels*

W: *Marx and Engels Werke*

The texts of Theodor Adorno

DE: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

ND: *Negative Dialectics*

MM: *Minima Moralia*

KCPR: *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*

GS: *Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften*

The texts of Sigmund Freud

SE: *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*

GW: *Sigmund Freud: Gesammelte Werke*

The texts of Immanuel Kant

CPR: *Critique of Pure Reason*

PFM: *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*

PW: *Kant's Political Writings*

GS: *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*

It is a Paradox of Freudian psychoanalysis that, whilst consistently struggling against illusion, it somehow activates it.

--Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and Béla Grunberger, *Freud or Reich?*

Introduction

Critique Beyond the Boundaries of Reason Alone

In occultism the mind groans under its own spell like someone in a nightmare, whose torment grows with the feeling that he is dreaming yet cannot wake up.

--Adorno, "Theses Against Occultism," *Minima Moralia*

The project of liberating reason is the same project of liberating ourselves. Indeed, this sentiment seems to be at the very core of the Enlightenment project itself. And nowhere is this sentiment more clearly expressed than in Kant's enlightenment motto: "Have the courage of your own understanding" (Kant, PW 54). For, was not this sense of autonomy based on the demand to fight through our "*self-incurred immaturity*" so we may use our newly liberated faculties, unaided by "lazy" doctrines stepped in the "cowardice" of dogma and tradition (PW 54)? Certainly, at the very apex of Enlightenment thought, we are to free ourselves by virtue of the independent, yet universal, use of reason. No longer will one's faculties of reason remain tethered to the authority of those who have set themselves up as our "guardians" (PW 54). Political liberation is inseparable from severing reason from its dependence on illusions, tradition, and authority.

This push toward freedom and progress informs the urgency of, the very demand for, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. To free ourselves we must first free our thought; we must free reason from its own chimeras and the self-imposed yoke strung around its neck. The project of enlightenment, the very project of liberation, is, for Kant, the "duty of philosophy" which should aim "to remove the deception arising from misinterpretation, even at the cost of destroying the most highly extolled and cherished delusion" (CPR

Axii). And surely this is the purpose of critique: to secure the independent use of reason so that our material autonomy may follow. After all is not critique like the “police” whose “job is to put a stop to the violence on whose account citizens must fear each other, in order that everyone may carry on his business calmly and safely” (CPR Bxxv)? Certainly, it would seem liberation is the foundation not only of Kant’s enlightenment thought, but also the project of critique itself.

Yet, there is no escape from deception. This, not liberation, was the lesson of the Enlightenment. Kant is quite clear about this, even if it seems contradictory. Lodged within the heart of his project, illusions are not only the target of critique but also what pushes his libratory project forward. This project contends that the necessity of illusion in the project of Enlightenment—the necessity of self-deception in the faculties of thought itself—demands turning to the tools of psychoanalysis. In fact, as I will show, Sigmund Freud’s project directly inherits the Kantian project on this point. In this way one can think of Freudian psychoanalysis as offering an important framework for both understanding the project of critique and the political liberation it promises. Hence, before we begin to investigate the stakes of a psychoanalytic critique of political reason, let us examine the stakes of Kant’s critique, the form it takes and its object—the compulsive nature of reason.

I. Dialectics of Reason

The need for critique in Kant’s work emerges from the nature of reason. Reason, unlike the intuition and the understanding, has no direct connection with experience.

“[C]ognition [*Erkenntnis*],” Kant argues, “starts from the senses, proceeds from there to the understanding, and ends with reason” (CPR A299/B355). The understanding, Kant writes “may be considered a power of providing unity of appearances [*Erscheinungen*] by means of rules” (CPR A302/B359). In other words, the very becoming of appearance occurs through the a priori organization of the manifold of sense impressions by means of concepts of the understanding. In order for appearances to maintain their unity, the rules of the understanding must also be unified. This is the job of reason; for it unifies the rules of the understanding beneath the abstracted guidelines of principles.¹ Whereas the understanding provides an organizational unity to the intuition, reason provides an organizational unity to the understanding. As such, Kant writes that reason “initially never deals with experience or any object” (CPR A302/B359). Reason is, thus, one step removed from the senses, and thus the touchstone of experience.

Since reason seeks to unify the rules of the understanding, it seeks a governing unity beyond the bounds of the understanding. In other words, in seeking the totality organizing the rules that give unity to appearance as such, reason must seek the unconditional ground conditioning appearance itself. The unity it seeks, Kant finds, “can be a completeness [*Vollständigkeit*] of principles only, not of intuitions and of objects” (PFM 68; GS 4: 332). Because principles organize concepts and not the objects of the senses, this unity exists not only beyond experience, but also beyond the rules of the understanding organizing experience. Thus the unity of the principles of reason cannot be represented as an object that can be experienced, as there is no experiential object “there” to be experienced. Having no objective status, the principles of reason are merely

¹ By analogy, Kant claims that the work of reason is similar to the “ancient wish, which someday, who knows how remote, will perhaps be filled: viz., that we might yet, instead of the endless manifoldness of civil laws, locate their principles” (CPR A302/B358).

subjective. They are the means by which we organize experience, and thus the sensual impressions of the world. The problem is that in order to present the unity behind the rules of the understanding, reason can only represent it “after the fashion of the cognition of an object” (PFM 68; GS 4: 332). The unity of the organizing force of the understanding appears like an object, some “thing” that can be brought before the senses, while it is no more than a self-grounded subjective abstraction beyond the bounds of experience. In other words, reason “foists [*unterschiebt*]” these “subjective principles” on us as “objective ones” giving rise to “a *natural* and unavoidable illusion [*einer natürlichen und unvermeidlichen Illusion*]” that Kant calls the “dialectic of pure reason” (CPR A298/B354). Because reason seeks the unconditional, it not only transgresses the boundaries of what can be experienced by the senses itself, but it also constantly “removes these limits—indeed, even commands us to step beyond them” (CPR A296/B353).

We find ourselves, now, in the throes of Kantian dialectics. This dialectic does not overcome or liberate; rather it entangles and fends off reconciliation. We cannot escape it. Forever, Kant finds, shall we transgress the boundaries of experience adhering to necessary illusions produced by the excess of reason as though they were, or even could be, truth. These illusions are “sophistries not of human beings but of pure reason itself” (CPR A339/B397). And indeed, these “sophistries” are both endemic to the function of reason as well as the target of the critique of reason. In fact, in as much as reason grounds the unity of the understanding, and in as much as it must seek the unconditional for this understanding, then one could easily claim that the conditions for appearance are grounded in the desire of reason to transcend those conditions. The removal of the

conditions of experience creates a world of beings produced solely from the principles of reason. As Kant writes, by virtue of the very nature of reason itself, the “understanding inadvertently adds for itself to the house of experience a much more extensive wing which it fills with nothing but beings of thought” (PFM 54; GS 4: 315f.). In as much as appearance remains unified, so too will reason have broken beyond the bounds of empirical experience and presented to the understanding that totality of subjective principles as something objective. We are beings that are necessarily haunted, and perhaps even chased by, the spirits of reason; nothing can save us from ourselves.

We cannot liberate ourselves from the movement to coronate the subjective principles of reason as objective. As tides ebb and flow with gravitational interaction between the earth and the moon, so too are we propelled to believe in illusions produced by the dialectical movement of reason. As Kant writes, none “cannot detach himself from them; perhaps he can after much effort forestall the error, but he can never fully rid himself of the illusion that incessantly teases and mocks him [*den Schein aber, der ihn unaufhörlich zwackt und ässt, niemals völlig los werden kann*]” (CPR A339/B397). Back and forth, we are brought to believe in the illusions of reason despite our best efforts. We may delay our “error”; we might even be able to withhold our belief initially through the power of skepticism, but in the end despite ourselves, despite the power of critique itself

[...] we suffer from a mere misunderstanding in our estimate of the proper application of our reason and of its principles and suffer from a dialectic which confuses the empirical use of reason and also sets reason at variance with itself. (PFM 84; GS 4: 350)

Reason will always go beyond the boundaries of that to which it can legitimately lay claim; the very nature of reason will always lead it beyond these markers, creating “illusions” which will continually “tease” and “mock” us (CPR A339/B397). In other words, even though the project of critique is to liberate us from subjection to the illusory use of reason, Kant continually must reiterate the fact that we will forever suffer the dialectic, remaining in the thrall of its projected being-less beings. Reason’s push past itself will continually split itself into the antinomial divide from which it cannot escape. In other words, no matter how hard we fight, no matter how much we set one side of reason against another, no matter how much we attempt to liberate ourselves from ourselves, in the end there is no escape from the transgressions of reason, and thus, perhaps, from feeling the sting of the broken promise of the liberation to come.

If we take the idea that we suffer a necessary dialectic of reason seriously, then we cannot, in the end, but conclude that the story of the power of reason, and thus the liberation it promises, might be different from our standard story of the Enlightenment. What we find is not liberation, but stasis. Even if one wants to say that Kant identifies the problem to be overcome in pointing toward the dialectics of reason, one cannot but conclude that critique is a weak power against the intractable and compulsive swinging of reason between the conditioned and the unconditioned. For this “natural” and “necessary” dialectic from which we “suffer,” the continual creation of and belief in beings existing outside of experience, can only be removed by dint of “scientific instruction and with much difficulty” (PFM 69; GS 4: 332f.). There is not much hope if science can only offer a tenuous defense against these illusions; for after all perhaps what has been revealed in Kant’s enlightenment is the fact that there is no escape and that we must learn

to live with these beings conjured from the far reaches of reason's attempt to unify experience. While a weak force providing little in the way of encouragement, it is still worth investigating what form the critique of reason takes.

As is well known, yet still worth revisiting, Kant's critique seeks to do nothing less than to subject "metaphysics to a complete revolution" as Copernicus did for the natural sciences (CPR Bxxiii). The analogy with Copernicus is quite telling. For just as Copernicus' revolution decentered the subject's perspective in relation to the passing stars, so too did Kant seek to decenter the subject's relationship to objects. Through a slight augmentation in how this relationship was understood Kant instituted a critique that he hoped would tame the tide of the compulsive transgressions of reason.

For Kant this reorientation occurs at the level of the subject's apprehension of objects, the very point from which the subject orients itself in the world. Kant's critical project overturns the assumption that cognition "must conform to objects" (CPR Bxvi). He asks us, instead, to imagine what it would mean to "assume that objects must conform to our cognition" (CPR Bxvi). Unlike a strict empiricism, which attributes the form cognition takes to the material conditions from which it springs, Kant argues the form of thought gives us the object. Just as Kant avoids the dictates of a strict empiricism, so too does he bypass idealism; for the form of thought does not replace the independence of the object from thought. As Kant writes, the representation of an object is nothing more than the "appearance of the thing, which is unknown to us but is not therefore less real" (PFM 30; GS 4 289). In as much as objects appear for us, this appearance conforms to the structures of our thought. Yet, the object itself remains independent from the structures of thought. In this sense "the existence of the thing that appears is thereby not destroyed as

in genuine idealism, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself” (PFM 30; GS 4: 289). In decentering the relationship between thought and objects, Kant performs a revolution not so much in that he reverses the relationship between subject and object, or thought and object, but that in doing so he releases the object in-itself from the demands of thought, thus positing a third entity between subject and object—that which is but does not appear, that which remains outside of and beyond the boundaries of reason alone.

And indeed freeing the object from the subject by turning thought toward the in-itself provides the decisive insight for critique to tame the compulsions of reason. If the relationship between subject and object were dictated by the subject’s form of thought, then the object appearing before the subject would be no more than representation; it would be an illusion with no experiential referent. Nevertheless, representation is not mere illusion for Kant because there must be some “thing” there corresponding to the subject’s form of thought. And indeed it is the phenomenal distinction producing this third that provides

[...] the only means of preventing the transcendental illusion, by which metaphysics has been deceived hitherto and misled into childish efforts of catching at bubbles, because appearances, which are mere representations, were taken for things in themselves. (PFM 33; GS 4: 293)

That is to say, there must be some “thing” for thought to present to the subject. And as we have seen, reason goes beyond its bounds when it attempts to present what has no experiential referent, no existing yet foreclosed third. Kant’s critique of illusion thus introduces us to a third that both grounds and is simultaneously excluded from the form

of thought that conditions appearance. The existence of this third is not only the excluded ground of appearance itself, but it is what anchors appearance in reality, allowing one to differentiate between appearance and illusion. In this sense, Kant paradoxically grounds thought in the object by granting the autonomy of the object from thought. The institution of the distinction between appearance and the thing-in-itself is the insight allowing the critique of illusion to function.

Kant's work promises the critique of reason's illusions. It is a critique based reorienting the axis from which one confronts the world. The reorientation between subject and object is predicated on the becoming autonomous of the object. Although letting the object go, freeing the in-itself from the predetermined categories of thought, provides the very pivot on which Kant's critique of the compulsive transgressions of reason operates, critique does not rid us of this compulsion, nor does it tame it. Rather it teaches us to live with the compulsion of reason by turning though toward the enigmatic third. And in this sense, the purpose of critique is to set up a levee between the compulsion of reason to transgress its legitimate boundaries so that we may on the whole benefit from reason and not remain subjected to the terrors of those being-less beings which it attempts to present to us as objectively real.

II. Dialectics of Desire

At the other end of the Enlightenment, Freud modifies Kant's critique of the dialectic of reason. It is from Freud's appropriation of Kant's critique of reason that I believe one can begin to outline a psychoanalytic critique of political reason. Thus, in the

interest of moving toward the political implications of this critique, let us examine Freud's Kantian inheritance in light of the illusions of reason.

Freud's critique of reason emerges from a similar Enlightenment concern for the subject's production of and subjugation to illusion. This shared concern is not accidental. Freud, like Kant, highlights the transgressions of reason beyond its own boundaries. Although Freud takes this conclusion further than Kant, they both agree the desire to transgress the bounds of reason begins with a schism in the self—a fracture constituting a part of the self remaining forever alien from the self. Beginning from many of the same ontological and epistemological premises, it is no surprise that Freud, like Kant, also draws our attention to the inescapable production of illusion besieging the human condition. And while both thinkers aim to liberate us from our entangled subjection to these compulsions neither thinker believes it is fully possible. It was as though Freud took his cue directly from Kant; for Freud's critique of reason also focuses on an overwhelming sense of entrapment from which there is no escape.

While Freud's concern for dialectical illusion is similar to Kant, Freud differs from Kant on its source. Whereas Kant locates the center of this movement within reason itself, Freud attributes it to the affective foundation of reason. As we saw, transcendental illusion denotes the attempt to present the totality of principles as though it were something that could be experienced in Kant's work. For Freud an illusion denotes desire's infusion of reality; it is the attempt to present desire as reality.² Because illusion signifies the mixture of reality and desire, Freud claims it "is not the same thing as an error" (Freud, SE 21: 30; GW 14: 353). An error is false and often made in good faith; it

² In *Freud*, Jonathan Lear describes an illusion as "belief caused by a wish. We take our beliefs to be responsive to reality; thus when we are in the grip of an illusion we are misled about the source and authority of our belief" (Lear 2005, 255).

is an assertion made from ignorance, where the correct grounds for the belief are not available or have been miscalculated. An illusion is also not delusion, for Freud. A delusion represents the negation of reality, whereas an illusion is the affective construction of the appearance of reality. Moreover, whereas both error and delusion presuppose the distinction between truth and falsity, reality and irreality, Freud's concept of illusion undermines these distinctions.

Contrary to both an error and delusion, an illusion is "derived from human wishes"; it represents the role of the drives in constructing how the world appears (SE 21: 31; GW 14: 353). For example, Freud states that the claim "made by certain nationalists that the Indo-Germanic race is the only one capable of civilization" is an illusion (SE 21: 30f.; GW 14: 353). It is an illusion because despite its veracity (although one does have the distinct feeling that Freud thinks this claim is false) its defining characteristic is the satisfaction of wish. It is a way of structuring appearance in light of the fulfillment of a desire. The production of illusion results from how we apprehend the world for Freud and can be, thus, traced back to primary narcissism.

Primary narcissism is the developmental stage propelling the infant into the distinction between self and object, between self and world.³ First in *Totem and Taboo*,

³ It is worth noting that D.W Winnicott develops Freud's concept of illusion in light of primary narcissism in his 1953 essay "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena." In this essay Winnicott argues for the central role of illusion in the development of infantile object-relations. He begins by examining the use of illusion within the developmental schema of the institution of the reality principle. In order to "accept" reality and displace pleasure one must first come to differentiate between one's self and external reality, between what is "me" and what is "not-me." In this sense, illusion is a central mechanism aiding this transition. It aids in the infant's understanding of his or her self as distinct from the world, and hence as capable of having relations to objects in the world. In examining how this transition Winnicott's work focuses on developmental moment between having no objects and having full object relations. Winnicott claims that this transition is aided by the infant's first object. Winnicott argues that with the first not-me object the infant enters into an illusory space defined as "the intermediate area between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived" (Winnicott 2002, 4). The transitional object is, for the infant, neither part of the infant nor is it part of the external world. Thus, the infant's perception of the object is both grounded in a reality outside of the infant and part of the infant's subjective construction of the world. As

and subsequently in “On Narcissism,” Freud posits an intermediate stage between the developmental touchstones of the organization of the drives called primary narcissism. At first, for Freud, the infant is auto-erotic. The drives are disorganized and “obtain pleasure and find satisfaction in the subject’s own body” (SE 13: 88; GW 9: 109). This stage is followed by the organization of the drives and pleasures in accordance with external objects. In other words in the first stage the drives “work independently” of each other seeking pleasure in the body, because the infant does not yet have external objects, does not have a world that it can differentiate from itself (SE 13: 88; GW 9: 109). This gives way to the distinction between inside and outside, subject and object. For it is only after this distinction has been instituted that one can develop affective attachments to objects. Primary narcissism is an intermediate stage describing how the distinction between self and world occurs. For Freud, the movement from auto-eroticism to object-love must be ushered in by an intermediary stage in which the drives organize themselves around a proto-object. This proto-object is the ego. Taking oneself as an object, splitting oneself from oneself, institutes a fracture in the infant from which it will never recover. It is an ambivalent wound, alienating the infant from itself while simultaneously giving it the world.

such, the infant understands the transitional object as both the result of his or her fantasmatic constructions and also as an entity that resists his or her fantasmatic constructions. This object is, hence, split between being laden with fantastical meaning and a materiality that resists this subjective institution of meaning. The object, for the infant, is illusory in as much as it is split for the infant as both an internal and an external phenomena for the infant. The object’s features that resist the child’s fantasmatic constructions catapult the infant into a reality outside of his or her self and thus help the infant come to a sense of his or her self as separate from it. Winnicott attributes this productive development of the sense of self to illusion. He writes that illusion is “*the intermediate area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality testing*. The transitional phenomena represent the early states of the use of illusion, without which there is no meaning for the human being in the idea of a relationship with an object that is perceived by others as external to that being” (Winnicott 2002, 4).

Primary narcissism is a strange moment in development, leaving permanent traces not only on the subject's understanding of the distinction between self and object, but also how the subject orients itself from this very distinction. While eventually this distinction will be sustained by the reality principle, initially it is governed by the drives. That is to say, the very becoming of this distinction between self and world, inside and outside is governed by the role of pleasure and displeasure.⁴ The very orientation of the self toward objects, and thus the very constitution of the self in light of the distinction between inside and outside, originates in the drives seeking release, and thus pleasure.

Indeed, Freud calls this orientation projection. One normally associates the concept of projection with a defense mechanism that presupposes the distinction between inside and outside. In this sense, projection is defined as the treatment of the affect, or the drives, as though they belong to the external world. In this way, one can rid oneself of the drives that come into conflict with the reality principle or pose a threat to the subject, by attaching them to external objects so that they can be treated as external objects. Yet, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud argues that projection is not just a defense presupposing the distinction between subject and object, but also a primary way of coming to understand the distinction between subject and object. Here, he claims "the projection outwards of

⁴ Freud describes this principle in his essay "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" written in 1911. He claims the "reality principle" develops as a response to the dominance of the "pleasure principle," which is guided by hallucinatory wish-fulfillment (SE 12: 219; GW 8: 231). Freud writes that after the continual suffering caused by the "non-occurrence of the expected satisfaction, the disappointment experienced [*das Ausbleiben der erwarteten Befriedigung, die Enttäuschung*]" one eventually abandons the pleasure principle's "attempt at satisfaction by means of hallucination" as the sole means to achieve pleasure (SE 12: 219; GW 8: 231).⁴ In the face of this suffering, caused by the disappointment of hallucinatory pleasure, the reality principle comes to act as an attempt to find pleasure not in what "was presented in the mind"; but, rather, in "what was real [*real*], even if it happened to be disagreeable" (SE 12: 219; GW 8: 232). Through the suffering caused by the attempt to find pleasure in hallucinatory fantasies, the infant moves toward discerning between what is "real" and "not real," between what is produced in the mind and what exists in the external world. Freud, therefore, will claim that the development of this discernment is the same as the "suppression [*die Ablösung*] of the pleasure principle by the reality principle" (SE 12: 222; GW 8: 234).

internal perception” to “which our sense perceptions are subject,” will “play a very large part in determining the form taken by the external world” (SE 13: 64; GW 9: 81). The very attempts to distinguish between inside and outside occur before one can orient themselves from that distinction, thus the early foundation for making this distinction relies on how subjective desire acts as the transcendental schema for the appearance of objects.⁵

The insertion of primary narcissism as intermediary stage between auto-eroticism and object-love, thus explains how objects appear. From this sense, they do not appear from an a priori organization of matter, but rather they appear as a reflection of the early egoic organization of the drives sent outside of the self in search of pleasure. As the very foundation not only of our understanding of the self, but also the world, the drives are “thus employed for building up the external world, though they should by rights remain part of the *internal world*” (SE 13: 64; GW 9: 81). And in this sense we could say that just as the subjective principles of reason cannot but appear to us as objective in Kantian dialectics, the subjective drives shaping the presentation of appearance cannot but appear as objective, as a necessary part of the world itself, in Freud’s appropriation of the Kantian dialectic. And just as the Kantian dialectic ensnares thought with the being-less beings of reason, so too will Freud’s dialectics of desire entrap us by presenting our hopes and despairs as an objective.

In Freud’s work illusions are the necessary byproduct of the foundational role of drives in constructing appearance; they represent nothing more than the becoming objective of the inevitable projection of subjective drives orienting the distinction between subject and object. If illusion is the residue of primary narcissism, then to

⁵ Slavoj Žižek makes a similar claim vis-à-vis Jacques Lacan in *The Plague of Fantasies*.

threaten illusion is to threaten the very ideal instituting the division between self and the world. It is to disrupt the very ground from which one stabilizes one's sense of self. This is precisely what not only Freud but also Kant's critique of reason demands. It demands curbing the illusions of reason orienting the comprehension of the world; critique demands giving up the certainty of illusion for the humility of a truth offending the remnants of the infantile narcissism, which promises we can master the world. In both instances, they critique reason by turning it toward its own limits, toward that which exists but exceeds the ability of reason to understand. As Freud writes, "[t]he more we seek to win our way to a metapsychological view of mental life, the more we must learn to emancipate ourselves from the importance of the symptom of 'being conscious'" (SE 14: 193; GW10: 291). By turning reason to its other, each thinker hopes, not to eradicate—for neither thinker believes this is possible—but rather to temper the effect of the illusions of reason on our lives. In other words, the disenchantment of thought occurs, each thinker contends, by turning thought toward the unconditioned ground of its own operation.

Standing at the intersection between Kant and Freud, standing, that is, on both sides of the enlightenment, we find ourselves trapped within the transgressions of reason. Just as reason will produce a house of being-less beings, a house of spirits that we cannot help but believe in, so too will the affective basis of reason produce the illusions that grasp and present the world through our narcissistic desires. And in both of these instances there is nothing we can do. We can fight against these illusions but in each case the weak force of reason is like "mills grind[ing] so slowly that people may starve before

they get their flour” (SE 22: 213). Our only hope, however weak it might be, is to critique reason by virtue of turning it toward its own limits.

I would like to suggest that in as much as the dialectics of reason force us to believe in the existence of a soul, or substance, or first cause, so too will the dialectics of desire force us to believe in the necessity of political hope or despair, the future end of need after the revolution or the end of humanity after the apocalypse. And that just as Kant and Freud suggest turning thought toward that which is but does not appear—the in-itself and the unconscious—as a manner of critiquing not just the production of illusion, but also our willing self-subjugation to illusion, so too must we turn toward the limit of appearance to provide the grounds from which to critique political rationality. The question becomes what would it mean to think of the dialectic of desire in relationship to political life and political thought?

III. A Psychoanalytic Critique of Political Reason

Psychoanalysis is a body of thought dedicated to a critique of reason oriented toward the necessary production of self-deception. In this sense, while it may very well have signaled the end of an enlightenment grounded in the illusion of liberation, it nonetheless remains the inheritor of Kantian critique. As such, a critique of political reason, if it wants to both turn thought toward the non-identical while simultaneously avoiding illusions grounded in the false mastery of infantile narcissism, must take its cue from the framework of psychoanalysis. For is not political reason beset by illusions

motivated by unnamed affect, even when it employs the critical tools of psychoanalysis?⁶ Is not the political drive for change, for overcoming, for, indeed, reconciliation a demand predicated on the affective basis of reality?⁷ Is not this demand the same overvaluation of the egoic rationality and the mastery of human action that resonates so closely with the intermediate stage of primary narcissism?⁸ Moreover, what might we learn not only about the illusions of political thought, but about the nature of that “thing” which is, but does not appear in a critique oriented not from appearance, but rather the non-identical grounds of appearance?⁹

Taking its cue from Kant and Freud this project argues that the psychoanalytic concept of *Verleugnung*—disavowal—must act as the starting point for a psychoanalytic critique of political reason. For it is only in the psychoanalytic concept of disavowal that thought confronts what it cannot overcome, that which defies the boundaries of reason itself, indeed as we will see of the phenomenological basis of appearance.

⁶ In “‘*Omnes et Singulatim*.’ Toward a Critique of Political Reason,” Michel Foucault argues that a contemporary critique of political reason would have to move past the dialectics of desire which would “trap us into tplaying the arbitrary and boring part of either the rationalist or the irrationalist” (Foucault 1994, 299). Rather he argues that a critique of political reason should take up the relation between rationalization and power so that we can understand how “political rationality has grown and imposed itself all thought the history of western societies” (Foucault 1994, 325).

⁷ Most notably one can point to the following examples: Willhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, ed. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael, M.D., trans. Mary Boyd Higgins (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980); Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); and Filip Kovacevic, *Liberating Oedipus? Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007).

⁸ Some authors have recently begun to take up this type of critique from the angle of psychoanalysis. For example see: Adam Rosen, “On the Fate of Psychoanalysis and Political Theory,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 76, no.3 (2007): 943-980.

⁹ In some senses, this is similar to Gayatri Spivak’s examination of the “native informant” in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* and her investigation of the subaltern in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In both of these works Spivak, one could argue, takes up the structural foreclosures that secure the absence of the other from European discourses—or the symbolic fortifications against the Kantian in-itself or Lacanian “real.”

The work of understanding the political implications of these boundaries, of indeed appearance itself, would have to begin with concept of ideology. The task of the first chapter is, thus, to investigate the Theodor Adorno's augmentations of Marx's concept of ideology as representative of an important shift in the orientation between rationality and appearance in the political. I perform this work by putting pressure on both Marx and Adorno's appropriation of the Hegelian concept of Spirit. In tracing out the shift in this concept from Marx to Adorno, one notes an important transformation in what it represents and what it means for reason to come to comprehend it. As we will see, for Marx, spirits must be exorcised by turning thought to material foundation of thought that is excluded from appearance. Uncovering the knowable conditions that are excised from appearance itself can thus overturn the spell of ideology. In contrast to Marx, Adorno takes a more Kantian route, arguing ideology, and thus spirit, reflects not just illusion, but also what is most real: what Adorno will call the non-identical core of appearance itself. The question becomes, then what does it mean to think this core, and how exactly might psychoanalysis help us in this endeavor.

While those who have taken up this question have often focused on the psychoanalytic concept of repression, the second chapter argues the repressed cannot be the non-identical. To support this argument this chapter reads the metapsychological nature of repression in light of Freud's Kantian inheritance. Beginning with Freud's claim that the unconscious is timeless (*Zeitlos*), it argues the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious—that which appears and that which does not appear—is predicated on the schematizing function of linear time. That which is temporalized is, or contains the potential, to become conscious. What remains without time, what remains

unschematized, is not only radically unconscious, but also cannot be brought to consciousness. Whatever the non-identical would be, given this framework, it would have to remain radically without time. Given this distinction, the chapter goes on to argue, because repression excises already schematized presentations from consciousness, what remains repressed cannot be the non-identical, because the repressed has been, and thus can be subjected to the linear temporality of reason. Thus, if we are to take up the question of the non-identical in psychoanalysis, we must take up the question of what remains unschematized, what remains outside of time, what, essentially, remains radically unconscious.

In contrast to repression, the third chapter argues what has been disavowed, and thus the function of disavowal, is the non-identical toward which political thought must turn. While most associate the function of disavowal with fetishism, and thus the Oedipal narrative of castration, Freud's concept of disavowal surpasses not only these frameworks, but also the assumptions buried beneath them. With respect to this, the chapter first addresses the problems of disavowal's association with fetishism and then dissociates the concept from fetishism. Distinguishing disavowal from fetishism illuminates the constitutive nature of disavowal, especially in Freud's late work. In these works one comes to see that disavowal represents not only the limits of rationality, of what has never been brought to consciousness—thus remaining unschematized—but also an irreparable split in consciousness lying beyond the boundaries of reason while still affecting the subject. Because disavowal institutes this split, because what has been disavowed is radically unconscious and timeless, a critique of political thought would turn toward what has been disavowed. And indeed, this is a project that even Freud

engaged in when he attempted to understand the political implications of this concept in his last work *Moses and Monotheism*.

The fourth chapter provides a reading of Freudian disavowal as a political concept in order to examine its full implications in light of the tangled relationship between the constitution, slavery, and prisons in the United States. Because much of Freud's political work operates on the assumption of the historical nature of consciousness, this chapter first begins, through a reading of the relationship between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, by arguing the historical nature of consciousness is grounded in what might be understood as the modes of punishment in Freud's work. Using this as a framework from which to engage in Freud's use of the concept of disavowal in *Moses and Monotheism*, the chapter goes on to argue, political disavowal indicates the schematizing function of the law that excludes the very deed constituting it. It is in light of this, that the chapter then explores this concept further by examining the reverberations of the 13th Amendment's simultaneous abolishment and preservation of the practice of slavery in light of political appearance.

Finally, the project concludes by suggesting that a psychoanalytic critique of political reason would not only turn political thought toward the concept of disavowal, but that this very turn would be predicated on examining how the non-identical is sustained throughout time, throughout generations. To think this we must begin to turn to the question of the intergenerational transmission of trauma. In fact, a psychoanalytic critique of the political reason would end by orienting ourselves in the political in light of a genealogy of the historical transmission of the non-identical.

Chapter One:

Exorcising Specters: Ideology and the Non-identical from Marx to Adorno

Who among us is not battling with specters that implore Heaven and demand of us their due, while we are beholden to them for our own salvation?

--N. Abraham and M. Torok, "'The Lost object—me'": Notes on Endocryptic Identification"

"So we now enter the wilderness of the spirit [*die Wüste des Geistes*]," Marx declares in *The German Ideology* (CW 5: 148; W 3: 131).

"Spirits? Wildernesses?" one might ask. "Nothing more than a rhetorical flourish," one might conclude; "for surely there is nothing there." Yet, perhaps Jacques Derrida is right in *Specters of Marx* when he warns that "[w]hen Marx evokes specters at the moment he analyzes, for example, the mystical character or the becoming-fetish of the commodity, we should therefore not see in that only effects of rhetoric, turns of phrase that are contingent or merely apt to convince by striking the imagination" (Derrida 1994, 185f.).¹⁰ Derrida seems to be on to something. Marx is clearly haunted by some "thing."¹¹ After all, the association between the specter and ideology in Marx's text is not

¹⁰ For a contextualized discussion of this text see: *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (New York: Verso, 1999); Ernesto Laclau, "The Time is Out of Joint," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 85-96; Colin Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms," *French Studies* 59, no. 3 (2005): 373-379.

¹¹ While Derrida's examination of the "subtle argument" lying beneath Marx's analysis of specters and spirits is geared toward demonstrating the family resemblance between Marxism and deconstruction, my interest in the spirits haunting Marx stems from a different concern (Derrida 1994, 157). Specifically, Derrida takes up the various spirits, the séances and possessed tables, conjurers and necromancers inhabiting Marx's texts to investigate the automation of the "spirit that spirits itself" (Derrida 1994, 217). In other words, the hauntological aspects of Marx's texts, for Derrida, will indicate another way to view the critique of the metaphysics of presence. But, as Derrida notes, not all aspects of Marx critique these phantasms, there are still arguments and assumptions that assume this metaphysics. For example Antonio Negri has argued this is the case with the concept of "exploitation" in Derrida's text. [See Antonio Negri, "The Specter's Smile," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx*,

accidental. Indeed, Derrida was not the first to pick up on this language. One could just as easily turn to Adorno, who not only explicitly claims that the “spell and ideology are one and the same [*Bann und Ideologie sind dasselbe*]” (Adorno, ND: 349; GS 6: 342); but also evokes the language of “bewitchment” and “conjuring” to describe the grip of ideology on consciousness.¹² What is this “thing,” the “thing” both of and in ideology leading Marx and Adorno to appeal to the language of possession, magic, and haunting to describe it? Is it, as Derrida suggests, more than just a rhetorical metaphor?

Perhaps what ideology represses haunts it. Or perhaps, the very rationality of recognizing what has been covered over by political illusion haunts the concept of ideology. Certainly there is an internal oscillation in the concept between what it hides and the possibility of bringing it to light. On the one hand, the concept conjures up images of populations possessed, as if by some spell. Their activity automated, alienated, by some external force, they are entranced by a spirit they do not even recognize. As Sarah Kofman notes in *Camera Obscura*, it is an apparatus of “occultation, which plunges consciousness into darkness, evil and error,” thus rendering “real relationships

ed. Michael Sprinker, trans. Patrica Dailey and Costantino Costantini (New York: Verso, 1999), 5-16]. Derrida’s text, as Pierre Macherey has noted, claims: “Father Marx is Dead: the time has come for him to return to his children, to us, in the form of his ghost or phantom” (Macherey 1999, 17). Thus, one can say that Derrida’s text, is focused on assessing how Marx’s ghost haunts us, continuously returning, demanding that we negotiate our inheritance from Marx, suggesting all the while that deconstruction in one of these inheritors. For example, also in *Ghostly Demarcations*, Terry Eagleton writes in “Marxism without Marx,” that Derrida seems to suggest that “deconstruction was all along a radicalized version of the creed [Marxism]” (Eagleton 1999, 84). Although I am in many senses taking my cue from Derrida, my interest in this language of ghosts specifically concerns not just how to think the phenomenal concept of ideology in Marx, but also how this language indicates and bespeaks of an investment in the rational overcoming of alienation in political philosophy. And while there are many things that will haunt Marx in his texts, the thing that I would like to track is the relationship between appearance and consciousness in ideology.

¹² For historical and theoretical overviews of this concept see: Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1991); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1985); Theodor Adorno, “Beitrag zur Ideologienlehre,” in *Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften, Band 8: Soziologische Schriften, I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 457-477; Christopher L. Pines, *Ideology and False Consciousness: Marxism and his Historical Progenitors* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

elusive and secret” (Kofman 1998, 14). Not recognizing one’s own possession, one very well might wonder how to break the spell or if it can be broken. On the other hand, the concept carries the seeds of its own overcoming, a promise that this spell of ideology can be both recognized and thus broken. Thus, this concept oscillates between entrapment and liberation, between the mesmerizing illusions of politics and the clear-sighted revolutionary break from a wretched state of affairs.¹³ Can reason break this spell? What is the relationship, in other words, between reason and ideology? How might this relationship be defined by the “thing” ideology covers over or reason would reveal? In other words, what is the form of rationality grounding our understanding of political illusion and the promise of its disenchantment?

In this chapter I follow Marx and Adorno’s haunted language, investigating how they constellate the relationships between ideology and rationality. I argue Marx’s account of ideology attempts to dispel political illusion by reorienting the relationship between thought and the world, between subject and object, while simultaneously assuming the form of rationality it seeks to undermine. I then turn to Adorno’s usage of this language to indicate the augmentations he makes to the relationship between thought and object under the spell of political illusion. What we will see, in the end, is that while Marx concentrates on disenchanting political illusion, Adorno argues that the spirit of ideology reflects the thing that appears as no thing, but nonetheless remains something.

¹³ In “The Concept of ‘Critique’ and the ‘Critique of Political Economy,’” Jacques Rancière marks out a similar contradiction in Marx. He argues that that the concepts of “*crisis*” and “*Critique*” come “into contradiction with another conception in Marx—that of the purity of science. The possibility of this science is then linked to a sort of breathing space in history” (Rancière 1989, 176). This contradiction represents the difference between critique and a “radical rupture with the conditions of existence of historical agents” (Rancière 1989, 176). See also Etienne Balibar, “The Vacillation of Ideology,” in *Masses, Classes, and Ideas: Studies in Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), 87-124.

In other words, Adorno's modifications of the relationship between rationality and ideology begin to point us toward the non-identical in political thought, something I suggest might act not only as the point of critique for political thought, but also as the point of demand for a psychoanalytic intervention into political thought.

I. Haunted by Spirits: Marx's Concept of Ideology

To understand the internal oscillations of Marx's concept of ideology, and thus its troubled inheritance in Adorno, we must constellate his discussion of ideology with the concepts of alienation and commodity fetishism. For it is in these discussions that not only does the language of magic, spells, and spirits arise, but also that Marx focuses on how political illusion mediates the relations between thought and world, subject and object. Let us, then, contextualize Marx's discussion of the rationality of ideology in *German Ideology*, which will demand entering the "wilderness of the spirit."

Spirits (*Geister*) and specters (*Gespenster*) abound in Marx's *German Ideology*.¹⁴ This proliferation of these beings disrupting the clean boundaries between space and time, between appearance and absence, bespeak of Marx's clear anxiety in this text—an anxiety of the hunted.¹⁵ In the section entitled "Saint Max," Marx pits himself against a

¹⁴ In *Specters of Marx* Derrida points out the "discreet and subtle" argument that "permits [Marx] to distinguish between spirit and specter. The specter is *of the spirit*, it participates in the latter and stems from it even as it follows it as its ghostly double. The difference between the two is precisely what tends to disappear in the ghost effect, just as the concept of such a difference or the argumentative movement that puts it to work in the rhetoric tends to vanish" (Derrida 1994, 156f.).

¹⁵ In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida positions Marx as giving rise to the chase, the hunt. While Marx does fancy himself a sort of ghost-buster in this text, the question I would like to ask is what is hunting Marx, what is driving Marx into the hunt? In reference to Marx's language in this section, Derrida asks "Why such relentless pursuit? Why this hunt for ghosts? What is the reason for Marx's rage? Why does he harass Stirner with such irresistible irony?" (Derrida 1994, 174). He concludes that it is a "Specular circle: one chases after in order to chase away, on pursues, sets off in pursuit of someone to make him flee, but in

“saintly conjurer [*Der Heilige Esamoteur*]” (CW 5: 149; W 3: 132) who also gives “instruction in the art of spirit-seeing [*Geistersehen*]” (CW 5: 152; W 3: 136). Marx seems keen on exorcising all the different spirits and specters Max Stirner continuously fabricates. Yet, what drives Marx into this furious fit of exorcism? What spell has this magician cast to fabricate the specters [*Gespensterfabrikation*] Marx casts back out (W 3: 138)?

Each attempt at expelling these spirits begins with a barrage of adjectives that concretize the nouns modify. Almost compulsively, Marx writes: “The fact is, therefore, that definite [*bestimmte*] individuals who are productively active in a definite [*bestimmte*] way enter into these definite [*bestimmten*] social and political relations” (CW 5: 35; W 3: 25). Whence all these *Bestimmungen*? Or, again, one can see this when Marx claims one must be a “real [*wirkliche*] individual” at a “definite [*bestimmte*]” moment in development using an “existing [*vorhandene*] language” in order “hear” something (CW 5: 150; W 3: 133). The “real,” the “definite,” the “existing,” each is an adjective lodged against the existence of spirits in “things,” as though by modifying the noun with these terms the “thing” becomes purified or disenchanted. In many senses, these adjectives are counter-spells warding off the unwanted.

Resonating with Plato’s *Parmenides* or *Sophist*, Marx’s concern for this spirit is that it “creates *itself* out of *nothing*, hence it is a question of *nothing*, which *out of nothing* makes itself *spirit* [*dich selbst aus Nichts erschafft*—also *um Nichts, das sich aus Nichts zum Geist schafft*] (CW 5: 149; W 3: 133). It is also a question, of course, of the nature transcendental illusion in Kant, and similar to Kant Marx also seeks to critique this being

making him flee, distances him, expulses him so as to go after him again and remain in pursuit” (Derrida 1994, 175).

that emerges “out” of and “from” this nothing. Marx argues “something is created by something out of something, and by no means comes, as in Hegel’s *Logik*, from nothing, through nothing to nothing [*Etwas von Etwas durch Etwas geschaffen, und Keineswegs, wie in der Hegelschen Logik, von Nichts durch Nichts zu Nichts gekommen*] (CW 5: 150; W 3: 133). This coming “from” and “through” the nothing, will only end by coming “to” nothing, according to Marx; for zero multiplied by anything can only come to zero. To create something out of nothing is no more than magic. To make others believe you can create something from nothing is no more than to put them under a spell. Under the spell, thus, one only sees spirits and ghosts, beings emerging from nothing. Are these the beings the “things” that are haunting Marx? They are surely the object Marx seeks to cast out with his adjectives; they are certainly the symptom of our possession, but what is this “thing,” this thing Marx does not chase down and exorcise, but rather that hunts, and thus haunts him?

What haunts Marx not only in *The German Ideology*, but also in *Capital*, is the spirit of Hegel. More specifically, Marx’s attempt to distinguish the “scientific” nature of dialectic materialism from the dialectics of Hegel haunts the concept of ideology. In the second afterward to *Capital*, Marx claims dialectic materialism is “not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27). He argues Hegel “transforms” the “thought process [*Denkprozeß*]” into “an independent subject” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27, *my translation*). In Hegel, Marx contends, the “idea”—is the “demiurgos of reality, that forms only its external appearance [*der Demiurg des wirklichen, das nur seine äußere Erscheinung bildet*]” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27, *my translation*). It is, quite simply, the creation of some “thing” out of no “thing.” To turn thought into the sole

fabricator of appearance is to create reality from nothing. In contrast, Marx argues there must be some “thing”—the “definite” of materiality—shaping the conscious apprehension of reality outside of consciousness itself. “For me,” Marx writes, “the ideal is nothing else than the material reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought [*Bei mir is umgekehrt das Ideelle nichts anders als das im Menschenkopf umgesetzte und übersetzte Materielle*]” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27). Concepts are only the “reflexes” and “echoes” of the “real,” the “definite” organization of reality, which is the inverse of Hegel’s dialectics (CW 5: 36; W 3: 25). Thus, each time Marx invokes the “definite” and the “real,” each time he exorcises the “spirit” from “things,” he inverts the priority of materiality in thought against Hegel’s spiritualism.¹⁶

In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx takes up this inversion in terms of the relationship between subject and object, a relationship that is essential for understanding both his language of spirits and his concept of ideology. He argues a “being which does have its nature outside of itself is not a *natural* being, and plays no part in the system of nature” (CW 3: 337; W 1: 578). A natural being, for Marx, “suffers” objects (CW 3: 337; W 1: 579). It “creates or posits [*schafft, setzt*] objects” because this being “is posited through objects [*durch Gegenstände gesetzt ist*]” (CW 3: 336; W 1: 578, *translation modified*). What motivates this “natural” being is the fact that “the objects of his instincts [*Triebe*] exist outside of him, as *objects* independent [*unabhängige*] of him; yet these objects are *objects* that he *needs*—essential *objects*”

¹⁶ For a discussion of this relation see: Daniel Brudney, *Marx’s Attempt to Leave Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 278-281.

(CW 3: 336; W 1: 578).¹⁷ A “natural” or “real” being for Marx is “objective” because it is driven to seek objects outside of its being. One’s activity to seek the external object, this thing, reflects the nature of the object sought. Indeed, we are human for Marx in as much as we engage in this creative activity spurred by the external world.

In contrast to this, Marx finds that in Hegel being is self-differentiating because its objects are objects of consciousness. As Marx argues, a “being which has no object outside of itself is not an objective being” and “a non-objective being is a *non-being*” (CW 3: 337; W 1: 578). To be more than an “unreal, non-sensuous [*unwirkliches, unsinnliches*] thing—a product of mere thought,” that is to be an “actual being [*wirklich sein*] means to be an object of sense, to be a *sensuous* object, and thus to have sensuous objects outside oneself—objects of one’s sensuousness. To be sensuous is to *suffer*” (CW 3: 337; W 1: 579). What does not suffer a world outside of itself is not a being. A non-objective being, a being that has only itself for its object is nothing more than a spirit that has been conjured up, capturing, mesmerizing one with its spell. Actual, determined, beings have external objects that send consciousness outside of itself, and material dialectics is the reflection of this externality in one’s thought.¹⁸

¹⁷ Or as Angela Davis writes in “Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation,” for “[a]rmed with their biological powers and drives, living as they do in and through nature, human beings can only survive by acting upon and transforming the material of nature,” and thus the very nature of their being (Davis 1998, 164).

¹⁸ Marx further clarifies this point later in the text when he writes: “For example, superseded being is essence, superseded essence is concept, the concept superseded is... absolute idea. But what, then, is the absolute idea? It supersedes its own self again, if it does not want to perform once more from the beginning the whole act of abstraction, an and to satisfy itself with being a totality of abstractions or the self-comprehending of abstraction. But abstraction comprehending itself as abstraction knows itself to be nothing: it must abandon itself—abandon abstraction—and so it arrives at an entity which is its opposite—at *nature*. Thus, the entire logic is the demonstration that abstract thought is nothing in itself; that the absolute idea is nothing for itself; that only *nature* is something” (CW 3: 343; W 1: 585).

Inverting the relationship between subject and object has more than just epistemological ramifications for Marx. Because Hegel begins from the idea and not the “real” his dialectics are a “mystified [*mystifizierten*]” legitimation of “the existing state of affairs”; whereas the “rational [*rationellen*]” materialist dialectic includes an “affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, and at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up [*seines notwendigen Untergangs einschließt*]” (CW 35: 20; W 23: 27f.). At stake in the difference between this “thing” which comes from nothing and this “thing” that comes from something, is nothing less than the revolutionary possibility of rational thought itself.¹⁹ And this “thing” coming from no “thing,” forms the specter haunting Marx’s concept of ideology.

In the preface to *The German Ideology*, Marx indicates how these spirits justify the existing state of affairs and dominate society. In the preface to this text Marx writes [h]itherto men have always formed false ideas about themselves [*Die Menschen haben sich bisher stets falsche Vorstellungen über sich selbst gemacht*], about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relations according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The products of their heads have grown above their heads [*Die Ausgeburtten ihres Kopfes sind ihnen über den Kopf gewachsen*]. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let

¹⁹ While critical of Hegel in this text, Marx is also polemically arguing against those who consider Hegel a “dead dog” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27). Despite the fact that the dialectic “suffers [*erleidet*]” from a “mystification [*Mystification*]” at the “hands of Hegel,” Marx was nonetheless a “pupil of that mighty thinker” and at times still “flirts [*kokettierte*]” with Hegel’s “modes of expression” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27). Ambivalent in his relationship to Hegel, Marx thus claims, that because the Hegelian dialectic is “standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell” (CW 35: 19; W 23: 27). For more on the relationship between Hegel and Marx see: Joseph McCarney, “‘The Entire Mystery’: Marx’s Understanding of Hegel,” in *Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Andre Chitty and Martin McIvor (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2009), 15-35; Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social theory: Dethroning the Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Tom Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism: The Philosophy of Karl Marx* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away [*Befreien wir sie von den Hirngespinnsten, den Ideen, den Dogmen, den eingebildeten Wesen, unter deren Joch sie verkümmern*]. (CW 5: 23; W 3: 13, *translation modified*)

Similar to the psychoanalytic concept of projection Freud develops at the turn of the twentieth century, ideology, for Marx, describes the appearance of an idea as autonomous in relationship to its “definite” and “real” conditions, which, thus comes to justify the current conditions of that society but also to dominate the society.²⁰ Ideology is the appearance of the idea as separate from the material conditions; it appears as some “thing” conjured out of nothing. For once conjured, these “spirits” quickly instantiate the spell leading one to “pine away” under the dictates of one’s own ideas.²¹ One “pines away” under the “yoke” of these “imaginary beings” and “chimeras,” constantly seeking to appease them, to quell the projections of one’s own mind, to quell the force of one’s own activity. Under the spell of ideology thought becomes “an activity directed against” itself; thinking becomes a form of “*Self-estrangement [Selbstentfremdung]*” conditioning the activity of passive self-domination (CW 3: 275; W 1: 515). *The German Ideology* is Marx’s attempt to break the spell of self-domination by exorcising these spirits, placing them back into their “real” and “definite” home in our heads, and thus under our control.

²⁰ For instance see: *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, SE 13: 64f.; GW 9: 80f.) and “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” (Freud, SE 14: 136f.; GW 10: 228f.)

²¹ Hannah Arendt captures this logic well when she writes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates; it is the logic of an idea” (Arendt 1994, 469). This logic for Arendt is purely deductive. The force of ideology sets into motion the law while assuming a one to one correspondence between the idea and its application. It is an unconditional application, or as Arendt writes “the only possible movement in the realm of logic is the process of deduction from the premise” (Arendt 1994, 469). Since the application of the logic of the idea in the form of law is strictly deductive, Arendt finds that “Ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being,” rather they are concerned with forcibly aligning the world with the idea (Arendt 1994, 469).

It is an attempt to disenchant Hegel's dialectics. What does it mean to break this spell? Where do those spirits belong? And what will this "rational" form of the dialectic tell us about the "definite" material conditions, such that it will also tell us about the necessity of its dissolution?

For Marx, our alienation from the products of our thought can only be the reflection of an alienation produced in the material organization of society. Whereas, for Hegel, "[a]ll alienation of the human being is therefore nothing but *alienation of self-consciousness*"; for Marx this alienation is not conjured from nothing, but results from some "thing," a "real [*wirklichen*] alienation" (CW 3: 334; W 1: 575, *translation modified*). For if consciousness is not the reflection of reality but the "demiurgos" of reality, then if alienation exists it is "nothing but the *manifestation* of alienation of the real human essence, of *self-consciousness*" (CW 3: 334; W 1: 576). For Marx, this naturalization of alienation is the naturalization of material contradictions produced by society.²² To naturalize this alienation is nothing other than to naturalize the material conditions, which in reality determine the "definite" conditions of our alienation. Thus, for Marx, one must look to the material organization of society in order to reveal the "thing" that is our alienation.

This material organization of society is the mode of production in a given society, for Marx. Under the capitalist modes of production the worker must sell his or her life, his or her "real" laboring activity in the world, "piecemeal" to the owners of the means of

²² In *Dialectics of Labor: Marx and his Relation to Hegel*, C. J. Arthur puts it nicely when he argues the sticking point for Marx is the fact that Hegel "insists that estrangement can be overcome precisely when self-consciousness appropriates objectivity and finds itself at home in this its other. This is achieved when spirit understands that the object is nothing but its own self-alienation" (Arthur 1986, 73). If this estrangement is the product of the modes of production then to "be at home" with this estrangement is to reconcile one self to the modes of production in society. This reconciliation seems to be the driving point of Marx's distinction from Hegel.

production for a price less than what the labor itself produces (CW 9: 198). Only under these “definite” circumstances would the object of one’s labor, similar to the ideas one produces, confront one as a perversely autonomous being demanding subservience. In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx explains alienation as the confrontation between the worker and his or her object of production. Marx argues since the activity, products, and value of the object the worker produces do not belong to him or her, “the worker is related to the *product of his labor* as to an *alien object* [*fremden Gegenstand*]” under the material conditions of capital (CW 3: 272; W 1: 512). More specifically, Marx explains the relationship between subject and object under the conditions of capital as follows:

[t]he *alienation* [Entäußerung] of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien. (CW 3: 272; W 1: 512)

The products of labor, much like Marx’s account of the spell of “imaginary beings” in *The German Ideology*, confront workers as something external and disconnected from them despite the fact it is a product they have created. In a system of alienated labor the product appears as autonomous to the producer setting up an inverse relationship between the worker and the products of the worker’s labor. If the objects we seek and the objects we produce impress themselves on our consciousness, and if we are alienated from these objects, then we will also be alienated from our own consciousness. Simply put, the more the worker produces, the more the worker externalizes activity under the conditions of

alienated labor, the more the worker becomes not only severed from his or her life process, but also his or her conscious reflection of the world. Materially, the more riches the worker produces the poorer the worker becomes; the more life activity the worker exerts for another the more life activity the worker loses and the more another gains.²³ Or as Marx writes, “The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object” (CW 3: 272; W 1: 512).²⁴

Capitalism, for Marx, operates by alienating us from our activity, which consequently affects the structure of our thought. The objects of our labor, like the objects of our thought, become autonomous, self-standing things demanding subservience. If our ideas are merely the “reflexes” and “echoes” of our material activity, and if these activities are structured by a capitalist mode of production that alienates one from activity, then the very structure of alienation in thought—i.e. ideology—must be the displaced schema of alienated labor (CW 5: 36; W 3: 26). Or in other words, if ideology is the displaced schema of alienated labor, then this must mean we do not recognize the reflection of our own labor in the products we produce, we do not recognize what Marx would call our “real” or “determinate” “objectivity.” Thus ideology must be the misrecognition of one’s activity reflected in the object of one’s own labor. The misrecognition of the reflection of our creative activities in the pursuit of objects is the ballast for unhinging market activity from use value and attaching it to the floating

²³ Or as Marx writes production “appears as a *loss of reality* for the worker, objectification as *loss and bondage to the object*, and appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation* [*die Vergegenständlichung als Verlust und Knechtschaft des Gegenstandes, die Aneignung als Entfremdung, als Entäußerung*]” (CW 3: 272; W 1: 512).

²⁴ In *Critique, Norm and Utopia* Selya Benhabib puts it nicely: “For Marx as well, objectification is an activity through which what is inner becomes outer and external. The purpose of the activity is to adequate embodiment and expression to the potentialities of the individual” (Benhabib 1986, 55).

signifier of exchange for Marx. In other words the logic of alienated labor grounding the modes of production under capital is the sine qua non of capitalism.

The structural expression of this alienation is found in commodity fetishism's valuation of the worker's product. This highlights not only the alienation of subject from the production of objects, but also how this alienation affects the appearance of those objects on the global market. In the first volume of *Capital* Marx argues that the appearance of the commodity is structured by the alienation of the worker. At first, he writes, a commodity appears as "obvious, trivial thing [*selbstverständliches, triviales Ding*]" but becomes "dodgy" or "complicated" when one takes a closer look at it (CW 35: 81; W 23: 85, *my translation*). It is a "complicated" thing because, on one hand, it has a use-value attached to the labor that produced it. "The form of wood, for instance" Marx writes, "is altered, by making a table out of it" (CW 35: 81f.; W 23: 85). Although transformed through both formal and material causes it "[n]onetheless remains a wooden table, an ordinary sensible thing [*sinnliches Ding*]" (CW 35: 82; W 23: 85, *my translation*). On the other hand, this "thing," also bears an exchange value obfuscating its use-value and, thus, the labor that produced it. As Marx writes:

[b]ut once it emerges [*auftritt*] as a commodity, it changes itself into a sensuously supersensible thing [*sinnlich übersinnliches Ding*].²⁵ It stands [*steht*] not only with its feet on the ground, but also positions itself [*stellt sich*] against all other commodities at its head and develops out of its wooden-head whims [*Holzkopf Grillen*] more fantastical [*wunderlicher*] things than if it were to begin to dance

²⁵ This is Derrida's translation of *sinnlich übersinnliches Ding* from *Specters of Marx*. See: (Derrida 1994, 189).

from its freewill [*aus freien Stücken*]. (CW 35: 82; W 23: 85, *my translation*)²⁶

The appearance of the product as it steps out onto the stage of the market of global capitalism as a commodity is both *sinnlich* and *übersinnlich*; it is both sensible and supersensible. The table itself is sensible. It is a thing one can touch feel, indeed, use. Although this “real” part of the table has its “feet on the ground,” rooted as it is in “determinate” materiality and use, its head, higher up and thus farther away from “determinate” materiality, participates in another form of valuation. It *stellt sich*, positions itself, at its head against the other heads of other sensuously supersensible things. And it is from this positioning, this comparative balancing against other commodities that the “real” table begins to dance. Surely a séance is at hand, a “spiritualist séance” as Derrida is quick to remind us in *Specters of Marx* (Derrida 1994, 189).²⁷

Of course, this séance is a metaphor; but it is a serious one nonetheless. The “dead”

²⁶ The full text reads: “Aber sobald er *als Ware* auftritt, verwandelt er sich in ein sinnlich übersinnliches Ding. Er steht nicht nur mit seinen Füßen auf dem Boden, sondern er stellt sich allen andren Waren gegenüber auf den Kopf und entwickelt aus seinem Holzkopf Grillen, viel wunderlicher, als wenn er aus freien Stücken zu tanzen begänne.” The two other standard translations of this are as follows. The *Collected Works* translates this as “But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than “table-turning” ever was” (CW 35: 82). And the Penguin edition translates it as: “But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own freewill” (Marx 1977, 163f.).

²⁷ This ritual, this calling forth, as the editors of *Capital* in *The Collected Works of Marx and Engels* note “was the rage among the European Aristocracy” after the “defeat of the 1848-49 revolutions” (CW 35: 771, fn. 66). The image Marx draws for us in explaining the mystical character of the commodity is thus: The aristocracy sits around a table, perhaps holding hands. The candles are lit. The table moves. They pause. They still do not believe, but they concentrate more. If nothing else, it is entertaining. This time the table shakes. They feel a little anxious. Things fall of the table; the table is now dancing on its own. They believe. Surely this is the sign of spirits, of ghosts they have called forth through their efforts. Or, perhaps as Marx notes, it is *Zauber und Spuk*, or what has been translated as “magic and necromancy”—a spell raising the dead. In raising the table they have raised spirits. It is the raising of something from no “thing.”

wood coming alive is the replacement of use value with exchange value. The abstraction of exchange value replaces use value. For the *übersinnliche* quality of the commodity, the exchange value, endows the table with a value formed by its relationships to other tables, other commodities. In the abstraction of exchange value, the “real” labor that transformed the raw material into the now “mystical character [*mystische Charakter*]” of the commodity becomes covered over, making it appear as though the exchange value and its fluctuations are a natural characteristic of the commodity itself (CW 35: 82; W 23: 85). The table does shake, the markets do move in accordance with ups and downs of exchange. But for Marx, as we have seen, the table can only shake from something just as the movement of the markets must too be anchored in something, and to believe that it shakes from nothing, just as one might believe that the exchange value of the commodity emerges on its own, is to fall under a spell. But what is this spell making tables dance by uprooting that part of the commodity with its “feet on the ground”?

Separated from the labor producing it, and appearing as a self-standing, autonomous object for exchange, the commodity takes on the form of the fetish because it appears to be the bearer of its own value. As Marx famously analogizes, just as in the “misty realm of religion,”²⁸

[...] the productions of the human brain appear [*scheinen*] as independent figures [*stehende selbständige Gestalten*] endowed with a life and entering into relations both with one another and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. I call this the fetishism which

²⁸ For an analysis of the ideological nature of commodity fetishism in Marx in relation to religious fetishism see: Christopher L. Pines, *Ideology and False Consciousness: Marxism and his Historical Progenitors* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 147-152; Arthur Ripstein, “Commodity Fetishism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (Dec. 1987): 773-748.

attaches itself to the products of labour so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (Marx, CW 35: 83; W 23: 86)²⁹

The commodity becomes a fetish when it appears as independent of its creators, and thus as a self-standing figure supported by a logic that appears to be natural. In its transformation from product to commodity, in its movement from alienated production to self-standing thing, the commodity conceals the social relationships composing the modes of production beneath the veneer of the symbolic relationship it has come to acquire between things, between commodities ruled by the movements in their exchange value. Now independent of its material conditions, Marx claims the “social character of [the workers’] own labor is reflected back to them as an objective character of the products of labor [*die gesellschaftlichen Charaktere ihrer eigenen Arbeit als gegenständliche Charaktere der Arbeitsprodukte selbst...zurückspieglet*]” (CW 35: 83; W 23: 86, *my translation*).³⁰ At this moment of reflection, the worker comes face to face

²⁹ Marx makes a similar claim in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. There he writes that: “The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien [*Die Entäußerung des Arbeiters in seinem Produkt hat die Bedeutung, nicht nur, daß seine Arbeit zu einem Gegenstand, zu einer äußern Existenz wird, sondern daß sie außer ihm, unabhängig, fremd von ihm existiert und eine selbständige Macht ihm gegenüber wird, daß das Leben, was er dem Gegenstand verliehen hat, ihm feindlich und fremd gegenübertritt.*]” (CW 3: 272; W 1: 512).

³⁰ The problem with the standard translation is that it misconstrues the fundamental element of the commodity fetish. Whereas the standard translation claims that the relationships of labor are “stamped” into the commodity, when one looks at the German one finds these relations are not “stamped” into the commodity, but rather “reflected back to [*zurückspieglet*]” the workers as an objective character of the commodity. The full lines in the *Collected Works* and the *Werke* are as follows: “A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor [*Das Geheimnisvolle der Warenform besteht also einfach darin, daß sie den Menschen die gesellschaftlichen Charaktere ihrer eigenen Arbeit als gegenständliche Charaktere der*

with the externalization of his or her labor and does not recognize it as belonging to him or her, but rather as an objective characteristic belonging solely to the commodity. It is misrecognition. The object appears as autonomous by virtue of this distorted reflecting back to the worker, by virtue of converting the reality of his or her activity into the denied ground of the product's seeming "autonomy." In this reflecting back the worker not only does not recognize his or her own labor in the products of his or her activity, but moreover the worker faces this labor as never having belonged to him or her. Indeed, this is the commodity's "mysterious [*Geheimnisvolle*]" nature (CW 35: 82; W 23: 86).

Separated from the labor producing it, raised up and fetishized, the commodity participates in a market moved by the fluctuations of exchange value. Exchange value abstracts away the particularities of the commodity, including the real labor producing it. Exchange value is a system of signification denoting commodities under the universal sign of gold or money. The exchangeability of products can only occur through the obfuscation of their particularities. Giving the products a value attached not to their production or use, but rather to other commodities triangulated by a universal value, gold, obscures the value of the labor producing the products, thus erasing any differences between the products and its material conditions. In other words, the commodity enters into a symbolic relationship that can equate "two ounces of gold" with "one ton of iron," despite the fact that more labor and time went into mining one ton of iron than two ounces of gold (CW 35: 85; W 23: 89). The product can only take on the value of the commodity, that is the abstracted symbolic function allowing it to be exchanged for other things, by obscuring its material conditions—the labor, time, and social relationships in

Arbeitsprodukte selbst, als gesellschaftliche Natureigenschaften dieser Dinge zurückspegelt, daher auch das gesellschaftliche Verhältnis der Produzenten zur Gesamtarbeit als ein außer ihnen existierendes gesellschaftliches Verhältnis von Gegenständen] (CW 35: 83; W 23: 86).

the act of its production.

As the commodity bears this new value through symbolic acts of exchange with other products, according to Marx, it appears to have “absolutely no connection with their physical properties and the material relations arising out of this” (CW 35: 83; W 23: 86). Or as Georg Lukács has noted in *History and Class Consciousness* the commodity fetish takes on a “‘phantom objectivity’, an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (Lukács 1971, 83). Its appearance as a commodity is simultaneously a concealment of the material relations of labor that actually produce the commodity.³¹ When the “proportions” of value set in exchange “appear [*scheinen*] to spring [*entspringen*] from the nature of the products” themselves, then one must move from spirits to the entrapment of spirit in the object, that is to say to the fetish (CW 35: 85; W 23: 89). Instead of viewing the value of the commodity as the “*material husks of homogenous human labor [sachliche Hüllen gleichartig menschlicher Arbeit]*,” one “inversely” begins by “equating different products to one another as values” which thus differentiates the value of human labor (CW 35: 84f.; W 23: 88, *my translation*).

The spell of fetishistic exchange begins with an abstracted idea that orients the material organization of the society. Instead of anchoring the value of the commodity form in its “real” and “definite” conditions for the production of the commodity and then proceeding to its abstraction, the spell of fetishistic exchange value begins with the

³¹ “*Political economy conceals [verbirgt] the estrangement in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production.* It is true that labour produces marvels for the rich, but it produces privation for the worker. It produces palaces, but hovels for the worker. It produces beauty, but deformity for the worker. It replaces labour by machines, but casts some of the workers back into barbarous forms of labour and turns others into machines” (CW 3: 273; W 1: 513).

abstraction of the commodity and proceeds to the material conditions. In other words, exchange value begins from the no “thing” of abstraction and conjures up the something of value; it is, simply the raising of spirits.³² As Sarah Kofman writes in *Camera Obscura*, the “idea is a reflection cut off from its source, henceforth unable to engender anything but reflections of reflections, simulacra, fetishes” (Kofman 1998, 4). For once you attach the value to this spirit, the market appears to dance and move as an autonomous thing. Once the value of the commodity is only found in its reference to other commodities, then “their own social movement possesses for them the form of the movement of things, beneath whose control they stand, instead of them controlling it” (CW 35: 85; W 23: 89). Like the table that dances, when the value of the commodity becomes fetishized, the market based on the exchange of these fetishes appears to dance on its own; it appears to move beyond human will and volition. Indeed the movement of the market, just like the movement of the table, is the sign of spirits or the laws of nature, of some transcendent force, an idea, not an object, that humans must suffer. Marx wants to expel this spiritual dancing of both tables and markets with the “real,” the “definite,” nature of a scientific materialist dialectics. For under the spell of the fetishized value of the market we dominate ourselves, but do not know it; “*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*”—this is the spirit of ideology (W 23: 88).³³

³² Here we note the difference between Marx’s concept of fetishism and Freud’s concept of fetishism. While both thinkers use fetishism to describe a resistance to representative thinking present in the “modern” world, the manner in which the representational function of thought is denied occurs in exactly converse ways. For Freud, thought denies the signifier, or concept, by focusing on the material object that is associated with that idea. In direct contrast for Marx, fetishism represents the erasure of the signified by the signifier, or the eclipse of the materiality of the concept by the concept itself.

³³ Slavoj Žižek argues, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, that when Marx writes “they do not know it, but they are doing it” in *Capital*, the problem is not strictly epistemological, i.e., that a society’s knowledge of its own activities is false and thus needs to be corrected by the science of a materialist political economy. And I would suggest that Marx’s concept of ideology means more than just shifting the notion of falsity

As we have seen, Ideology in, Marx's texts, produces spirits. It is the creation of some "thing," a market, the movement of a table, or value, from nothing. It begins with the concept and shapes the appearance of social relationships in light of that concept. Marx wants to exorcise these spirits, to expose the knee shaking the table from below. To do this he turns thought back to the thing, its "real" object. Since concepts do not give us objects, but rather our objects give us concepts, Marx's appeal to the "real" and the "definite" is an appeal to the thing orienting our concepts themselves. It is a reversal. For when one disenchant the table, when one exorcises the fetishistic value haunting the commodity, one can see that it is only in a world in which we have convinced ourselves that the products of our own hands belong to another, that could we convince ourselves that the products of thought are external and autonomous. Beginning with the idea, the appearance of the world can only reflect that idea. In other words in Marx's conception of ideology, there is some "thing," something that can be known, recognized, and understood, hidden behind the violent abstraction of exchange. All one need, Marx finds is to do is to reverse the standpoint of knowing itself, to reverse the dialectic to expose the "determinate" and real state of affairs. The idea, it seems, is that if one begins with something—if one begins from the world and not the concept—then thought will lead to the necessary negation of "real" state of affairs. For as Lukács writes in *History and Class Consciousness*, the essence of all Marxism lies in the fact that the "[m]aterialist

from the "knowing" to the "doing" as Žižek claims in that text, such that a society knows the truth but acts otherwise. Yet, it seems that ideology seems to emerge from the dislocating alienation from thought, activities, and relationships. In other words, ideology has less to do with truth, than it does the phenomenological relation between subject and object.

dialectic is a revolutionary dialectic” (Lukács 1971, 2).³⁴ Here, we finally come to what haunts Marx, to what chases him and hunts him into his furious fit of exorcism. What haunts Marx is the spirit behind the revolutionary potential of the science of materialist dialectics—Hegel.

Consciousness begins with something, for Marx. As we saw, the human “suffers” objects. In fact, the human not only suffers objects, but is also constituted by these external objects. Consciousness is sent out of itself by the human need to attain external objects that will sate this need. I am tempted to say that for Marx, as for Freud in *The Ego and Id*, the imprint of one’s attachment to these objects forms consciousness.³⁵ As we have seen, Marx argues that under the conditions of capitalism alienation constitutes our relationship to the objects impressing themselves upon us. Our thought, and thus our very being, is also alienated. If one starts from the side of the object in the materialist dialectic, if one begins with some “thing,” and if our relationship to this “thing” is one of alienated activity, then not only is our thought itself alienated, but the very kernel of our being is one of alienation as well. In other words if the schema of our activity is founded in the contradictions of capital, then where does the logic of non-contradiction, the logic that keeps the dialectic moving, emerge? Thrown into the “real” and “definite” conditions of alienation, how can we help but be alienated? Yet, nonetheless, in Marx, from this something a nothing arises, the impending thought of overcoming these conditions of alienation.

³⁴ See also: Richard Schacht, “Marxism, Normative Theory, and Alienation,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 565-580.

³⁵ In *The Ego and the Id* Freud argues that “in the early phases of development” we can “suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices” (SE 19: 29; GW 13: 257).

Marx does not want this overcoming to emerge from no “thing.” It cannot arise from some pre-existing subject or rationality. Rather, as we saw in our reading of *Capital*, the “scandal and abomination” of the “rational” form of the dialectic lies in the fact that it contains both “the affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, and at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up” (CW 35: 20; W 23: 27). The nothing that will take over the something here does not begin with the concept or the idea. Rather, it is because the material conditions of capital, specifically found in our alienation to the objects of our production, contain an inherent contradiction, that the “echoes” and “reflexes” of this object in our consciousness also contain this contradiction. Because thought begins with something, and because this something is contradictory, our thought itself should be contradictory. That is to say, our thought should be based on the logic of contradiction and not the logic of non-contradiction. If our thought were based on the logic of contradiction, then from where would it get the ability to recognize contradiction? From where would it get the ability to operate on the logic of non-contradiction, the very logic that would not only name the difference of alienation as contradiction, but also demand the overcoming of contradiction itself? Furthermore, and this seems to be the place where another, more problematic spirit arises, it is because the impression of the material conditions is contradictory, that we not only “recognize” the existing state of affairs as contradictory, but therefore can also “recognize” its negation, its necessary, “inevitable,” negation.

Are not both of these recognitions conjured? In arguing that one can recognize a contradiction, and thus the negation, or overcoming of that contradiction, have we not just conjured something, a recognition, from nothing, the necessary presupposition of

both a non-alienated subject and rationality? Hegel haunts Marx because he cannot overcome Hegel.

Let me be clear. If humans “suffer” objects and if this suffering propels the formation of their conscious recognition of the world, and thus thought itself, then if the human’s relation to these objects were structured by a separation from these objects, then this would not be alienation from thought, ideas, or humanness—it would just be the type of creatures humans are. From what would one be alienated, if not a presupposed wholeness or naturalness that would, essentially be, according to Marx, no “thing” at all? And when we talk about recognizing the contradiction of the material conditions because these conditions form thought are we not creating some “thing” from nothing? Have we not just conjured the spirit of the human outside of alienation? From where do we recognize this contradiction? From what standpoint? Certainly not from the standpoint of materialism. For if we actually played out this materialism, we would not end in the second recognition, the recognition of negating the current state of affairs, but we would rather end in the inability to even recognize the contradiction, that is to say a state of disavowal. In this state reason would not, could not, be constituted by an intolerance of the logic of non-contradiction—that force that would propel thought to recognize and then exorcise contradictions and alienation—but rather rationality would be constituted by contradiction, and would thus remain the unnamed motor from which consciousness emerges.

When Marx seeks the “real” and the “definite,” he seeks to overturn the priority of the concept in the Hegelian dialectic, yet he fails to overturn the dialectic itself. A

spirit that cannot forebear contradiction propels the dialectic.³⁶ Even if one exorcises these “things” that come from no “thing,” with the “real” material objects that impress themselves on consciousness, in as much as this relationship contains a recognition of the contradiction, which propels it to overcome this contradiction, the dialectic will still retain a trace of the spirit, despite its appeal to the “real” which acts as the critique of ideological illusion. Thus, the dialectic remains haunted, perhaps not only by rationality, but one might say a desire for rationality to deliver us from the very same suffering we inflict on our selves.³⁷ As Abraham and Torok write in “‘The Lost object—me’: Notes on Endocryptic Identification”: “Who among us is not battling with specters that implore Heaven and demand of us their due, while we are beholden to them for our own salvation?” (Abraham and Torok 1994a, 139f.).

II. The Spell of Ideology: Adorno and Kantian Schema

The language of “spells” and “conjuring,” indeed “bewitchment” and “fetishes,” permeates Adorno’s discussion of ideology. As with Marx, who attempts to disenchant thought by reorienting the priority of the object in the dialectic, so too will Adorno approach the spell of ideology by reorienting the dialectic. He too is disturbed by the ideological conjuring of something from nothing; after all, as he writes in *Minima Moralia*: “[n]o spirit is there [*Kein Geist ist da*]” (MM 260; GS 4: 151). While this

³⁶ For Marx’s relationship to the logic of non-contradiction in the Hegelian dialectic see: Lawrence Wilde, “Logic: Dialectic and Contradiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 275-295; Wendy Brown, “Logics of Power in Marx,” *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 225-234.

³⁷ ND in introduction, it s in greek: That which has wounded will heal.

language is inherited from Marx, Adorno's language of bewitchment takes a different turn, for it is rooted in the dialectical struggle between reason and magic outlined in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Given Adorno's concern for the development of an enlightenment science grounded in domination, it is of no surprise that he remains wary of the "scientific" tendencies of dialectical materialism.³⁸ For what would stop Marx's material dialectics from aligning with a form of reason that has become automated, fetishistically material, and brutal, indeed a form of logical positivism?³⁹

Nowhere is this concern more evident than in the difference between Adorno and Marx's conceptualization of the "real" to which thought must turn in order to critique ideology's slow march toward destruction. For a form of reason that seeks to uncover the "real," to grasp its totality with the power of thought, must do so by expelling myth from thought. Scientific rationality, Adorno and Horkheimer argue is "protected within the departments of science from the dreams of a spirit-seer [*Geistersehers*]" and it "has to pay the price: world domination [*Weltherrschaft*] over nature turns against the thinking

³⁸ In *Critical theory, Marxism and Modernity*, Douglas Kellner sums up this distinction when he writes that while both Adorno and Horkheimer "extended their critique of fascism and capitalism, they distanced themselves from the Marxian Theory of history and critique of political economy, subordinated science and politics to philosophy, and tended to make the domination of nature the fulcrum of their analysis, rather than such classical Marxian themes as political economy, social relations, class struggle, or the transition to socialism" (Kellner 1989, 83). See also: David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), chapter two.

³⁹ In "Reification and the Nonidentical: On the Problem of Nature in Lukács and Adorno" Steven Vogel takes Adorno and Lukács as exemplary models of this tension, a tension which he claims besets the whole tradition of Marxism (Vogel 1996, 254). See also Martin Jay's *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a concept from Lukács to Habermas*. In a chapter entitled "Adorno and the Lukácsian Concept of Totality," Jay also takes up the tension between Adorno and Lukács. Jay argues Adorno positioned himself against a scientific Marxism and the concept of a real totality that emerges with it. Instead of this concept of the real or totality, Jay argues "The nonidentical constellations that he claimed were the representation of truth contained irreducible moments of objectivity that resisted subsumption under the subject" (Jay 1984, 269). For a discussion of the history of the concept of alienation and reification beginning with Hegel and ending with Lukács see: Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), chapter three; Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx and the Sources of Critical Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981).

subject itself” (DE 20; GS 3: 43).⁴⁰ Thought protected from conjurers and spirit-seers turns in on itself, turns back on the subject; the domination and disenchantment of nature in science leads only to the subjugation of the subject and its forms of thought. If Adorno is concerned with rationality compulsively divesting the “real” of spirit, yet still employs the language of the “spell” and “bewitchment” to describe ideology, then what he means by the real must be qualitatively different than Marx. In as much as Adorno differs from Marx on what the spell of ideology is, then so too will he his concept of critique differ from Marx’s.

In this section I argue that while Adorno will struggle with Hegel in ways similar to Marx—or Idealism more broadly—he will distance himself from the tendencies in the Marxist dialectic that attempt to exorcise spirit through its compulsive convocations of the “real,” the “actual,” the “determined.” And while Adorno, too, will believe that the creation of something from no “thing” is magic, he will argue these conjured beings still reflect something real. As a result, he argues critique must be oriented toward the non-identical of rationality, i.e., the Kantian “in-itself” which both represents the liberation of the object from the subject, while simultaneously shaping the contours of the subject’s thought. And it will be this shift, from the “real” to the “non-identical” that will offer us a direction that is helpful in beginning to locate what the framework of a psychoanalytic critique of political reason. In order to demonstrate the full value of this shift from the real to the non-identical we must take up Adorno’s relationship to Kant, and specifically

⁴⁰ This distinction will come down to how each thinker understands the real. In the “Actuality and Philosophy” Adorno states quite clearly that there is no totality of the real that thought can grasp. He writes that “Whoever chooses philosophy as a profession today must first reject the illusion that earlier philosophical enterprises began with: that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real. No Justifying reason could rediscover itself in a reality whose order and form suppresses every claim to reason” (Adorno 1977, 120; GS 1: 325).

the role of the transcendental schematism in thought. Yet, before we can turn to Kant, we must first take up Adorno's relationship to spirit, and thus Marx and Hegel. Again, we must return to the "wilderness of the spirit," but perhaps this time it will be a different wilderness.

In many ways, in *Negative Dialectics* Adorno makes the same theoretical moves Marx does in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. As we saw, in this text Marx argues thought, indeed consciousness itself, emerges from the impression of external objects. Marx's dialectic does not begin with the thought processes grasping the object as a reflection of itself. Objects are not merely the reflection of conscious structures. Rather, Marx's material dialectic begins by claiming objects impress themselves on thought. In other words, something—concepts—must come from some "thing," "real" and "definite" objects or social relations. And this is also the case for Adorno.

Just as Marx argues the contradictions forming, and propelling, thought itself are not endemic to thought itself, but rather the reflection of "definite" material social conditions, so too Adorno argues the contradictions forming the basis of thought are rooted in "a most real, antagonistic system in itself [*höchst real, antagonistisches System*]" (ND 10; GS 6: 22, *translation modified*). Thus, when the "knowing subject" "rediscovers itself" in the reflection of the "real" of material contradiction, what the subject finds is not necessarily the processes of thought reconfirmed in its relation to the object, but rather the impressions of the "real" on the structures of its thought. Faced with the "knowing subject's" "rediscovery" of itself through its relationship to the material contradictions that shape it, Adorno argues:

[t]he state of obsessively gripping reality [*Die zwangshafte Verfassung der Realität*], which idealism had projected onto the region of the subject and the mind [*Subjekt und Geist*], must be retranslated [*zurückzuübersetzen*] from that region. (ND 10; GS 6: 22, *translation modified*)

In this sense, for Adorno the forms of thought grasping and presenting objects to the subject are structured in advance by the material conditions the subject finds itself in. The task of thought is not to solely recognize its universal functions in the reflection of the object, but rather is to “retranslate” these forms of thought back into the material conditions of which they are a reflection. Much like Marx, who will claim that Hegel misrecognizes the source of alienation in the subject’s dialectical relationship to the object, Adorno too will claim that we must translate this “state of obsessively gripping reality” back into the material conditions that produce this structure, or even desire, of thought itself. In light of this Adorno argues dialectical thought represents “the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither system nor contradiction” (ND 11; GS 6: 22).

Despite Adorno’s affinity to Marx, Susan Buck-Morss has noted in *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, Adorno’s engagement with identity critique is not strictly Marxist (Buck-Morss 1977, 24). While Buck-Morss locates this difference in the fact that Adorno never included a theory of political action,” I think we can also articulate this difference in each thinker’s understanding of spirit (Buck-Morss 1977, 24). As we saw, for Marx, spirit begins with nothing and creates something. It is an empty being with no ground and thus no truth. In contrast to Marx, the illusion arising from nothing is simultaneously real and unreal for Adorno. “[H]idden” in identity, he argues, there is “a truth moment of

ideology” (ND 149; GS 6: 152). Every spirit reflects what is. The bewitchment of the subject by these spirits is both “true, because it forms that ‘ether’ which Hegel calls spirit; untrue, because its reason is not reason yet, because its universality is the product of particular interests” (ND 10f.; GS 6: 22). On the one hand, spirit is the residue of the historical constellation organizing the material conditions of society. Yet, on the other hand, these forms of thought are not universal; they do not correspond with the promise of thought because they are no more than the result of a particular historical organization.⁴¹ Spirit is both true and untrue—a claim surpassing the logic of the excluded middle.⁴²

If thought reflects both the truth and untruth of society, it is necessary, Adorno argues, to tweak the Marxist inversion of Hegelian dialectics. The dialectic cannot begin with consciousness grasping the object, as with Hegel. It also cannot simply begin with the object impressing itself on consciousness, as with Marx, because “[n]o object is wholly known” (ND 14; GS 6: 25).⁴³ Since objects, for Adorno, “do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder” one must begin with that part of the object that

⁴¹ Adorno also makes this point in *Minima Moralia* when he writes “[s]uperstition is knowledge, because it see together the ciphers of destruction scattered on the social surface; it is folly, because in all its death-wish [*Todestrieb*] it still clings to illusions: expecting from the transfigured shape of society misplaced in the skies an answer that only a study of real society can give” (MM 257; GS 4: 274).

⁴² For Adorno’s relationship to Hegel on the truth and falsity of spirit see: Ute Guzzoni, “Hegel’s Untruth: Some Remarks on Adorno’s Critique of Hegel,” in *Theodor W. Adorno: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol. I*, ed. Simon Jarvis (New York: Routledge, 2007), 84-89; Fred Dallmayr, “The Politics of Non-Identity: Adorno, Postmodernism—and Edward Said,” *Political Theory* 25 (1997): 33-56; and Gillian Rose, “From Speculative to Dialectical Reason,” *Theodor W. Adorno: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory: Vol. IV*, ed. Simon Jarvis (New York: Routledge, 2007), 137-146.

⁴³ In the section entitled “Passage to Materialism” in *Negative Dialectics* Adorno writes “[i]t is by passing to the object’s precedence [*Vorrang*] that dialectics becomes [*Wird*] materialistic” (ND: 192; GS 6: 193, *translation modified*). Deborah Cook discusses this passage in relationship to Hegel and Marx in “Adorno’s Critical Materialism,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 32 (2006): 719-737.

escapes consciousness (ND 5; GS 6: 17). In other words, one must orient the relationship between subject and object toward neither the subject nor the object, but rather to the non-identical, the third escaping both the subject and the appearance of the object.⁴⁴ This reorientation shifts the “direction of conceptuality” toward that “thing” which does not appear, but remains “real” nonetheless (ND 12; GS 6: 24). The shift toward non-identity is neither dialectics nor dialectical materialism, but rather “negative dialectics,” for Adorno (ND 12; GS 6: 24).⁴⁵ This form of dialectics moves away from the “real” of the Marx’s dialectic, and thus from the “spirit” of Marx’s ideology critique, by turning, as we will see, back to Kant.

Yet, before we get to Kant it is important to note that reorienting the dialectic toward the non-identical demands that we begin with the truth of illusion. If, unlike Marx’s concept of spirit, for Adorno spirit is both true and false, then what is the content of its truth and falsity? That is to say, if the spell for Marx explains ideology as the belief in the emergence of something from nothing—a belief which is false—then what is the spell of ideology if it is the emergence of something from a nothing which is still remains some “thing”?

⁴⁴See: Susan Buck-Morss, “The Dialectic of T.W. Adorno,” *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Theory* 14 (Winter 1972): 137-144.

⁴⁵ See: Anke Thyen, “Dimensions of the Non-Identical,” in *Theodor W. Adorno: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol. I*, ed. Simon Jarvis (New York: Routledge, 2007), 199-220; Simon Jarvis, “The Coastline of Experience: Materialism and Metaphysics in Adorno,” in *Theodor W. Adorno: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol. III*, ed. Simon Jarvis (New York: Routledge, 2007), 246-264; Michael Theunissen, “Negativity in Adorno,” in *Theodor W. Adorno: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol. I*, ed. Simon Jarvis (New York: Routledge, 2007), 178-197; Deborah Cook, “Adorno, Ideology, and Ideology Critique,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 27 (2001): 1-20; Deborah Cook, “Adorno’s Critical Materialism,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 32 (2006): 719-737; Simon Jarvis, “Adorno, Marx, Materialism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. Tom Huhn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 79-100; Kathleen League, *Adorno, Radical Negativity, and Cultural Critique: Utopia in the Map of the World* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011).

Negative Dialectics is one of the few places where Adorno explicitly discusses the spell as ideology. The “spell,” Adorno claims, is the “subjective form of the world spirit” (ND: 344; GS 6: 337). In this sense it describes the dialectical relationship between the individual and world spirit, the particular and the universal, this moment and the weight of history. It describes the traces and imprints of the objective as the subjective emerges from its dialectical relationship to it. To be under a spell is to be possessed by the “most conditioned [*allerbedingtesten*] spirit of those who have it and cannot even know how much it is their own” (ND 10: GS 6: 22). The individual, thus, emerges from and is imprinted by objective and material conditions in ways that remain pre-reflective and unconscious.⁴⁶ For Adorno, the current world spirit is defined by the technical rationality of industrial capitalism. Thus, it should be of no surprise that for Adorno the spell grasping the subject is “equivalent of the fetish character of the commodity [*Ware*]. The self-made thing becomes a thing-in-itself, from which the self cannot escape any more” (ND: 346; GS 6: 339, *translation modified*). The very same logic of exchange underwriting the market supports our understanding of self. In as much as commodities appear as an independent entity so too do individuals. We inflect our experience of ourselves and the world through the commodity’s metaphysical logic. As a result we imprison both the world and ourselves in our experience of them as reified, universal, and exchangeable things. In other words the spell of ideology for Adorno describes the incanting rhythms of how capital has structured not only the material conditions but also

⁴⁶ Deborah Cook, following Brian O’Conner’s suggestion in *Adorno’s Negative Dialectic* argues we should understand this not as materialist dialectics, but rather critical materialism. She writes, “Adorno’s materialist theory is designed to show that our experience is impoverished and nature damaged precisely because we have failed to recognize the degree to which we are a part of nature even as social and historical beings” (Cook 2006, 734).

appearance itself. We, like the commodity, appear to ourselves as things in ourselves; we, like the commodity, appear as autonomous entities; we, like the commodities we produce, appear exchangeable, replaceable, disposable.

In as much as capital has structured the becoming of appearance, and in as much as this appearance rests on the exclusion of the non-identical, then it makes sense that Adorno not only turns the very conditions of appearance, but also specifically to Kant's discussion of the conditions of appearance in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Specifically, Kant's description of the phenomenal character of the relation between subject and object, explains for Adorno, the ideological infusion of the subject with "opaque, mediated, and mitigated power relations" (GS 8: 466, *my translation*).⁴⁷ To further elucidate this bewitchment, we must turn more explicitly to Adorno's understanding of the relationship between our faculties and the material organization of society, and thus to Kantian schematism.

In making the distinction between what appears and the "real," or an object in-itself, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* critiques the illusion of reason by delimiting the boundaries of knowledge to which we can legitimately lay claim. This distinction between what appears and the object-itself is predicated on the subject's a priori temporalization of space. What is brought into space and time appears and what is not does not appear for the subject. For as we all now, for Kant schematism brings together the understanding and the intuition through transcendental time determination. Although there will be an extended discussion of this function in the second chapter, suffice it to say for now that for Kant, transcendental schematism presents a "rule for determining our

⁴⁷ The full sentence reads "Zur Ideologie im eigentlichen Sinne bedarf es sich selbst undurchsichtiger, vermittelter und insofern auch gemilderter Machtverhältnisse."

intuition in accordance with such and such a general concept” (Kant, CPR A141/ B180). The problem for determining this rule, for Kant, is that the foundations for manifold of intuition and the concepts of the understanding are radically heterogeneous. For Adorno, this is a question of how matter and form come together. He positions Kant’s question in the chapter on schematism as “how it is possible for knowledge to be not just something alien to its object but also the truth because it adapts itself to the nature of what it is classifying the nature of what is immediately given” (Adorno, KCPR 2001, 131).⁴⁸ Concepts belong to the understanding, which is grounded in the *a priori* determinations of the categories of understanding. Intuition presents the understanding with the manifold of empirical determinations. Having their foundations in heterogeneous functions of the subject, Kant must explain how the manifold of the intuition and the concepts of the understanding come together in such a way as to present objects to the subject.

For Kant, schematism bridges these heterogeneous processes. The pure intuition of transcendental time determination, as schematism, zips together, as it were, human experience. The *a priori* temporal ordering conditioning experience is the third that brings together the pure concepts of the understanding with the objects of experience. Schematism, thus, becomes an essential element in Kant’s account of how concepts are brought to the intuition, because schematism explains the ground upon which both the understanding and the intuition are compatible. They become compatible because the a

⁴⁸ In “Adorno and the Problem of the Given,” Brian O’Conner writes “Whilst Kant’s idea is mark the limits of agency, and thus to posit the unknowable, Adorno wants to establish some philosophical expression of non-identity—what it is about the object that undermines its identity with the ‘subjective’ concept” (O’Conner 2007, 38). Adorno seems to confirm this sentiment when he writes that “This means that the distinction made in the *Critique of Pure Reason* between appearances and things-in-themselves is not to be taken all that seriously because the things-in-themselves remains no more than a ‘noble feature,’ as Brecht phrases it in *The Three Penny Opera*. In other words, they survive s a reminder that subjective knowledge is not the whole story, but they are without further consequence themselves” (KCPR 2001, 128).

priori temporal structure that allows for an object to appear prepares both the concept for the manifold of intuition as well as preparing the manifold of intuition for the concept. The question of how they meet, and exactly how the pure intuition of time sets up this rendezvous, remains as Kant famously writes, “a secret art residing in the depths of the human soul, an art whose true stratagems we shall hardly ever divine from nature and lay bare before ourselves” (CPR A142/ B181).

For Adorno, the merger between the intuition and concepts is not necessarily a “secret art.” Since intuitions are distinct from concepts one must ask how they come together. But when Kant does ask this, Adorno argues Kant cannot help but concede that it occurs through thought adapting to the object itself. Adorno, thus reads a material moment into Kantian schematism a material moment, where the in-itself, the “non-identical” makes itself felt in thought despite of all of the subjective mediation defining Kant’s project (KCPR 2001, 133). In other words, the schematism is where thought touches things; thus Adorno wonders if this is where Kant does “justice to the given instead of simply dictating to it brutally” (KCPR 2001, 133).

If we take this moment of the “non-identical” seriously for Adorno, then we can see that what was a “secret” for Kant “has been unraveled” (DE: 98; GS 3: 146f.). If we want to find the spontaneity of thought itself, this spontaneity will not be found in thought’s relationship to the object per se. Rather we would have to look in the places where the non-identical would touch thought by means of transcendental time determination. Yet, because this merger is structured in advance by the fetishistic logic of capital that obeys the strict schema of identity, this place is foreclosed in advance. That is

to say that schematism under the auspices of capital works against the spontaneity of the subject that would resist the fetishistic appearances it engenders.⁴⁹ In fact, Adorno claims

[t]he active contribution, which Kantian Schematism still expected of subjects—that they should, from the first, relate sensuous multiplicity to fundamental concepts is denied to the subject by industry. It purveys schematism as its first service to the customer. According to Kantian schematism, a secret mechanism within the psyche [*geheimer Mechanismus in der Seele*] preformed immediate data to fit them into the system of pure reason. (DE: 98; GS 3: 146f.)

The schema rendering the world sensible to the subject is the same one organizing the modes of production in capitalism. In fact this pre-figuring of the world is the very first “product” that the culture industry provides to subjects. For Adorno schematization reflects the structure of the rationality propelling the modes of production in industrial capitalism. One could say material objects and concepts merge—forming the experience of the subject—in ways that propel capital. Kant’s description of the schematism of the understanding and the categories of consciousness “is undoubtedly the index of a specific state of the self-consciousness of spirit and at the same time as a mediated stage in the history of thought” (KCPR 2001, 136). In this sense, the spell of ideology grasping the subject schematizes concepts and materiality through the temporal logic of commodity fetishism. Just as the logic of the fetish rests on the abstraction of its materiality so that it can enter into the symbolic relationships of exchange, so too does the logic organizing schematism begin to abstract sensuous materiality so as to ready it for exchange. What appears is only what is subjected to a model of temporality reflecting the schema of

⁴⁹Susan Buck-Morss argues that for Adorno, “the autonomous, spontaneous moment of cognition lay in refusing to acquiesce to the resulting fetishization of thought in which subject was split from object, mind from matter” (Buck-Morss 1977, 85).

capital itself. As Adorno writes, the Kantian categories reflect the world in which we live; “it is the world of exchange, the world of commodities, the world of reified human relations that confront us, presenting us with a façade of objectivity, a second nature” (KCPR 2001, 137). What appears is false because it is based on a violent abstraction of particular qualities. And in this sense the truth of appearance becomes what does not appear, that which has been left out of the illusory fetishization of appearance itself: the non-identical. One can, thus, map the negative impression of the non-identical within appearance because ideological illusion is simultaneously true and false.

Our experience of the world becomes inflected by the logic and rhythm of the commodity fetish, because our ability to allow sensuous materiality to touch the understanding is silenced in advance by the process of abstraction equating all sensuous materiality.⁵⁰ For instance, the pre-figuration of the world in alignment with the logic of commodity fetishism can be seen, according to Adorno, in that “familiar experience of the moviegoer, who perceives the street outside as continuation of the film he has just left” (DE 99; GS 3: 147). One experiences the world according to the characters, plots, rhythms, temporalities, scoured over and abstracted to appeal to the most possible people, for the “universal” consumer. In this way, “all appearance [*Erscheinende*] is so thoroughly stamped [*gestempelt*] that nothing can occur that does not bear in advance the trace of the jargon, that is not seen at first glance to be approved” (DE 101; GS 3: 149, *translation modified*). The very becoming of appearance itself is “stamped” in advance to us via the schematism of capitalism. The term *gestempelt* is tricky here. While it can

⁵⁰ Deborah Cook discusses this introjection of the modes of production in terms of Adorno’s relationship to Freudian Psychoanalysis in “The Sundered Totality: Adorno’s Freudo-Marxism,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 25, no. 2 (1995): 191-215.

mean stamped as “imprint” or “impression,” it can also mean stamped as “postmarked.” Given Adorno’s use of Kantian schema, and the context of the sentence in which this “stamping” of “appearances” happens in advance, it might make more sense to understand this sense of “stamping” in terms of a postmark. That is to say, that since the conditioning of these appearances happens a priori, unconsciously even, one could speak of them being sent in advance of the subject, or in advance and to the subject, instead of as imprinted in the subject.⁵¹ And indeed, this aligns with Adorno’s claim that through the pre-figuration of the world through the schema of the modes of production the appearance of the world is “passed through the filter of the culture industry” (DE 99: GS 3: 147).⁵² Stamping in advance secures the necromancy and magic of the spell of ideology for Adorno. For as Adorno argues in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we have been “bewitched [*verhext*] by the objectification of mind” (DE 21; GS 3: 45).⁵³

What comes to us before ourselves in the schema of production under? What spell has reified our thought? As we have seen, for Adorno the logic of fetishism has ordered the concepts of the understanding, thus it has inflecting the appearance of the world. All appearances are exchangeable because they are abstracted from their contexts. Our thought is alienated, because it is first and foremost the reflection of the fetishistic logic underpinning the exchange of commodities under capital. But what does it mean to claim that fetishism stamps our appearance in advance, thus unconsciously capturing our

⁵¹ In many senses this is what Althusser means by his Lacanian interpretation of the concept of ideology.

⁵² Or as Adorno writes: “The culture industry snatches up these tendencies [that] strengthens and validates them, while the insubordinate either stay away or are explicitly discarded. [*Sie greift diese Tendenzen auf, verstärkt und bestätigt sie, während alles Unbotmäßige entweder wegbleibt oder ausdrücklich verworfen wird*]” (GS 8: 476, my translation).

⁵³ For an excellent analysis of the concept of reification from Lukács forward see: Axel Honneth, “Reification and Recognition: A New Look at an Old Idea,” in *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, ed. Martin Jay (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17-96.

engagement with the world and its objects? This stamping is simultaneously a denial and displacement.⁵⁴ It denies, or perhaps disavows as we will see in the third chapter, what resists and falls outside of the temporal synthesis that conditions appearance itself. It then displaces this disavowal in order to guarantee that what appears is all there is, that the concept has presented the object. Thus the spell of fetishism conjures some “thing” (appearance) from no “thing” (that which falls outside of temporal synthesis), yet, this no “thing” still remains a “thing” (the disavowed ground of appearance itself). And one can see this “thing,” this nothing, in the spirit that appears before us. Thus “false consciousness” should no longer be understood as a “crystallized blind and anonymous social process itself”; instead today it represents “the tailored science of society” (Adorno, GS 8: 474f., *my translation*).⁵⁵ This active grasping that “obsessively grips reality” by excising a part of this reality will form the heart not only of the spell, but also explain how the possession of the spell affects us, how we have in some sense become the brutality of capital.

The universal processes of exchange, grounded in the capitalist modes of production, inflect thought, slowly erasing the “spontaneous activity” of the non-identical at the hinge of schematism between concepts and sensuality. Adorno thus comes to the conclusion that the destruction of the “secret art” of schematism is “the violence [*Die Gewalt*] of industrial society” that becomes “imprinted on [*wirkt in*] people once and for all” (DE: 100; GS 3: 148 *translation modified*). The logic of the fetish is the indelible

⁵⁴ This is similar to Althusser’s anti-humanist articulation of the concept of ideology.

⁵⁵ “Das gesellschaftlich bedingte falsche Bewußtsein von heute ist nicht mehr objektiver Geist, auch in dem Sinne, daß es keineswegs blind, anonym aus dem gesellschaftlichen Prozeß sich kristallisiert, sondern wissenschaftlich auf die Gesellschaft zugeschnitten wird.”

stamp of capital sending abstracted figurations of the world in advance of the subject. The procrustean logic of exchange forming the backbone of the commodity becomes the mode for how the subject judges, experiences, and comes to know both the world and oneself once it has been internalized. It is a machine, a stamping machine perhaps—one constantly catching the subject as it attempts to experience the world from the gap between concepts and materiality, one that obviates this alienating gap by “compulsively” securing it, covering it over, by sending a pre-packaged version to the subject in advance of itself.

The internalization of this denial of the non-identical not only violently excises particularity in appearance, but also violently excises particularity in one’s reflexive experience of self. And one can see this in *Minima Moralia*, where Adorno uses the psychoanalytic concepts of the death drive and projection to think through the internalization of this violence. He writes

[o]nly when the process that begins with the metamorphosis of labour-power into a commodity has permeated men through and through and objectified each of their impulses as a priori commensurable variations of the exchange relationship, is it possible for life to reproduce itself under the dominant relations of production. Its consummate organization demands the coordination of people that are dead. The will to live depends on the negation [*Verneinung*] of the will to live.” (MM 229; GS 4: 261; *translation modified*)⁵⁶

For Adorno, to be the subject of the ideological spell under modern capital is to kill oneself while telling oneself that one is alive. One becomes the living dead, which is no

⁵⁶ This is Joe Weiss’ translation.

more than an immunization that takes in the brutal logic of capital in order to inoculate the subject to the brutality of his or her material conditions. Through the internalization of the modern modes of production we are seized by a logic propelling life by its negation—a principle, as we will see in the next chapter, clearly outlined in the Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.⁵⁷ In experiencing the world we are compelled to reify, harden, it and ourselves. To become a subject, to live in and negotiate the world under these conditions, is to simultaneously hollow out experience and to murder what is living and “spontaneous” in our own subjectivity. Or as Adorno writes in *Negative Dialectics* “the subject is spent and impoverished in its categorical performance [...] the subject must dilute itself to the point of mere universality” (ND 139; GS 6: 142f.) One becomes a subject by dissolving into a schema that abstracts particularity for the purposes of exchange.

Having become the living dead through the internalization of schema of capital, subjects project this internalized, murdering “whatever to them seems living” so that it “shall resemble themselves” (MM 231; GS 4: 262). Or one could imagine Adorno rhetorically asking: “Having become a subject by virtue of the internalization of the violence of the capital, how can one help but be violent”?⁵⁸ Spellbound by the

⁵⁷ See Freud’s metaphorical discussion of the development of the cortical layer in chapter four of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Taking the development of simplified living organism as he starting point, Freud will write that “It would be easy to suppose, then, that as a result of the ceaseless impact of external stimuli on the surface of the vesicle, its substance to a certain depth may have become permanently modified [...] A crust would thus be formed which would at last have been so thoroughly ‘baked through’ that it would create easy pathways for interpreting certain stimuli (Freud, SE 18: 26; GW 13: 25).

⁵⁸ For Axel Honneth reification represents the forgetting of a prior moment of recognition, and it is this forgetting that allows us to act brutally against people conceived of in advance instead of in light of recognition. Speaking of Nazi practices, Honneth writes “[e]ven today it is difficult to comprehend reports describing how young men could nonchalantly shoot hundreds of Jewish children and women in the back of the head. And elements of such horrifying practices can also be found in all the genocides that marked the end of the twentieth century. If we as humans relate to each other though antecedent recognition, a fact

mechanical rhythms of modern capital that demand the “coordination” of the living dead, ideology then becomes the experience of being unknowingly seized by the violent logic of capital in ways that we do not recognize, resulting in an unconscious repetition of its violence on others, the world, and ourselves.⁵⁹

In general, Adorno’s language of the spell describes commodity fetishism as a transcendental schema pre-figuring the world for abstract exchange. According to Adorno, the schema of the fetish is a “technical rationality” reflecting the “compulsive character of a society alienated [*entfremdeten*] from itself” (DE 95; GS 3: 142). The technical rationality conditioning the experience of the world is the compulsive attempt to cover over the alienation of the non-identical instituted by the modes of production in industrial capitalism. Ideology is the attempt to compulsively cover over this alienation by collapsing appearance with ontological status. In a different register, we might say that ideology closes the phenomenal divide between subject and object, forcing the object into the subjective construction of its appearance. And the danger lies, as Adorno writes in his 1954 essay “Contribution to the Theory of Ideology,” in the fact that with this collapse between what is and what ought to be, it makes the current state of affairs appear as “beyond the integration of all transcendence and all critique” (GS 8: 476, *my translation*).⁶⁰ The dialectical relationship between concepts and materiality no longer define experience, rather the positivism declaring the tautology: what *is* is all there is

of which I am certain, then these mass murders raise the question as to how we can explain the vanishing or ‘forgetting’ of this previous recognition” (Honneth 2008b, 158).

⁵⁹ We will see how this unconscious repetition engendered by the framework of the categories of the understanding will play out in terms of slavery and prisons in the United states in chapter four.

⁶⁰ The full sentence is: “Wollte man in einem Satz zusammendrängen, worauf eigentlich die Ideologie der Massenkultur hinausläuft, man müßte sie als Parodie des Satzes: ‘Werde was du bist’ darstellen: als überhöhende Verdoppelung und Rechtfertigung des ohnehin bestehenden Zustandes, unter Einbeziehung aller Transzendenz und aller Kritik.”

defines experience. Appearance under the aegis of fetishism eschews the moment of critique that would demand what *is* is not all there is.⁶¹ In other words, ideology fixes thought “in the beliefless belief of pure existence [*glaubenslosen Glauben an die pure Existenz*]” (GS 8: 476, *my translation*).⁶² Thus, for Adorno, ideology does not just describe the alienating facture we experience in our relationship to the world and our selves, but rather, one might say, it is the internalization of the fetish as the transcendental logic of appearance in general. Because the fetish pre-figures the becoming of appearance in Adorno’s understanding of ideology, and because appearance is both true and false for Adorno, the nature of ideology critique is different in Adorno’s work than it is in Marx’s. And it is from this difference that we might begin to form the starting point for a critique of political rationality.

As we saw, in Marx’s work ideology critique is aimed at the real, a real that when taken as the starting point of thought punctures the illusions, and thus subservience, forming the backbone of capitalism. For Adorno, thought must also be turned toward the real, but the status of this real, as the non-identical, is slightly different than in Marx’s work. The real, for Adorno, is that which is, but that which does not appear. While this might seem similar to Marx, and in many senses it is, there is an important difference.

Ideological illusion for Marx covers over the real. The real can thus be recognized; it can

⁶¹Given not only Adorno’s explicit claim that the idea of no transcendence is ideology rooted in base positivism, but also the fact that Adorno adheres to the spirit of Hegel, a spirit that remains both true and false, one might wonder how Joel Whitebook could argue in his essay “Weighty Objects: On Adorno’s Kant-Freudian Interpretation” that in *Negative Dialectics* “Adorno brilliantly (and repetitiously) elucidates the same aporia from innumerable angles but never gets beyond it. My claim is that the concept of sublimation would have allowed him to get beyond this situation. And although he implicitly makes use of the concept he cannot embrace it; sublimation apparently lacks the requisite negativity and comes too close to a Hegelian notion of reconciliation” (Whitebook 2004, 52).

⁶² Or, as Martin Jay writes in “The Frankfurt School Critique of Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge,” “[a]nything smacking of ontology was itself ideological” for Adorno (Jay 1974, 86).

be known despite and outside of the ideological configuration of appearance itself. In fact is the only way to break the illusions supporting capitalism is to conjure up the “real.” For Adorno, the real is known not by its appearance, but rather by its absence; it is that which has been left outside of the conceptual configuration of space and time and thus is more than just simply subjected to the misdirection of recognition itself. For under the current constellation forming the schema of thought the non-identical is the necessary occlusion forming what appears. For just as material alienation forms the schema of thought for Marx, so too does the mechanism of occlusion present in commodity fetishism form the schema not only of thought but also of appearance for Adorno. Now since thought and appearance itself is formed by occlusion, then the real, that which is but does not appear cannot be recognized by a prior form of thought, but rather from the internally, and material, contradictions within the formation of appearance itself.

Breaking the spell of ideology in Adorno occurs not solely through the power of recognition, but rather with the immanent and ambivalent figuration of the world through the logic of the commodity. This is to say that despite the fact that the culture industry’s grasp on schematism there lies hope in ideology critique. In a world where all appearances are flattened out and serve capital, the capacity for ideology critique begins with the truth embedded within these reified appearances. In other words, ideology critique concerns the immanent confrontation of the falsity of experience with its own truth (GS 8: 474). Since the spell conjures spirits that are both true and false, since ideology is not just the negation of materiality, the immanent structuring of appearance itself is contradictory. In other words, for Adorno, the ideological pre-figuration of the world carries its own seed of destruction. “It is not altogether unlikely,” as Adorno writes

in *Negative Dialectics*, “that the spell is thus breaking itself” (ND 346; GS 6: 339).⁶³ But in what way might the spell break itself, and what is the job of thought, of critical thought, in the face of this spell that breaks itself?

Since the thought that grasps the world is a reflection of the schema of the modes of production, and since these modes of production are constituted by contradiction, then the contradictions of thought will be no more than the mere reflection of the contradictions of the material conditions. Thus, the immanent nature of the contradictions of society will reflect themselves in not only how the subject grasps the world, but also in the appearance of the world that the subject grasps. Spirit is both true and false. As we saw earlier:

[t]he subjective preconception of the material production process in society—fundamentally different from its theoretical constitution—is the unresolved part, the part unreconciled with its subjects. Their own reason, unconscious [*bewußtlos*] like the transcendental subject and establishing identity by barter, remains incommensurable with the subjects it reduces to the same denominator: the subject as the subject’s foe. The preceding generality is both true and untrue: true, because it forms that ‘ether’ which Hegel calls spirit; untrue, because its reason is no reason yet, because its universality is the product of particular interests.” (ND 10f.; GS 6: 22, *translation modified*)

⁶³ In “The Lament over Reification” Gillian Rose explains this idea as Adorno’s attempt to choose “a hard path between Benjamin’s view of history as the corruption of the world, and Lukács’ view of history according to which reconciliation between subject and object can be ‘imputed’ as the end of history. Adorno’s position is encapsulated in the aphorism ‘Universal history must be construed and denied.’ It must be construed because it is the only perspective from which the socio-historical formation of society and thought can be grasped; it must be denied because the world has no *telos* and capitalism has developed new means of enslavement, not of liberation” (Rose 2007, 170).

The constellation of appearance itself would point negatively toward what has been excluded. The subject's thought is antagonistic to the subject itself. Its reason, as a reflection of the material conditions, is "incommensurable" with the subject. As we saw, this stamping in advance, creates the subject as the living dead, as the living that must cut away at itself in order to survive, through the fetishistic logic of abstraction forcing the subject to disavow and displace that part of itself that does not adhere to the logic of the modes of production. What falls outside of the logic of appearance supporting the modes of production, returns, negatively of course, and haunts the production of appearance and subjectivity. Simply put, the logic of fetishism is inimical to the subject it produces, and in the production of that subject it creates a contradiction within the subject that can only break itself, because it promises a form of subjectivity that it fundamentally denies the subject. It promises freedom by coercing. It promises universality through particular historical conditions. What remains, that which is "real" but does not appear, returns to unsettle the stasis of these contradictions.

In the face of this not only might the spell break itself, but also the fetishistic logic of thought must be resisted by reconfiguring it toward the non-identical. One must begin with neither the subject nor the object, but that which the fetishistic logic of capital expels from appearance, with the non-identical. This "negative" dialectic would begin with no "thing" that is some "thing." And it would be the conjuration of this "real" that does not appear that would lead to the disenchantment of the spell of ideology. He concludes that by making this shift we can gain an "insight into the constitutive character of the nonconceptual in the concept," and thus philosophy can "end the compulsive identification [*Identitätzwang*] which the concept brings unless it is halted by such

reflection” (ND 12; GS 6: 24). For, as Adorno writes “knowledge is not supposed to prepare the phantasm [*Phantasma*] of a whole” (ND 14; GS 6: 25). Just as the presentation of principles as though they were objects of experience forms the basis of transcendental illusion for Kant, so too will the phantasm of the whole become the cauldron of the ideological illusion capturing the thought processes, for Adorno Negative dialectics are, of course, as Adorno writes a “[d]isenchchantment [*Entzauberung*] of the concept” which is the “antidote [*Gegengift*] of philosophy” (ND 13; GS 6: 24). This disenchantment occurs when we reorient the conceptual to the non-identical that lies within it—the very resistance to identity at the heart of identity. This reorientation would exorcise a reified spirit that comes to the object and instead investigate the “real” no “thing” that emerges from the particularity of a historical constellation of things. As Adorno writes, we must orient the dialectic to a “diversity not wrought by any schema; to those objects philosophy would truly give itself rather than use them as a mirror in which to reread itself, mistaking its own image for concretion” (ND 13; GS 6: 25).

III. Beyond Spirits: Failed Exorcisms and the Non-identical

The language of specters is embroidered throughout the texts of Marx and Adorno. At each moment Marx and Adorno conjure up these ghosts, the experiences of mysticism and mystery, the concept of ideology is present. And as we have seen this conjunction between the language of spells and the concept of ideology is neither accidental, nor merely rhetorical. Rather, this language is central to their understanding of ideology and its possible dissolution. In response to these spells, Adorno and Marx are keen on reorienting the dialectic toward the “real.” And as we have seen, ideology

critique is, thus, centered on reorienting thought toward the real so that it may overcome the illusions politics, the illusions of reason.

They differ, however, on the status of the real, and this has great consequences on how they conceptualize ideology and the form of its critique. By following out these differences we might be able to move toward the function of the non-identical in critique. Since the “real” for Marx represents the material conditions, some “definite” thing, then to dispel the spirits of ideology means directing thought back to this “definite” and “real” thing, back toward the material conditions of thought. For Adorno, the case is different. For the “real” is the remainder of thought, that part of the object that does not appear, that is not schematized. Thus for Adorno to redirect thought back to the “real” is not to redirect back to the “definite” but rather back to the non-identical, or those places where thought touches the non-identical.

Because they differ on what defines the “real” their conceptions of overcoming the spell of ideology differ. For Marx, the overcoming of ideology conjures another spirit. For, as we saw, if the concepts of consciousness are structured by material conditions, and if these material conditions are contradictory, then consciousness itself must also be contradictory. Yet, if consciousness is contradictory, then how does it recognize its own contradictions? To put it in another register, if the material conditions that structure thought do not recognize the logic of non-contradiction, then how can thought access this logic, such that a recognition, and then overcoming, of contradiction could ever occur, unless we presuppose the spirit of a rationality based on the logic of contradiction, which appeals to a pre-existing unity of consciousness. This specter of rationality lodged in the

heart of materialist dialectics, this haunting of a pre-existing form of thought, sends Marx into his fits of failed exorcisms.

Yet, Adorno is not haunted by spirits in the same way that Marx is. Adorno does not furiously seek to cast out the very same spirits that haunt him. Rather, for Adorno, we must read the negative impression of the spirit, that place where the non-identical affects a form of thought that constructs appearance as fetishes. Yet how does the non-identical make itself “felt” within a “space defined entirely by the subject (KCPR 2001, 131)? For Adorno, the construction of this form of thought will immanently undo itself; it is, as Derrida might say it is “autoimmune.”⁶⁴ On the one hand, this form of thought promises the technical mastery of nature, and the world, a mastery that can only set one free. Yet, simultaneously, the subject is not free, because this mastery turns in on the subject. The very same mastery that conquers the forces of nature, simultaneously conquers the subject. And it is in the subject’s thought obsessively gripping objects, that the negative impression of the non-identical touches the schema, affecting thought itself, slowly cracking appearance, as appearance itself becomes more rigid. And while there may be aspects of this immanent dissolution of the reified spirits of appearance that remain haunted by the same rationality that Marx remains haunted by, Adorno’s indication of the non-identical, sets up a crucial project for political thought, thus acting as a fundamental

⁶⁴ Derrida first defines autoimmunity in a footnote in his essay “Faith and Knowledge.” In this text he attempts to explain a logic of self-destructive protection along the lines of a biological model. He writes that this process consists in a “living organism” “protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system” (Derrida 1998, 73). In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Derrida claims that the logic of autoimmunity points not only to a “harming or ruining oneself, indeed destroying one’s own protections,” a certain kind of suicide, but also and, “more seriously still,” it consists in “threatening the I [*moi*] or the self [*soi*], the *ego* or the *autos*, ipseity itself, compromising the immunity of the *autos* itself” (Derrida 2005, 45). Autoimmunity demonstrates how the attempts to shore up the sovereignty of the ego, the autonomy of the individual, to protect a notion of a self that remains the master of itself, undercut the very thing it was meant to protect: the self, the ego, the power and mastery of the sovereign.

hinge between political thought's attempt to think the non-identical and psychoanalysis. Thus, in order to explore this question, let us then turn to that nothing that remains something, that which negatively impresses itself on thought itself, the non-identical in psychoanalysis.

Chapter Two

The Spirit of Repression: The Return of Kant in Freud

The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the discover, the orientation on the past tends toward an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps perdu* becomes the vehicle of future liberation.

--Herbert Marcuse, *Civilization and its Discontents*

Sparked by the fantasy of a politics buried in psychoanalysis, political thought has often taken up the question of the non-identical and alienation through the paradigms of repression.⁶⁵ For what else could be the no “thing” that is something other than what has been repressed?⁶⁶ Does not repression form the void structuring appearance itself? Are not the drives themselves subject to a form of “surplus repression” structured by the material conditions of capital, as Marcuse argues in *Eros and Civilization* (Marcuse 1974, 35)? Is not the fracture in being the reflection of the material conditions of this surplus repression?⁶⁷ Can we not speak of repressed moments in our collective history, moments

⁶⁵ For examples see: Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996); Paul Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought, 3rd edition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers 1999); José Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers 2001); R. Osborn, *Freud and Marx: A Dialectical Study* (London: 1938); Todd Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2000); Phillip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of a Moralizer, 3rd edition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979); Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974); Maurice Apprey, “Repairing History: Reworking Transgenerational Trauma,” in *Hating in the First Person Plural*, ed. Donald Moss (New York: Other Press, 2003), 3-28; Edward Glover, *War, Sadism, and Pacifism* (London: Unwin Brothers 1933); Erich Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1962); Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War*, trans. Alenka Pfeifer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1966); T. Johnston, *Freud and Political Thought* (New York: Citadel, 1965).

⁶⁶ In his 1914 essay, “On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement” Freud claims that the theory of repression is “corner-stone” of psychoanalysis (SE 14: 16; GW 10: 54).

too traumatic to integrate and metabolize through in the public and political sphere, as Cathy Caruth does in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*?⁶⁸ Is not the repressed that which returns, thus remaining uncanny, that part of ourselves alienating us from ourselves as Julia Kristeva reminds us in *Strangers to Ourselves*? In other words, is not the repressed that which “is,” but does not appear, that which political thought if it wants to critique its unfettered dream of liberation founded in rational mastery must turn toward?

In this chapter I will take up the question of whether the non-identical is equivalent to the repressed. While the analogy between the repressed and the non-identical is quite tempting, I am not sure the psychoanalytic concept of repression can do this work. Specifically, as we will see, the concept of repression is based on a similar form of rationality as political overcoming—an underlying hope that all can be resolved, that liberation will come, and that all forms of alienation are just an expression of the wrong state of affairs. And in this sense, while the repressed is, and should remain, an important concept for political thought, it is not the place from which a critique centered on the non-identical should begin. To understand the force of this claim, we must first turn to the unconscious characteristic of the repressed, which means we must turn to the metapsychological relationships between time and the unconscious.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See: Russell Jacoby, “Negative Psychoanalysis and Marxism: Towards an Objective Theory of Subjectivity,” *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Theory* 14 (Winter 1972): 1-22; Helmut Dahmer, “Psychoanalyse und historischer Materialismus,” in *Psychoanalyse als Sozialwissenschaft* (Frankfurt: 1971).

⁶⁸ See also: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., Ed. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Noëlle McAfee, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

In this chapter I argue the concept of repression is metapsychologically rooted in a form of rationality that assumes a linear model of temporality. In as much as this model of temporality renders repression subject to therapy, then so too will can repression be rationalized, so too can it be overcome. In order to support this claim, we must first return to Freud's Kantian inheritance, by examining the relationship between cognition and time in Kant. Second, I will demonstrate how Kantian schematism influences Freud's concept of the drives and thus repression, arguing that repression disrupts a linear model of time and therefore presupposes a linear model of time. Finally, I argue that because of repression's presupposition of a linear model of time we must rethink what is radical about the temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*. Rather than orienting critique from the axis of linear and non-linear temporality, I argue the orientation of the non-identical in psychoanalysis must operate from the axis of time and timelessness. It is from the former that one finds liberation from the past and it is from the latter one confronts the limits of the therapeutic situation. This means, as I argue in the third chapter, changing the constellation of psychoanalytic concepts from repression and toward the concept that poses the limits of the therapeutic situation: disavowal.

“So muss denn doch die Hexe dran!—the Witch Metapsychology” (SE 23: 225).⁷⁰

I. Kant and the Timeless Unconscious

⁶⁹ Freud defines metapsychological as the collation of the three different ways of discussing the workings of the psyche: economic, dynamic, and topographical. See (SE 14: 181).

⁷⁰ Alan Bass uses this quotation as the starting point for his paper “Time and the Witch: Femininity, Metapsychology and the Temporality of the Unconscious,” *MLN* 91, no. 5, *Centennial Issue: Responsibilities of the Critic* (Oct. 1976): 871-912.

Freud hinted at the timeless nature of the unconscious as early as his 1895 *Studies on Hysteria* written with Josef Breuer. It was a hypothesis he carried throughout his career, even in his shift from the first to the second topography, that helped explain the strange temporality of repression. For how else could the repressed collapse the experience of the past and the present for the subject if the repressed were not located in an unconscious that was not part of the linear progression of time—unless the unconscious was, in fact, timeless. Freud’s hypothesis has led some, like Jacques Lacan and Jean Laplanche to claim that the unconscious is outside of time, because it is time itself.⁷¹ Freud’s claim has led others, such as Alan Bass to argue the unconscious is not outside of time, but rather composed of a discontinuous temporality.⁷² Others have just discarded Freud’s hypothesis, claiming that it is not only inconsistent, but also not helpful in the analytic situation. I would like to suggest that the key to understanding Freud’s hypothesis about the timeless nature of the unconscious and its relationship to repression, is Kant.

The fact that Freud appealed to Kant throughout his career is widely known, but it is rarely taken seriously. Just think of Jean Laplanche’s claim in “Temporality and Translation,” where he argues Freud’s references were rooted in “a debased, a sort of ready-made Kantianism such as was in currency” at the time (Laplanche 1989, 243).⁷³

⁷¹ Lacan’s reading of the timeless nature of the unconscious is inflected through Hegel. Lacan writes, that the unconscious is “located outside time exactly like the concept, because it is itself time, the pure time of the thing [*le temps pur de la chose*]” (Lacan, S1: 243; L1: 267). This distinction is so primary, between Freud and Lacan on the timeless nature of the unconscious, that I would say it is one of the differentiating factors of their theoretical systems.

⁷² See Alan Bass, “Time and the Witch: Femininity, Metapsychology and the Temporality of the Unconscious,” *MLN* 91, no. 5, *Centennial Issue: Responsibilities of the Critic* (Oct. 1976): 871-912.

When it is taken seriously thinkers analogize the unconscious with the unknowable, but assumed existence, of the transcendental unity of apperception in the “Deduction” of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* ⁷⁴ or they focus on Freud’s Kantian methodology of deducing the unconscious from existing symptoms.⁷⁵ Both of these approaches begin with Kant’s claim that the transcendental unity of apperception cannot be subject to the conditions for the possibility of presentation, and end by claiming Freud’s concept of the unconscious follows out and modifies the consequences of a subject that cannot know its self.⁷⁶ Essential to these arguments is the relationship between Kant’s use of temporality to explain the phenomenal split in appearance and Freud’s claim about the timeless nature of the unconscious. Thus, for Freud they conclude, just as for Kant, the subject is split from its self and this split is defined by time.

In this section I will argue that to ground the timeless nature of the unconscious in Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is to misunderstand not only Freud's relationship to Kant, but also to misunderstand the a-temporal nature of the unconscious.

⁷³ One could also think of Charles Hanly’s argument in “A Problem with Freud’s Idea of the Timelessness of the Unconscious” where he claims that Freud’s references to “the timelessness of the unconscious are empirically mistaken and hearken back to the narcissistic longing for indications of the immutable and timeless in human nature” (Hanly 2009, 22).

⁷⁴ For a variety of approaches to this analogy see: Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 2005); Nishad Patnaik, “Fetishism and its Relation to Time,” *Social Scientist* 34, no. 9/10 (Sep. – Oct., 2006): 72-93; Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty & Venus in Furs*, 9-142 (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

⁷⁵ For example see: Bettina Bergo, “Psychoanalytic Models: Freud’s Debt to Philosophy and His Copernican Revolution,” in *The Philosophy of Psychiatry: A Companion*, ed. Jennifer Radden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 338-350; Alfred I. Tauber, *Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Alfred I. Tauber, “Freud’s Dream of Reason: The Kantian Structure of Psychoanalysis,” *History of the Human Sciences* 22, no. 4 (2009): 1-29.

⁷⁶ For example see: Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 2005); Alan Bass, *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 84-85; for a discussion of this in terms of Kant and the Cartesian “cogito” see: *Cogito and the Unconscious*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

For as I will show in the next section Freud appeals to Kant to demonstrate the phenomenal character of the drives, which creates the division between the conscious and unconscious, a division further supported by repression. Yet to get there, we must first meet Freud where he directly takes up Kant on the subject of the timeless nature of the unconscious.

In his 1915 essay “The Unconscious,” Freud argues that the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious is “an extension of the corrections undertaken by Kant of our views on external perception” (SE 14: 171; GW 10: 271). Just as Kant “warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived” so too for Freud “psychoanalysis warns us not to equate perceptions of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object” (SE 14: 171; GW 10: 271). Whereas, for Kant, “appearances are not things in themselves, but are the mere play of our presentations, which in the end amount to determinations of inner sense,” for Freud the appearance of our “mental processes” is not equivalent with these processes themselves (Kant, CPR A102). What we know of the mental processes are only appearances, the result of our cognition. Freud thus understands the division between the conscious and the unconscious as a phenomenal split.

Four years after he writes the essay “The Unconscious,” Freud defines this phenomenal split in terms of time with another reference to Kant in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. A text that confronts the repetition of trauma amongst the veterans of the First World War, it explores not just lost time, but moments that repeat themselves, continuously subjecting those who suffer these neuroses to a single non-integrated

moment of their history.⁷⁷ In the fourth chapter of this text, Freud begins a “far-fetched speculation [*weitausholende Spekulation*]” to explain traumatic repetition as failure to synthesize stimulus (SE 18: 24; GW 13: 23). The veterans, he suggests, were exposed to a stimulus that occurred too quickly or that was too much to synthesize. In other words, consciousness failed to bind this stimulus. Remaining outside of consciousness, the stimulus not only stands outside of meaning, but also the subject’s experience of time, for Freud. He writes:

[a]s a result of certain psycho-analytic discoveries, we are to-day in a position to embark on a discussion of the Kantian theorem that time and space are ‘necessary forms of thought’. We have learnt that unconscious mental processes are in themselves ‘timeless’. This means in the first place that they are not ordered temporally [*zeitlich geordnet werden*], that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time [*Zeitvorstellung*] cannot be applied to them. (SE 18: 28; GW 13: 27f.)

Freud appeals to Kant’s discussion of time and space as “necessary forms of thought” in the *Critique of the Pure Reason* or, as we will see, to the a priori role of time and space for experience as such in the chapter on the “Transcendental Aesthetic.” For Freud, as for Kant, objects must be temporalized, or brought into time, to appear. What is not, or cannot be, temporalized—what Kant calls the thing-in-itself—is unconscious for Freud.

⁷⁷ In respect to the psychoanalytic investigation into “shellshock,” or the literal impression of war in traumatized soldiers, Sandor Ferenczi’s “Two Types of War Neuroses” provides an interesting picture. The piece opens by marking the large numbers of patients, too many, in fact: “This number is too great, the time for observation has been too short” (Ferenczi 1927, 124). Ferenczi then draws a picture of the conditions, patients whom suffer “violent tremors” all over their body, or have been struck by a “rigidity, and weakness” which gives rise to “peculiar gaits” which are the source of his “bewilderment” (Ferenczi 1927, 125). He then proceeds to describe to general symptoms: “*anxiety hysteria and conversion hysteria*” (Ferenczi 1927, 141).

For as Jean Laplanche has noted in his essay, “A Short Treatise on the Unconscious,” “the adjective ‘atemporal’ (*zeitlos*) does not refer to an accidental quality of the ‘other thing’ in us, but to its very being” (Laplanche 1999a, 101).⁷⁸ The “timeless” nature of the unconscious, for Freud, is the condition for the possibility of the repetition compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. For the unconscious repetition of the trauma is the continual attempt to bind stimulus—the attempt to conceptualize it as a part of the subject’s history. Thus, in this text, Freud explains trauma through the subject’s failure to conceptualize external stimulus, which he argues is also a failure to temporalize stimulus.⁷⁹ But what does it mean to place Freud’s temporal distinction between the conscious and unconscious next to Kant? What might a return to Kant tell us about this temporal distinction, but also, perhaps, about the nature of the drives themselves in Freud? Let us then follow Freud by turning to where Kant discusses the necessary role of space and time in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

⁷⁸ Jacques Press discusses the implications of the usage of the adjective *zeitlos* to describe the unconscious in his essay “*Temps et Pulsion*.” He writes: “Pour Freud, l’Inconscient est ‘*zeitlos*,’ littéralement: sans temps. Le suffixe allemand *-los* s’oppose au préfixe *un-*. Il importe ainsi de différencier dans la langue allemande ‘*unbewusst*,’ qui signifie inconscient au sens freudien, de *bewusstlos*—qui se dit de quelqu’un ayant perdu conscience. Or, il est remarquable que le “*un*” allemand, comme Freud le fait remarquer lui-même à propos de ‘*unheimlich*,’ porte le sceau du refoulement. Relevons de plus qu’il n’existe pas de terme dans la langue allemande qui soit applicable à la non-temporalité de l’Inconscient et qui utilise le préfixe *un*. Il existe bien un mot *unzeitig*, mais il signifie ‘qui ne vient pas à temps, inopportune’. D’où sans doute la perplexité des traducteurs, qui on oscillé entre ‘atemporalité’ et ‘intemporalité’ (Press 1997, 1707f).

⁷⁹ In 1933, a little over a decade after the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud again returns to the question of the temporal distinction between conscious and the unconscious in *The New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Yet, unlike in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud’s concern here is on the antinomical character of the unconscious. Spurred by the fact that “logical laws of thought do not apply to the id” Freud writes: “we perceive with surprise an exception to the philosophical theorem that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time [*Im Es findet sich nichts, was der Zeitvorstellung entspricht*]; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and—a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought—no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time” (SE 22: 74; GW 15: 80).

Kant discusses the necessary role of space and time for thought in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” where he seeks to explain the necessary conditions of sensory experience, or the subjective conditioning of our immediate capacity for intuiting the world and its objects. An intuition, according to Kant, “refers to objects directly” (CPR A19/B33). In order for the subject to intuit an object two things must be in place. First, there must be an external stimulus that “corresponds to sensation,” an “empirical intuition” corresponding to “*matter*” (CPR A19/B34). In other words, one cannot intuit what cannot be felt, what is not “there.” Second, experience demands the organization of the sensory apprehension of this matter, or what Kant calls the “*form*” of intuition. Only through the combination of the sensory reception of empirical objects and the formal organization of this sensory reception can external objects appear to us. For Kant, the formal organization of matter is a function of the subject not found in the sensual reception of matter, and is thus the product of what Kant calls the “*pure intuition*” (CPR A21/B35). The pure intuitions organizing sensuous materiality, for Kant, are space and time.

For the experience of “this” or “that” object to occur, for there to be appearances of objects in the world at all, the object must first be ordered spatially and temporally. Kant calls the a priori organization of sensuous materiality into space “outer sense,” while he will call the a priori organization of appearances in time “inner sense.” Although both inner and outer sense are necessary for an object to appear for Kant, inner sense takes logical precedence. For As Kant writes, “[t]ime is the formal condition of all appearances generally” (CPR A33/B50).⁸⁰

The first thing to note about inner sense for Kant, is that time cannot be a “real” quality of objects. Time is neither “self-subsistent [*für sich selbst bestünde*]” nor does it “attach to things as an objective determination” that would “remain if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of our intuition of it” (CPR A33/B49). Rather, time is solely the product of the subject; as Kant writes, “apart from the subject [*außer dem Subjekte*], time is nothing” (CPR A35/B52).⁸¹ Or as Jean Laplanche notes in “Temporality and Translation,” Kant helped us understand “the capacity which the human being has of creating, of secreting—*sit venia verbo*—his own time” (Laplanche 1989, 243). Quite simply, for Kant time is part of the subject’s attempts to apprehend the world.⁸² Time is a subjective unfolding of inner sense that grasps the world by temporalizing space. Thus, Kant writes “[t]ime is a necessary presentation [*Vorstellung*] that underlies all intuitions” (CPR A31/B46).⁸³ Not only does time secure our immediate grasp of the world, it also makes “synthetic propositions possible a priori” (CPR

⁸⁰ Kant continues: “Space is the pure form of all outer appearances. Not all presentations, whether or not they have outer things as their objects, do yet in themselves, as determinations of the mind, belong to inner state; and this inner state is subject to the formal condition of inner intuition, and hence to the condition of time” (CPR A34/B51). In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Martin Heidegger argues that this means that “time takes precedence [*Vorrang*] over space. As universal pure intuition, it must be the dominant and essential element [*führenden und Tragenden Wesenelement*] of pure knowledge and hence of transcendence as well, since it is pure knowledge which makes transcendence possible (Heidegger 1962, 52; 1951, 51).

⁸¹ See also: Lorne Falkenstein, *Kant’s Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1995). Specifically pages 287-309.

⁸² It is because Freud’s Kantian inheritance is not taken seriously that the radically subjective nature of time in Freud’s discussion of the timeless nature of the unconscious is often misunderstood. For example, in an essay entitled “Time and the Unconscious,” Marie Bonaparte argues “[t]o say that the unconscious is timeless may mean that the unconscious fails to *perceive* time, that it receives absolutely no impression of it whatsoever” (Bonaparte 1940, 439). In this sense the unconscious is timeless because it is ignorant of an externally imposed time, a time that exceeds the subjective grasping of the world through time.

⁸³ In an article entitled, “Time, Space and Schematism” Gerold Prauss points out that Kant wavers between the priority of time and space as that which constitutes the enduring, permanence of one’s perception. As he writes, “[t]his unacceptable wavering between space and time can be understood as the consequence of not having grasped the spatio-temporal ambiguity of co-existence” (Prauss 1981, 10f.).

A39/B56). The necessity of inner sense's role in presenting the manifold of objects to the mind is found in how time organizes this presentation.⁸⁴

To demonstrate how inner sense temporally organizes the presentation of objects we can turn to Kant's discussion of the synthesis of apprehension in the first edition of the "Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding." In this section Kant argues "[n]o matter from where our presentations [*Vorstellungen*] arise" they "belong to inner sense," thus "all our cognitions are yet ultimately cast under [*unterworfen*] the formal condition of inner sense, i.e., to time" (CPR A99; *translation modified*). For Kant, time molds, or casts, the presentation of objects for us by ordering the impressions of sense experience sequentially. As Kant writes, there would be no object as such "if the mind did not in the sequence [*aufeinander*] of impressions following one another distinguish time" (CPR A99). The appearance of an object necessitates the sensual impression of the object. For one to experience sense impressions of the object, these impressions cannot stand as discrete moments ordered haphazardly. Rather, each discrete impression must have already been brought together as a sequence of impressions that are ordered in accordance to a linear concept of time. The object would not "endure" in our apprehension, if it this apprehension were not formally ordered in advance of the object by the subject's inner sense. Or as Kant writes:

[f]or any presentation [*Vorstellung*] as contained in one instant can never be anything but absolute unity. Now in order for this manifold to become unity of

⁸⁴ In *Heidegger, Kant & Time*, Charles M. Sherover has argued although Kant's concept of temporality is the "keystone" for the synthesis of the categories and thus cognition as such, time "remains, in the end, not the pulsating heart of the dynamic being, but an abstract logical function which is continually pointed to as necessary presupposition" (Sherover 1971, 248). Given the relationship between time in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the determinations of time in the categories, I would argue that time, for Kant, is not simply a static notion, but rather a linear notion that the categories order in more complex and dynamic ways.

intuition (as, e.g., in the presentation of space), it must first be gone through [*Durchlaufen*] and gathered together [*Zusammennehmung*]. (CPR A99)

Inner sense orders material impressions successively; it runs them together, allows each instant to become constellated with other instants in a sequential ordering of “nows.” Or one could say that the matter of sense impressions casts objects in the mold of time that is a progressive sequence. Each impression, if it is to be more than a momentary flash absolutely disconnected from other sense impressions, must first, as the very condition of its appearance to the subject, be subject to a progressive ordering of time that links each of these impressions together into one experience throughout this linear apprehension of the object. Thus, inner sense synthesizes impressions by subjecting them to an a priori successive model of temporality.

If inner sense organizes the manifold of intuition according to a progressive and linear form of time, then it should be of no surprise that, for Kant, the concepts that emerge from a higher order synthesis between the concepts of the understanding and the manifold of intuition are also subject to a linear notion of time. And this seems to be the full force of Kant’s claim that time is the essential element in schematism, which bridges the heterogeneous functions of the understanding and the intuition, or concepts and sense experience.⁸⁵ In other words, for concepts to apply to empirical objects there must be a mediating element that is common to both. For Kant, this mediating element is time. As Kant writes:

[t]ime, as the formal condition for the manifold of inner sense and hence for the connection of all presentations [*Vorstellungen*], contains an a priori manifold in

⁸⁵ In an article entitled, “Making Sense of Kant’s Schematism,” Michael Pendlebury argues that part of the task of the schematism is to “explain how intuitions could have the contents needed for them to be subsumed under the naturalised categories (and other concepts)” (Pendlebury 1995, 797).

pure intuition. Now a transcendental time determination is homogenous with the *category* (in which it consists) insofar as the time determination is *Universal* and rests on an a priori rule. But it is homogeneous with *appearance* [Erscheinung], on the other hand, insofar as every empirical presentation of the manifold contains *time*. Hence it will be possible for the category to be applied to appearances [Erscheinungen] by means of the transcendental time determination, which, as the schema of the concepts of the understanding, mediates the subsumption of appearances under the category. (CPR A138f./B177f.)

Experience, or consciousness as such, is dependent on the formal ordering of the sensuous apprehension of the object by the pure intuition of time and the temporal underpinnings of the categories of the understanding. In fact because time structures both the intuition and the understanding, the a priori status of time is the common meeting point between sense experience and concepts.⁸⁶ But here we should notice something interesting about the relationship between the pure intuition of time and transcendental time determination in the schematism. As we have noted, the pure intuition of time is grounded in a linear notion of time that structures sense impressions along a progressive model. If transcendental time determination is a higher order formalization of the temporalization of the appearances of objects that are supported by this linear notion of time, then the concepts of the understanding must also be grounded on a linear notion of time. And this seems to be what Kant means when he argues that “the schemata are nothing but a priori *time determinations* according to rules [Die Schemate sind daher nichts als Zeitbestimmungen a priori nach Regeln]” (CPR A145/B184). Concepts order

⁸⁶ See: Fiona Hughes, *Kant's Aesthetic Epistemology: Form and World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

impressions into different relationships of time that are originally constituted by the linear model of time found in the pure intuition of time. They bring the appearances of the intuition into a higher order structuring of the progressive linear model that supports sense experience.⁸⁷ Surely this is what Kant means when he writes “Different times are only parts of one and the same time” (CPR A32/B47).⁸⁸ Since linear time founds our sensory apprehension of the world, it is also the foundation of our conceptual judgments about the world. And in this sense we can see that what lies outside of the subject’s ability to temporalize, will also lie outside of the ability of the subject to cognize. Thus, consciousness, even rationality as such for Kant, fundamentally rests on a linear notion of time.⁸⁹ But what does Kant’s reliance on a linear model of time in order to distinguish

⁸⁷ See for instance, Michael Wood’s argument in “Kant’s Transcendental Schematism,” *Dialectica* 37, no. 3 (1983): 201-220.

⁸⁸ In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger will take this to be indicative of the ontological difference between Being and beings. Schematism, anchored in time itself schematizes particular ontic determinations of time or, “the schemata of the pure concepts of the understanding ‘determine time’” (Heidegger 1962, 109; 1951, 99). Having separated time from time determinations, Heidegger will go on to argue “As the sole, pure, universal image, time gives the horizon of transcendence a precursory inclusiveness. This unique, pure, ontological horizon is the condition of the possibility that an essent within it can have this or that particular overt and ontic horizon. Time not only gives transcendence a precursory unifying cohesion but as the pure self-giving offers it, in general, something on the order of a check. Times makes perceptible to a finite being the ‘opposition’ of objectivity, which opposition belongs to the finitude of that act of orientation by which transcendence takes place” (Heidegger 1962, 113; 1951, 102).

⁸⁹ In order to demonstrate this let us take as an example the schemata of time that form the concepts of actuality, possibility, and necessity in Kant’s category of modality. In order for any of these concepts to be legitimately applied, there must first be an empirical object that can be sustained by the a priori linear structuring of the time of sensory experience. As Kant writes the object falls under the concept of existence if it exists “within a determinate time [*bestimmten Zeit*]” or specific succession of instants that are progressively strung together (CPR A145/B185). If the object does not fall under a determinate time, but a rather can exist at “at some time [*zu irgendeiner Zeit*]” then it falls under the concept of possibility (CPR A145/B185). A possible object is, hence, an object that has not been brought into this succession of moments, but has the capability of being brought into a future succession of moments. If the object must exist “at all time [*zu aller Zeit*]” then it falls under the concept of necessity, which means that the object not only exists at this particular moment on the line but has existed on all the moments prior to this moment and will exist in all moment to come after this one moment (CPR A145/B185). Thus, when the object becomes conceptualized, at least in light of the category of modality, the object is brought into different constellations of time that accord with the linear nature of the pure intuition of time. Just as the sensuous intuition of the object demands the linear ordering of sense impressions, concepts themselves will be different variations of the form of time this linear model of time.

between the presentation and conceptualization of objects tell us about Freud's invocation of Kant in order to make the distinction between the conscious and unconscious?

When Freud appeals to Kant to distinguish conscious from unconscious, he appeals to the productive role of the transcendental schema in presenting objects to the subject. In as much as what is conditioned must be ordered sequentially, brought into a temporal sequence, that which is not schematized lies outside of appearance and thus this temporal sequence. Thus for Freud, what is unconscious is unschematized, hence the unconscious's characteristic of timelessness.

If Freud, as we saw, envisions psychoanalysis as turning Kant's "Copernican turn" back in on ourselves, then to understand what remains unschematized we must ask what do we mean by "selves." If we mean that there is a part of ourselves that escapes our conceptualization of the self, such as the transcendental unity of apperception, then the unconscious would be that which is left out of our secondary reflection on our self.⁹⁰ In other words when presenting ourselves as an object of examination to ourselves, there is something about ourselves that will escape that observation and will remain beyond the limits of reason to think. It would be that which could not be temporalized because it is not subject to the linear model of time that the schema presupposes.⁹¹ It would appear as

⁹⁰ For example see: Jean Laplanche and Serge LaClaire, "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study," *Yale French Studies* 48, *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis* (1972): 118-175.

⁹¹ Others, such as Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche, and Alan Bass have argued that the unconscious has a form of temporality. In the cases of Lacan and Laplanche these claims center on the fact they attempt to reconcile Freud's claim about the a-temporal nature of the unconscious by ascribing it the role of the progenitor of time. This of course is founded in thinking that the unconscious is analogous to Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, but also to a specifically Hegelian reading of Freud's claim. Bass, as I will take up shortly, argues that the temporality of the unconscious is discontinuous.

the non-identical, that real part of our selves that appears a no “thing” at all, from the perspective of an already cognizing subject.⁹²

Yet, I think that Freud’s appeal to Kantian schematism in his claims about the timeless nature of the unconscious is not only located on the level of a secondary cognitive reflection on the subject itself, but has a more material and primary function in Freud’s genetic account of the development of the drives, the unconscious, and the ego. In other words, I would like to suggest that just as Marx turns the dialectic to the “real” objects that impress themselves on us, so too does Freud materialize Kant’s phenomenological investigation. In essence, I would like to ask, how envisioning Freud’s understanding of the drives through the light of Kantian schematism might help us to understand the temporality of the drives, the formation of the ego, but also the temporality of repression. In light of this question, I would like to suggest that by taking Freud’s Kant seriously we might be forced to renegotiate our understanding not only of the timeless nature of the unconscious, but also the temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*.⁹³

II. Defensive Schematization: The Temporality of Freudian Repression

⁹² This is akin to the argument Slavoj Žižek following Lacan, makes in *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* where he writes: “[t]his gap which separates the empirical I’s self-experience from the I of transcendental apperception coincides with the distinction between existence qua experiential reality and existence qua logical construction [...] The status of Kant’s I of transcendental apperception is that of a *necessary* and simultaneously *impossible* logical construction [...] in short: of the Lacanian *real*” (Žižek 1993, 14). He also comments on this relationship in *The Parallax View*, specifically pages 20-25.

⁹³ This sentiment is similar to one expressed by André Green in an article entitled “Freud’s concept of Temporality: Differences with Current Ideas,” where he suggest that the move from the first topography to the second topography is a move from the unconscious to the drives. He writes “I think that, in the second topographical model, the inclusion of the drive—in fact erotic and destructive drives in the psychical apparatus under the instance of the Id—is replacing the unconscious. One has to consider the unthinkability of the Id, the movements it provokes, and the possibility or the impossibility of transforming them” (Green 2008, 1039).

Freud's appropriation of Kantian schematism is essential for not only understanding the drives, but also for both the development of the ego and its defenses, and specifically the temporality of repression.⁹⁴ By following out Freud's materialist Kantianism we will see that the drives themselves are phenomenal and that their organizing principle, the ego's defense of repression, is based on the linear model of time that Freud presupposes by leaning on Kant's schematism to think the phenomenal nature of the drives.

In Freud's work the ego develops through the organization of the drives. Thus, one of the central questions of Freudian psychoanalysis concerns how this organization occurs. Framed another way, Freudian psychoanalysis takes as one of its cornerstones, the fact that infants experience an originary helplessness (*Hilflösigkeit*) characterized by an inability to distinguish between one's self and the external world.⁹⁵ The question

⁹⁴ In some ways this is similar to Adrian Johnston's argument in "*Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, where he argues that the drives themselves are split between two differing temporalities that correspond to the phenomenal divide. The fundamental thesis of Johnston's project is to argue that the "metapsychological structure of *Trieb* is split along the lines of two irreconcilable, incompatible axes—an *axis of iteration* (source-pressure) and an *axis of alteration* (aim-object). These two axes are roughly analogous to the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal as utilized in his exposition of why self-consciousness is shaped by its own internal conditions of (im)possibility: Fully transparent self-consciousness is impossible" (Johnston 2005, 149). Yet, unlike Johnston, I am taking a Freudian approach to this question, which necessitates valuing the materialist conditions that give rise to conceptualization itself. This is different from Johnston's Lacanian approach that favors the symbolic and represents a Hegelian reading of Freud. See Also: Andreas Hamburger. "Zeitfenster: Für eine Metapsychologie der Gegenwart," *Forum Psychoanalyse* 25 (2009): 199-218.

⁹⁵ In his 1926 text *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* Freud claims all anxiety has its root in feelings of helplessness, or a "reaction to the felt loss of the object" (SE 20: 137). In this instance this felt loss of the object is the mother. Freud, thus carries this loss further claiming that this felt loss of the object which gives rise to anxiety is actually the presence of helplessness which confronts the child when the object is no longer present. He writes, "The reason why the infant in arms wants to perceive the presence of its mother is only because it already knows by experience that she satisfies all its needs without delay. The situation, then, which it regards as a 'danger' and against which it wants to be safeguarded is that of non-satisfaction, of a *growing tension due to need*, against which it is helpless" (SE 20: 137). Thus, whereas in other texts which draw upon this original helplessness like *The Future of an Illusion* Freud ties the protective function not to the father but to the mother. This anxiety sparked by the loss of the protective and nurturing object of the mother is genetically related to the helplessness of the infant upon birth, upon being thrown into the world and subjected to an excessive amount of stimulation that it cannot master. Freud writes "What both

becomes then, how does the infant move from this state to a form of consciousness resting on this distinction. In other words, how does the infant come to orient itself in the world? To shift registers once again, one could say the question driving Freudian psychoanalysis is the following. If one concedes that the origin of concepts and consciousness is material, then we must also concede that humans have neither concepts nor a complete sense of self when they are born. If humans do not have these concepts and the sense of consciousness organizing these concepts to begin with, then how do we give a materialist answer for these developments that does not assume a naïve realism? I would like to suggest that the way that Freud answers this question is by both attending to Kant's "Copernican turn" while simultaneously inverting Kantian schematism. This inversion occurs through shifting the function of the a priori categories of the understanding to the temporality of pleasure and bodily drives. And in fact, it is only in understanding Freud's materialist modification of the synthetic role of Kantian schematism, that we can fully understand not only the function of repression, but also the temporality that repression assumes.

To begin with we must turn to the development of the ego. For Freud, this ego emerges through the attempts of the infant to schematize both internal and external stimulus. This development is grounded in the surface of the body. As he writes in his 1923 text *The Ego and Id*, the ego "first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a

situations have in common is the economic disturbance caused by an accumulation of amounts of stimulation which require to be disposed of" (SE 20: 137). Faced initially with the inability to master this stimulation, both internal and external, the infant begins to understand that an external object, the mother, takes care of these needs. Freud notes, "the content of the danger it fears is displaced from the economic situation on to the condition which determined that situation, viz., the loss of object" (SE 20: 138). Thus, anxiety is a product of both mental and biological helplessness. This original anxiety, in terms of the loss of object, becomes transferred and extended to other objects as the infant matures: from castration to the fear of the loss of the love of the super ego

surface entity but is itself the projection of a surface” (SE 19: 26; GW 13: 253).⁹⁶

Consciousness, and the objects that can be represented to consciousness, arise from the process of sorting out where our body ends and where the world begins. For what is the body if not “a place from which both external and internal perception may spring” (SE 19: 25; GW 13: 253)? Since the body is both the source of internal excitation and what receives and processes external stimulation through the senses, its surface, (and subsequently the “projection” of the body that allows us to experience it as surface),⁹⁷ is the site of receiving this stimulus.⁹⁸ Resonating with Nietzsche’s argument in “Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense,” Freud seems to be claiming the sensory apprehension of the world is a translation of both internal and external stimulus through the body.⁹⁹ It is at this first translation of stimulus through the body that Freud materializes Kantian schematism.¹⁰⁰ The body is the axis of translating our reception of stimulus into concepts

⁹⁶ Freud develops the concept of the ego in his 1923 text *The Ego and Id*, where he constructs the second topography of the psyche. As opposed to the topography of the unconscious, pre-conscious, and conscious, Freud offers the topography of the ego, id, super-ego in this text. This shift in topography is a response to the fact that the “*Ucs.* does not coincide with the repressed”—that while “all that is repressed is *Ucs.*” not everything that is “*Ucs.* is repressed” (SE 19: 18; GW 13: 244). The second topography allows Freud to tend to this distinction by recognizing that the middle term, the ego, is actually an extension of the id, and thus part of it is, “and Heaven knows how important a part,” unconscious (SE 19: 18; GW 13: 244).

⁹⁷ Freud’s description of the ego as a bodily ego, and especially in relationship to the “projection” of the surface of the bodily ego, is exactly what Jacques Lacan will pick up on in his foundational essay “The Mirror Stage.”

⁹⁸ An interesting correlation to this famous passage in *The Ego and Id* can be found in Freud’s “Findings, Ideas, Problems,” where he writes “Space may be the projection of the extension of the psychical apparatus. No other derivation is probable. Instead of Kant’s *a priori* determinants of our psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it” (SE 23: 300).

⁹⁹ I am specifically thinking about the first metaphor that grounds knowledge for Nietzsche in this essay: “[t]he stimulation of the nerve is first translated into an image” (Nietzsche 1999, 144).

¹⁰⁰ One might say that thinking the transcendental nature of materiality and the drives is the project of Deleuze. For a discussion of Deleuze’s relationship to Kant in terms of the appearance of objects and the drives see: Michael J. Olsen, “Transcendental Idealism, Deleuze and Guattari, and the Metaphysics of Objects,” in *Thinking Between Deleuze and Kant: A Strange Encounter*, ed. Edward Willatt and Matt Lee (New York: Continuum, 2009), 51-170.

and thus the a priori reception of objects occurs not through cognition, but rather the body's orientation and grasp of what besieges it. In other words, the categories are bodily categories.¹⁰¹ Whereas the reception of this stimulus demands we render sense of this stimulus, and in as much as the bringing into appearance of the object of these stimuli demands these objects are temporalized, then, one might say this bodily ego, standing at the threshold between internal and external excitations, translates stimulus by temporalizing it. While, as we will see, Freud is concerned with external stimulus, the primary focus of Freud's inverted "Copernican turn" is internal stimulus: the drives. For, as Freud repeatedly points out throughout his work while one can flee external stimulus, "one cannot run away from oneself" (SE 20: 203; GW 14: 230).

Drives, for Freud, are constant internal excitations we cannot escape through flight.¹⁰² Since these sources of stimulus must also be translated, they too have a phenomenal status in Freud's work. Freud makes this clear in his essay "The Unconscious," when he argues that "drive can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents it can [*nur die Vorstellung, die ihn repräsentiert*]" (SE 14: 177; GW 10: 275, *translation modified*).¹⁰³ The drive-in-itself, if you will, cannot appear for us except as a presentation, a *Vorstellung*. Drives are a form

¹⁰¹ What Julia Kristeva calls this the semiotic in *Revolution in Poetic Language* is similar to this bodily schematization that occurs prior to the formal ordering of the drives in light of the symbolic, or developed ego. A schematization that not only orders prior to the institution of the symbolic, but remains the material vehicle of language, or meaning. The course shaking of the vocal chords as the infant screams becomes transformed in the curt sentence that demands. The spacing between sobs and laughs becomes the rhythmic lilt of everyday speech.

¹⁰² While the drives become associated with objects, and thus an externality, this only occurs after they have been organized by an ego that can determine the inside from the outside. Thus, before this ego fully develops, the drives remain unfocused, unorganized, and internal.

¹⁰³ In the Standard Edition there is the well-known problem of how Strachey translated the German word *Trieb*. Normally translated as instinct in the Standard Edition, throughout the rest of this text I will translate it as drive, as is now recognized to be a better translation.

of internal material excitation; welling up from within our bodies, they can only appear, or become conscious, as a presentation, as something bound to a temporal rule.¹⁰⁴ In other words, not unlike the fact that the manifold of intuition must be synthesized with the concepts of the understanding in order to “be” for us in any way, so too must the drives become synthesized with ideas in order to become conscious. The conscious appearance of the drive thus necessitates temporalization, but the materiality of the drive-in-itself will always escape this temporalization, and thus conscious presentation. In light of the phenomenal status of the drive Freud writes it “appears [*erscheint*] to us as a border-concept [*Grenzbegriff*] between the mental and the somatic” (SE 14: 121f.; GW 10: 214, *translation modified*). And in fact this splitting of the drive in the body’s attempt to temporalize stimulus represents the timeless nature of the unconscious. The unconscious is nothing more than that which has failed to be schematized through the rule of the body.

If the unconscious is composed of material drive-in-itself, the part of the drive that remains outside time and presentation, and if these excitations demand conceptualization, then the manner in which the drive-in-itself would become a “drive-presentation” would be found in how the ego translates the drive into time. Freud describes the egoic function as the following:

[i]ts psychological function consists in raising the passage [of events] in the id to a higher dynamic level (perhaps by transforming freely mobile energy into bound energy, such as corresponds to the preconscious state); its constructive function

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida takes up the issue of the drives and synthesis in an essay entitled “Resistances,” in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, & Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 25-27.

consists in interpolating [*einschaltet*], between drive-demand [*Triebanspruch*] and the action that satisfies it, the activity of thought which, after taking its bearings in the present and assessing earlier experiences, endeavours by means of experimental actions to calculate the consequences of the course of action proposed. (SE 23: 199; GW 17: 129, *translation modified*)

The bodily ego creates “bound energy” by conceptualizing unconscious, and thus a-temporal, drives. In doing so, it brings the drive into the “present.”¹⁰⁵ By turning freely mobile energy into bound energy, or essentially temporalizing the drive into a present drive-presentation, the ego translates the drives into different symbolic possibilities of being phenomenally expressed in consciousness. These possibilities are synthesized by the ego as an act of schematization.¹⁰⁶ The expressions are then organized according to the subject’s history and the ego’s ability to calculate action in the future. The ego not only binds the drive by bringing it into the present, but also performs a higher order structuring of the drive by referencing it against the past and the future. One might say that the ego schematizes the sensuous materiality of the drive with its representative concept. It thus acts as a bridge between two heteronymous functions of the subject: conceptualization and intuition of an internal material stimulus. Just as the transcendental function of the pure intuition of time bridges concepts and the empirical manifold, so too

¹⁰⁵ In “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” Freud makes a similar claim about the relationship between drive and consciousness when he writes, “It is probable that thinking was originally unconscious, in so far as it went beyond mere ideational representations [*Vorstellen erhob*] and was directed to the relations between impressions of objects [*Objekteindrücke*] and that it did not acquire further qualities, perceptible to consciousness, until it became connected with verbal residues [*Wortreste*]” (SE 12: 221; GW 8: 233f.)

¹⁰⁶ In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze argues that these syntheses are forms of schematism supported by the repetition of the death drive. He writes that “To repetition that binds—constituting the present—and repetition that erases—constituting the past—we must add a third, that saves or fails to save, depending on the modes of combination of the other two” (Deleuze 1991, 115).

will Freud write that all that becomes bound in the ego is placed in time, while all that remains unbound to concepts or affects, remains in the unconscious, remains timeless.

While the development of the ego occurs by schematizing excitations the question remains by what rule, by what concept does this translation occur? Whereas for Kant these translations occur in accordance with the regimented temporal ordering of the categories of the understanding, for Freud this translation first occurs through a temporal schema that obeys the pleasure principle. Freud explicitly discusses the role of the rule of pleasure in sorting out the distinction between stimuli, and thus the development of the ego in his 1915 essay “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” and his 1925 essay “Negation.” The question framing both of these discussions of the development of the ego is: how does the ego establish the differentiation between itself and the world, that is how does the ego establish a sense of spatiality. Freud writes:

[i]n so far as the ego is auto-erotic, it has no need of the external world, but, in consequence of experiences undergone by the drives of self-preservation [*Icherhaltungstriebe*], it acquires objects from that world, and, in spite of everything, it cannot avoid feeling internal drive stimuli [*Triebereize*] for a time as unpleasurable. Under the dominance of the pleasure principle a further development now takes place in the ego. In so far as the objects which are presented to it are sources of pleasure, it takes them into itself, ‘introjects’ them (to use Ferenczi’s [1909] term); and, on the other hand, it expels whatever within itself becomes a cause of unpleasure. (SE 14: 135f.; GW 10: 228)

The ego establishes a sense of itself as distinct from the world by first schematizing stimuli, then spatializing it through the rule of pleasure and displeasure. Very concretely,

for Freud, the ego moves from inner sense to outer sense by temporalizing stimulus in accordance with the pleasure-unpleasure series. At the early stages of this process, the infant has not fully distinguished between the inside and the outside, leading to this spatialization taking the early forms of introjection and projection. The inside, that is what we take as part of ourselves, that which we willingly take into ourselves, becomes associated with that which appears as pleasurable. The outside, what we take as distinct from ourselves, what we resist taking into ourselves, becomes associated with what appears as unpleasurable. As Freud writes in “Negation,” “the original pleasure-ego wants to introject into itself everything that is good and to eject from itself everything that is bad. What is bad, what is alien to the ego and what is external are, to begin with, identical” (SE 19: 237; GW 14: 13). What the flesh recoils from appears as outside; what the flesh welcomes appears as inside. If we are to read this essay in light of what I have been arguing is Freud’s reliance on Kant, then we can see that for Freud appearances are conditioned by the logically prior temporal schematization of a stimulus that endures and is then spatialized in accordance with the rule of the pleasure principle.¹⁰⁷ And in this sense we could then say that the body’s enduring reception of stimulus informs what is not yet, but will become the unity of consciousness based on the affective distinction between inside and outside. While eventually the infant is able to schematize in line with a more stable sense of outside and inside, that is to institute the reality principle, this originary role of pleasure’s rule in schematizing stimulus remains, silently influencing the

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the consequences of this see Julia Kristeva’s *The Power of Horror* and Jean Hyppolite’s “Spoken Commentary on Freud’s Negation” in the Appendix to Jacques Lacan’s *Seminar One: Freud’s Papers on Technique*.

origin of our concepts, ideas, judgment, and even our very motility in the world.¹⁰⁸ For what else could the pleasure principle be but that rule by which the ego organizes not only its drives but also the objects to which they eventually become attached? And what else could the non-identical be except that which remains outside of this process of schematizing both internal and external stimulus: the drive-in-itself that disrupts the distinctions to which we so fervently hold.

Since schematism is bound by the rules of the categories for Kant, determinative judgment does not discriminate between empirical objects. Yet, for Freud the synthetic function of the ego is based not on the categories of the understanding, but the schematization that occurs between the body's a priori temporalization and the development of the spatiality of the pleasure-unpleasure series. Because the rule is not first and foremost rational, but rather affective, once established the ego discriminates between empirical excitations based on the pleasure and unpleasure they provide. Thus, whereas the Kantian subject shapes appearance in advance through the categories of understanding, the Freudian ego shapes appearance in advance through the bodily temporalization of pleasure and unpleasure. Where for Kant this occurs without

¹⁰⁸ Since the ego manages not only the drives, but also one's relationship with externality reality, the ego binds the drives to ideas in ways that broker both the demands of the id and the demands of self-preservation. This allows for the discharge of the drives in a way that preserves the subject from harm. Thus one can understand how, the ego organizes drive representations in accordance with the reality principle. The function of repression emerges at the heart of the schematic function ego when the pleasure of the drives threaten the subject and the ego must reorganize how this drive is translated into the linear experience of time. The ego's translation of the drives into conscious phenomena relies on the ability to defer, delay, displace and at times refuse the discharge of a drive at the behest of the reality principle. In this sense the reality principle that informs how the ego organizes drive representations. As Freud writes, the job of the ego is to bring "the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies" (SE 19: 25; GW 13: 253). As we have seen the ego's relationship to the id is the translation of the id's noumenal content into symbolic representations that can be consciously organized. We now can see that the principle of this organization is the influence. It operates on deferring the pleasure of discharge until a later time, or it operates by displacing, condensing, all of which demands the repression of the drives.

discrimination, for Freud this occurs by discriminating against those stimuli causing unpleasure. In other words, unlike Kant, for Freud the ego binds and brings before itself the appearance of some excitations, while barring the entrance of others. And here we should note that, if the ego creates drive-presentations out of the drive-in-itself by synthesizing them through the spatiality of pleasure, a process that temporalizes and splits the drive, then the manner in which the ego must creatively negotiate how it binds internal excitations, would also occur at the level of the temporal structure of the synthesis it performs.¹⁰⁹ Thus, repression, one of the functions against letting certain drives into consciousness, is the ego's manipulation of the temporal aspects of this synthetic process, and as Adrian Johnston has noted in *Time Driven* "Freud's concept of repression (and its accompanying defense mechanisms) marks a break with Kant" (Johnston 2005, 109).

In his 1915 metapsychological essay "Repression," Freud argues that repression defends against drive-presentations that are "irreconcilable with other claims and intentions" (SE 14: 147; GW 10: 249).¹¹⁰ In other words, the operation of repression negotiates the potential conflict between drive-presentations that would "cause pleasure [*Lust*] in one place and unpleasure [*Unlust*] in another" if the ego were to allow them access to consciousness (SE 14: 147; GW 10: 249). Repression, hence, manages this potential conflict of the drives by reordering the egoic synthesis of the drive representations in time. Drive-presentations are denied access to consciousness and thus

¹⁰⁹ This seems to be what Freud means when he speaks of the conscious binding of drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in relationship to the trauma of those excitations that cannot be bound by the pathways already carved out in consciousness (SE 18: 34f.; GW 13: 35f.)

¹¹⁰ Throughout his corpus Freud's use of the term repression vacillates between a more general concept that encapsulates several different processes of defense and a more restricted use that deals with one specific form of defense. See: Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 390. Here I am discussing the repression as a specific mechanism of defense.

entrance into the subject's history. Repression reorders this egoic synthesis of the subject's experience of time, creating an "outlaw [*vogelfrei*]" of the banned drive-presentation, placing it outside of the "great organization of the ego" and subjecting it "only to the laws which govern the realm of the unconscious" (SE 20: 153; GW 14: 185).

Repression bans the drive-presentation from the conscious experience of time in two different phases: "primal repression [*Urverdrängung*]" and "repression proper" [*die eigentliche Verdrängung*] (SE 14: 148; GW 10: 250). Primal repression is the "first phase" of repression where a "psychical (ideational) representative of the drive" is "denied entrance into consciousness [*daß der psychischen (Vorstellungs-) Repräsentanz des Triebes die Übernahme in Bewußte versagt wird*]" (SE 14: 148; GW 10: 250). In this instance, the drive-presentation, already the product of the temporal synthesis of the ego, becomes discarded from the subject's history.¹¹¹ The *Vorstellung* remains unconnected to the subject's reflective experience of its own history. In order to keep the schematized drive-presentation from becoming conscious, the psyche withdraws an expenditure of psychical investment or "cathexis" from the drive-presentation, effectively unbinding it from the temporal suturing of "nows" forming the basis of the ego's experience of time (SE 14: 181; GW 10: 280). In order to hold back the drive-presentation from consciousness, the ego expends an amount of energy equal to that of the drive-presentation. Freud calls this counter-energy "*anticathexis*"; it "represents the permanent expenditure [of energy] of primal repression, and which also guarantees the permanence

¹¹¹ In his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, written from 1916-17 at the height of the First World War, Freud analogizes this process with political censorship. He writes that "Take up any political newspaper and you will find that here and there the text is absent" (SE 15: 139). This is, obviously, "the work of the press censorship. In these empty places there was something that displeased the higher censorship authorities and for that reason it was removed—a pity, you feel, since not doubt it was the most interesting thing in the paper—the 'best bit' (SE 15: 139).

of that repression” (SE 14: 181; GW 10: 280). Held back by an egoic counter-force that bars its entrance into time, the “outlawed” drive-presentation “persists unaltered” in the “dark” timelessness of the unconscious (SE 14: 149; GW 10: 251). Thus, we can understand that when Freud claims that the result of this first phase of repression causes a “*fixation*” of the drive and its associated representation, he means that the drive although schematized, has not been conceptualized and thus has become fixated in a certain moment of time, while simultaneously being excised from the subject’s linear temporalization of experience as such.

Given that the unconscious primary processes aids these banned drive-presentations by way of displacement and condensation, the ego must employ a second, higher order, form of repression to ensure that the drive-presentation does not enter into the subject’s history.¹¹² The second phase of repression, what Freud calls “repression proper,” is “actually an after-pressure [*Nachdrängen*]” that affects the “trains of thought [*Gedankenzüge*]” associated with the repressed drive-presentation (SE 14: 148; GW 10:

¹¹² As a result of this first phase of repression, unconscious processes are, “attuned” as it is to the flux and flow of drive tensions. They advocate for the release of the drive-presentations. As Freud notes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the primary processes govern the regulation of drive-tensions in the unconscious by manipulating the structure of the drives-representations: displacement and condensation. These two processes are “directed towards seeking the *free discharge* of the quantities of excitations” (SE 5: 599). On the one hand, when faced with a drive-presentation that has been repressed, the unconscious condenses the stagnant drive-presentations with those that are associated it, thus creating a “composite idea” that is “endowed with great intensity” (SE 5: 657, 595). This newly formed representation, as a composite of both the banned drive and its associative representations, is thus said to be “overdetermined.” It is the folding of a whole train of thought into one singular idea. On the one hand, whereas condensation operates by forming a composite idea that has the banned idea and drive folded into it, displacement involves the sliding the banned drive from its current representation to a new “intermediate” representation that is associated with it but stands separate from it (SE 5: 657). In other words, in displacement the banned drive itself becomes displaced amongst a train of associated ideas. As we can see both of these functions manipulate the fact that the drive relies on ideas, or representations, to be discharged. It is in taking advantage of this split in representation that the unconscious sneaks the barred drive past the “anti-cathexis” of primary repression (SE 14: 148). Thus as result of primary repression, a system of substitution and exchange forms between drives and representations so that these “banned drives” can become bound and expressed in consciousness (SE 14: 179). Under the institution of repression, this symbolic exchange “acts as point of passage” between the unconscious and the conscious under the law of the reality principle (SE 14: 182).

250). This second phase of repression is thus defined by its attempts to “repulse” the associative representations of the originally repressed drive-presentation. In this sense, “repression proper” cuts out or censors these conceptual associations within the “trains of thought” that could become associated with the fixated drive representation of primal repression. It is the re-organization of presentations in order to ensure the originally repressed drive-presentation does not enter into the subject’s history. One could even say it is a reordering of the subject’s history itself to ensure the ban placed on drive-presentation stays in place. Repression is, thus, the egoic manipulation of the entrance of drive-presentations into the subject’s history. It maintains an experience of linear time free from the representations that threaten this reflective historical construction. The question remains, does Freud’s modification of Kantian schematism still assume a linear rationality, especially in light of the defensive function of repression in this materialist schematization?

Alan Bass takes up the temporality of repression in Freud by arguing that it is a higher order form of temporality that imposes a linear model of time on a primary unorganized temporality.¹¹³ In his essay “Time and the Witch: Femininity, Metapsychology, and the Temporality of the Unconscious,” Bass argues consciousness is organized by a “primary” and “secondary” temporality “in the same way as the primary

¹¹³ Nishad Patnaik makes a similar distinction in the essay “Fetishism and its Relation to Time.” There Patnaik argues that Patnaik argues that “we shall attempt to provide a ‘schematization’ through time, by developing Freud’s ‘very obscure’ remarks on the ‘Kantian theorem’ (concerning the *a priori* character of space and time). In the first *Critique*, we shall argue, there is a tendency towards the spatialization of time (along with the corresponding temporalization of space), which simultaneously hides within it a pre-temporal time, a non-moment or absolute particularity that is the very origin of conscious or phenomenal time” (Patnaik 2006, 74). This pretemporal time, Patnaik argues, will be a “‘fetishized time’ that is the very time of consciousness. Thus, the pervasive extent of the ‘disavowal of difference’, as the very basis for ‘human reality’, would begin to emerge” (Patnaik 2006, 75).

process is related to the secondary processes (secondary elaboration), or primary narcissism to secondary narcissism: the secondary formation is necessary obscuring of the primary one” (Bass 1976, 890). For Bass primary temporality, like the primary processes and primary narcissism, operates “discontinuously” because it is rooted in the death drive’s continual act of differentiation (Bass 1976, 899). Because the temporality of the unconscious is discontinuous it defies the logic of non-contradiction and acts as the cause of the temporal irruptions of the return of the repressed. Secondary temporality, according to Bass, represses the discontinuity of the primary temporality by instituting a logical sense of linear time. Thus for Bass, linear time is a defense against the differentiating primary temporality of the death drive. If we were to shift this claim more directly into our register, we could say that for Bass, the temporality of Freud’s schematization of the drives is decidedly non-linear.

Although Freud materializes Kant’s phenomenal distinction, and although his concept of repression marks a large departure from Kant, I would like to suggest Freud’s concept of repression assumes a linear model of time. What is discontinuous in Freud’s account of the primary processes is not time, as Bass suggests, but rather the spatialization of stimulus—the introjection and projection marking the imaginary and fantastical attempts of the young ego to fully distinguish itself from the world. Repression acts against the construction of the linear model of time not with it as Bass suggests. It is, as we will see in Freud’s account of trauma, a second order operation assuming the prior bodily temporalization of stimulus. In fact, as I have shown, primary repression does not create a linear model of time, but rather cuts holes into the sequentially of linear time. Secondary repression then ensures that the subject’s experience of time remains linear

despite the missing “nows” ripped from the progression of time. Repression defends against unpleasurable stimuli by manipulating the process of schematization. It excises stimuli that have already been temporalized, and thus, in some sense prepared for conscious rationalization. Thus, Freud’s concept of repression is based on the assumption of the linear nature of temporality; for the very function of repression is to excise schematized stimulus from sequentially of time according the demands of the pleasure principle.

If we shift registers from the metapsychological level to the subjective experience of analysis, we can see, perhaps more clearly, why repression assumes the linearity of time and thus why it cannot be the non-identical. For the subject it is, of course, always a problem of memory. In the analytic situation, one uses the language of both repressed memories and unconscious memories to speak of these repressed presentations. These memories become repressed when the affect attached to them comes into conflict with the reality principle and thus call into action the censorship functions of the ego. The ego censors the drive-presentation by manipulating how the drive is cast into the subject’s experience of time and conceptualization of its own history. In order to preserve this ban on the outlawed drive-presentation, all other presentations associated with this memory become barred as well. It is literally the attempt to erase the drive-presentation from conscious and structuring all conscious associations to serve this erasure. Or as Jean Laplanche argues, in “A Short Treatise on the Unconscious,”

[...] it is at the level of *temporalisation*, conceived of as narrativisation, as the translation of enigmas coming from the other, as continual ‘self-theorisation’, that

repression is located: in as much as it involves precisely the failure of temporalisation and the deposit of untranslated residues. (Laplanche 1999a, 101)

And what more is this failure to bring into time than the erasure of a moment in linear time? What more is an erasure than a moment in time which has lost its home amongst schematized “nows” and is thus forced to wander along this chain of experience looking for a new home, one which will welcome it under another name?

For Freud, the material of analysis is memory. In his 1914 essay “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through,” he argues that “[d]escriptively speaking” the aim of analysis “is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, it is to overcome resistances due to repression [*Deskriptiv: die Ausfüllung der Lücken der Erinnerung, dynamisch: die Überwindung der Verdrängungswiderstände*]” (SE 12: 147f.; GW 10: 127). The aim of analysis is to neutralize the effects of those drives that have been simultaneously bound and repressed by the ego’s schematizing synthesis, by making conscious what is unconscious or filling in the gaps in memory. For Freud, the work of the analyst, as he notes in numerous essays, is akin to work of the archaeologist—constantly unearthing and attempting to reconstruct a moment in time that has been forgotten, defended against, excised from our histories. To speak of “gaps [*der Lücken*]” or of “filling in [*Ausfüllung*]” presupposes a lack in the conscious construction of one’s history. And as we have seen this lack is created by the egoic defense against certain drive-presentations. The process of analysis rids the subject of these defensive gaps by lifting the structures of forgetting when the analyst untangles the resistances of repression. This loosening of egoic resistances allows the analysand to fill in these gaps in memory because it brings

forth the missing memories that these resistances have held back.¹¹⁴ Thus, if the task is to bring forth what has been forgotten by disentangling the resistances that prevent the memory from being recognized, and this “bringing forth” is the same as subjecting this memory, or this drive-presentation, to its place within the subject’s linear experience of time. By attending to the priority of bodily temporality in Freud’s work, we can begin to shift the metapsychological axis of investigation into the non-identical from model of linear and non-linear temporality to the axis of time and timelessness. But in order to complete this shift in emphasis, we must first investigate the relationship between the timeless nature of the unconsciousness and linear time that defines the more radical forms of temporality in psychoanalysis: the “return of the repressed” and “repetition compulsion.”

III. Working through *Nachträglichkeit*

The repressed always returns, defining what many have argued is the radical temporality of the psychoanalytic critique of the modern subject.¹¹⁵ The psychoanalytic premise of not only the “indestructibility” of the repressed, but also its continual influence on the present stands in stark contrast with the assumptions of a rationality grounded in linear notion of time (SE 5: 577; GW 2&3: 583). The subject of

¹¹⁴ In thinking about this specific function of analysis and reification Joel Whitebook argues “the goal of analysis is to dissolve those objectifications and expand the realm of consciousness, spontaneity, and autonomy” (Whitebook 2002a, 1214).

¹¹⁵ For example see: Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974); Jacques Lacan, “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty,” in *Écrits*, trans. and ed. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 161-175; Jean Laplanche, “Time and the Other,” in *Essays on Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 234-259; Jean Laplanche, “Temporality and Translation: For a Return to the Question of the Philosophy of Time,” *Stanford Literature Review* 6, no. 2 (1989): 241-259; Malcolm Bowie *Psychoanalysis and the Future of Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994); Sara McNamara, “The Retroactive Temporality of Subjectivity,” PhD diss., State University of New York, Stony Brook, 2011.

psychoanalysis is positioned as out of joint, out of time. The repressed past, having never been, is never past; it constantly trips up the subject, foiling its plans, sabotaging its speech. As Marcuse notes in *Eros and Civilization*, by “undermining the notion of the individual of self-mastery” psychoanalysis “undermines one of the strongest ideological fortifications of modern culture—namely the notion of the autonomous individual” (Marcuse 1974, 57). The subject, caught in the thrall of the unruly drives and an unmasterable past, is divided from himself or her self and simply cannot master himself or herself. Already always belated, the subject of psychoanalysis experiences the non-linearity of time.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, if Freud’s adherence to Kantian schematism exposes the linear model of time underlying both the drives and repression, then this would force us to rethink the radical implications of the temporality of the repressed. Perhaps, the radical temporality of *Nachträglichkeit* still assumes a linear model of time, thus making the repressed subject to conscious rationalization.¹¹⁷ Is not this same subject, the subject of repression, the subject of belatedness, not also the same subject of analysis? Is not the job of analysis to rationalize, to bring into grammar of speech, and thus into a temporal order, these repressed moments, desires, drives? While we have examined the temporality of the function of repression, its excision of a schematized excitation from the linearity of time, we have yet to discuss the temporality of the repressed itself, the very temporality that defers and repeats for the subject, the temporality of an intractable fixation within the

¹¹⁶ For example, in “Temporality and Translation” Laplanche argues that psychoanalysis, “after Freud” can allow us to think the non-linear temporal sequence of “present > past > future” (Laplanche 1989, 258).

¹¹⁷ In *Perversion and Utopia* Joel Whitebook makes a parallel claim. He argues “rather than subverting the Enlightenment, the decentration of the subject is an essential moment in the project of enlightenment that is consistent with its own concept” (Whitebook 1996, 92). In other words, as Whitebook writes the “dispossession of a naively centered ego is a necessary propaedeutic to the repossession of a more adequate ego” (Whitebook 1996, 93).

subject's development. In other words, we must now turn to the temporality of trauma and its relationship to the phenomenal nature of the drives and repression.¹¹⁸

Although one can find the temporality of trauma throughout Freud's work, from the discussion of the belated nature of trauma one finds in *Studies on Hysteria* to the discussion of the traumatic reverberations of the murder of the father in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud most explicitly examines this temporality in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As already briefly mentioned, this text is the result of Freud's attempt to render sense out of the "traumatic neuroses" that were the result of the "terrible war," World War I (SE 18: 12; GW 13: 9). These neuroses, he notes, "have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (SE 18: 13; GW 13: 10). Before the war, psychoanalysis assumed the rule of the pleasure principle—which "the mental apparatus endeavors to keep the quantity of excitation in it as low as possible" (SE 18: 9; GW 13: 5). Yet, with these returning veterans, the mental apparatus did not seek the avoidance of intense excitation, but rather repeated it, over and over again.¹¹⁹ As Freud writes:

[...] we come now to a new and remarkable fact, namely that the compulsion to repeat [*Wiederholungszwang*] also recalls from the past experiences which include

¹¹⁸ For a discussions concerning the relationship between temporality, repression, and trauma see: Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Jonathan Cohen, "Trauma and Repression," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 5 (1985): 163-189.

¹¹⁹ In "Two Types of War Neuroses," Ferenczi describes the temporality of trauma more in terms of a prolonged anticipation sparked by a unexpected stimulus. He writes, "In spite of all of its tragedy this behaviour of the traumatic neurotic recalls the situation of the hotel guest startled out of his sweetest slumbers by his next-door neighbour, who when undressing had flung on shoe against the communicating door. After vainly endeavouring to fall asleep again, he had to implore his restless neighbor to hurl the second shoe against the door in order that he might to sleep" (Ferenczi 1927, 140).

no possibility of pleasure [*die keine Lustmöglichkeit*], and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to drive impulses [*Triebregungen*] which have since been repressed [*verdrängen*]. (SE 18: 20; GW 13: 18)

In the face of this fact, Freud is forced to admit that the “most that can be said, therefore, is that there exists in the mind a strong *tendency* towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances” (SE 18: 9; GW 13: 5). While the ego tends towards the schematization of excitation in accordance with the rule of the pleasure principle, there exists other tendencies that not only contradict the pleasure principle’s attempt to quell excitation, but also do so on another temporal model: repetition.

The experience of this repetition does not necessitate horrors of war. For who among us does not feel as though we are “pursued by some malignant fate or possessed by some ‘daemonic’ power” continually asserting itself silently, causing us to repeat a past that we cannot recognize, not to mention divest ourselves of (SE 18: 21; GW 13: 20).¹²⁰ From the “benefactor who is abandoned in anger after a time by each of his *protégés*” to “the man whose friendships all end in betrayal,” the compulsion to repeat represents the opposing force to the pleasure principle (SE 18: 22; GW 13: 20). In as much as the compulsion to repeat challenges the rule of the pleasure principle, and in as much as it is characterized by an iterative temporality, then does not the compulsion to repeat represent a radical form of temporality, that is the temporality not of the function

¹²⁰ In his work on the intergenerational transmission of trauma Maurice Apprey would call this passive experience of one’s self-sabotage the “phantom” of an “internal assassin” (Apprey 2002, 16). “Any potential success,” he writes, “alternates with self-destructive activity. The phantom demands that extinction in one form or another be avidly pursued. The phantom is merciless in demanding a destruction that has already been mandated. The subject is left to choose his or her form of self-destruction” (Apprey 2002, 16).

of repression, but of the repressed itself and its continual incursion into the subject's experience of linear temporality? If this is the case, then is not the repressed subject the opposite of rational subject? And if this is the case, then is not the repressed, perhaps, the non-identical? To answer this we must turn, again to Freud's description of the synthetic function of the ego under traumatic conditions.

Freud's "far fetched speculation" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is not limited his Kantian musings alone. Indeed, in order to explain the development of the ego as a defensive mechanism organizing bodily excitations, Freud asks us to "picture a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation" (SE 18: 26; GW 13: 25). This "little fragment of living substance" would be, Freud writes, "suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies" (SE 18: 27; GW 13: 26). Due to the constant barrage of stimulus from the external world, this receptive "little organism" would have to form a "crust [*Rinde*]" which

[...] would at last have been so thoroughly 'baked through' [*durchgebrannt*] by stimulation that it would present the most favourable possible conditions for the reception of stimuli and become incapable of any further modification. In terms of the system Cs., this would mean that its elements could undergo no further permanent modification from the passage of excitation, because they had already been modified in the respect in question to the greatest possible extent: now, however, they would have become capable of giving rise to consciousness. (SE 18: 26; GW 13: 25f.)

Conscious perception of the world is the result of the “permanent modifications” made on the external part of the organism as it continually receives and processes stimulus. As the organism is charged with receiving and responding to this stimulus, as it is subjected to the similar forms of stimulus over and over again, the very psychical mechanisms translating the bodily reception of stimulus recognize patterns and subject all other forms of stimuli to those patterns. Specifically here, we can see Freud, again, materializing the Kantian categories. As we saw for Kant the mental temporal patterns, or concepts apprehending the world, are part of the subject from the beginning. They are specific rules applied to the pure intuition of time, thus forming the basis of experience itself. For Freud, although the pure intuition of time is located in the body and not the understanding, it remains linear. Nonetheless, because the body is the site of the pure intuition of time, the relationship between the body and stimulus is determinative for the development of the rules applied to the pure intuition of time. In as much as this relationship is varied, then so too will the concepts organizing the different rules of time vary. In this way Freud inverts the priority not of the pure intuition of time in Kant, but the concepts that organize the different experiences of the pure intuition of time. In other words, whereas for Kant the concepts organizing time are a priori, for Freud the concepts organizing time are the representation of the historical relationship between the body and the forms of stimulus to which it is subjected. The temporal structures of the concepts presenting objects are grounded in the repetitious bodily reception of similar forms of external stimulus. Thus consciousness, the experience of the reception of these stimuli, arises from these permanent modifications in the reception of bodily stimulus—it is no more than the rind that forms outside of the organism itself.

As with any rind, consciousness is not only the hardened outside that defends against the outside, but is simultaneously a protection of what lies beneath. As Freud writes “*Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than reception of stimuli*” (SE 18: 27; GW 13: 27). For the organism cannot take in all of the stimuli it is subjected to; it must sort out stimuli, create convenient patterns to abbreviate the constant onslaught of stimuli that surrounds it. In other words it must become an inflexible “shield” both excluding stimulus while simultaneously translating it (SE 18: 28; GW 13: 27).¹²¹ What is schematized is brought into time, while what is not schematized remains timeless. “By its death” Freud argues, the outer layer of the organism, thus saves “all the deeper layers a similar fate” (SE 18: 27; GW 13: 27).

Trauma is the result of “excitations from outside that are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” of the egoic schematization of stimulus (SE 18: 29; GW 13: 29). It disrupts the patterns and schemas forming the basis of perception and understanding. It is too much, too different, too quick. It cannot be sorted by the schematic bodily categories that have been established. As such the traumatized subject fails to synthesize, and thus protect, the deeper layers from the force of this excitation. For the moment, Freud argues, the pleasure principle is “put out of action” (SE 18: 29; GW 13: 29). At this moment there “is no longer the possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead—the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them” (SE 18: 30; GW 13: 29). Not only is the event overwhelming for the subject of trauma, but also during the event itself, there is an abdication of the rule of the

¹²¹ What becomes of what is left behind at this stage is not the repressed, but will in fact be what the disavowed as I will show in the next chapter.

pleasure principle—the very schema organizing perceptive experience is shut down. As a result, there is a flood of stimulus, a breaking of the dam. Normal things, things schematized on a daily basis, flood in without interpretation, and flood in without cognitive recognition. Having impacted the deeper layers, they scar them. These scars insist, demanding interpretation and thus rational mastery.¹²²

The task of mastery is the task of binding excitations, and the case of the internal scars of external trauma only highlights this function for Freud. If we take this model of external trauma, Freud argues, and turn it in on itself, we get an interesting picture of how the force of the drives might institute “disturbances comparable [*gleichzustellen*] with traumatic neuroses,” because the protective shield is not turned inward (SE 18: 34; GW 13: 35). In other words, our “little organism” with its “crusted over” exterior is also subject to the force of internal excitations. Just as with external stimulation the “task of the higher strata of the mental apparatus” would be to “bind the drive excitations” that “press toward discharge” (SE 18: 34; GW 13: 35f.). And just as a failure to schematize external stimulation results in the internal scars that insists on mastery, a

¹²² This concept of external trauma is the basis of Jean Laplanche’s argument for the establishment of the unconscious. For Laplanche the unconscious emerges from the inability of children to translate “enigmatic signifiers,” unconscious sexualized signifiers from the adult world that escapes the adult’s conscious understanding. Having received the messages, but without the ability to schematize them, the signifier becomes lodged in the child, repressed, forming both its unconscious and the source of its drives. He writes “what is crucial is the fact that the adult world is entirely infiltrated with unconscious and sexual significations to which *adults themselves* do not have the code. Furthermore, there is the fact that the infant does not possess the physiological or emotional responses corresponding to the sexualized messages it is being offered; in short, the child’s means of constituting a substitutive or temporary code are fundamentally inadequate” (Laplanche 1999b, 127). The infant introjects these signifiers without understanding them or the capacity to understand these unconscious manifestations of sexualized messages that escapes the adults themselves. This is the externalization of the unconscious and the ways in which this externalization actually creates the source of drive in infants, thus forming their own unconscious. For it is the infant’s repression of the enigmatic signifiers it introjects that forms the unconscious for Laplanche (Laplanche 1999b, 129). From this Laplanche concludes “The drive is therefore neither a mythical entity, nor a biological force, nor a concept, lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical. It is the impact on the individual and on the ego of the constant stimulation exerted from the inside by the repressed thing-presentations, which can be described as the source-objects of the drive” (Laplanche 1999b, 129).

[...] failure to effect this binding would provoke a disturbance analogous to a traumatic neurosis; and only after the binding has been accomplished would it be possible for the dominance of the pleasure principle [*die Herrschaft des Lustprinzips*] (and of its modification, the reality principle) to proceed unhindered. (SE 18: 35; GW 13: 36)

Before the drives can be organized by the rule of the pleasure principle, they must first be bound by a prior mechanism. As we have already seen, excitations are initially apprehended, and thus bound, through the body's temporalization of that reception. Once a sense of self, grounded in this bodily schematization, begins to develop these drives are spatialized in accordance with the rule of the pleasure principle. Thus the "task of mastering or binding excitations" operates prior to the pleasure principle (SE 18: 35; GW 13: 36). When this primary task of temporalizing the drives fails the drive remains timeless and thus a-rational.¹²³ In other words, in as much as the drive never becomes temporalized, it never attains the status of the phenomenal drive-presentation that becomes further organized in accordance with the pleasure principle. The drive thus remains unconscious, an a-temporal specter bending time, haunting the present, working itself out outside of the temporal dimensions of consciousness itself. Constantly subject to this non-bound drive, the prior mechanisms of schematizing internal excitations continually repeat their attempts to bind this drive, to master it by binding it, thus bringing it into consciousness by subjecting it to the rule of the pleasure principle. These

¹²³ In an essay entitled "*Le Rythme et la Raison*" Jean-Claude Rolland describes the iterative temporality of the primary synthesis. He writes "La repetition qui, dans le système préconscient, œuvre au cœur du travail représentatif, au cœur de l'activité de pensée don't on sait qu'elle est virtuellement infinie, cette repetition serait donc la marquée au sein même du moi, du ça et de sa pulsion, et cela de la même façon que, comme Freud le dit dans le beau texte qu'il lui consacre, la negation est dans le moi la marquée du refoulement, l'équivalent du *made in Germany*" (Rolland 1997, 1627).

primary mechanisms are the source of its iterative temporality: it tries to bind a past drive, over and over, in the present otherwise—it is a temporality defined by repetition and difference. As André Green notes, the “repetition compulsion was the difference of the timelessness of the unconscious and the timelessness of the unconscious is a way to keep, to conserve beyond the experience of reality, the deception. The repetition compulsion is in fact the murder of time” (Green 2008, 1037). Non-schematized drive returns otherwise. Indeed this would seem to be the very kernel of the unconscious, that part of our selves that is non-identical. If this “thing” that the primary mechanism of schematizing fails to bind is the non-identical, then would not the trauma of the external, the internalization of an un-schematized external excitation be the non-identical as well? Would it not be the phantom which haunts us, sending us on errands that are not our own?¹²⁴

Yet, is the “thing” of trauma repressed, and is the repressed equivalent to the unconscious?¹²⁵ If it were then the repressed would be the source of what appears to be

¹²⁴ It seems that this would be one way to express the transgenerational transmission of trauma expressed by both Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s concept of the “phantom” and Maurice Apprey’s concept of “transgenerational haunting.” In his 1975 essay “Notes on the Phantom,” Abraham writes “The phantom is the formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious—for good reason. It passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent’s unconscious into the child’s. Clearly, the phantom has a function different from dynamic repression. The phantom’s periodic and compulsive return lies beyond the scope of symptom-formation in the sense of a return of the repressed; it works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject’s won mental topography” (Abraham 1994b, 174). Apprey writes, “[i]n transgenerational haunting, then, a contemporary generation is unwittingly possessed by an earlier generation. The possession preserves history, but in a poisonous, unmetabolized version” (Apprey 2002, 12). For example, he writes, “[f]orced intromission is a means of torture and shaming. Sodomy (intromission via anality) is known by perpetrators of ethnic violence as the most extreme shaming strategy. White New York City policemen forcibly inserting a broomstick into a black man’s anus and mouth speaks amply to this issue of intromission as a shaming strategy. We can, of course, add intromission vial genitality to the repertoire of shaming devices when perpetrators of ethic violence rape the mothers, wives, and daughters of the enemy. In Laplanche’s language, these strategies of forced intromission cause injuries that are not easily metabolized” (Apprey 2002, 11). See also Maurice Apprey, “Reinventing the Self in the Face of Received Transgenerational Hatred in the African American Community,” *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 1, no. 2 (1999): 131-143.

the radical temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*. But, as we have seen, the repressed is unconscious, but cannot be the unconscious itself, and thus cannot be the source of the iterative temporality of *Nachträglichkeit*. If we take Freud's Kantian distinction between the conscious and the unconscious seriously, then the distinction is between time and timelessness. The unconscious is the in-itself of the phenomenal presentation of both internal and external excitations that have been subjected to bodily schematization. In contrast to this timelessness, as we have seen, primary repression prevents drive-presentations, drives that have already been schematized, from becoming conscious. Thus, all repressed drive-presentations are unconscious, but not everything that is unconscious is repressed. And this distinction can also be articulated as that which has already been schematized but defended against, and that which has never been, nor can be, brought into consciousness.

Furthermore, the unconscious, as non-schematized materiality, cannot be the source of this iterative temporality. Unlike Lacan, who will argue that the unconscious is outside of time, because it is the source of time itself, for Freud the unconscious is itself timeless. As existing without time—not outside of time—the unconscious is not the source of time, but rather what has been excluded from schematization. One can only argue that the unconscious is the source of iterative temporality from the perspective of linear time. In other words, one can only conceptualize the deferred effects of both the

¹²⁵ See: Luis J. Martín Cabré. "The Psychoanalytic Conception of Trauma in Ferenczi and the Question of Temporality," *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 68 (2008): 43-49. Cabré examines Ferenczi's argument that trauma is not about repression, but rather disavowal. He argues: "Therefore, the traumatic cannot be repressed or remembered because it exists in a psychic space beyond representation; it disorganizes the world of representations, including that of the analyst. In other words, the trauma "presents" itself, it does not "re-present" itself; its presence does not belong to any present, it even destroys the present in which introduces itself. It is an absolute present without presence, a mad present in which the subject abandons time in the effort to place his impossible suffering in a vaster temporal unity. This is a present that is endless and inexhaustibly present and at the same time empty" (Cabré 2008, 45).

repressed and the unconscious itself from the perspective of concepts that are already ordered by the assumption of a sequential chain of sutured “nows.” And indeed, what would it mean to speak of the “deferred” or “belated” temporality of trauma without the prior assumption that what has been deferred, should have been located at another moment in time, and has been moved down the chain of linear time to another moment, a moment that happens after, later? What more is a belated being, but one that feels the wavering edges of one’s experience as the past comes crashing into the present, again, and again. Thus the unconscious is not the “source” of this temporality, but rather the temporality of *Nachträglichkeit* is only a higher ordering, a different ordering, of an a priori schematization that assumes a linear model of time. What is unconscious is timeless. What is conscious has been schematized according in line with a linear model of time. The belated temporality of *Nachträglichkeit* is not located in the timeless unconscious, but is located in the experience of a disorder of linear temporality that must logically assume the linear model of temporality. Thus, if “belatedness” is a radical challenge to the rational temporality of modern subject, it is only because it assumes and reorders that model of temporality. Yet, it seems that the radical nature of the non-identical is located in its timelessness, not in the schema’s attempt to rationalize it. It is a radicality that would still remain, because it is the resistance to rationalization itself. This is why the non-identical cannot be the repressed: the subject can rationalize the repressed. The repressed can be overcome. And this is, of course, the goal of analysis itself.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ One can see this sentiment about *Nachträglichkeit* in Gerhard Dahl’s “The Two Time Vectors of *Nachträglichkeit* in the Development of Ego Organization: Significance of the concept for the Symbolization of Nameless Traumas and Anxieties.” Dahl writes, “*Nachträglichkeit* manifestly entails the action of a force, analogous to that of the compulsion to repeat, that seeks to symbolize the unfamiliarity and confusion of the original experience—whether as a real event that was not understood or as a diffuse

IV. Beyond Repression: Toward the Navel of Analysis

When one turns back to Freud's Kantian construction of not only of the unconscious, but also the drives and repression, the temporality of the unconscious becomes quite clear. Freud's appeal to Kant to describe, and in some senses legitimate, the unconscious positions the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious as a phenomenal one. This distinction is fundamentally one that separates what appears for us and what does not appear for us, in terms of what has been schematized and what resists or fails to be schematized. In other words, the distinction between what appears and what does not is a distinction between what has been temporalized by the subject along a linear model of time and that part of the object, or experience, that has not and thus remains timeless. In as much as the unconscious is "timeless" it does not appear, cannot appear. Thus, the unconscious remains that thing, which is but does not appear, that which exists beyond rationality itself.

As I have shown, Freud's appeal to the "timeless" nature of the unconscious means neither that the unconscious is time itself, nor that the unconscious is the non-schematized portion of our conscious reflection on our self. Rather, the unconscious for Freud is the result of the phenomenal nature of the drives themselves. In turning Kant's "Copernican turn" in our selves, Freud materializes Kant's schematism, rooting the phenomenological distinction not in cognitive reflection on the self, but rather in the bodily translation of internal stimulus, the drives. All one "knows" of the drives is what has been conceptualized, the drive-presentation, or what has been schematized. While

primary process scene—so that it can subsequently [*nachträglich*], in accordance with the reality principle, be structured thought, understood, and perhaps also mastered" (Dahl 2010, 741).

this schematization occurs on the level of the a priori synthesis of the categories of understanding for Kant, for Freud the body schematizes through the patterns established by the body's continual subjection to internal and external stimulus. And while they place the locus of schematization in different places: rationality for Kant and the body for Freud, they both rely on a linear model of time to explain the temporality that underlies the phenomenological divide.

In as much as the unconscious is formed through the phenomenological split in the drives themselves, repression will become a way to manipulate this process and it too will thus assume a linear model of time. We have, thus, seen that the Freudian concept of repression is rooted in a temporal structure that favors the rationality of the subject. The subject of knowing and historical narration structures the analytic situation. In fact, analysis, one could argue, is no more than reconstructing the subject's experience of time, of the subject narrating its own history and overcoming the resistances to that narration. And while the form of these resistances may look different for Freud depending on whether that resistance is a primary or secondary function of the ego, analysis has the same goal: to allow the subject to rationalize its own history by side-stepping those resistances and bringing the repressed into a linear model of time, even if belatedly. Since the repressed has already been schematized the repressed can be brought into the subject's experience of time. In fact, techniques of analysis structured by the dynamics of repression seek to do just that, to work through resistances so that what has been made unconscious can become conscious. And the repressed can become conscious, or historically narrated, because it is already structured by the temporality of consciousness, i.e., it has been schematized. Just as for Kant, the concepts of the understanding and the

materiality of the intuition come together through the transcendental time determination, so too can the repressed become schematized by the subject's narration of their own history, because it shares with the subject's sense of history a linear structure of time. Thus, when political thought appeals to Freud's concept of repression, or even Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, political thought is not confronting the non-identical, but rather a form of alienation that can be rationalized in end, that can fundamentally be overcome.

It is the spirit of Kant that haunts the political turn to Freud. For in as much as political thought heralds the repressed and its temporality as the non-identical, it remains in the thrall of a hidden desire that overvalues the power of rationality. In Freud's appeal to Kant you find this rationality tucked away in the linear model of time that forms cognition itself. This is what Adorno means in his lectures on *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* when he writes

Kant's critique of reason would not be conceivable in the absence of this idea of the social and political emancipation of the human subject that has ceased to act out a submissive role towards the world and instead discovered in the freedom and autonomy of the subject the principle which alone enables the world to be known.

(Adorno 2001, 135)

Is not this dream of emancipation and subjective mastery located in a model of temporality that operates successively, the model of temporality that makes the concept of change itself comprehensible?¹²⁷ Is this not this dream abstracted into a model of

¹²⁷ Indeed one can see this same spirit in Eva Schaper's essay entitled "Kant's Schematism Reconsidered," where she argues that Kantian schematism can be understood as part of one's "active" and "productive" engagement with the world (Schaper 1964, 290).

temporality, the very same dream that underlies Freud's concept of the repressed in as much as he appeals to Kant's model of temporality?¹²⁸ If political thought wanted to think the non-identical, if it wanted to confront the limits of its own rationality, and thus curb its desire for the illusion of radical change premised on the power of rationality, would it not have to look elsewhere, toward the timeless itself, toward that which is fundamentally non-schematized?

In an essay entitled "Resistances," Jacques Derrida draws our attention a footnote in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In this footnote, Freud, frustrated with his analysis of a dream, muses over the fact that every dream has a "'navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown [*gleichsam einen Nabel, durch den er mit dem Unerkannten zusammenhängt*]" beyond which analysis cannot go (Freud, SE 4: 110fn; GW 2: 116fn.). For Derrida, Freud's navel represents "a night, an absolute unknown that is originarily, congenitally bound or tied (but also in itself unbound because ab-solute) to the essence and to the birth of the dream" (Derrida 1998, 10f.). This "navel" is, as Derrida continues, a "scar" that "is knot against which analysis can do nothing" (Derrida 1998, 11). Beyond this knot one will not find the repressed, but rather the non-schematized no "thing" that resists the rationality of analysis, and perhaps it is toward this that we should now turn.

¹²⁸ Although without reference to Kant, Marie Moscovici captures this sentiment nicely in "La dictature de la raison," *Nouvelle Revue de Psychoanalyse* 27 (1983): 65-84.

Chapter Three

At the Limits of Rationality: Freud's Concept of Disavowal

In other attacks, however, the pathogenic material consisted of pieces of the patient's childhood memory, which had not come to light while I was analyzing him and which now came away—the comparison is unavoidable—like sutures after an operation, or small fragments of neurotic bone.
--Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable"

In 1933 the Nazi party comes into power, formally constituting the Third Reich. Four years later and under the protection of the Catholic Church, Freud writes and publishes "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" and the first two sections of *Moses and Monotheism*. These texts are remarkable for their focus on both the limits of the techniques of analysis as well as politics. These limits, one might think, could be the result of Freud's growing pessimism given his historical conditions. And, of course, there is support for this when one reads Freud confiding to Ernest Jones in 1934 that "[t]imes are bleak and life is no longer easy" (Paskauskas 1995, 735); or speaking of the impending Nazi incursion into Austria in 1937 that "[t]he only hope remaining is that one will not live to see it oneself" (Paskauskas 1995, 757).¹²⁹ While it would, of course, be easy to reduce the tone of Freud's late work solely to historical context, one could just as easily ask if the historical context revealed limits already endemic to psychoanalysis. In fact, these limits of analysis and politics in Freud's late work blur the line between theory and history, between his forthcoming exile to England and the theorization of the Jewish

¹²⁹ One might be tempted to look at Freud's last confession in light of Adorno's claim in *Minima Moralia* that "Only a human to whom death has become as indifferent as its members, that has itself died, can inflict it administratively on innumerable people. Rilke's prayer for 'one's own death' is a piteous attempt to conceal the fact that nowadays people merely snuff out" (Adorno, MM 248).

Diaspora in *Moses and Monotheism*, between his concern for the permanency of political censorship and the very limits of analysis itself. Each time these thresholds of analysis, or politics, emerge in Freud's writing, so too does the concept of disavowal (*Verleugnung*).

By 1938 *Verleugnung* is not a new concept in Freud's thought. In fact, one can find the term as early as Freud and Breuer's 1895 *Studies on Hysteria*,¹³⁰ Freud's 1901 *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,¹³¹ and his 1913 *Totem and Taboo*.¹³² Nonetheless, it is widely recognized that Freud does not develop the conceptual framework of disavowal as a distinct form of psychological defense until the early 1920's, a few years after the introduction of the death drive and the second topography of the psyche.¹³³ When Freud begins to develop this concept it indicates, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, the subject's "refusal to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception—most especially the perception of the absence of the woman's penis" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 118). It is a refusal to accept a "reality" by bifurcating one's belief; it is a refusal of the logic of non-contradiction itself, the very basis, and one

¹³⁰ In Freud's chapter "Psychotherapy of Hysteria" in *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud uses the term *Verleugnen* to describe a specific instance of resistance to therapy. This case seems remarkably similar to his later description of *Verneinung* in his 1925 essay "Negation." In "Psychotherapy of Hysteria" Freud claims that "There are cases, too, in which the patient tries to disown [*verleugnen*] it [a pathogenic recollection] even after its return. 'Something has just occurred to me now, but you obviously put it in my head.' Or, 'I know what you expect me to answer. Of course you believe I've this or that.' A particularly clever method of disavowal [*Verleugnen*] lies in saying: 'Something has occurred to me now, it's true, but it seems to me as if I'd put it in deliberately'" (SE 2: 280; GW 1: 282).

¹³¹ In a chapter entitled "Forgetting of Impressions" from *the Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud examines how forgetting acts a defense against intolerable memories or associations. He calls this defense both "disowning [*Ableugnen*]" (SE 6: 144; GW 4: 160) and "disavowal [*Verleugnung*]" (SE 6: 145; GW 4: 161).

¹³² In the last chapter of this text Freud uses the term *Verleugnung* to describe the self-deceptive displacements that propel the development of the instantiation of law after the murder of the father. Freud argues that this final displacement, this final distancing not only of the memory of the deed, but also the responsibility for the deed, represents the "most extreme *disavowal* [*Verleugnung*] of the great crime which was the beginning of society and of the sense of guilt" (SE 13: 150; GW 9: 181, *translation modified*).

¹³³ See Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 118-121.

might say, of reason and logic itself. During the following years the concept of disavowal becomes more and more important not only as an intractable resistance to both analysis and politics, but also a primary function of the psyche equal in stature to the “cornerstone [*Grundpfeiler*]” of psychoanalysis: repression (SE 14: 16; GW 10: 54).¹³⁴

Freud’s focus on this concept in his late work highlights the limits of rationality. If disavowal indicates the limit of analysis, and if analysis is predicated on articulating and rationalizing the repressed by bringing it into time, then disavowal would pose the limit of analysis because it would indicate the intractable nature of the non-rational character of the subject. This non-rational character, unlike repression, would not operate on linear model time, because it would not operate within time. It would be that which escapes, but effects, consciousness because it escapes the schematizing functions of time. In other words, by turning to disavowal we are turning the non-identical, and by turning to the non-identical we are turning to the functions of consciousness that operate non-synthetically. Taking up disavowal as the non-identical forces both psychoanalysis and political theory to grapple with that part that not only escapes consciousness, but also seeks to undermine it, that part that not only alienates the subject from itself, but also guarantees and secures this alienation.¹³⁵ Disavowal poses the limit marking the boundaries of a critique of political rationality. In as much as political theory must also go beyond the confines of what can be rationalized, conceptualized—or brought into a

¹³⁴ For an excellent analysis and tracing of this concept and form of defense see: Michael Franz Basch, “The Perception of Reality and the Disavowal of Meaning,” *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 11 (1983): 125-153.

¹³⁵ For an example of the limits posed by the death drive and the timeless nature of the unconscious, things that are all bound up with the concept of disavowal see: Oliver Flournoy, “Le temps, l’inconscient et la pulsion de mort,” *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 61, no. 5 (1997): 1863-1872.

model of linear time that promises the overcoming of alienation—it can only do so by taking the concept of disavowal as seriously as Freud took it in his late writings.

While, as we will see, disavowal becomes central to Freud’s thinking of analysis and politics, the development of the concept is not without its own vicissitudes, slowly becoming modified and shifting around the framework of analysis. Thus, this chapter has two interrelated goals. First, the chapter will disentangle the concept from the shifts and associations it gathers along this trajectory, specifically in terms of fetishism. Second, it will follow the chronological development of the concept in order to argue that by the end of his life Freud not only saw this concept as a primary function of the psyche. Finally, I will conclude by arguing that disavowal defends against schematization and thus indicates the non-identical in psychoanalytic thought. This will set us up for an investigation into how disavowal presents the limits not only of the analytic situation, but also of the political in the following chapter.

I. The Brambles of Fetishistic Disavowal

When one considers the concept of disavowal, the concept of fetishism is fast on its heels, often overtaking it. There is good reason for this. The closest Freud comes to a metapsychological definition of disavowal is in his 1927 essay “Fetishism.” In this essay, he differentiates disavowal from repression through the example of fetishism. In light of this, this essay sets up the prevalent association between disavowal and fetishism in the psychoanalytic, philosophical, and political literature alike. In this section I will explore the concept of fetishistic disavowal so that I may differentiate it from disavowal. I will argue that the discourse of fetishistic disavowal entwines the concept of disavowal within

a framework of masculine desire and paranoid fears of castration by turning disavowal into a defense at the Oedipal stage. Instead of subsuming the concept of disavowal under the auspices of these paranoid fears, I will suggest in the next section that disavowal is a primary mechanism of the psyche, representing the non-synthetic functions of the ego equal in stature to repression.¹³⁶ In other words, if disavowal cannot be extricated from fetishism, the structure of disavowal would be based in the fully formed egoic defenses of the Oedipal complex. If disavowal is a strictly Oedipal defense, then it cannot be separated from the masculine and patriarchal assumptions characterizing Freud's description of this phase. Moreover, and this is my fundamental point, the story of fetishistic disavowal occludes, as I will show in the next section, the more interesting story of disavowal as a primary defense that constitutes the ego itself. For, the move to distance the concept of disavowal from the concept of fetishism is a move to distance the concept of disavowal from what Deleuze and Guattari have called the "imperialism of Oedipus" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 54). What is at stake in this move, as with Kristeva's discussion of the semiotic, is an attempt to wrest the concept away from the dominance of the symbolic, and specifically a symbolic order structured by the erasure of women, and toward the material instantiations of meaning that are not pre-, or anti-Oedipal, but perhaps, just non-Oedipal. By highlighting the non-Oedipal possibilities of the concept, I want to examine not only the formal aspects of disavowal but also the

¹³⁶ As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the sovereign rule of Oedipus in the mythology of psychoanalysis excludes "the free syntheses where everything is possible: endless connections, non-exclusive disjunctions, nonspecific conjunctions, partial objects and flows" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 54). For an overview of this position see: Alphonso Lingis, "Oedipus Rex: The Oedipus Rule and its Subversion," *Human Studies* 7, no. 1 (1984): 91-100. While I do think that Deleuze and Guattari, help us to think what the primary processes would look like out from under the shadow of Oedipus, I agree with Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and Béla Grunberger's critique of Deleuze and Guattari's focus on possibility and liberation in *Freud or Reich?: Psychoanalysis and Illusion*, which they attribute to latent fidelity to Wilhelm Reich (Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger 1986, 13).

extreme polymorphous mobility of its material instantiations. And it is in the interest of setting the concept of disavowal free, that we must first understand how it becomes entangled with the mechanism of fetishism.

From “evil-smelling feet” (Freud, SE 7: 155fn; GS 5: 28fn) to totemic practices, to the “glance of the nose” (SE 21: 152; GW 14: 311), Freud was always interested in fetishistic practices. Examples of fetishism pepper his texts and often take center-stage in them, as one can see in *Totem and Taboo*. But what is it about the practice of fetishism that so fascinates Freud? To answer this, we should turn to Freud’s description of the central feature of fetishism in his 1905 text *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Here he describes fetishism as the substitution of a sexual object for

[...] some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person’s sexuality (e.g. a piece of clothing or underlinen). Such substitutes are with some justice likened to the fetishes in which savages believe that their gods are embodied [*Dieser Ersatz wird nicht mit Unrecht mit dem Fetisch verglichen, in dem der Wilde seinen Gott verkörpert sieht*]. (SE 7: 153; GS 5: 26)

The fetishist displaces his or her sexual aim from an “appropriate” object to an “inappropriate” object, presumably, for Freud, from people to things. These objects bear a metonymic relationship to the person, but slowly become the object of sexual pleasure for the fetishist. The fetishist, in this sense, converts the object of his or her sexual aim from people to things that are associatively linked to the former person of their sexual aim. This associative displacement of sexual aim—from the person to objects that touch

the person's genitals, to objects that touch the objects that touch the person's genitals, etc.—is similar to the “savages” who embody their belief in transcendent forces to material objects. For Freud, both “savages” and the fetishist take the thing to not be representative of the concept, but rather take the thing to be the concept or person. Thus, a fetishist, in some sense, denies the representative and associative, thus symbolic, character of the object of their sexual aim; he or she mistakes the thing for the representation.¹³⁷

For Freud, fetishism is not in and of itself pathological. For all symptoms, one consistently finds in Freud's texts, are only exaggerations of universal psychological mechanisms. And thus, for Freud, there is a touch of fetishism in all of our sexual lives. From carrying an object belonging to your lover, to the smell of a lover's shirt when one puts it on, our sexual lives are filled with minute displacements of sexual pleasure.¹³⁸ While not pathological in itself, the displacement of fetishism can become pathological for Freud

[...] when the longing [*das Streben*] for the fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object and actually

¹³⁷ The denial of the symbolic in fetishism is, one could argue, what originally draws him to makes the association between disavowal and fetishism. This makes sense given, as we will see in the next section, that the early formulations of disavowal were meant to explain the genetic root of psychoses as opposed to the repressive roots of the neuroses. It is only after the essay on fetishism, again as I will show in the next section, where Freud begins to distance his concept from both neurosis and psychoses, by focusing more on its character of “splitting” and the denial not of reality by contradiction. One could trace this via Klein to Kristeva who argues that abjection concerns neither neurosis nor psychosis, but the borderline personality, the pervert who neither denies the symbolic nor retreats into it, but rather manipulates it. For the relationship, or challenge, that Kristeva's account of abjection can make to Freud's concept of fetishism see: Tina Chanter, “Abjection, or Why Freud Introduces the Phallus: Identification, Castration Theory, and the Logic of Fetishism,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 48-66.

¹³⁸ In “The Evasion of Gender in Freudian Fetishism,” Donovan Miyasaki argues that “the non-pathological fetishist evades the construction of gender in terms of sexual roles” thus this form of non-pathological fetishism can “serve as a critique of Freud's masculine model of sexual instinct and relation” (Miyasaki 2003, 289).

takes the place of the normal aim, and, further, when the fetish becomes detached [*loslöst*] from a particular individual and becomes the *sole* sexual object. (SE 7: 154; GS 5: 27)

Only when the object becomes separated from its association with the person, when the object becomes a sexual object in itself, does the normalized displacement become a symptom of something deeper, collapsing the symbolic significance of the “normal” function of fetishism. That is to say, if the everyday form of fetishism involves displacing one’s sexual aim onto an object associated with a person, then the object retains a symbolic value. It is a material thing representing the other of one’s desire. When fetishism becomes a symptom it disassociates the person from the object, thus collapsing the symbolic value of the object. The object becomes a good in itself for the fetishist, representing nothing other than itself; it is the “sole” object of the fetishist’s desire.

Twenty-two years after *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud writes the seminal essay “Fetishism.” In this essay he argues the symbolic collapse of the object of desire is a defense against the idea associated with the object. One defends against its associations by “zooming in,” as it were, on the material instantiation of the idea’s representation, allowing sensuous materiality to overtake the idea.¹³⁹ This, for Freud, represents the difference between repression and disavowal. Repression, as we have seen, manipulates the schematization of the drives, excising certain drive-presentations from the subject’s reflective experience of its history. Repression thus concerns the vicissitudes of “affect” in psychical life: how these affects become bound to time, excised from time,

¹³⁹ See: Alan Bass, *Disavowal and Difference: The Trauma of Eros* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Alan Bass, “The Problem of Concreteness,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 66 (1997): 642-682; Lawrence Brown, “On Concreteness,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 72 (1985): 379-402.

roam around outside of linear time, seeking some form of historical expression, even if only in displaced and condensed manners (SE 21: 153; GW 14: 313). In contrast, disavowal represents “the vicissitude of the idea [*das Schicksal der Vorstellung*]” (SE 21: 153; GW 14: 313). And this is, Freud argues, exactly what we see in fetishism. It is not the materiality of the drive-presentation that must be defended against, but rather the *Vorstellung* of the drive-presentation. The object associated with the drive-presentation disassociates itself from the drive-presentation. It appears not as something good for its relationship to the idea (or person), but rather as a good in itself, something to be desired on its own.¹⁴⁰ Thus, in fetishism’s dissociative substitution of the idea for the object, Freud finds the *Vorstellung* of the drive is disavowed, becoming severed from the desire for the object while still retaining this desire for the object. This allows the fetishist to both deny and affirm the idea associated with the material representation of the idea at the same time. Thus, what one sees in fetishism is the disavowal of an idea that must be both acknowledged in practice and denied it in thought. What is the idea that the fetishist defends against?

For Freud, at heart, fetishistic disavowal defends against the idea of castration. During the Oedipal stage, a young boy, according to Freud, will have had a chance to view female genitals—perhaps walking in on his mother, perhaps with playmate, etc. Upon this chance encounter, the boy is confronted with sexual difference. Yet, the boy has a problem registering this difference because, as Freud writes in his 1923 essay “The Infantile Genital Organization (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality),” he

¹⁴⁰ This is, again, the difference between Marx’s concept of fetishism and Freud’s concept. Where in Marx the fetish covers over material social relations with the idea, for Freud the fetish covers over the idea with materiality.

assumes “all other living beings, humans and animals, possess a genital like his own” (SE 19: 142; GW 13: 295). Attributing everyone with a penis, what Freud calls the “primacy of the phallus [*Primat des Phallus*],” the boy is “shocked” to find that not everyone has a penis and moreover that the difference between men and women is marked by the difference in genitalia (SE 19: 142; GW 13: 294).¹⁴¹ This perception becomes more incompatible and threatening to the boy associates this difference with the threat of castration. According to the boy’s expectations the girl should have penis. Faced with the fact that she does not, the boy must make sense of this fact in light of his expectations. The conclusion the boy comes to, the one that is intolerably threatening to him, is that the girl once had a penis and that it must have been taken away; the boy comes to believe girls and women have been castrated. The perception of sexual difference, thus, becomes the idea of anticipated castration, which the boy defends against through the fetish.¹⁴² Faced with a conflict between his expectations of the primacy of the phallus and the representation of sexual difference as the threat of castration, little boys, Freud writes:

[...] disavow the fact and believe that they *do* see a penis, all the same [*Sie leugnen diesen Mangel, glauben doch ein Glied zu sehen*]. They gloss over the contradiction between observation and preconception by telling themselves that the penis is still small and will grow bigger presently; and they then slowly come

¹⁴¹ For Lacan, the function of the Freudian “primacy of the phallus” is strictly symbolic. It represents, neither the anatomical distinction between the sexes for Lacan, nor is it an “object (part-, internal, good, bad, etc.)” (Lacan 2002e, 579). Instead, Lacan gives the phallus the status of master signifier; it is, he writes, “a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of analysis, may lift the veil from the function it served in the mysteries. For it is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as whole, insofar as the signifier conditions them by its presence as signifier” (Lacan 2002e, 579).

¹⁴² Speaking of both his presentation of women in his account of fetishism and disavowal, as well as in case studies (i.e. Dora), Nancy Chodorow argues in *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* that “Freud’s account of the male psyche represents women, and especially the mother, not only explicitly but implicitly, or latently, as object” (Chodorow 1994, 25).

to the emotionally significant conclusion that after all the penis had at least been there before and been taken away afterwards. (SE 19: 143f.; GW 13: 296)

The little boy disavows this “lack,” believing he sees a penis where there was none before. Yet, there is no actual lack; there is only the lack produced by the boy’s misguided expectations, the pre-conceptions supported by a specific symbolic framework. In this context, disavowal ‘glosses over’ a contradiction produced not by reality and thought, but rather produced solely within the symbolic framework’s inability to grasp reality. Instead of covering over this internal short circuit of the symbolic, disavowal allows the contradiction to exist by allowing the subject to believe both perceptions are true.

Given this story of the boy’s Oedipal encounter with sexual difference, fetishism emerges as a defense against the idea of castration. The fetish allows the boy to hold both contradictory beliefs. Instead of the contradiction propelling the boy toward resolution—as one would expect from a form of rationality based on the logic of non-contradiction—the fetish emerges as a stop gap allowing the symbolic contradiction to persist. The fetish, thus, replaces the idea of “the woman’s (the mother’s) penis that the little boy once believed in and—for reasons familiar to us—does not want to give up” (SE 21: 153; GW 14: 312). The fetish, Freud writes, is the “memorial [*Denkmal*]” that “the horror of castration [*der Abscheu vor der Kastration*]” has set up for itself “in the creation of substitute” (SE 21: 154; GW 14: 313). The material instantiation of the idea of the woman’s penis allays the young boy’s anxiety over the fantastical threat of castration. Since this penis does not actually exist, because it is a semi-hallucinatory response to the

“trauma” of an imaginary threat, the boy could not sustain this belief alone.¹⁴³ Thus, the young boy preserves the idea of the woman’s penis by concretizing it in the fetish. This act of concretization allows the young boy to rationally deny he believes women have penises, while still preserving this belief, and thus what it wards off, in a material object.¹⁴⁴ The shoe, the foot, the nose, the strand of hair, thus are each fetishistic substitutes for the imaginary female penis; they concretize the idea, turning it into a thing, setting up the structure of disavowal as that which wards off the threat of castration.¹⁴⁵

Through the lens of Freud’s narration of fetishism, the concept of disavowal appears as a mechanism that supporting the displacement of the imaginary female penis. In other words disavowal is the result of the fetish. If disavowal were the result of the fetish, then disavowal would also be dependent on the story of castration and sexual difference that sets the need for the fetish in motion. And if this were the case then the concept of disavowal would be inextricable from a narrative logic oriented toward the telos of the Oedipal complex, and thus the erasure of women by constituting female sexuality as a lack which then becomes subjected to a field of signification oriented by

¹⁴³ In *The Ego Ideal*, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel argues the idea behind the creation of the fetish is two-fold. On the one hand it is the denial of sexual difference, but also it is the “refusal to acknowledge the difference between generations” which can only be maintained by the boy’s attempt to “pass off his small pregenital penis as genital penis by idealizing it” (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1985, 104). This idealized penis becomes a fetish that covers over the generational difference between father and son, instituting a regime of temporal misrecognition that the son will internalize.

¹⁴⁴ In an article entitled “Aphasia, Fetishism and Constructions in Analysis,” Maurits Katan makes an provocative suggestion concerning the temporality of the fetish. He argues that the “fetishist repeats the pre-traumatic situation when his sexual excitement was not yet threatened by the traumatic observation that followed” (Katan 1969, 552). In this sense the fetish is a memorial that continually reenacts the time before trauma; it is a “recollected memory” that defends against what follows (Katan 1969, 552).

¹⁴⁵ In a 1922 essay entitled “Medusa’s Head” Freud brings this point home when he writes that “[t]he snakes on Medusa’s head “serve actually as a mitigation of the horror [*der Milderung des Grauens*], for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror” (SE 18: 273; GW 17: 47). The sight of this “horror,” he claims “makes the spectator stiff with terror [*macht starr vor Schreck*], turns him to stone” (SE 18: 273; GW 17: 47).

the phallus.¹⁴⁶ Luce Irigaray has brought this critique to bear on the Oedipal story and its centrality to the mythos of psychoanalysis. Freud's narration of the Oedipal drama, structured on the hallucinatory paranoia of the boy's "overestimation" of the value of his penis, captures all sexuality in the projective fears of the young boy.¹⁴⁷ She argues that in this structure

[w]oman's castration is defined as her having nothing you can see, as her *having* nothing. In her having nothing penile, in seeing that she has No Thing. Nothing *like* man. That is to say, *no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality, reproducing its truth. *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth.* (Irigaray 1985a, 48)

What does the young boy "see"? No "thing." It is from this perceived no "thing," that the boy constructs some "thing"—the fetish.¹⁴⁸ How does this "nothing to be seen" turn into no "thing," which through the boy's affective response turns into some "thing?" Is the fetish an ideological construction, the result of a prefiguring of appearance in light of not

¹⁴⁶ As Tina Chanter has argued in *The Picture of Abjection*, the logic of fetishism constructs women as men by "endowing women with fetishes"; it is a logic that institutes the law of equivalence and sameness, making all women like men, so that men can tolerate the existence of sexual difference (Chanter 2008, 166). For it is only after the fetishistic displacement that disavows sexual difference that the boy can fulfill his expectations of the universality of the male genitals, can he rest at ease, can he ward off the threat of castration. It is as if, Chanter argues, "the boy is saying that another human being must of necessity be the same as himself, and if this turns out not to be the case, he will simply make it the case" (Chanter 2008, 167). Fetishistic disavowal, thus, abstracts sexual difference and interprets it through the phallus of masculine desire and anxiety, creating of women nothing more than beings of lack who have been symbolically appraised in light of the phallus, preparing them for exchange within an economy of masculine desire. As Chanter notes, this might force one to ask what would happen if one brought Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism to bear on Freud's concept of fetishistic disavowal (Chanter 2008, 162).

¹⁴⁷It is worth noting that, in this sense, for Freud, as well as much of the psychoanalytic literature, women cannot be fetishists.

¹⁴⁸The idea that the fetish a thing created from nothing is central to Alan Bass's argument in an article entitled, "Fetishism, Reality, and 'The Snow Man,'" *American Imago* 48, no. 3 (1991): 295-328.

just the material conditions that structure labor, but perhaps also sex?¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, what are the material conditions informing the symbolic structure of the young boy's expectations? Why does he expect to see penises everywhere, such that the boy could render the appearance as absence in Freud's narrative?¹⁵⁰ Is the schematization of appearance already structured toward the phallus, and if so then what does this say about Freud's construction of the social context that surrounds the boy? Is the prefiguring of appearance itself structured by the spell of the phallus thus fetishistically restraining appearance in its inability to recognize what is different than the phallus? Perhaps, a turn toward Marx's concept of commodity fetishism would be helpful in thinking about construction of the symbolic structure that allows Freud to imagine the young boy conjuring something from no "thing"?

Luce Irigaray makes just this move *This Sex Which is not One*, where she argues the symbolic order has been structured in advance by the erasure of women. She bases this argument on the exchange of women, vis-à-vis Claude Lévi-Strauss, in patriarchal societies.¹⁵¹ The law of masculine desire not only subjects women to a process of

¹⁴⁹ Catharine A. MacKinnon makes this argument in "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory." She writes "Sexuality is to feminism what work is Marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away" (MacKinnon 1982, 515). In other words women, just like workers, are alienated. In the same way that the worker is alienated from the product of his or her activity, women are alienated from sexuality and desire. Whereas the worker's alienation serves the surplus value that supports capital, for MacKinnon women's alienation of sexuality serves the unequal distribution of power between the sexes under the system of patriarchy. Thus, one could argue, just as ideology is the moment that the worker confronts the products of his or her labor as alien, as not belonging to him or her, so too one could say that ideology is the moment in which women confront their objectified sexuality.

¹⁵⁰ The patriarchal and heterosexist nature of the structure of the fetish itself in psychoanalysis has caused some, like Marjorie Garber, to argue that the concept of the fetish cannot divest itself of its complicity in these structures. In an article entitled, "Fetish Envy" she writes "Penis envy *is* phallus envy; phallus envy *is* fetish envy. It is not clear that it is possible to go "beyond ideology" here; the ideology of the fetish is the ideology of phallogentrism, the ideology of heterosexuality" (Garber 1990, 46).

¹⁵¹ See also: Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy of Sex,'" in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, edited by Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge 1997): pgs. 27-62.

exogamous exchange, but also creates a symbolic system that excludes the other of masculine desire in this exchange. This concludes, she argues, in a system of sexual signification only recognizing one sex. Referring to Freud's claim that the fetish protects men from becoming homosexual (SE 21: 154; GW 14: 313), she argues that in as much as the phallus organizes the systematic abstraction and exchange of women amongst men through the signifier of the phallus, women become the material upon which this displaced "hom(m)o-sexuality" plays out. She writes,

[t]he use of and traffic in women subtend and uphold the reign of masculine hom(m)o-sexuality, even while they maintain that hom(m)o-sexuality in speculations, mirror games, identifications, and more or less rivalrous appropriations, which defer its real practice. Reigning everywhere, although prohibited in practice, hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women, matter, or sign, and hetero-sexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men.

(Irigaray 1985b, 172)

Women, as commodities, are abstracted from the materiality of their own desire and are only allowed to interpret desire through a symbolic field anchored in the phallus of masculine desire and anxiety. Thus, one can apply Marx's concept of commodity fetishism to the mythos of the Oedipal drama underpinning Freud's account of the fetish. When one does this, one sees that the fetish, the woman's phallus, secures the self-referential and narcissistic nature of masculine desire. The phallus as master signifier subjects everything and everyone to the same symbolic system, capturing sexuality and sex in advance, valuing it in terms of the phallus, so that it may be exchanged. In other

words, women, like the commodity, would be abstracted and exchanged under the aegis of the phallus as what organizes the symbolic field. In fact it is because women are subjected to the law of the phallus, that Irigaray will argue that “[a]ccording to a certain ideology, the little girl can thus have *no value* before puberty” (Irigaray 1985a, 25). If one were to carry Marxist critique further, then fetishism might appear as the ideology that secures this system of phallic exchange that grounds the symbolic, and as “a card-carrying member” of this ideology, Freud “never questions” it (Irigaray 1985a, 28).¹⁵²

If disavowal were no more than a function of fetishism, then it too, would be implicated in a logic of sameness that levels all things to exchangeable forms of masculine sexuality. It would perhaps be the ideological fortification of the phallic structuring of the symbolic itself in Freud’s narrative.¹⁵³ But, as I will attempt to show in the next section, to understand disavowal only through the story of fetishistic disavowal occludes the more primary function that Freud ascribes it in his late work. For Freud, all instances of fetishism are Oedipal in nature. All instances of fetishism involve the mechanism of disavowal. Thus, all forms of fetishistic disavowal participate in a symbolic structure grounded in the structure of the Oedipal complex. Yet, in Freud’s work not all instances of disavowal are fetishistic. In contrast to an interpretation that finds that disavowal is no more than function of fetishism, and thus part of a symbolic economy grounded in phallogocentrism, I will argue that disavowal is primary defense mechanism that constitutes the psyche. And in fact, if disavowal is not necessarily

¹⁵² She goes on to argue “all the social regimes of ‘History’ are based upon the exploitation of one ‘class’ of producers, namely, women. Whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force) and whose constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order as such, without any compensation in kind going to them for that ‘work’” (Irigaray 1985b, 173).

¹⁵³ In *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud’s Writings*, Sarah Kofman argues that the development of penis envy in women is Freud’s defensive construction that preserves the masculine narrative of the Oedipal complex.

Oedipal, then perhaps the concept of fetishism could be freed from the overarching patriarchal narrative of the Oedipal Complex. Specifically, if one concedes that Freud's narrative of the introduction of the law and thus the symbolic is constrained by patriarchal ideological constructions, this does not negate the existence of fetishism itself, for fetishism exists despite Freud's narrative constraint. Thus, just as we will ask what does it mean to think disavowal outside of the Oedipal narrative, so too, after having separated disavowal from fetishism, we should ask the question would fetishism look like outside the constraints of the Oedipal narrative.¹⁵⁴

II. Disavowals and Their Vicissitudes

If disavowal is not only fetishistic, and thus part of the Oedipal narrative pinned to the anxiety and overvaluation of the phallus, then what exactly is it? When taking up the task of elucidating the concept of disavowal, it is necessary to point out that there is no definite theory of disavowal in Freud's work. Nonetheless, as Laplanche and Pontalis point out in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, there is "a definite consistency in the evolution of this concept in his work" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 118). But as with all "evolutions" this involves shifts and modifications of the concept. It is precisely these shifts that I plan to follow out in this section in order to help clarify the concept of disavowal present in Freud's late works. It is a concept, I will argue, that, like repression,

¹⁵⁴ This I take to be Julia Kristeva's project in *The Power of Horror* and Tina Chanter's project in *The Picture of Abjection*. While I am sympathetic to these projects, my aim here is centered solely on investigating disavowal as a primary form of defense, I take this work to be outside the scope of my project. One can also, perhaps see this in the idea of the transitional object in the work of Winnicott. See also: Philippe Réfabert, "Une Matrice Psychique Transitionnelle: Proposition pour penser clivage et fétichisme," *Psychanalyses: Revue de Collège de Psychanalyses* 44 (1992): 61-69; David L. Ralphing, "Fetishism in a Woman," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 37, no. 2 (1989): 465-492.

is a primary function of the psyche. Yet unlike repression, which preserves the synthetic functions of the psyche, disavowal indicates the non-synthetic functions of the psyche. In as much as disavowal will indicate the non-synthetic functions of the psyche, it will take us back to the egoic function of schematization and the a-temporal nature of the unconscious, and thus toward the non-identical.

What is at stake in separating disavowal from the Oedipal narrative? By separating the concept of disavowal from the Oedipal Complex and castration theory I hope to demonstrate that disavowal is a primary function of the psyche. There are many significant facts that would follow from this addition to, or reorientation of, the psyche. Repression favors synthesis and the preservation of the unity of the psyche. And while one will find this is also the case of Freud's early of disavowal, by the end of Freud's work disavowal comes to represent an intractable non-synthetic function splitting the psyche. If disavowal was a primary function like repression, and was not a secondary defense emerging from castration theory, then the psyche would not be premised solely on the tendency toward synthesis. If the defenses constituting the psyche were not focused on preserving the illusion the unity of self, then the self would be, at times, irredeemably fractured, thus indicating the limit of rationality itself. And in as much as the self would be fractured by that which remains outside of the subject's schematizing functions, then this and not repression is what we would want to retranslate back into the political if we were interested in performing a critique of political reason. In hopes of reaching the political stakes of this discussion, let us now turn toward the development of Freud's concept of disavowal.

From 1923 until 1927 Freud's concept of disavowal is tied, as we have seen to the discourse of the "trauma" of sexual difference and the imaginary threat of castration forming the kernel of the Oedipal drama. Yet, during the same years, the concept is also essential to Freud's project of differentiating the psychical origins of neurosis and psychosis—a project that had occupied him at least as early as his 1913 essay "The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis: A Contribution to the Problem of Choice of Neurosis."¹⁵⁵ These origins, Freud argues in two essays published in 1924, can be traced back to the psychical functions of repression and disavowal. In "Neurosis and Psychosis" Freud begins parsing out the "genetic difference" between the two when he writes, "*neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id, whereas psychosis is the analogous outcome of a similar disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world*" (SE 19: 149; GW 13: 387). When a drive has been repressed the ego comes into conflict with the id. The drive constantly seeks conscious expression through displacement and condensation. The ego thus, "finds its unity threatened and impaired by this intruder, and it continues to struggle against the symptom" (SE 19: 150; GW 13: 388). The ego's continued fight against the repressed drive produces symptoms that paint the "picture of neurosis" (SE 19: 150; GW 13: 388). In essence what one finds at the heart of "every transference neurosis" is the fact that "the ego has come into conflict with the id in the service of the superego" through the mechanism of repression (SE 19: 150; GW 13: 388).

¹⁵⁵ In this essay Freud is concerned with examining the origin of different neuroses, over and beyond the question of whether the neurosis is constitutional or accidental. Specifically, he is interested in answering the question why certain neuroses develop and not others. This question is a nascent version of the question we find in his essays from 1924.

In contrast to the ego's conflict with the id forming the basis of neurotic symptoms, Freud argues psychoses can be traced back to a conflict "between the ego and the external world" (SE 19: 152; GW 13: 390). Psychosis, he argues, "consists in a frustration, non-fulfillment, of one of those childhood wishes which are so deeply rooted in our phylogenetically determined organization" (SE 19: 151; GW 13: 390). In this case the drive is stronger than the ego's attachment to reality. The ego cannot preserve its unity by repressing the drive, so the ego tears itself away from reality as a last ditch effort to preserve its unity. Whereas the ego sides with reality and the super-ego against the id in neurosis, in psychosis the ego sides with the id against reality and the super-ego. And where Freud attributes the function of repression to the origin of neurosis, disavowal forms the genetic origin of psychosis (SE 19: 153; GW 13: 391). Freud makes this point quite simply in "The loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," when he writes "neurosis does not disavow the reality, it only ignores it; psychosis disavows it and tries to replace it [*Die Neurose verleugnet die Realität nicht, sie will nur nichts von ihr wissen; die Psychose verleugnet sie und sucht sie zu ersetzen*]" (SE 19: 185; GW 13: 365). Thus, the concept of disavowal is not only woven into the narrative of the Oedipal drama, but is also a key element in another narrative: the metapsychological distinction between neurosis and psychosis.

In 1924 Freud explicitly begins to think of disavowal not only outside the fear of castration and fetishism, but also as a psychical function that precedes the Oedipal phase, when he links it to the early functions of the ego. In arguing that disavowal is the genetic root of psychosis, where the ego sides in favor of the id and against the perception of a troubling perception, Freud already positions disavowal as a defense of equal importance

to the functions of the ego as repression. And in as much as Freud positions the function of disavowal, and repression for that matter, before the advent of the Oedipal Complex in these accounts, then the realities the young ego responds to is neither necessarily imbued by the threat of castration nor the primacy of the phallus. This is to say the disavowed reality in these instances is not yet culturally coded by normative roles. Despite the fact that Freud's search for a genetic account of disavowal makes it a primary function in the psyche, in this account disavowal still preserves the unity of the ego by aligning one's perception of external reality with the id. Thus, in this account, the concept of disavowal, just like repression, is a mechanism employed by the besieged ego in order to maintain its unity. During these years the concept of disavowal, like the concept of repression, favors the synthetic functions of the ego. It erases, realigns, and reforms one's perception to side step the threat the id poses to the ego. As we will see, when Freud develops the concept of disavowal further, as he moves it away from the psychoses, the defense becomes more stark, tending to favor the non-synthetic functions of the ego, thus exposing the intractable split that lies at the heart of subjectivity.

Freud's 1927 essay "Fetishism" represents a turning point in the concept of disavowal.¹⁵⁶ In this essay Freud not only formally defines disavowal for the first time, but also plays down disavowal's relationship to psychosis, and thus its synthetic function.

¹⁵⁶ During the same year Freud also uses will use the term disavowal in *The Future of an Illusion* in a way that seems to foreshadow his use of the term in *Moses and Monotheism*. Attempting to discuss the what truth religion may offer, even though it is supported by illusions and wish fulfillment, Freud writes "religious doctrine tells us the historical truth—though subject, it is true, to some modification and disguise—whereas our rational account disavows [*verleugnet*] it" (SE 21: 42; GW 14: 366). Here, Freud attempts to articulate the difference between the historical truth from the rational account. This has formal similarities with his attempt to distinguish the practices of traditions (and the traces of historical truth within them) and the rational account of historical narrative that disavows what remains in tradition. Yet, he will go on to use the term slightly differently, and more akin to his 1923-1926 understanding of the term one page later when he writes that "[i]f on the one hand, religion brings with it obsessional restrictions, exactly as an individual obsessional neurosis does, on the other hand it comprises a system of wishful illusions together with a disavowal of reality [*Verleugnung der Wirklichkeit*], such as we find in an isolated form nowhere else but in amentia, in a state of blissful hallucinatory confusion" (SE 21: 43; GW 14: 367).

In light of the unique symptom that the fetish presents and the mechanism that makes it possible, Freud formally redefines the distinction between repression and disavowal. He writes:

[t]he oldest word in our psycho-analytic terminology, ‘repression’ [*Verdrängung*], already relates to this pathological process. If we wanted to differentiate more sharply between the vicissitude of the *idea* [*Vorstellung*] as distinct from that of the *affect*, and reserve the word ‘*Verdrängung*’ for the affect, the correct German word for the vicissitude of the idea [*der Vorstellung*] would be ‘*Verleugnung*’.

(SE 21: 153; GW 14: 313)

Whereas repression concerns the developments, displacements, and condensations of affect, disavowal concerns the developments, displacements, and condensations of an idea. In a slight modification of the concept, Freud’s concept of disavowal now concerns how an idea, the representation of a perception, becomes transformed as the ego develops.¹⁵⁷ The disavowal of a perception is no longer its repudiation of reality, as in

¹⁵⁷ Edith Jacobson makes this distinction in her 1957 essay “Denial and Repression” when she writes: “repression counter-cathetic ego formations safeguard the repression of unacceptable drive representations. In the case of denial [disavowal], a wishful id fantasy that tends to distort reality is used as a defense against an opposite frightening idea, which likewise distorts reality” (Jacobson 1957, 78). While both defenses negotiate the same conflict, each defense focuses on a different side of the conflict in order to resolve it. In repression the drive representation is barred from consciousness. This banishment from the ego is maintained by counter formations that ward off the irruption of the drive that has been primarily repressed. Whereas repression bars the drives, disavowal distorts one’s perception of external reality. Disavowal uses the fantasies of the id as a defense against the incompatibility of the drives and reality. Yet, instead of effecting the drive itself disavowal distorts reality through the projection of fantasies from the id. While, Jacobson’s work on disavowal is helpful in distinguishing this concept from repression, she is writing it in the context of examining psychosis. This connection is not unfounded, and in fact Freud makes this connection in several places throughout his work. Yet, the concept of disavowal that I am interested in this chapter does not concern disavowal’s relationship to psychosis, but a more subtle form of disavowal that still effects reality, but still maintains a relationship to that reality. I am interested in disavowal, not in the extremities of its defense which might be psychosis, but rather in the more modest, and perhaps problematic articulation of the concept, which concerns maintaining a contradictory relationship to reality. For other variations of this argument see: Alan Bass, *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Rottenberg, *Inheriting the Future: Legacies of Kant, Freud, and Flaubert* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); J.A. Brook, “Freud and

psychosis,¹⁵⁸ but rather the manipulation of this perception so that the subject can both acknowledge and deny it—like displacing the idea on to an object as in the fetish.

Disavowal becomes a “compromise” in resolving the “conflict between the weight of the unwelcome perception and the force of his counter-wish” (SE 21: 154; GW 14: 313). It resolves the conflict by disconnecting two perceptions that should be contradictory, allowing them to exist simultaneously. In this sense one retains both perceptions while the implications of holding these two contradictory ideas at once is cut off at the start.¹⁵⁹

These ideas are maintained because disavowal preserves a distance between what would be contradictory ideas; it separates them from each other and ensures that they do not come into contact with one another, giving deference to both the reality principle and pleasure principle simultaneously. In this essay, disavowal operates by dividing consciousness between the two ideas, allowing the subject to maintain two contradictory beliefs without feeling any of the emotional or intellectual dissonance one might

Splitting,” *The International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 19 (1992): 335-350; Michael Franz Basch, “The Perception of Reality and the Disavowal of Meaning,” *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 11 (1983): 125-153; E. E Trunnel, W.E. Holt, “The Concept of Denial or Disavowal,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 22 (1974): 769-784; Sol Altschul, “Denial and Ego Arrest,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 16 (1968): 301-318; Channing T. Lipson., “Denial and Mourning,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 44 (1963): 104-107.

¹⁵⁸ Referring to his two 1924 essays Freud writes: “Recently, along quite speculative lines, I arrived at the proposition that the essential difference between Neurosis and psychosis was that in the former the ego, in the service of reality, suppresses a piece of the id, whereas in a psychosis it lets itself be induced by the id to detach itself from a piece of reality. I returned to this theme once again later on. But soon after this I had reason to regret that I had ventured so far” (Freud, SE 21: 155; GW 14: 315).

¹⁵⁹ This characteristic of disavowal has been noted by both Eugene Trunnel and William Holt in their essay “The Concept of Denial or Disavowal.” Here they write that in a state of disavowal or denial “Perception is accurate and unimpaired, but there is a defensive failure to appreciate fully the implications of that perception” (Trunnel and Holt 1974, 783). Perhaps, more importantly for my purposes it has also been noted by Hanna Segal in her essay “Silence is the Real Crime” in a political context. In speaking of the threat of nuclear war and its real possibility for total annihilation, or achievement of the aims of the death drive, Segal writes that “governments both envisage a nuclear war and deny the reality of what it would entail” (Segal 1997, 145). She goes on to write “in this split we retain intellectual knowledge of the reality, but divest it of emotional meaning” (Segal 1997, 145f.).

otherwise.¹⁶⁰ Whereas, in 1924 disavowal simply meant the repudiation of external reality in favor of the id, in this essay disavowal now comes to represent a compromise between neurosis and psychosis. Instead of either repressing the id or reality, the ego disavows and thus favors both the id and reality.¹⁶¹ Disavowal thus becomes a psychological mechanism that defies the “either or logic” and institutes a regime of “both and,” even at the expense of the logic of non-contradiction, and thus a rationality that presupposes a linear model of temporality in which contradicting things cannot exist *at the same time*.¹⁶²

Not only is disavowal a subtler defense than Freud had speculated three years earlier, but he also gestures toward making disavowal a mechanism that supersedes the context of the “traumatic” discovery of sexual difference. At the end of the essay Freud discusses two young men’s disavowal of their father’s death. He characterizes this defense as an oscillation between two beliefs engendered by a split in consciousness. The brothers both acknowledged their father’s death, yet simultaneously refused to believe in it. Concerning the young men’s disavowal of their father’s death, Freud writes that, “it was only one current in their mental life that had not recognized their father’s death; there was another

¹⁶⁰ W. R. Bion argues that this separation results from a delinking process. See: W.R. Bion, “Attacks on Linking,” *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 40 (1959): 308-315.

¹⁶¹ Myrta Casas de Pereda gives a dialectical account of this distinction in an essay entitled “Verleugnung, strukturelle Wirkung und pathologische Dimension,” where she writes “Das ‘Nein’ der Verdrängung, verantwortlich für die unbewußte Spur, kann als ‘Ich sollte nicht’ formuliert werden und impliziert die Beteiligung eines Dritten, der darüber entscheidet, ‘was ich tun kann oder nicht.’ Das ‘Nein’ der Differenzierung, in der sich die Verleugnung bemerkbar macht und die dyadische Situationen erzeugt, kann als ‘Ich glaube nicht nicht’ bzw. ‘Ich kan nicht nicht glauben’ formuliert werden” (Casas de Pereda 1997, 36).

¹⁶² In his 1940 essay *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* Freud writes that the “primary processes” which the id has available to it “differ widely from those which are familiar to us through conscious perception in our intellectual and emotional life; nor are they subject to the critical restrictions of logic, which repudiates some of these processes as invalid and seeks to undo them” (SE 23: 198). What is extraordinary about disavowal is that it is able to bypass the defensive nature of logic in consciousness, by splitting belief in the existence of the object. As Freud writes in his 1927 essay “Fetishism” the little boy “has retained that belief, but he has also given it up” (SE 19: 154).

current which took full account of the fact” (SE 21: 156; GW 14: 316). The recognition of the fact runs along a different stream than the implications of the existence of the fact, both intellectually and emotionally. This split in the “currents” of recognition allowed “the attitude which fitted in with the wish and the attitude which fitted in with reality” to exist “side by side” (SE 21: 156; GW 14: 316). The perception of fact and the perception founded on the “counter-wish” would normally contradict each other and demand resolution. Disavowal creates a “split [*Spaltung*]” between the two beliefs (SE 21: 156; GW 14: 316). Thus, to disavow a fact is not to repress it, but rather is to not recognize the conflict that a fact might pose with one’s wishes or anticipations by maintaining a split between two beliefs.¹⁶³ It is not to contradict oneself in one’s belief structure, but rather to not even recognize the contradiction or its implication. The subject who defends against this “unwelcome perception” oscillates between recognition and non-recognition of the fact without ever feeling the dissonance of intellectual contradiction or the emotive or affective implications. The concept of splitting becomes essential for Freud’s late formalization of the concept of disavowal, which will represent a stark irreconcilability lodged in the young ego.

From 1939 to 1940 Freud produces two texts highlighting the constitutive role of splitting, and thus disavowal, in the development of the psyche: *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* and “The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence.” For Freud, the young, developing ego is “fighting on two fronts [*kämpft also auf zwei Fronten*]” (SE 23: 200; GW 17: 130). This continual struggle of what is already a “weak and immature ego” forces it to develop separate mechanisms in order to fend off both the threat from internal

¹⁶³ This leads Eugene E. Trunnell and William E. Holt to argue that “Disavowal or denial as originally described by Freud involves, not the absence or distortion of an actual perception, but rather a failure to fully appreciate the significance or implications of what is perceived” (Trunnell and Holt 1974, 771).

stimuli, the drives, and the threat from external stimuli, reality (SE 23: 200; GW 17: 130). On the one hand, as we have already seen, repression repulses the drives at the behest of reality; it is the egoic defense against unruly drives. On the other hand, the ego must defend against the excessive stimuli of the “external world.” When the ego cannot harness the force of one against the other, the external world against the drives or the drives against the external world, the ego takes a third option, splitting itself to allow for the contradictory demands to exist simultaneously. In as much as the repression of the drives is essential to the constitution of the synthetic functions of the ego for Freud, so too is the mechanism of splitting essential for the non-synthetic functions of the ego. Thus, Freud argues that the splitting of disavowal is as constitutive for the development of the ego as repression.¹⁶⁴ He writes that:

[...] the childish ego, under the domination of the real world, gets rid of undesirable instinctual demands [*Triebansprüche*] by what are called repressions [*Verdrängung*]. We will now supplement [*ergänzen*] this by further asserting that, during the same period of life, the ego often enough finds itself in the position of fending off some demand from the external world which it feels distressing and that this is effected by means of a *disavowal* of the perceptions [*Verleugnung der Wahrnehmungen*] which bring to knowledge this demand from reality. (SE 23: 203f.; GW 17: 134)

Freud supplements the “cornerstone” of psychoanalysis, primary repression, with another defense mechanism, disavowal. The process of disavowal becomes one of the mechanisms by which the ego defends itself against the demands of stimuli, aiding the

¹⁶⁴ This splitting has been characterized, in a clear analogy with the two modes of repression, primary disavowal by Alan Bass in *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros*.

constitution of the psyche. In this sense, we can see that disavowal is one of the mechanisms, along with repression, that gives rise to ego.¹⁶⁵ The young ego is thus founded on not only the repression of the drives, but also the disavowal of threatening perceptions; when confronted with the conflict of the drives and the demands of the reality principle, disavowal allows the ego to choose neither side by splitting the belief in the existence of the external perception that conflict with the drives into two currents: one which acknowledges the perception, the other which denies it. It is the rift between these two perceptions, and not the repudiation of the perception that defines the constitutive psychoanalytic concept of disavowal. Disavowal, where “two attitudes persist side by side throughout their lives without influencing each other” Freud claims “may rightly be called ‘splitting of the ego’” (SE 23: 203; GW 17: 134). With this understanding of disavowal developed in Freud works, the psyche becomes oriented not only toward defensive synthesis, but also toward an intractable splitting.

With the “new” status of the concept of disavowal, Freud argues that one should not overvalue the “synthetic value of the ego” in his 1940 essay “The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense” (SE 23: 276; GW 17: 60).¹⁶⁶ Both neurosis and psychosis

¹⁶⁵ Melanie Klein picks up on the foundational nature of this splitting in her work on early child analysis. This splitting for Klein is the manner in which the infant attempts to negotiate the ambivalence of the drives, specifically the threat that the death drive poses for the infant. As she argues in “Envy and Gratitude,” although the infant will gradually work towards the integration of experience, there is a tendency within the early to “split itself and its objects” because “the ego largely lacks cohesion at birth, and in part because it constitutes a defence against the primordial anxiety, and is therefore a means of preserving the ego” (Klein 1975a, 191). In an attempt to negotiate the threat of the drives, the infant projects this ambivalence onto an object, thus effectively splitting its perception of the object. But this split in the object, between what she calls the good and bad parts of the object, also affects a correlative split in the ego. As she argues in “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms,” “I believe that the ego is incapable of splitting the object—internal and external—without a corresponding splitting taking place within the ego” (Klein 1975b, 6).

strive to maintain the unity of the ego by repressing or repudiating contradictions in consciousness; they both serve to maintain rationality, even if that logic is disconnected from reality. But along with the tendency towards synthesis, the ego is also constituted by non-synthetic, non-rational, forms of defense. As a process of defense, splitting opts for neither a repression of the drive in favor of reality (neurosis) nor the withdrawal from reality in favor of the drives (psychosis); rather in this case, “the child takes neither course, or rather he takes both simultaneously, which comes to the same thing” (SE 23: 275; GW 17: 59). While this is an “ingenious solution” to the problem presented to the ego, Freud finds that the relief provided by the splitting of the ego which occurs in disavowal is “paid for in one way or another, and this success is achieved at the price of a rift in the ego which never heals but which increases as time goes on” (SE 23: 276; GW 17: 60). Thus, when disavowal, as a form of splitting, becomes primary for the development of the ego, so too does the non-synthetic nature of the ego; it is a defense that splits the ego, but where this chasm remains within the ego, a permanent scar resulting from the ego’s battle on two fronts.

III. Both/And: Disavowal at the Threshold of Rationality

Freud’s concept of disavowal comes late. Perhaps its belated appearance and its unsettled nature in Freud’s work is the source of the tension in the concept. For surely when one surveys the concept, it is obvious that it oscillates between a narrative of castration and narrative of the non-synthetic characteristics of egoic development. In the

¹⁶⁶ Joel Whitebook argues that the non-synthetic aspect of the ego has been overvalued in anti-humanist engagements with Freud in the second chapter of *Perversion and Utopia*. Instead of overvaluing the non-synthetic, Whitebook argues that synthesis remains the goal of analysis and the psyche for Freud.

end, although Freud develops this concept outside of the castration narrative, perhaps there will always remain a touch of fetishism in disavowal. Nonetheless, the trajectory of Freud's development of the concept from 1923 until 1939 suggests that the concept of disavowal is a primary defense mechanism preceding the introduction of the symbolic and the law in not only the Oedipal narrative, but also for whatever mythological structure comes to represent the moment of the symbolic and law in psychoanalysis. One might even suggest, although this is beyond the scope of this chapter, that Freud tries to reign in the threat of disavowal in by entangling it within the Oedipal narrative.

As I have shown, disavowal is as primary for the ego as repression. As we saw in chapter two, repression aids the egoic organization of the drives by excising drive-presentations. Repression sides on the favor of reality against the id, thus maintaining the unity of the ego against the threats that the drives pose. It operates by negating drive-presentations that set the ego at odds with itself by negating drive-presentations forcing the ego into contradiction. Repression, thus, favors the unity of the ego, preserving this unity by instituting and maintaining the logic of non-contradiction. In contrast to the unifying functions of egoic repression, disavowal sides with neither the id nor reality, but rather chooses both. In choosing both the drive and reality, it preserves contradiction by giving up the unity of consciousness; it preserves contradiction by negating the unity of consciousness behind the logic of non-contradiction. In as much as disavowal negates this unity, then consciousness cannot recognize contradiction; without the unified sense of self, contradiction just becomes difference. Because disavowal does not recognize the logic of non-contradiction it represents the non-synthetic function of the psyche. If the synthetic functions of the psyche are supported by the defense of repression, and if

repression presupposes the linear model of time and thus rationality, then one might wonder if disavowal, as non-synthetic and thus opposed to this form of rationality, would also be founded on the linear model of time.

The introduction of a primary non-synthetic function of the ego in Freud's late work forces one to reevaluate the primacy of the synthetic function of the ego. If the synthetic function of the ego is, as I have shown in the second chapter, the schematization of appearance as such, then disavowal's constitutive status also forces us to reevaluate the role of linear time in consciousness. Objects, things, stimuli, appear by virtue of a bodily schematization that brings them into a linear model of time. Repression serves the logic of non-contradiction in the synthetic temporal apprehension of stimuli. It negates contradiction by manipulating affective attachments to certain drive presentations, thus it excises certain affects and presentations from the temporal grasping of the world. A model of consciousness based solely on repression is, thus, structured by fetishizing the vicissitudes of drive-presentation and thus operates primarily from the axis of linear and non-linear temporality. In as much as non-linear forms of temporality assume a linear model—for it is nothing other than a second order reshuffling of the linear progression past-present-future—to operate from this axis is to remain caught within a framework of what can be rationalized, what can be brought back into and reordered in light of the successive march of time. Thus, when one assumes the repressive model of the psyche, one occludes the effect of the non-synthetic forms of defense operating from the gap between what is brought into time and what is not. This is to say, a model of the psyche based solely on repression, represses, as it were, the noumenal side of appearance—the axis between what appears and what does not, the axis between time and timelessness.

But if, as we have seen in Freud's late writings, disavowal is as fundamental to the development of the ego as repression, then the ego must also be composed of non-synthetic functions that we must also examine in terms of schematization of stimuli. That is to say, that in as much as the ego schematizes sensuous materiality and concepts by removing drive-presentations from consciousness, the very constitution of the ego itself, the very introduction of appearance itself preserves the bar between the phenomena and noumena in the split of disavowal. And in as much as repression presupposes a linear model of time, then so too would the introduction of a primary non-synthetic function in the ego would simultaneously introduce a different temporal axis into consciousness. This would not be an axis split between linear and non-linear time, but rather an axis between time and timelessness. Disavowal as a primary function of the ego preserves the distance between what can be conceptualized and what cannot, between what can be brought into time and what cannot. And in this sense, in as much as one would speak of the egoic schematizing of stimuli, one would also have to speak of the egoic dis-schematizing of stimuli. Consciousness would simultaneously bind and unbind; it would constantly split the world it comes to know. In splitting the world the subject it self becomes divided. In the very grasping of the world through time, the subject splits itself through the gap between time and timelessness. The constitution of the ego would thus consist in schematization and dis-schematization. And, as perhaps it always had been since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the very becoming of the phenomenal would consist of a simultaneous binding and unbinding of stimulus, the pulsations of the life and death drives.

Disavowal, then, speaks to the splitting of appearance enforcing the phenomenal divide of consciousness itself—a split that enforces the temporal division of rationality itself. And while disavowal explains how fetishism occurs, while it might very well be the genetic root of fetishism, fetishistic disavowal is no more than a specific instantiation of a more primary process of splitting that constitutes the split between what is temporalized, and thus subject to rationality, and what is not temporalized, and thus not subject to rationality. Where disavowal will form the limit to the synthetic, and thus rational, functions of the ego, disavowal will also indicate the limit of analysis.

I would like to suggest that disavowal operates at the threshold of temporality. I make this claim not because I believe that disavowal gives rise to a troubled or “disordered” experience of temporality—although it might—but because disavowal, like repression, must partake in the phenomenological, and thus temporal, distinction between conscious and unconscious. In as much as the repressed is schematized, and in as much as disavowal is as primary as the repressed, it must also operate on the same level of the relationship between stimulus and conceptualization, stimulus and its temporalization. And in as much as disavowal indicates the non-synthetic functions of the ego it must represent what which is not schematized, or that which is fundamentally timeless. As timeless, what has been disavowed in the primary functions of the psyche have not been brought into time, and like the drives that resist the primary synthetic functions of the ego in trauma, this gives rise the repetition compulsion, a compulsive and absolutely unconscious re-enactment of the attempts to master the non-identical, to master what has escaped our ability to conceptualize it. In other words, what has been disavowed is

timeless because it is what remains un-schematized and thus the mechanism of disavowal, unlike repression, represents the non-identical.

Given the late development of the concept the concept of disavowal as a primary form of defense, it should be not surprise that disavowal represents a limit to the standard model of analytic treatment.¹⁶⁷ Whereas, the model of analysis is designed toward repression, when faced with a situation in which “the compulsion to repeat [*Zwange zur Wiederholung*]” comes to replace “the impulsion to remember [*Impuls zur Erinnerung*],” what it means to negotiate the symptoms present in analysis becomes a problematic, if not interminable, task when that task is structured on repression and the linear model of time it presupposes (SE 12: 151; GW 10: 130).¹⁶⁸ This is especially the case when the mode of analysis is still structured on retrieving a forgotten—repressed—memory which treats this repetition as only a resistance to unlocking and bringing forth a memory to fill in a gap in one’s conscious history. Freud struggles with the compulsion to repeat and disavowal in his late theoretical work,¹⁶⁹ but will neither fully integrate the concept of disavowal nor its symptom—the compulsion to repeat—into the analytic model.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ See: Humphrey Morris, “Narrative Representation, Narrative Enactment, and the Psychoanalytic Construction of History,” *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 74 (1993): 33-54.

¹⁶⁸ Freud writes in *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through*: “the patient brings out of the armoury of the past the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of treatment—weapons which we must wrest from him one by one” (SE 12: 151).

¹⁶⁹ See Freud’s 1937 essays “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” and “Constructions in Analysis.”

¹⁷⁰ In his 2000 text *Difference and Disavowal: The Trauma of Eros*, Alan Bass argues that the primary status of disavowal ought to transform how the analyst engages in the interpretative process in analysis when faced with patients whose symptoms are rooted in primary disavowal and not primary repression. Since in these cases the analyst is faced with a patient whose defense mechanism “dedifferentiates” the past and the present, that is it resists the integration of difference, Bass argues that the aim of analysis becomes the “redifferentiation of perception and memory, past and present, in order to reverse the effects of primary disavowal” (Bass 2000, 269). The analytic aim in repression is to excavate and reconstruct the memories that are absent from the present, because the history of the present is marked by lack and absence. Because the problem in disavowal is not a lack in the present, but an excessive present that does not differentiate

Disavowal—as non-schematized, non-identical, and thus timeless—is the limit to rationality in psychoanalysis. Thus, if psychoanalysis can act as a critique of the overvaluation of rationality in political thought, then one must turn political thought toward the psychoanalytic concept of disavowal. But what would it mean to translate this concept into the political, how would disavowal indicate the limit not only of rational thought itself, but of the rationality of the political as such? To answer this question we must turn to Freud’s understanding of the relationship between the psyche and the political as well as his deployment of the concept of disavowal in his last text on the political *Moses and Monotheism*.

between the past and the present, the aim is not excavation, but rather relieving the present of this excess through differentiating the past from the present; it exorcises the ghosts that haunt the present

Chapter Four

Constitutional Disavowal: Psychical Incriptions of Law and Punishment

From this, we can only conclude that the institution of slavery carries an obscurity even blacker than the obscurity of poverty [...]

--Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

This project has been founded on the assumption that as a body of thought dedicated to thinking the non-identical psychoanalysis is an essential resource for thinking limits from which to critique political rationality. That is to say, by attending to the limit of political rationality, one might be able to critique the illusions that are its necessary byproduct. In following out this suggestion we have differentiated the metapsychological structures of the psychoanalytic concepts of repression and disavowal, arguing that disavowal and not repression represents the non-identical in psychoanalytic thought and can thus act as the point from which to engage in this critique. This differentiation was necessary because when political thought does take up the tools of psychoanalysis to think the non-identical it often turns to the concept of repression. And why not? After all, repression is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory. One can hardly imagine psychoanalytic theory without it, both in its general sense of psychological defenses as such and in its more restricted sense as a specific psychological defense. This is to say nothing of the temptation to equivocate between psychological and political repression. Indeed, does not Freud constantly use political metaphors to describe repression in the psyche? While there is an affinity between the political and repression and while the concept of repression is central to the very foundation of psychoanalysis, as I have argued

in the second chapter, the repressed is neither the non-identical nor is it the limit of rationality in psychoanalysis. This is not to say that the repressed is not a powerful concept for political thought, this is only to say that it does not represent the limits of political thought because it participates in the very rationality it intends to subvert. Within the psychoanalytic framework, the repressed can be rationalized, worked on, worked through, slowly chipped at and altered by the power of recognition and reason.

The gambit of this project has been that turning political thought toward the non-identical through the lens of psychoanalysis means taking up the concept of disavowal developed in Freud's late work. As I have argued in the previous chapter, disavowal is not tied to castration theory; rather it denotes the unschematized aspects of our lives, those aspects remaining outside of appearance and thus the logic conditioning appearance itself. As that which escapes schematization, we cannot escape disavowal; it is a force so strong that consciousness splits before it. For what has been disavowed, if it is the non-identical, forms the kernel of appearance itself; it is the negative impression at the heart of the logic forming the principles of schematization. Taking up disavowal, and thus what has been disavowed, means examining not only what resists reason, but also the non-synthetic mechanisms constituting the ego that do not recognize the demands of a reason grounded in the logic of non-contradiction and linear temporality. And in as much as the disavowed has been excluded from the very logic constituting the becoming of appearance itself, then it is what appearance cannot recuperate. Thus, whereas the illusion of ideology represents a deception that we can overcome, the oscillations of political disavowal denote a foundational, or structural, illusion we cannot escape. For what else would mark the boundaries of political rationality other than that which is but does not

appear, the non-identical alien lodged within political rationality yet not recognized by this rationality itself?

In this chapter I will argue that turning political thought toward the non-identical means examining the constitutional structures giving rise to political subjectivity. More specifically, I will argue that the trace of the disavowed operates within the political complex of law and punishment. Yet, before we can take this up directly, it is first helpful, and perhaps necessary, to briefly examine the relationship between the psyche and the social in Freud's work. The link between the psyche and the social, I will suggest, is epitomized by the relationship between ontogenesis and phylogenesis, a relationship demonstrating the historical origins of consciousness in Freud work. After having established the historical origins of consciousness in Freud's work, I will then turn to Freud's deployment of the late concept of disavowal in *Moses and Monotheism* to argue the psychical origin of disavowal is rooted in the non-synthetic moment at the origin of the political realm, a moment that concerns the development of law and the modes of punishment. In this way, I will suggest that whereas for Marx consciousness is structured by the modes of production, for Freud, we might say that it is structured by the modes of punishment. Finally, I will further the investigation into the constitutional nature of this concept by turning to Angela Davis' discussion the 13th amendment, prisons, and slavery. I will argue that the relationship between slavery and the constitution is best understood as an example of political disavowal, and that a confrontation with the limits of political thought might mean a confrontation with the manner in which the modes of punishment schematize the appearance of political subjectivity.

I. The “Witch Prehistory” Phylogenesis: *Totem and Taboo*

In order to truly understand the political nature of the concept of disavowal Freud’s work, it is necessary to ask if the constitutive defenses of the psyche are a-historical and universal? One might reframe this question by asking if the Oedipus complex is universal and necessary in its form, or if it is a specific constellation reflecting certain historical conditions? If the features of the psyche were universal, then its political expression would be no more than iteration—slight variations played on the utterly coercive facts of the human condition. And indeed, when Freud seems to universalize the Oedipal narrative and generalizes the pathologies emerging from it, the character of the psyche appears stable, universal, and a-historical. Yet, if one looks more closely at the relationship between history and the psyche in Freud’s work, and specifically the relationship between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, I believe one can find another story, a story not premised on the assumption of the universality of the Oedipal complex, but rather a story privileging the historical and material nature of the psyche. By re-framing the relationship between the psyche and the social away from the mythological structure of the Oedipal complex and toward the relationship between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, I will suggest that the defensive mechanisms of the psyche are historical and political in Freud’s work.¹⁷¹ This, of course, will be essential for examining how disavowal points back toward the complex of law and punishment.

¹⁷¹ Although it may seem that I am bringing Freud closer to Marx in this argument, it is necessary to note that Freud has many reservations about both Marx’s theory and its application. Freud most explicitly criticizes Marx in the 35th lecture of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, where he argues that “[t]heoretical Marxism, as realized in Russian Bolshevism” is a political illusion (SE 22: 179). He finds that the “strength of Marxism” lies “in its sagacious indication of the decisive influence which the economic circumstances of men have upon their intellectual, ethical, and artistic attitudes” (SE 22: 178). Driven by the science of economics, Marxist theory dispels certain illusions that cover over the material ground of the political and social world and Freud readily agrees with this attempt to correlate economics

One can discern two ways in which the psyche is political in Freud's work. First, there are many places where one finds that the psyche is constituted by and through its relationship to others. Certainly, this is clear in Freud's *The Ego and Id* where he argues, "the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned [*Niederschlag der aufgegebenen*] object-cathexes" (SE 19: 29; GW 13: 257).¹⁷² Freud further confirms this in the opening pages of *Group Psychology* where he argues individual psychology is "at the same time social psychology" (SE 18: 69; GW 13: 73).¹⁷³ In this sense, what we take to be most internal, what we take to be the very core of our identity, is nothing more than the marks others have left on us, the remainder of affective attachments that have long dissolved. Second, and more important for my purposes here, Freud views the psyche as social because it is the reflection of social and political history—or phylogenesis.¹⁷⁴ In other

with the development of society. Nonetheless Freud finds that "it cannot be assumed that economic motives are the only ones that determine the behavior of human beings in society" (SE 22: 178). Thus, according to Freud, while Marx's theory unveils the important correlation between economic and social structures its singular focus does so at the expense of other important psychological influences on the development of society. For as Freud writes it is "incomprehensible how psychological factors can be overlooked where what is in question are the reactions of living human beings," reactions that are driven by "their self-preservative instinct, their aggressiveness, their need to be loved, their drive towards obtaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure [*ihren selbsterhaltungstrieb, ihre Aggressionslust, ihre Liebesbedürfnis, ihren Drang nach Lusterwerb und Unlustvermeidung*]" (SE 22: 178; GW 15: 194). As we can see, for Freud, Marx reduces the complexity of the material development of society when Marx positions this development through the singular principle of economics, thus forsaking what Freud understands to be the perennial influence of the psyche on human life, the development of civilization, and also the source of the problems of society.

¹⁷² It is because of this sense in which the ego develops through its relationship to the external world that some, like Jean Laplanche have argued against primary narcissism *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* and others, such as object relations theorist D. W. Winnicott to posit the vicissitudes of primary narcissism onto the child's first object in "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena."

¹⁷³ For a discussion of the relationship between development of the ego in Freud's work in light of the Marx and Adorno see: Joel Whitebook, "The *Urgeschichte* of Subjectivity Reconsidered," *New German Critique* 81 (Autumn 2000): 125-141.

¹⁷⁴ It is because of both of these relations between the political and psyche that allows Freud to continuously make the analogy between the political and the psyche. According to Freud there is "an almost complete conformity in this respect between the individual and the group: in the group too an impression of the past [*der Eindruck der Vergangenheit*] is retained in unconscious memory-traces" (SE 23: 94; GW 16: 201). The group, like the individual, is affected by the early stages of its development,

words, the other marking my sense of self is not just other people but also the historical organization of society structuring the psyche. Thus, if we want to understand the political and historical nature of disavowal in Freud's work, then we must briefly turn to phylogenesis.

Phylogenesis is one of Freud's most controversial concepts.¹⁷⁵ It explains, for Freud, how individual development, ontogenesis, mimics the evolution of the species as a whole.¹⁷⁶ This hypothesis allows Freud to access transgenerational traits in the human species without the need to reference a trans-historical universal. In this sense, our initial helplessness, the struggle to differentiate the inside from the outside, the drama of the Oedipal conflict and its resolution with the introjection of the law of the father are all specific instantiations in individual development of the historical development of the species according to the phylogenetic hypothesis.¹⁷⁷ In his 1914 preface to the 1905 text *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud describes this relationship:

fixations, impressions, and disturbances that are retained unconsciously. These impressions of the past continue to persist in the present and affect the individual or the group without the individual or group necessarily being aware of it. Thus, the text turns on the claim that just as the individual has an unconscious that affects the subject in ways that it does not understand, that remains the singular force that alienates the subject from itself, so too does a group, community, or one could even say state. Freud makes this comparison explicitly in his analysis of the historical reconstructions of the Rat Man's childhood in his 1909 case study *Notes upon a case of Obsessional Neurosis*. He writes in a footnote that "[i]f we do not wish to go astray in our judgement of their historical reality, we must above all bear in mind that people's 'childhood memories' are only consolidated at a later period, usually at the age of puberty; and that this involves a complicated process of remodeling, analogous in everyway to the process by which a nation constructs legends about its early history" (SE 10, 206).

¹⁷⁵ For example, in *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* José Brunner argues phylogenesis is an unfortunate Lamarckian loyalty in Freud's work that will eventually subtends the racist violence of totalitarianism (Brunner 1995, 163).

¹⁷⁶ Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* is one of the few places where the materialist nature of Freud's phylogenetic gambit is taken seriously.

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of this, and specifically the thesis of recapitulation see: Stephen Jay Gould's *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1977).

[o]ntogenesis may be regarded as a recapitulation of phylogenesis, in so far as the latter has not been modified by more recent experience. The phylogenetic disposition can be seen at work behind the ontogenetic process. But disposition is ultimately the precipitate of earlier experience of the species to which the more recent experience of the individual, as the sum of the accidental factors, is super-added. (SE 7: 131; GS 5: 3f.)

When looking at Freud's description of this relationship one can easily conclude that history frames the individual in advance. While psychoanalysis gives more preference to the "accidental factors" involved in individual development than the historical disposition of the individual, Freud finds psychoanalysis must constantly assume this inherited disposition to make sense of the accidental factors in the development of the individual. In other words, as Freud describes it in a letter to Lou-Andreas Salome, the historical origin of individual development is a "witch prehistory" that must be conjured to explain the individual's primal fantasies and its entrance into the law (Pfeiffer 1966, 80).

Methodologically, the role of phylogenesis in Freud's work is interesting. On the one hand, it seems to be no more than a methodological "remainder," as Robert Fliess has noted, no more than a necessary assumption that grounds the technique of analysis (Fliess 1956, 46). On the other hand, it indicates the material and historical origins of consciousness, as Marcuse has noted in *Eros and Civilization*.¹⁷⁸ While it might be the case that phylogenesis is the necessary, yet mystical, historical assumption that anchors the specificity of individual development in Freud's work, I would like to ask what it would mean to take Freud's reliance on phylogenesis as an indication of his

¹⁷⁸ See Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pages 55-60.

commitments to understanding the historical inscription of the psyche? What if we took what was at stake in phylogenesis seriously, not as a biological theory rooted in Lamarck, but rather a description of the historical and material nature of the psyche itself? How might this shift in emphasis force us to reconsider not only the psyche and its relationship to the social, but also the relationship between disavowal as a psychological experience and as a social phenomenon? In order to flesh out the relationship between the psyche and the social so that we may understand the relationship between disavowal and historical conditions, we must first examine the one text that Freud dedicates to exploring the historical origin of the psyche: *Totem and Taboo*

Written in 1913 *Totem and Taboo* represents Freud's narration of the historical basis of the psyche.¹⁷⁹ Desires and inclinations, he argues, drives and psychological mechanisms can all be traced back to an event so momentous it "left ineradicable traces in the history of humanity [*unertilgbare Spuren in der Geschichte der Menschheit hinterlassen*]" (SE 13: 155; GW 9: 186). This event, for Freud, was the murder of the *Urvater*. Freud's narrative structure of this event leans on Darwin's theory of the evolution of human exogamy. The story of the murder of the primal father is so important for Freud it appears in every political text Freud writes afterwards, acting as the source of

¹⁷⁹ One can also think of *Totem and Taboo* as it resonates with and resists certain tendencies within the social contract tradition of political thought. In *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, Philip Reiff argues that Freud presents a unique social contract theory in that the "the social contract appears as a counter-revolutionary response to the overthrow of patriarchal government" (Reiff 1979, 223). More recently José Brunner, argues that one should read Freud's "story of the primal horde as part of a rhetorical strategy which is well-known from the writings of social contract theorists" (Brunner 1995, 157). While there is much to be said about what it would mean to read Freud's origin story in line with the tradition of social contract theory, I find that this interpretative strategy helpful in exploring how Freud attempts to think the relationship between the social and the psyche and how this origin remains present, haunting the present in ways that one might not notice. I, thus, turn to Freud's story for what Marcuse has called its "symbolic value" (Marcuse 1974, 60) and would prefer to treat it as what José Brunner has called a story of political contract (Brunner 1995, 156f.). See also Rajana Khanna's discussion in *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*.

religion, unconscious guilt, the law and its internalization, the catalyst for a mob mentality that desires the emergence of a great leader,¹⁸⁰ and most importantly the historical kernel of the Oedipal complex.¹⁸¹

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud argues that the murder of the primal father is the source of the Oedipal complex. In other words, the ontogenetic entrance into the law and the symbolic, the very law that conditions appearance and meaning itself, is nothing more than the recapitulation of historical conditions carried forth by material practices of previous generations. The foundational thesis of this text seems to upend the very universality of Oedipal Complex by giving it a historical origin. In this sense, Freud's story of the violent, incestuous, and cannibalistic nature of the origin of society in *Totem and Taboo* is simultaneously the story of the violent, incestuous, and cannibalistic desires that structure the psyche and the drives. Because the development of the individual is the recapitulation of the historical development of the species for Freud, and because the murder of the primal father represents a decisive turning point in this history, Freud argues that it has "not allowed mankind a moments rest [*die Menschheit nicht zur Ruhe kommen läßt*]" (SE 13: 145; GW 9: 175). What is the methodological structure of this moment for Freud? What can we derive from this structure that assumes that the historical organization of society is repeated each individual's own development?¹⁸² In

¹⁸⁰ See: Todd Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), Chapter three; Phillip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁸¹ There are many retellings of this story throughout Freud's work and each retelling focuses on different aspects given Freud's rhetorical need and argument within the text. For other retellings of this story see: (SE 14: 293); (SE 17: 262); (SE 18: 122-128); (SE 20: 67-68); (SE 21: 132).

¹⁸² My argument is neither focused on the content of Freud's narrative nor on whether or not the series of murders of the *Urvater* actually took place or not. Rather I am solely interested in examining what Freud's investigation tells us about how he understands the relation between the psyche and the social. If interested

other words, what might happen if we put aside the content of Freud's narrative to the side, and focus on what Freud's argument can tell us about the relationship between the historical and the psyche, between the material organization of society and the structure of consciousness? In order to answer this, let us turn to the narrative.

Freud begins with Darwin's hypothesis that our pre-human ancestors "lived in comparatively small groups or hordes within which the jealousy of the oldest and strongest male prevented sexual promiscuity" (SE 13: 125; GW 9: 152). The oldest and strongest male, the *Urvater*, ruled this loose band of individuals through sheer physical domination. The primeval father kept all of the females for himself, which not only "prevented sexual promiscuity" but, according to Freud, must have forced the younger and weaker males to look for other hordes, in which they would challenge the "oldest and strongest male" in order to vie for the sexual domination of the group.

Freud's contribution to Darwin's narrative begins with the imaginative leap that the brothers, forced out of the horde by the primal father, banded together and killed the *Urvater*. He writes

[o]ne day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually [*Eines Tages taten sich die ausgetriebenen Brüder zusammen, erschlugen und verzehrten den Vater und machten so der Vaterhorde*

in the debates about the actual status of the "primal crime" see: Robert A. Paul, "Yes, the Primal Crime did take place: A Further Defense of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*" *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (2010): 230-249; Robert A. Paul, "Did the Primal Crime take Place?," *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 4, no. 3 (1976): 311-352.

ein ende. Vereint wagten sie und brachten zustande, was dem einzelnen unmöglich geblieben wäre]. (SE 13: 141; GW 9: 171)

This event marks a transition that gives rise to a social formation “based on complicity in the common crime” (SE 13: 146; GW 9: 176). Forced into to the bond of exile, the brothers returned to end the rule of the *Urvater* and incorporate his power by cannibalizing his flesh.¹⁸³ Yet, as Freud claims in *An Autobiographical Study* the brothers were not immediately “able to take over their heritage” since they “stood in one another’s way” (SE 20: 68). For what would stop others from doing the same as they did? It was only, as Freud claims, through the “influence of failure and remorse [*Mißerfolges und der Reue*]” that they began to “band together” though the institution of the law of totemic regulations (SE 20: 68; GW 14: 94).¹⁸⁴ For Freud, these totemic regulations represent a fetishized “deferred obedience” to the law of the murdered father.¹⁸⁵ What are we to

¹⁸³ For arguments that analogize this moment in Freud’s work with the phenomenon war see: Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War*, trans. Alenka Pfeifer (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1966); Edward Glover *War, Sadism, and Pacifism* (London: Unwin Brothers, 1933).

¹⁸⁴ In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse argues this represents the counter-revolutionary and self-destructive failure of the initial liberation (Marcuse 1974, 64-5). Others, such as Mark Blackell have argued that Freud’s mythical retelling of the deferred obedience represents the institution of ambivalence in the political realm. See Mark Blackell, “Democracy and Ambivalence: *Totem and Taboo* Revisited,” *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 6, no. 1 (2001): 45-57.

¹⁸⁵ For Freud the memory of the murder of the father and the delayed obedience to the law of the father first becomes displaced onto the totem animal, which Freud claims promises the security of the social order. In light of the spectral father who now possessed more strength than the real father through the displacement of his memory onto the totem animal, the brothers “revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for the father [*Sie widerriefen ihre Tat, indem sie die Tötung des Vaterersatzes*]” (SE 13: 143; GW 9: 173). Thus the law acts to stop the repetition of the violence that founds the political by recognizing this violence in its very prohibition. Yet, the same gesture that denies the deed simultaneously reenacts the deed. The reenactment of this violence occurs in the tradition of the communal sacrifice of the totem animal. Freud writes that the communal sacrifice of the totem animal during the totem meal, which reinforces the bond of the community, is in fact “a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion” (SE 13: 142). It is a double gesture of denial and reenactment; this tradition simultaneously fends off unwelcome perceptions while preserving the ambivalence the brothers’ maintained toward the father. The social order, for Freud, emerges in this double gesture of preserving the memory of the violence and denying it.

make of this story of revolutionary violence and its relationship to the structure of the psyche?

When examining Freud's story one can come to the conclusion that he leaned on anthropological assumptions and methods tinged by the colonial project and racism. One could also say that, having already worked out both the dynamics and importance of the Oedipus complex, Freud molds Darwinian and Lamarckian science of his day to mirror, and thus historically legitimate, the narrative of psychoanalysis. Furthermore, it is important to note that this is story only about brothers, father's, and the intergenerational transmission of power amongst males. And, there is truth to these critiques. Yet, if one confronts both the problematic imaginaries constructing the narrative as well as Freud's dire need for corroboration from the "respected" sciences one still must confront the fact that in this text Freud's argument assumes the social priority of the psyche, and that this social priority is located in the development of the law as a guilt reaction to some foundational deed.

In as much as Freud's narration of this event is a simultaneously an attempt to uncover the particularities of the phylogenetic "witch prehistory" analysis must assume, then this narration describes the historical, and thus, material foundation, for the psyche. More specifically, if the psyche is structured by historical constellations resulting from political action—the brother's revolutionary coup d'état—and if these constellations are the development of law as the spirit of the action or as a reaction against the deed, then the phylogenetic influence on the psyche is located in the historical organization of the law itself. And indeed, this is the crux of Freud's narration in *Totem and Taboo*,

demonstrating how the complex of punishment and law affect the development of consciousness and its material, intergenerational transmission.

Despite the more controversial aspects of this story, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud narrates the relationship between the development of the law and the internalization of this law in the form of self-lacerating punishment forming the complexes that structure the psyche. The tripartite structure of the drives, the ego, and the super-ego, the very fracture from ourselves and the meticulous self-monitoring in light of the law, the self-disparaging whispers of the melancholic, are all the reflection of the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary construction of the law. It is the creation of a symbolic system, as we will see in the next section, excluding the appearance of the deed acting as its catalyst. In as much as the law is reaction to this deed, then the law carries it within itself, negatively. In this respect, the deed becomes the non-identical moment of the law. It is the non-schematized, non-symbolic, moment within the appearance of the political itself, within the constitutional disposition of the political. In order to see exactly what this has to do with Freud's late concept of disavowal must turn to Freud's last text *Moses and Monotheism*.

II. Before the Law: *Moses and Monotheism*

Quoting Goethe Freud ends *Totem and Taboo*: "In the beginning there was the deed" (SE 13: 161). As the quotation indicates, and as I have been arguing, Freud's understanding of the psyche begins with the political and social, the material conditions embracing our activities. If Freud anchors the structure of the psyche in the historical conditions of the modes of punishment, and if disavowal is a fundamental structure of the

psyche, then the constitutive nature of disavowal must also have its origins in the modes of punishment. In light of this, it is not an accident that as disavowal becomes part of the structure of the psyche in Freud's late work it also becomes part of his understanding of the historical conditions. Nowhere is this demonstrated more clearly than in *Moses and Monotheism*. In other words, *Moses and Monotheism*, I would like to suggest, is Freud's attempt to retranslate the psychical structure of disavowal back into the historical conditions giving rise to it in his late work.

Before turning to *Moses and Monotheism*, it will be helpful to briefly examine the recent attempts by Slavoj Žižek and Homi Bhabha to follow on the materialist origins of disavowal in the psyche. They both draw explicit lines between disavowal as a form of consciousness and the material conditions of the political and social. On the one hand, Žižek anchors the existence of disavowal in the modes of production, and most explicitly commodity fetishism. As he argues in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, only under the conditions of an "exchange process" premised on the fact that "the individuals partaking in it are *not* aware of its proper logic" could fetishistic disavowal as a form of ideology emerge (Žižek 1989, 15).¹⁸⁶ Žižek, thus, plays on what he sees as the similarities between

¹⁸⁶ In *The Plague of Fantasies* Žižek discusses disavowal as the distance that supports the transcendental function of fantasy by appealing to *Full Metal Jacket*. The first half of the film documents the brutality of breaking down recruits in order to create them into killing machines. During the first half of the film one is introduced to two characters: one who fully identifies with the fantasy that structures militaristic dogma and one who maintains an ironic distance from this dogma. The character whom fully identifies with the phantasmatic framework ends up killing himself and his drill sergeant before being shipped off to Vietnam. Žižek claims that "the radical, unmediated identification with the phantasmatic superego machine necessarily leads to a murderous *passage à l'acte*" (Žižek 2008, 27). In contrast to this "radical" identification with the fantasy that underwrites the symbolic structure, the character who maintains a distance from this fantasy acts according to this implicit framework. This is exemplified in the second half of the film where he shoots and kills a wounded Vietcong soldier. Thus, Žižek claims that it is this subject who maintained a distance from the fantasy that is actually the "fully constituted military subject" (Žižek 2008, 27). Hence for Žižek there must be a distance between the fantasy and the symbolic structure it orders if the fantasy is to function. When this distance has been traversed the fantasy dissipates and short circuits. In other words, he claims that one must disavow the fantasy which orders the symbolic, that instills the law, if this order is to maintain itself. This distance he claims, is not a "secondary function" in the

Marx and Freud's concept of fetishism in order to align the emergence of disavowal as a form of thought with the material conditions that produce it. On the other hand, Bhabha argues the colonial projects of modernity have created contradictory spaces and temporalities. These spaces and temporalities give rise not only to racial stereotypes as a form of fetishism, warding off the threats to the white European illusions of modernity subjectivity, but also the experience of a hybridity grounded in a "disjunctive temporality" by the post-colonial subjects themselves (Bhabha 1994, 245). Bhabha argues the fundamental ambivalence of this disjunctive temporality allows for the iterative re-signification of identities that will allow the disavowed post-colonial subjects to emerge for the first time (Bhabha 1994, 5).¹⁸⁷ By highlighting the material conditions of capital or the project colonialism both thinkers follow a form of fetishistic disavowal rooted in Freud's work back to a contradiction in the social and political spheres.¹⁸⁸ Yet,

operation of fantasy, but rather its "disavowed foundation, its 'constitutive crime', its founding gesture which has to remain invisible if power is to function normally" (Žižek 2008, 35).

¹⁸⁷ Bhabha defines this "disjunctive temporality" in terms of the timeless as well, as a lack. He writes "[w]hat may seem primordial or timeless is, I believe, a moment of a kind of 'projective past' whose history and signification I shall attempt to explore here. It is a mode of 'negativity' that makes the enunciatory present of modernity disjunctive. It opens up a time-lag at the point at which we speak of humanity through its differentiations—gender race, class—that mark an excessive marginality of modernity" (Bhabha 1994, 238).

¹⁸⁸ I choose both Žižek and Bhabha because they draw most explicitly not only on Freud's work to describe the political implications of disavowal, but also specifically the materialist tendencies in Freud's work to talk about it. For other variations of the political deployment of Freud's concept of disavowal see: Gayatri Spivak uses the (Lacanian) concept of disavowal as psychotic foreclosure in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Aida Alayarian, gives an account of political disavowal in light of Freud's understanding of the concept as repudiation in his work from 1923-1924, *Consequences of Denial: The Armenian Genocide* (London: Karnac Books, 2008); Stanley Cohen uses the 1927 version of the concept as a split recognition to explore the denial of human rights abuses in *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002); and Nicole Loraux uses disavowal as a foundational mechanism to explore the founding of the polis in *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, trans. Carinne Pache and Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006); for other variations see: Jean Wyatt, "Signifying Contortions: Disavowal, the Enigmatic Signifier, and George W. Bush's Credibility after 9/11," *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2006): 194-205; Derek Hook, "The Racial Stereotype, Colonial Discourse, Fetishism, and Racism," *Psychoanalytic Review* 92, no. 5 (2005): 702-734;

as I have been suggesting, disavowal is not necessarily fetishistic, nor are the modes of production the complex forming the structure of the psyche in Freud's work. Rather the historical formation of the law defends against a historical idea by the modes of punishment. In order to highlight this understanding of the historical conditions that make disavowal a constitutive feature of the psyche, we must turn to *Moses and Monotheism*.

In 1939, after the outbreak of World War II and after having been displaced multiple times, Freud publishes the full text of *Moses and Monotheism* from his new home in London. This would be Freud's last text on the political and his first political text where the concept of *Verleugnung* plays a dominant role. And just as Edward W. Said notes in *Freud and the Non-European*, *Moses and Monotheism* is a "classic example" of "late style," which like "the bristlingly difficult" late works of Beethoven, "seems to be composed by Freud for himself" (Said 2004, 28). Despite its ungainly construction and its complicated publication history, the central premises of *Moses and Monotheism* are drawn from *Totem and Taboo* written 26 years earlier in 1913. Freud, thus, envisions *Moses and Monotheism* as both an application and restatement of his claim that the law is a defensive construction set against the "deed" acting as the catalyst for the structure of politics. Yet, unlike *Totem and Taboo*, the story of *Moses and Monotheism* incorporates the concept of disavowal.

Despite the fact that the text of *Moses and Monotheism* is dominated by a discussion of the "return of the repressed,"¹⁸⁹ Freud also uses the language of disavowal to work out

Adrian Johnston, "The Cynics Fetish: Slavoj Žižek' and the Dynamics of Belief," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 9 (2004): 259-283.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Bernstein provides a wonderful analysis of the function of tradition and repression in *Moses and Monotheism* in the second chapter of *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

the premises of *Moses and Monotheism*. Despite this fact, disavowal's prominent role in this text is rarely, if ever, noted. If it is true that that disavowal is a separate defense from repression, and if disavowal is a constitutive defense highlighting the non-synthetic nature of the ego, then one could examine this text as demonstrating the non-synthetic nature of the development of communities as opposed to the synthetic narratives of repression.¹⁹⁰ And indeed, this is how Freud uses the concept when he highlights a split in the law, represented between history and tradition, which occludes and defends against the non-schematized violence founding the state.

As is well known, Freud's thesis in *Moses and Monotheism* is two-fold. On the one hand, it reworks the premises of the historical development of Judaism by arguing Moses was "not a Jew but a well-born Egyptian [...] and a zealous supporter of the monotheistic faith" (Pfeiffer 1966, 204).¹⁹¹ When this new religion lost the support of the political structure with the death of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, Freud claims that "this ambitious and aspiring man [Moses] had lost all his hopes and had decided to leave his fatherland and create a new nation which he proposed to bring up in the imposing religion of his master" (Pfeiffer 1966, 204). After Moses' flight from his "fatherland" and his attempt to found a new "nation," Freud claims that he, like the *Urvater* of *Totem and Taboo*, was "probably

¹⁹⁰ If disavowal is genetically different from repression in that it represents the non-schematized which is not subject to the temporal underpinnings of rationality, then political disavowal as opposed to political repression would challenge the sentiment of overcoming the past that one finds in myriad of books. For example in *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* Norman O. Brown examines both *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism* in light of historical repression. He concludes, "If historical consciousness is finally transformed into psychoanalytical consciousness, the grip of the dead had of the past on life in the present would be loosened, and man would be read to live instead of making history, to enjoy instead of paying back old scores and debts, and to enter that state of Being which was the goal of his Becoming" (Brown 1959, 19).

¹⁹¹ Ernst Pfeiffer, ed., *Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé Letters*, trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966).

killed” in a “popular uprising and his teachings abandoned” (Pfeiffer 1966, 204).¹⁹² Like the deferred institution of the law of the father by the rebellious brothers, Moses’ teachings would also form the foundation of Judaism in a moment of deferred obedience.¹⁹³

On the other hand, Freud pushes past the framework of *Totem and Taboo* in *Moses and Monotheism* making the theoretical argument that Judaism consolidated its identity through the mechanism of disavowal.¹⁹⁴ Freud argues Jewish history disavows not only its Egyptian influence but also the murder of Moses. Disavowal consolidates the Jewish people as a people and as a concept. In fact, the deferred guilt and obedience evidenced in the institution of the law of Moses is founded on this very disavowal. Thus, just as disavowal is constitutive for the development of the ego in Freud’s late work, so too does *Moses and Monotheism* position it as constitutive for the formation of a people and the law that makes this people intelligible as a people.

Because disavowal concerns the schema engendering political appearance, Freud’s text is filled with an examination of the formation of historical texts central to a group’s

¹⁹² There are many good texts focusing on this text in relationship to the historical argument and in relationship to Freud’s own Jewishness. Yet, neither of these are my focus here, which is limited to examining how Freud deploys this term in the text. For more information on the historical argument and material that deals with this in terms of Freud’s Jewishness See: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Robert A. Paul, *Moses and Civilization: The Meaning Behind Freud’s Myth* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Eric L. Santner, “Freud’s ‘Moses’ and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire,” *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 3-41.

¹⁹³ Some literature compares Freud’s investigation of Moses in *Moses and Monotheism* with his 1914 essay “The Moses of Michelangelo.” For examples see: Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Freud and Marx*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Catherine Malabou, “Les Deux Moïse de Freud,” *Cliniques Méditerranéennes* 74: 79-88.

¹⁹⁴ In “Die Macht der Phantasie—die Phantasie der Macht. Freud und die Politik der Religion,” José Brunner marks a fundamental distinction between these two texts in terms of power.

self-understanding. If examined psychoanalytically these texts reveal the same defensive structures as the speech of the subject for Freud. Just as speech exhibits symptoms, so too may we

[...] count upon finding what has been suppressed and disavowed [*Unterdrückte und Verleugnete*] hidden away somewhere else, though changed and torn from its original context [*abgeändert und aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen*]. (SE 23: 43; GW 16: 145)

The very texts that bind the people as a people are the very same texts disavowing the non-schematized aspects of its history. These texts retell the nation's founding, continually binding one back to the legends that surround the origin of a people.¹⁹⁵ These conscious articulations of a group are beset by two opposing tendencies for Freud. On the one hand, there is the tendency expressed in the text that “falsifies [*verfälscht*],” “mutilates [*verstümmelt*],” and changes things into their opposite. On the other hand,

¹⁹⁵ In Freud's earlier works, he will often claim that there is a “remarkable analogy” between the psychical forces which affect one's recollection of childhood memories and the manner in which a “nation preserves in its store of legends and myths” (SE 6: 48). He alludes to direct correlation twice in his 1901 text *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (SE 6: 48, 148). He will also deploy this analogy in a footnote to the “Rat Man” case in his 1909 “Notes upon a case of Obsessional Neurosis,” where he claims that if “we do not wish to go astray in our judgement of their historical reality [childhood memories], we must above all bear in mind that people's ‘childhood memories’ are only consolidated at a later period, usually at the age of puberty; and that this involves a complicated process of remodeling, analogous in every way to the process by which a nation constructs legends about its early history” (SE 10: 206fn). Freud will develop this correlation more distinctly in his 1910 work “Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood.” In this text he writes that the nature of childhood memories “is perhaps best illustrated by a comparison with the way in which the writing of history originated among the peoples of antiquity. As long as a nation was small and weak it gave no thought to the writing of its history. Men tilled the soil of their land, fought for their existence against their neighbours, and tried to gain territory from them and to acquire wealth. It was an age of heroes, not of historians. Then came another age, an age of reflection: men felt themselves to be rich and powerful, and now felt a need to learn where they had come from and how they had developed. Historical writing, which had begun to keep a continuous record of the present, now also cast a glance back to the past, gathered traditions and legends, interpreted the traces of antiquity that survived in customs and usages, and in this way created a history of the past. It was inevitable that this early history should have been an expression of present beliefs and wishes rather than a true picture of the past; for many things had been dropped from the nation's memory, while others were distorted, and some remains of the past were given a wrong interpretation in order to fit in with contemporary ideas” (SE 11: 83).

there is the tendency in the text that seeks “to preserve everything as it is” without care for consistency (SE 23: 43; GW 16: 145). The results of these two tendencies is the fact that “almost everywhere there are noticeable gaps, disturbing repetitions, and obvious contradictions” which “reveal things to us which it was not intended to communicate” (SE 23: 43; GW 16: 145). In other words, as Freud provocatively claims “[i]n its implications the distortion of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces [*Es ist bei der Entstellung eines Textes ähnlich wie bei einem Mord. Die Schwierigkeit liegt nicht in der Ausführung der Tat, sondern in der Beseitigung ihrer Spuren*]” (SE 23: 43; GW 16: 145). The historical narratives that bind a people together busily attempt to erase the appearance of the deed that set them free. All that remains of this deed is the negative impressions within the text as the text attempts to erase the deed itself. The very articulation of the political is, thus, a defense against the deed that set the political in motion. And nowhere is this more evident than in the law forming the boundaries the political.¹⁹⁶

At first glance, the defensive construction of the law appears as the symbolic escape from a traumatic recognition.¹⁹⁷ If it were then the law would be the material form of the apparatus of secondary repression that ensures primary repression, or in this case the deed at the origin of the political. And of course, if the law is a symbolic break from the deed, then it can subsume and master the deed.¹⁹⁸ Yet, if the law emerges from

¹⁹⁶ Jeffery Bernstein makes a similar argument in his essay “Aggadic Moses: Spinoza and Freud on the Traumatic Legacy of Theological-Political Identity,” *Idealistic Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 38, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008): 3-21.

¹⁹⁷ See: Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), especially pages 142-143; James J. DiCenso, *The Other Freud: Religion, Culture, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 199).

disavowal, and not repression, then this forces us to rethink the development of the law not as a form of symbolic break, a gaining distance from the deed, but rather a break toward the concrete, a bringing closer of that which does not appear in order to assure the conditions of its non-appearance. In other words, if the law emerges from disavowal, if the very conditions of the political and what can be rendered sensible and visible within a certain construction of the historical, then the law does not represent a symbolic break from trauma, but rather a traumatic break from the symbolic. And in as much as mastery and distance are premised on this symbolic break, then so far as disavowal represents a break from the symbolic it also represents a break from the distance needed for recognition and mastery. Far from an entrance into psychosis, the state where symbols become things themselves, this would mean the onset of a borderline disorder where what is but does not appear exists simultaneously with what is and appears, often contradicting, disrupting, and undermining the very conditions of appearance itself.

In *Moses and Monotheism*, this disrupting split appears in two different forms of collective articulation history and tradition. There is split between the

[...] written record and the oral transmission of the same material—*tradition*.

What had been omitted or changed in the written record might very well have been preserved intact in tradition. Tradition was supplement but at the same time a contradiction to historical writing. (SE 23: 68; GW 16: 172)

On the one hand, the deed does not appear in the historical account, the account that is conscious of itself. On the other hand, tradition registers the non-schematized violence at

¹⁹⁸ This is of course the central premise in Noëlle McAfee's *Democracy and the Political Unconscious*, where she argues for a public sphere that can sublimate its affect and discord in the symbolic nature of speech. One also finds this premise operating, although more ambivalently, in Shoshana Felman's *The Juridical Unconscious*.

the origin. It preserves it. It repeats it. It is another form of memory, one that cannot appear but is nonetheless manifest. Tradition, then, becomes a social reservoir where the unconscious memory traces are registered. While these traces are preserved, that to which they refer exist outside of the current political and social symbolic constellation engendering appearance in the political.¹⁹⁹ Disavowal occurs between the historical narrative and tradition, allowing a group to simultaneously recognize and not recognize the foundational deed of the political. The political realm emerges between the stories of history and the practices of tradition, the simultaneous and non-synthetic recognition of the deed.

Freud's political use of the term disavowal seems to include two main characteristics. First, the symbolic expression of political and social history, the foundational texts and laws that bind them together, both exclude the non-identical while bearing its negative impression. Arising after the fact, both the laws of prohibition and the texts that consciously preserve the history of the nation are defensive constructs that foreclose the conditions for appearance for the unschematized deed at the origin of the

¹⁹⁹ This understanding of tradition is one of the main lines of Freud's argument in *Totem and Taboo*. In this text Freud constantly wonders how the meaning and origin of the tradition of totemism and the taboo restrictions that define it have been lost, such that people engage in these practices without understanding their meaning. This can be seen most clearly in Freud's second essay in *Totem and Taboo*, "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence," which is a sustained meditation on the development taboo. This development, though, cannot be fully narrated because taboo emerges from an "unknown origin [*unbekannter Herkunft*]" (SE 13: 18). Something gives rise to marking a certain act or object taboo. What is prior to the observance of this prohibition is not and cannot be known. *Something* comes before taboo; there is an origin. Yet, *what* the origin is remains unknown. Freud calls the concealed nature of this origin a "riddle [*Rätsel*]" (SE 13: 22). One knows "it" is there, but can neither fully reveal nor comprehend what "it" is. The origin is thus a "riddle," simultaneously revealing and concealing itself. In fact when one reaches this point in the essay, Freud takes the time to "assure" the reader that not only is the present difficulty of the origin of taboo murky, but that "the whole subject is highly obscure [*undurchsichtig*]" (SE 13: 21). Freud's affected modesty does not last long, for he is quick to point out that while the problem of the origin of taboo is difficult for the historian and the anthropologist, the psychoanalyst might be able to shed some light on this problem. Psychoanalysis can "throw light onto" this obscure origin (SE 13: 22). It can inflect, fill out, and thus come to the aid of history.

nation. In other words, the consolidation of identity, the binding together of meaning, forecloses in advance the unschematized from appearance itself. Secondly, the schematized split engenders both a historical record and tradition. It creates the conditions for both the unconscious registration and historical negation of the deed propelling the construction of the law. It thus creates a “contradiction.” On the one hand the deed is “recognized” in its unconscious repetition in tradition. On the other hand, the deed is not recognized in the defensive construction of conscious history and law. Thus the crux of the logic of non-contradiction operating at the heart of the construction of political organization lies in the non-synthetic nature of the origin of the political engendering the split between history and tradition. The deed is disavowed, not repressed or repudiated. That is to say that these “facts and ideas” are “not lost” but rather their practice “persisted in traditions which survived among the people” (SE 23: 63; GW 16: 166). In this sense the social acts and observances become unarticulated memorial to what has been severed from the official history of the nation. The traces remain, providing for the dissonant and contradictory space of both the unarticulated memory and the historical texts that attempt to shore up borders that form a people as a people in their official narrative.

In playing out Freud’s understanding of the political and historical origins of disavowal by examining both *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, we have come to two important insights. First, Freud’s materialist commitments focus on the influence of the modes of punishment, not the modes of production structure consciousness. Second, looking at the modes of punishment illuminates the political instantiation of the non-identical within the symbolic tensions of the law. It sets into

motion the simultaneous recognition and non-recognition of what does not appear in the political—a dissonant oscillation sparked by the presence of that which is but is not schematized. Thus we can begin to see the limits of political rationality as the limit of the ability to recognize contradictions as contradictions, as the impression and the effect of the non-schematized on the development of law and history. Next, I would like to extend the discussion of political disavowal by briefly taking up Angela Davis' work the relationship between the United States Constitution, prisons, and slavery. Angela Davis' work on the constitutional link between slavery and incarceration in the United States demonstrates how the historical condition of the law affects the appearance of political subjectivity. It is thus an excellent place to take account of the political implications of the concept of disavowal.

III. The Constitutional Disavowal of Chattel Slavery: A Case Study

In many respects Davis' work is driven by critical theory's attempt to think the non-identical. For Davis this specifically takes on the form of reflecting slavery's impression on the modes of punishment in the United States. In this section, I will take up Davis' argument that the prison is the modern echo of chattel slavery affecting the construction of political subjectivity. It is an echo that I would like to claim the Freudian concept of disavowal helps to identify as the reverberation of the negative impression of the non-schematized elements at the origin of the nation.

Yet, before we begin down this road, it is helpful to ask the question of what it means to speak of slavery as outside the schematization of the political? As I have argued throughout what lies outside of schematization lies outside of appearance as such; it is what remains radically unconscious, radically timeless. If slavery remains unconscious,

we might ask, can slavery even appear as an object of knowledge for the state? Moreover, if slavery is non-schematized then can it be articulated by the state or is it resigned to silence on this subject? To speak of slavery as non-schematized in the political does not mean it cannot appear, that it was a trauma surpassing comprehension and thus mastery—though in some sense this might be the case.²⁰⁰

In contrast, to say slavery is a non-schematized element of the political means it does not appear in the founding code of law—the constitution. As Davis points out “[n]ot even the term ‘slavery’ was allowed to mar the sublime concepts articulated in the Constitution” (Davis 1998b, 53).²⁰¹ It is thus not brought to legal articulation in the founding symbolic matrix constituting the condition for the possibility of appearing in the political. And in this sense, perhaps Hannah Arendt is right when she argues that at the time of the founding of the United States, “the institution of slavery carrie[d] an obscurity even blacker than the obscurity of poverty; the slave, not the poor man, was ‘wholly overlooked’” (Arendt 2006, 61). While excluded from the founding grammar of political appearance, slavery remained a constitutive practice or tradition within the United States. Thus, one might say slavery is the non-identical at the heart of political schematization in the United States. Remaining outside of political articulation, it still remains, bumps up against, bleeds into, and affects the political. It is what does not appear, but nonetheless remains. This relationship between of the law and tradition in terms of slavery is most

²⁰⁰ While to address this would take us too far afield, in saying this I am positioning this, in some respects against the line of literature that takes up and fetishized trauma as unspeakable. While it may in some senses be the case, this does not mean that one cannot read its impressions, its external manifestations, etc. Moreover, the problem is that it was left out of the symbolic matrix that imbues the possibility of meaning itself, thus to speak it is always, in some sense to mis-speak, mis-recognize, or mis-schematize.

²⁰¹ There are two slight exceptions to this claim: the 3/5th compromise in Article I, Section II, and Article IV, Section II.

explicitly seen in the retroactive insertion of the concept of slavery into the constitution in the Thirteenth Amendment.

It is with a touch of irony that Angela Davis' argument begins with the constitutional abolition of chattel slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment states:

[n]either slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. (Constitution of the United States)

As is quite clear, in the retroactive attempt erase the tradition of slavery the 13th Amendment simultaneously performs two contradictory actions. On the one hand, it abolishes slavery. On the other hand, it preserves slavery within the modes of punishment. A clause, tucked between the nouns to be abolished and the verbs that would do that work, literally interrupts the action of abolition in the amendment. Quite simply, the Thirteenth Amendment sidesteps the very erasure it was meant to employ, providing a clear instance of the Freudian concept of disavowal, declaring: "I know very well that slavery will still exist in the form of the prison, but all the same I am abolishing slavery." The Thirteenth Amendment's disavowal of slavery leads Davis to conclude that "the abolition of slavery corresponded to the authorization of slavery as punishment" (Davis 1998e, 99); or again, the exceptional clause in the Thirteenth Amendment "would render penal servitude constitutional—from 1865 to the present day" (Davis 1998d, 76). This simultaneous nationalization and abolition of the tradition of slavery is etched into the foundation of political law, thus transforming what was once the "the particular repressive power of the master" into what Davis, and many others, conclude was "far

more devastating universal power of the state” (Davis 1998e, 100). In other words the Thirteenth amendment transforms both the modes of punishment and the law through the incorporation (I am tempted to say introjection) of the practice of slavery. This incorporation fundamentally affects how the law develops post-Thirteenth Amendment, the function of incarceration, and how the newly freed population appears in the political realm. Nowhere is this seen more clearly, Davis notes, than in the transformation of the slave codes into the state codified black codes in the post-war south that “transferred symbolically significant numbers of black people from the prison of slavery to the slavery of prison” (Davis 1998d, 75).

Before the Thirteenth Amendment, states left the management and discipline of the slave population to the loose network of slave masters. The function of the state was relegated to arbitrating disputes amongst slaveholders in terms of the slave codes. These codes ensured that slaves could not “bear witness” in court of law,²⁰² could not “meet” with other slaves,²⁰³ set standards for rounding up and returning runaway slaves,²⁰⁴ and the methods of monitoring the movement of the slave population.²⁰⁵ In effect, and

²⁰² For example, section 4 under the title “Slaves, and Free Persons of Color” of Alabama’s 1833 Constitution states “No slave shall be admitted a witness against any person, in any matter, cause, or thing whatsoever, civil or criminal, except in criminal cases, in which the evidence of one slave shall be admitted for or against another slave.”

²⁰³ Again, from part entitled “Slaves, and Free Persons of Color” in Alabama’s 1833 Constitution, section 9 decrees, “Riots, routs, unlawful assemblies, trespasses, and seditious speeches, by a slave or slaves, shall be punished with stripes, not exceeding thirty-nine, at the discretion of a justice of the peace; and he who will, may apprehend and carry him, her, or them, before such a justice.”

²⁰⁴ Once more, section 15 from the part entitled “Slaves, and Free Persons of Color” in Alabama’s 1833 Constitution decrees “All runaway slaves may be lawfully apprehended by any person, and carried before the next justice of the peace, who shall either commit them to the county jail, or send them to the owner, if known, who shall pay for every slave so taken up, the sum of six dollars to the person apprehending him or her, and also all reasonable costs and charges.”

²⁰⁵ Again, in Alabama’s 1833 Constitution section 5 under “Slaves, and Free Persons of Color” states that if a slave has left “the tenement of his master” “without a pass, or some letter or token” then the slave could be rounded up and carried “before a justice of the peace, to be by his order punished with stripes, or not at

although it is the obvious point it bears pointing out: prior to the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment, slaves had no juridical subjectivity, and thus no capacity to appear within the political realm. Only constituted in law through their negation, the slave population was not positively inserted into the syntactical grammar of political subjectivity. After the abolition of slavery the state was forced to recognize and manage its former slave population as full juridical subjects, something for which it was ill equipped and prepared.²⁰⁶ While this shift, almost universally included the capacity of the newly freed black population to “sue and be sued” in court, it often also meant simply renaming the former slave codes as the black codes by reconstituting the relationship between slave holder and slave as that between employer and apprentice.²⁰⁷ Thus, in as much as the black codes were no more than thinly veiled slave laws, the newly granted capacity of political appearance to the freed population of ex-slaves remained constrained by the apparition of slavery.

The phantom of slavery not only rested behind the construction of the black codes, but it also gave birth to new laws, thus ensuring all black labor would remain within the purview of either former slaveholders or the state. These new laws, especially seen in Mississippi’s vagrancy laws, made it illegal for any newly freed black citizens to

his discretion, not exceeding twenty stripes.” Moreover, in section 6 one finds that a slave could receive “ten lashes on his or her bare back” for each offense of trespassing on other plantations without “being sent upon lawful business.”

²⁰⁶ Pete Daniels comments on the loose association and confusion that characterized labor in the post-war south in his essay “The Metamorphosis of Slavery, 1865-1900.” Danies writes “Like a patchwork quilt, the new labor system in the South was varied and complex, and unpatterned blend of illiteracy, law, contracts, and violence, confusing, if not incomprehensible, even to those closest to it” (Daniels 1979, 88).

²⁰⁷ One only need to look at the “differences” between Alabama’s runaway slave law in its 1833 Constitution and its runaway apprentice law in its 1866 black codes to see this difference.

be unemployed, or unruly, generally lazy, or just insubordinate at work.²⁰⁸ Breaking these laws was “punishable by incarceration and forced labor, sometimes on the very plantations that previously had thrived on slave labor” (Davis 2002, 29).²⁰⁹ Renaming the slave codes as black codes, as well as the construction of new laws in response to the disavowal of slavery in the constitution could not but leave an indelible impression in the construction of law. In fact, one can easily say that much of post-war law develops to both fend off the articulation of slavery while simultaneously incorporating the tradition of slavery into the law itself in the metonymic shift from the slave codes to the black codes. This shift not only bears the impression of the tradition of slavery under another name, but it also has ramifications on how the former slave population was constructed as legal, rights bearing, juridical subjects.

The main difference between the slave and the black codes lie in the fact that the black codes did not just guarantee the right of the employer (slave master) over his apprentice (property)—for that remained the same—but in the creation of new juridical subject caught in the symbolic matrix employed by the state to manage and recapture the

²⁰⁸ Vagrancy laws were commonly employed in the post-war south to quickly and wantonly re-imprison the newly freed population of ex-slaves. Some versions of these laws cast quite a wide net. For example, South Carolina’s Vagrancy Law from 1865 states: “All persons who have not some fixed and known place of abode, and some lawful and respectable employment; those who have not some visible and known means of a fair, hones and reputable livelihood; all common prostitutes; those who are found wandering from place to place, vending, bartering or peddling any articles or commodities, without a license from the District Judge, or other proper authority; all common gamblers; persons who lead idle or disorderly lives, or keep or frequent disorderly or disreputable houses or places; those who, not having sufficient means of support, are able to work and do not work; those who (whether or not they own lands, or are lessees or mechanics,) do not provide a reasonable and proper maintenance for themselves and families; those who are engaged in representing publicly or privately, for fee or reward, without license, any tragedy, interlude, comedy, farce, play, or other similar entertainment, exhibition of the circus, sleight-of-hand, waxworks, or the like; those who, for private gain, without license, give any concert or musical entertainment, of any description; fortune-tellers; sturdy beggars; common drunkards; those who hunt game of any description or fish on the land of others, or frequent the premises, contrary to the will of the occupants, shall be deemed vagrants, and be liable to the punishment hereinafter prescribed.”

²⁰⁹ See also: Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

free labor of its newly freed black population.²¹⁰ As Davis argues, this shift from the slave to the black codes both “acknowledged and nullified black people’s new juridical status as US citizens” (Davis 1998d, 76). The displaced metonymy of slavery within the law itself gives rise to the schematization of a juridical subject that allows for the appearance of the former slave population within the political realm, albeit paradoxically. Through the incorporation of slavery into the constitution through the lens of imprisonment, the new political subject appears to disappear. It is granted rights to have them taken away. Oscillating between absence and presence, the new juridical subject is not the product of the repression of slavery, but rather of the negative impression of what has not been schematized—a disavowal simultaneously transforming and preserving the tradition of slavery.

Because the modes of punishment are based on assumed qualities of its juridical subject, it should not be a surprise that with the creation of a new juridical subject, the paradoxical subject of the disavowal of slavery—the modes of punishment transformed in response to it. Prior to the abolition of slavery the assumed subject of imprisonment was a right’s bearing individual. The modes of punishment transformed in response to the creation of the new paradoxical subject. For what purpose could the removal of one’s rights serve if the juridical subject was constructed to have the subject’s rights removed advance of the subject itself? How was the state to mobilize imprisonment as form of

²¹⁰ In “The Metamorphosis of Slavery, 1865-1900,” Pete Daniels describes the situation as such: “Coercion, the crucial element in involuntary servitude, came from sources other than the worlds of the landlords or merchants. It came from the law, which increasingly tightened its grip on workers; from the contract, which became a year sentence on a few acres; from violence, which gave object lessons to those who objected to the system ; and from illiteracy, which placed the worker at the mercy of the literate elite and kept him from seeking jobs that required more skill than plowing, hoeing, and picking. All of these tentacles reached out toward those laborers who were technically free and embraced them in a system” that challenges what we would mean by the word freedom (Daniels 1979, 89).

punishment when the subject to be imprisoned is not the right bearing juridical subject, but rather a juridical subject deprived of rights?

Convict leasing developed as a mode of punishment in response to this new juridical subject, and was in practice post-Thirteenth Amendment state-codified slavery.²¹¹ Where the state could not keep black labor under the control of its former slave masters,²¹² it rounded up, imprisoned, and rented out black labor under the convict-leasing program. In many respects, convict leasing was worse than slavery.²¹³ Much of this has to do with the lack of capital invested in the convicts and the disproportionate amount of surplus value the new industries of the south were willing to extract from the newly imprisoned black labor force. As W. E. B. Du Bois notes in “The Spawn of Slavery”:

[t]he innocent, the guilty, and the depraved were herded together, children and adults, men and women, given into the complete control of practically irresponsible men, whose sole object was to make the most money possible. (Du Bois 2005, 4)

²¹¹ See: Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Christopher R. Adamson, “Punishment after Slavery: Southern State Penal Systems, 1865-1890,” *Social Problems* 30, no. 5 (June 1983): 555-569.

²¹² See: Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

²¹³ See: W.E.B Du Bois, “The Spawn of Slavery: The Convict-Lease System in the South,” in *Race, Crime, and Justice: A Reader*, ed. Shaun L. Gabbidon, Helen Taylor Greene (New York: Routledge, 2005): 3-8; Matthew J. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996); Mark Colvin, *Penitentiaries, Reformatories, and Chain Gangs: Social Theory and the History of Punishment in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

States quickly became dependent on this new income, forming the kernel of what Davis argues eventually becomes the prison industrial complex.²¹⁴ As Du Bois would note, in light of this new income for the state, “it was almost impossible to remove the clutches of this vicious system from the state” (Du Bois 2005, 5). With what little capital was put toward the labor landing in the state coffers and a seemingly endless amount of black convict labor provided by the enforcement of the black codes, companies often extracted surplus value at the expense of the health of its workers, something that was not economically viable under slavery.

While many of the punishments used to control convict labor were similar to those used on the plantations of the antebellum south, the economic realities of convict leasing intensified them. One only needs to look to Pratt Mines in Alabama as an example. Here the convicts were controlled by an unsupervised gang of “overseers” who often hung “men by their thumbs or ankles” as punishments for minor offenses (Blackmon 2008, 96). When the convicts committed major offenses, such as failing to “work at the rate demanded by their overseers,” they received “as many as sixty or seventy lashes”—so many that the “skin literally fell from their backs” (Blackmon 2008, 96f.). In instances where convicts attempted to escape these conditions, they were often

[...] subject to many of the same torturous restraints as their slave forebears—shackles, balls and chains, or objects riveted to iron cuffs or collars to limit their mobility. A convict recaptured after escaping a labor camp in Muscogee County,

²¹⁴ See for example: Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), especially chapters two and five; Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work for Free Labor* (New York: Verso, 1996), especially chapter one.

Georgia, had a steel ring placed around his neck to which ‘was fixed a spike, curling inward, so that rapid running was impossible.’ (Blackmon 2008, 97)

Outside of these punishments, the prisoners were often literally worked to death. In many instances large unmarked mass graves were used to dispose of the bodies at long-term work sites.²¹⁵ In other words, as Davis argues, under the convict-leasing system in the post-war south a

[...] small but significant number of black men and women were condemned to live out the worst nightmares of what slavery might have been had the cost of purchasing slaves been low enough to justify conditions of genocide. (Davis 1998d, 87)

Convicts were a cheap commodity more profitable to dispose of than to take care of after the transformation of law and the modes of punishment post Thirteenth Amendment. By incorporating methods of punishment employed during slavery, the modes of punishment fundamentally and materially transformed. This transformation was the direct result of the modes of punishment’s response to the new juridical subject produced by the constitutional disavowal of slavery. This transformation in juridical subjectivity, the law, and the modes of punishment undoubtedly bears the impression of slavery past abolition and into the present.

Carrying this negative impression forward constitutes a political schematization of the previously unrecognized population of slaves as criminal. In other words, now that

²¹⁵ As Matthew J. Mancini has noted in *One Dies, Get Another* the “isolation, the semifrontier conditions of the rural south, the drive for profits, and the miserable penury of the lessees—all combined to produce terrible health problems, sometimes of epidemic level. They could result in soaring death rates for some years. Mississippi recorded an 11 percent annual death rate over the entire period from 1880 to 1885—a total of 482 convicts. Fifteen of 120 convicts died in the Alabama mines in 1877; 45 of 182 died on the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad two years later. In states where convicts were held in jails rather than being transported to their labor camps directly, mortality was higher” (Mancini 1996, 66).

slavery was incorporated into the modes of punishment and the newly freed population was coded as criminal, the transformation in the law “symbolically emphasized that black people’s social status continued to be that of slaves, even though the institution of slavery had been disestablished” (Davis 1998e, 100).²¹⁶ The very mechanism that writes the former slave population into the political as juridical subjects only does so by making this population appear as criminal, where criminals are now constituted as slaves. Allowed to appear as juridical subjects whose rights are afforded only to be taken away, the subject of disavowal appears as criminal in the political, thus constituting the racist equation of blackness with criminality through an unrecognized metonymy of slavery. As Davis writes, these “ideological and institutional carryovers from slavery began to fortify the equation of blackness and criminality in US society” (Davis 1998d, 75). Thus, through the defensive construction of the law in response to slavery and slavery’s imprint on modes of punishment, one can see that the constitutional disavowal of slavery constructs a new political subject: the black criminal. This new subject constrains the possibility of state recognized political subjectivity in advance for the newly freed population, the rule of its schematization of political appearance becomes a steel band wrapped around its neck with an inward curling spike to stop it from running away.

Variegated bits and pieces, shattered fragments of slavery are lodged with the modes of punishment. So much so, one is tempted to claim that while they are different institutions, the post-Thirteenth Amendment developments in the modes of punishment

²¹⁶ This racialization of crime and the status of the criminal was not just symbolic, but was also the result of the shift in the modes of punishment of themselves. As Alex Lichtenstein has noted in *Twice the Work of Free Labor* “Penitentiaries in the antebellum South had been used to mete out justice to whites; but the brutality of convict leasing, and its association with slavery, bred a reluctance to prosecute or punish whites in the New South. This dramatic transformation in the form, function, and racial implications of southern punishment accompanied the political, social, and economic upheavals of Reconstruction” (Lichtenstein 1996, 18).

bear tradition of slavery into the present. This is of course not accidental, for perhaps the logic of the state depends on the logic that both founds chattel slavery and becomes carried over into the modes of punishment. In other words, one might claim that just as slavery was central to the project and construction of the United States, so too is the prison a central to the projects of the present political formation of the United States.²¹⁷ And in fact, when one looks at these statistics of incarceration in the United States one cannot help but become suspicious.²¹⁸

By turning to and briefly outlining Davis' investigation of the foundational relationship between slavery and the prison in the United States, the full nature and explanatory force of disavowal becomes clear. Disavowal highlights the non-synthetic nature of law and its effects on both the modes of punishment and the construction of juridical subjectivity. In other words, one could say that modern logic of incarceration is the same as slavery because it creates the idea of a right's bearing individual from an originary negation based on racialized modes of punishment.²¹⁹ But it seems to go even

²¹⁷ See also: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

²¹⁸ There are a few statistics and demographics composing the prison system in the United States that immediately stand out. With a total prison population, as of 2007, of 2,293,157, the United States leads the world in incarcerating its population. The total population of the United States is roughly 5% of the world's population; yet, the number of people imprisoned by the United States makes up roughly 20% of the world's total imprisoned population. This results in the fact that, as recently indicated in The Pew Center on the States 2008 report, there are "more than one in every 100 adults is now confined in an American jail or prison" (Pew Center 2008, 3). While this fact may be striking enough on its own, when one breaks down the demographics of who is imprisoned the ratios drastically shift. One finds that while white men over the age of 18 compose 1: 106, Hispanic men over 18 compose 1: 36, and most strikingly black men over 18 compose 1:15 (a ratio that increases to 1:9 when one looks specifically at black men between the ages of 20-34) (Pew Center 2008, 6).

²¹⁹ Davis makes this point in a particularly Hegelian fashion in her "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation." She writes "One of the striking paradoxes of the bourgeois ideological tradition resides in an enduring philosophical emphasis on the idea of freedom alongside an equally pervasive failure to acknowledge the denial of freedom to entire categories of real, social human beings" (Davis 1998b, 53). She goes on to characterize this form of freedom when she writes Davis argues "The master's notion of freedom, in fact, involved this capacity to control the lives of others—the master felt himself free at the expense of the

further than tracing out the genealogy of originary violence, it also hones in on the existence of the non-identical at the heart of politics, at the heart of the law. In this case, we can see that the non-identical is the negative impression of slavery within the law, which carries on the unarticulated tradition it forms in reaction to. The non-identical at the heart of the law, thus, represents the limits of political rationality because the legal schema of disavowal engenders an appearance it can only permanently mistranslate—a mistranslation imprisoning a whole population within the tradition of slavery. Always failing to articulate that which is its ailment, political rationality cannot but continually fail to overcome what was never included within it to begin with.

IV. Taking Account of Political Disavowal

From *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud investigates the effect of the historical and material organization of the modes of punishment on consciousness. For what else could the relationship be between phylogenesis and ontogenesis, other than the relationship historical and the individual? And what more than the historical constellation of law and punishment, of the constitution of the symbolic and the institution of guilt, is at the center of Freud's explorations into the relationship between phylogenesis and ontogenesis in both texts? In following out the historical constellation and the material inscription of the modes of punishment on the psyche, Freud's late work

freedom of another. As the conscious slave certainly realized, this merely abstract freedom to suppress the lives others rendered the master a slave of his own misconceptions, his own misdeeds, his own brutality and infliction of oppression" (Davis 1998b, 55). Psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott also makes this point when he writes "The enslavement of African Negroes provided and still provides us with a false easiness about our own freedom; and the reappearance of the slavery theme in our books, films and songs is largely our way of getting the feeling that we ourselves are free" (Winnicott 1990, 215).

on the political points us toward the constitutive nature of disavowal in the political realm.

As we have seen, disavowal as a political concept characterizes the effect of the non-schematized deed setting the political in motion has on the development not only of its self-narration, but also the construction of the laws forming the backbone of the political, the very boundaries of the political realm itself. For as I have argued, the very deed acting as the catalyst for the political remains within the political while not appearing in the political. Not appearing in the political except through the impression it makes on the laws that react against it, the non-identical creates as it were, a spectral figure in negative. It forms a cryptogram with no code that subjects the political realm to what it cannot understand, to what literally remains beyond, before, outside of, yet necessarily immanent to the very rationality emerging from the deed itself.

Not included in the very rationality it initiates, excised from the very schema of the logic of appearance in the political, disavowal as both a material and psychological phenomenon marks the very threshold of rationality's promise of mastery and overcoming. Marking this limit, and thus perhaps turning political thought toward the non-identical, might very well mean taking into account the apparition of the negative impression of the non-identical that bolsters the appearance of the political realm. In light of this, we can see that the very logic that gives rise to appearance, as such, in the political realm will necessarily be structured by the negative impression of what remains unschematized. And just as Marx will conclude that it is only under the conditions where workers do not own the products of their labor, that workers believe they are not entitled to the products of their labor, so too one can say that, for Freud, it is only under historical

conditions in which the law both fends off and repeats what founds it, it is only under historical conditions when political appearance includes to exclude, that disavowal is constitutive of the ego.

But what are we to make of this shift from appearance to the non-schematized? How are we thus to understand the effect this shift might have the very foundations of political rationality, and perhaps the affective investment that sparks and nurtures the illusions of overcoming that have come to form the structure of political rationality? To answer this question we must ask what type of apparition is the disavowed, what spectral form haunts us when it is the negative impression? Can the specter of disavowal be dispelled through uncovering the secrets of long forgotten trauma? Or is the specter of disavowal a poltergeist, that which haunts indirectly and permanently, that which haunting the very ground upon which we stand leaves us all forsaken?

Conclusion

From Spirits to Phantoms, From Phantoms to Poltergeists: Critique and Structure

[...] his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts.

--William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom*

124 was spiteful.

--- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

A critique of reason would begin by turning toward that which exists but does not appear; a psychoanalytic critique of reason turns toward the constitutive and historical function of disavowal. In order to fully understand the implications of this claim, we must, as this dissertation has suggested, view Freud through the lens of Kantian critique. When we stand at the intersection of Freud and Kant, we can see that disavowal refers to the limit of cognition, the unrecognizable thing pressing in and thus shaping the contours of thought, of the symbolic, of the law itself. Turning political thought toward that which is but does not appear, toward the unconscious constitution of the political, forces the political to confront the limits of what it can master and overcome; for disavowal represents not only the limit of appearance, but also the end of the reign of the logic of non-contradiction. In other words, disavowal lies beyond, consciousness, beyond the repressed—indeed even beyond the spirit.

As I have argued, politics may be beset by political illusions, i.e. a classical Marxist understanding of ideology, but political thought is beset by the illusion that it can overcome and master these illusions. The only way to temper the dialectical illusions of political thought is to transform its assumptions about the nature of consciousness by

turning it toward the non-identical. In turning consciousness toward the non-identical one turns consciousness not toward that which can be brought to consciousness but remains hidden, but rather one turns consciousness toward those aspects of itself that are formed by, stamped by, that which is but cannot appear. And when we begin to think about this reorientation from the view of the political, what one finds is a shift from a sole focus on those illusions which are subject to the corrective of rational thought to the introduction of those intractable splits in consciousness giving rise to what rational thought can only recognize as contradictions. In other words, what one finds in this reorientation is the limit of the power of rationality within the political in the illumination of the very threshold between what appears and the conditions of appearance itself. And it is at this threshold that we find the function of disavowal, not repression.

Repression does not mark the limit of either rationality or political rationality. From the repression of the drives to the repressive apparatus of the state, repression is always secures the dominant modes of rationality; it preserves the unity of the ego, the unity of the state. Moreover, repressive unity is secured by denying appearance to what has already appeared—for repression is only an “after-pressure” after all—and as such, repression does not erase or obliterate that which it removes, but only hides what has already been cognized. And in this sense, what remains repressed is only that which is but remains hidden, it is that which awaits the right key to unlock it, the clever analyst or detective to set it free. Until then, of course, it appears indirectly in the form of symptoms that haunt, a spirit wrecking havoc upon the present; but all of these symptoms can be undone by breaking the spell and setting the repressed free, of putting the cryptogram of trauma together. Spirits can always be set free.

Disavowal, in stark contrast to repression, is a puzzle that comes with all the wrong pieces. Rather than representing that which appears and is then denied entrance to consciousness, disavowal represents that which is, but never appeared. On the other side of the split giving rise to appearance itself, what has been disavowed is radically timeless, a-rational, and constantly present in symbolic structure giving rise to appearance itself. As such, when consciousness, if it ever, attempts to work through the disavowed it can only mistranslate it, misinterpret its significance. It can only misunderstand what has been disavowed because the very structure of its understanding is constructed from the negative impression of what has been disavowed. As such, disavowal represents the limits of the power of rationality itself. Having been left behind from the beginning, it cannot be reincorporated, recuperated, into a system that never incorporated it to begin with. What has been disavowed represents the limit of thought, and thus the non-identical, which political thought, must turn to if it is to critique its illusions of mastery and overcoming. Because the disavowed is trapped in a web of mistranslation, it represents something more troubling than spirits, something more terrifying because it cannot be set free.

When we take up the non-identical, as what has been disavowed, in a political context we are forced to confront the timeless reverberations of what exists outside of the structure of political appearance, the deeds which while giving rise to the structure are not incorporated into it. Indeed, when political thought begins to turn toward what has been disavowed, it must engage in a genealogy. But this genealogy must take a different form. It represents an investigation between thought and the non-identical; an attempt to understand not only the negative impression of the non-identical in the law, but also how

this negative impression sustains itself throughout time, simultaneously resisting rationality while asserting its presence within the very law that excludes it. Having already been constituted in disavowal, there is no escape from the non-identical in political appearance. This is not to say constitutive disavowal is universal, and thus inescapable; rather this is to say that as long as the historical conditions of our political life are structured by the mechanism of disavowal, then the non-identical will trouble it. And in this sense, thinking disavowal as a political concept must begin with the historical transmission of the non-identical and its effect on construction of political subjectivity. In light of this genealogy of what is but does not appear, I would like to suggest that we must turn from a notion of spirit to a notion of the phantom.

Transgenerational Haunting: Legacies of the Non-identical

We must, thus, take up an investigation in to the historical transmission of the non-identical beyond the boundaries of reason. This is a task that psychoanalysis alone has taken up and developed in its focus on the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Nowhere, I believe, is this phenomenon more clearly articulated and so closely brought in line with the concept of disavowal, than in the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok.²²⁰ I would like to briefly turn to their notion of the phantom in order to illuminate

²²⁰ Gayatri Spivak also takes up the work of Abraham and Torok in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Specifically, Spivak takes up the concept of cyptonymy, as she attempts to “docket the encrypting of the name of the ‘native informant’ as the name of Man—a name that carries the inaugurating affect of being human” (Spivak 1999, 5). She further argues that “as the historical narrative moves from colony to postcolony to globality, the native informant is thrown out—to use the Freudian concept-metaphor of *Verwerfung*—into the discursive world as a cryptonym, inhabiting us so that we cannot claim the credit of our proper name” (Spivak 1999, 111). Spivak’s usage of this concept, as I understand, is meant to indicate the constitutive symbolic exclusion folded into the system of signification. Whereas, Spivak takes up the native informant as what has been foreclosed (*Verwefung*) from and thus encrypted into the symbolic, I am

what it means to think the intergenerational transmission of trauma as the historical transmission of the non-identical, so that I may gesture toward what this may mean in terms of political thought.

Torok and Abraham define the phantom in their 1975 essay, “‘The Lost Object—Me’: Notes on Endocryptic Identification.” They write that the phantom represents “a memory *without legal burial place*” for the patient (Abraham and Torok 1994a, 141). The development of this illegal memory causes a “genuinely covert shift in the entire psyche” for Abraham and Torok (Abraham and Torok 1994a, 141). While initially the concept of the phantom sounds similar to the concept of repression, the difference becomes clear when one learns that the phantom haunts the subject, but does not belong to the subject; for the phantom is “[t]he buried speech of the parent” that has become “(a) dead (gap) without a burial place in the child” (Abraham and Torok 1994a, 140fn.). In other words, the phantom describes the transmission of unconscious material from the parent to the child, or how the non-identical becomes transferred between generations.²²¹

Nicolas Abraham further clarifies this concept in an essay entitled “Notes on the Phantom: A Compliment to Freud’s Metapsychology” also written in 1975. In this essay he argues the phantom is “meant to objectify, even if under the guise of individual or collective hallucinations, the gap produced in us by the concealment of some part of the love object’s life” (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 171). The phantom, thus, represents what I do not understand about the other. Yet, the question the other poses to me is also

appealing to what has been disavowed (*Verleugnung*) from the symbolic, and thus unconsciously passed along throughout the generations, i.e. Abraham and Torok’s concept of the phantom.

²²¹ Thus further clarify this when they write, “[t]his unknown phantom returns from the unconscious to haunt its host and may lead to phobias, madness, and obsessions. Its effect can persist through several generations and determine the fate of an entire family line (Abraham and Torok 1994a, 140fn).

unconscious to the other. And in this sense, it becomes clear that “what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 171). I am not haunted by the unconscious basis of my own actions, but rather the phantom haunting me is the unconscious gap driving the other. The phantom, thus, represents the incorporation of other’s secret, which thus forces us to continually attempt to translate and render sense out of what cannot become conscious, or expelled.

One cannot exorcize a phantom once possessed. How could one? For what becomes lodged in me is not only locked, but I do not even have the key; for I did not forge the lock. It is not my secret that I internalize—it belongs to someone else. In light of this, Abraham writes

[t]he phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious—for good reason. It passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent’s unconscious into the child’s. Clearly, the phantom has a function different from dynamic repression. The phantom’s periodic and compulsive return lies beyond the scope of symptom formation in the sense of the return of the repressed; it works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject’s own mental topography. (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 173)

Like the disavowed the phantom has never been “conscious” and differs from the structure of the repression, perhaps even from the spirit of repression. What returns, what comes crashing down on the subject is not the return of one’s own denied affect, the uncanny return of what is at once most foreign and most one’s own. Rather, when one is haunted by a phantom, one is unconsciously driven by the unconscious drives of another.

“The Phantom which returns to haunt,” Abraham writes, *“bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other”* (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 175). The phantom makes a transgenerational puppet of the subject, internally sabotaging the subject in accordance with unconscious wishes and drives formed in a historical context that do not belong to the subject. Disassociating the subject from its own actions, the phantom drives the subject to re-enact the unconscious suffering of another, to fulfill the other’s unconscious wish. The subject preserves the other history by carrying it within; the subject “preserves history, but in a poisonous, unmetabolized version” (Apprey 2002, 12).

Because the phantom cannot be uncovered, at least in the same manner as repression, and because the phantom always implicates another, Abraham argues the “phantom remains beyond the reach of the tools of the classical analysis” (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 174). The subject can only be liberated from the incorporation of the other’s secret, he writes, when “its radically heterogeneous nature with respect to the subject is recognized, a subject to whom it at no time has any direct reference” (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 174). But how this radical heterogeneity that not only “gives rise to endless repetition” but also “eludes rationalization” can come to be recognized is not clear (Abraham and Torok 1994b, 174). What form of rationality could recognize this difference as difference and not as contradiction? It would have to be a form of rationality that is not just turned toward the non-identical, but rather would have to spring from the non-identical, a form of rationality that is not yet and may not even come to be.

In turning to the phantom we can begin to see the outline of a form of critique that would take up a genealogical investigation into the non-identical, and especially the structures of transmitting the non-identical as an unrecongizable inheritance structuring the subject beyond any possiblity of rational mastery. For it is a historical thread that remains but does not appear, structuring our drives and actions with a secret meaning that is not our own, and which we cannot come to know or recognize. And it is toward the phantom of the disavowed, not the spirit of repression, that political thought must turn if it wants to take up the non-identical and its inheritance. Yet, to take up the phantom politically we must move from the family to the state, we must move from the interpersonal to the structural, we must thus move from the phantom to the poltergeist.

Poltergeist as Political Critique

Spirits we would like to escape haunt us. We fight against them. Sometimes we overcome them. All the while it is not the spirit that has under its thrall; rather, it is the phantom. Tangled in a battle against spirit, the real object of our subjection is the phantom. Thus, we often mistake the victory over the spirit for a victory over subjection, while simultaneously and more radically we remain under the spell of phantoms, gaps in us produced by others, locks to which there are no keys. I would like to end this project by suggesting that if we wanted to think the phantom as structural phenomenon, if we wanted to think about the political transmission and inheritance of the non-identical, we must turn from the phantom to the poltergeist.

While, as we have seen, the phantom differs from the spirit because the phantom represents a radically intersubjective split in consciousness that cannot be recuperated. What would it mean to think of this intersubjective split in consciousness as structured by something other than the dynamics of the family, of that small Oedipal fantasy of the nuclear family, or any family structure? It would have to mean making the move from the phantom to the poltergeist, from intersubjectivity to structure. Perhaps to better understand what is at stake in this shift of terminology—I am tempted to stay away from the term “metaphor”—we should examine the type of specter the poltergeist represents.

While phantom or spirits represent the transfigured presence of something that does not belong, the poltergeist represents a thing that remains without figure in its active presence. A poltergeist haunts houses, inadvertently terrorizing the people who choose to live there. It is a ghost of structure. Never appearing it is only indicated in the movement of objects, the shaking of walls, the throwing of knives. The fact that it does not appear is not accidental, but given its nature, necessary. A spirit, what has been repressed, normally refers to a person to whom some horrible event has taken place; it can thus take a definite form. A phantom, as what has been disavowed, is no more than the mistranslation of the incorporation of a radical heterogeneity; it is our attempt to give figure to those things affecting us that we cannot understand. In contrast to both the spirit and the phantom, the poltergeist cannot come to form because it neither represents some individual figure nor an unrepresentable gap. Rather the poltergeist refers to the historical reverberations of an event, some thing that is not the type of thing to have a form as such. The event is repeated in slamming of the doors, in the ripping up of the floorboards. The poltergeist cannot come to form because it refers not a thing with a form, but rather to an event re-

enacted in the very wood-work of the house. As a very part of the house, as long as the house stands so too does the poltergeist.

And perhaps when we try to think the political implications of the critical power of the Freudian concept of disavowal, we make the (metaphorical) move from phantoms to poltergeists. For the concept of the poltergeist seems to allude to the structural intergenerational transmission of the non-identical. And indeed is this not what we saw with the constitutional preservation slavery in the form of the prison? Is not the structural displacement of slavery from the plantation to the prison, not the institutional preservation of an unmetabolized event remaining non-identical to the very structure of law it gives rise to? Moreover, is not the structural haunting of slavery, the political poltergeist of our system of law, not manifested in the terrorizing affects of not only maintaining a racially striated population through the violent threats of the law and the mythological racist narratives securing the paradoxical political subjectivity of the African American population? Is not slavery, the non-identical of the political, transferred from generation to generation through the minute structural displacements within the very wood-work of law? And if the law represents the very boundaries of the phenomena of political subjectivity and action, then is not the very political realm haunted by a poltergeist wrecking havoc in its compulsive return? Is not the formless form resisting appearance except in its indirect effects, the blind re-enactment of the variegated unschematized aspects of slavery?

A critique of reason, indeed, turns to the non-identical. A psychoanalytic critique of reason re-orientes the psyche toward constitutive feature of disavowal. Both of these shifts move reason from what it can know, and thus control, toward that which escapes it.

It is a move away from the illusions of spirit and toward the darker entrapment of the phantom. Thus, as we have seen a psychoanalytic critique of political reason demands turning reason toward structural phantom, the poltergeist. It would mean turning thought to those compulsive aspects of our history resisting form, yet persisting beyond the boundaries of reason alone—to the political inheritance of those unspeakable things unspoken.

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