

What's the good of psychoanalysis: Zizek and the vanishing mediatrix

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2nd July 1992

There is a correspondence between topology and practice.
This correspondence is time. Topology resists, and it is
in this resistance that the correspondence exists

Le Topologie et Le Temps 21 November 1978.

"Perfect is the man who knows what comes from heaven and what comes from man. Knowing what comes from heaven, he is in tune with heaven. Knowing what comes from man, he uses his knowledge of the known to develop his knowledge of the unknown and enjoys the fullness of life until his natural death. This is the perfection of knowledge. However, there is one difficulty. Knowledge must be based upon something, but one is not certain what this may be. How, indeed, do I know that what I call heaven is not actually man, and that what I call man is not actually heaven? First, there must be a true man; then there can be true knowledge." Chuang Tsu 4th Century BC.

"Do not seek fame. Do not make plans. Do not be absorbed by activities. Do not think that you know. Be aware of all that is and dwell in the infinite. Wander where there is no path. Be all that heaven gave you, but act as though you have received nothing. Be empty, that is all.

The mind of a perfect man is like a mirror. It grasps nothing. It reflects but does not hold. Therefore, the perfect man can act without effort." Chuang Tsu 4th Century BC.

Preface

What follows started from a paper by Zizek called "Why should a dialectician learn to count to Four?". In this paper Zizek reminds us that Hegel's dialectical process could be counted as three or as four, with "the subject as the surplus-moment which 'counts for nothing'". This subject he identifies as "the vanishing mediator".

Zizek is interesting to me in relation to my work as a strategy consultant. I am constantly working with managers concerned to bring about change in the organisations in which they work; and it is never clear whether it is they themselves or their organisations which they are talking about. In this work, therefore, there is always a question of Group effects.

Zizek writes in this space between the psychoanalytic, philosophical and social, in a way which moves easily between the private and the extimate. This movement resonates with what seems to be being asked of me by managers - to support the processes whereby the privacy of their Imaginary formations come up against the extimate Real of 'market forces'.

In framing my title, I rather followed in a certain tradition of choosing it as a provocation to finding a way of writing under it. But having accepted the challenge of his paper, there was something missing for me in the way he was writing. So I changed "mediator" to its feminine form: "mediatrix".

I knew I was onto something when I encountered two responses to this title. The first response was to be reminded that the mediatrix is a term used by Catholics to refer to the Virgin Mary - grace personified. Here is Lacan on the subject of saints:

"A saint's business, to put it clearly, is not charité [charity]. Rather, he acts as déchet [left-over]; his business being décharité. So as to embody what the structure entails, namely allowing the subject, the subject of the unconscious, to take him as the cause of the subject's own desire.

In fact it is through the abjection [désitué] of this cause that the subject in question has a chance to be aware of his position, at least within the structure..... that it produces an effect of jouissance [jouis-sens]" Television p19

Here was my first direction - to pursue the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, using the case of the Vanishing Mediatrix as a place from which to approach this question of the subject *désitué*.

But in seeking to approach this question, I am also questioning the good of psychoanalysis. Lacan points out that the position of the subject *désitué* is not without its pleasure, which he formulated as *jouis-sens*:

"What Freud discovers in the unconscious is something utterly different from realising that broadly speaking one can give a sexual meaning to everything one knows, for the reason that knowing has always been open to the famous metaphor (the side of meaning Jung exploited). It is the Real that permits the effective unknotting of what makes the symptom hold together, namely a knot of signifiers. Where here knotting and unknotting are not metaphors, but are really to be taken as those knots that in fact are built up through developing chains of the signifying material.

For these chains are not of meaning but of enjoy-meant [jouis-sens]..... " Television
p14¹

So this gave me my second direction - to ask the question of the good in terms of pleasure.

The second response to my title came when I rang up to dictate it for inclusion in some publicity material as the title of a seminar. When I started dictating "mediatrix" to the ear at the other end, I was interrupted half way through with the following slightly irritated comment:

"I used to work for the BBC. I know how to spell 'media tricks'"

It took me a few moments before I could find a way of getting him to listen from a different place! But when I later came across the following quote from Joyce avec Lacan, I realised that his irritation also concealed an end to my writing:

"Take care at this point, for it is the clinic which imposes this complement [that a letter is not only a message; it is also an object]. For how are we to render the *symptôme* without implicating the letter in the structure of language? The psychoanalysable *symptôme* is interpretable: it is without doubt a message; but its consistence isn't semantic: it includes that *jouissance* which Freud discovered as the limit of the power of interpretation, in his formulation of the 'negative therapeutic reaction'. The *symptôme*, if it is supported by a structure identical to that of language, is not articulated in a process of languaging, but is 'inscribed in a process of writing'"
Joyce avec Lacan p11²

In what follows, I want to pursue Zizek's lead by addressing the nature of the place and practice of the psychoanalyst: "What's the good of psychoanalysis?" In doing so, I am concerned not only to approach the question of the end of analysis, but also to link this to the ways in which such an end might show itself in the workings of the Group: what kind of leader does a psychoanalyst take himself to be?

1Jacques Lacan - Television. October 40 Spring 1987. MIT Press

2Joyce avec Lacan. Bibliothèque Analytica 1987. Translated from the Preface written by Jacques-Alain Miller. The quote is from the Ecrits p445.

Introduction

Let me try and set the case before you. This may begin to sound like a lesson in theology, but bear with me. What I would like you to do is listen to the shape of the case as it unfolds. It is through this shape that I want to address the nature of the place and practice of the analyst.

Prophets, priests and kings - and prayer

The mediator is one who stands midway between two others and who intervenes in order to unite them. The mediation that is of chief interest to religion and theology is that which occurs between God and men. Leaving aside the divine or semi-divine versions of mediator, of which Hermes is a classic one, the human form of mediator was named as such because of his supposed affinity with the gods, serving as mediators for others. Three main types can be distinguished: prophets, priests and kings.

- (i) Prophets (including seers, soothsayers, witches, sibyls, sorcerers, medicine men etc) are distinguished by personal intimacy with the deity, empowering the bearer to speak and act in the name and by the power of the latter.
- (ii) The priest, on the other hand, does not as such have supernatural powers. He mediates by worshipping on behalf of the people.
- (iii) The king or ruler is a mediator to the extent that he is thought to hold his office by commission from the god, to rule in the name of the god, and to be somewhat divine in his very exaltation over the people.

To these can be added a fourth:

- (iv) Intercessory prayer is a type of mediation not restricted to a special office, although it has a special affinity with the priesthood.

That Christ is the definitive and indispensable mediator between God and man is the central doctrine of the New Testament. This brings us to the mediatrix.

The Mediatrix

The appellation of mediatrix does not designate one specific office of the Blessed Virgin. Like the term mediator, it is susceptible of various senses and can be used in different references. There are, in fact, three moments: the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the present. In the Incarnation, Mary was the mediatrix because the Son of God came to men through her. As Moses mediated the Law to the Israel of the flesh, so she mediates JC, the source of grace, to the Israel of the spirit.

It is a widely accepted belief not only that Mary's consent constituted a free acceptance of her vocation, but that the Incarnation itself was made to hinge on her agreement. In this light, Mary is mediatrix, not only as one through whom the divine gift is transmitted to men, but also as the one who, in the name of mankind, responds to the divine initiative.

The second basis for the title of Mediatrix consists in Mary's association with JC in His mediatorial activity. Some hold that her Compassion had, in dependence on

Christ's Passion, a true redemptive value for mankind. This is Mary's coredemptive role.

Finally, Mary is called Mediatrix in a third sense, referring to her present situation in heavenly glory. This is where Mary vanishes. The belief that all graces now communicated to men by the glorified Christ are given through Mary has by now received very widespread acceptance in the Church, although there is no agreement about the manner in which this mediation is practised. In this third sense therefore, Mary is concerned with the actual distribution of graces, that is to say, in the enduring process of applying to individual persons the supernatural merits acquired by Christ (and secondarily by herself) through the redemptive work. This is what theologians designate technically as Mary's cooperation in the *subjective* Redemption.

The difficulty with this formulation of Mary as somehow *de-materialised* is that it is still a formulation in terms of presence//absence, and therefore a formulation in terms of the Symbolic - later on, we will want to formulate it in terms of the Real. Nevertheless, it is around the way this *vanishing* is formulated that this case revolves.

The question of grace then becomes central. The Church identifies itself with the role of mediator under the three types listed earlier. These mediating roles are explicitly centred around *objective* redemption. In this sense, there is an analogy between Mary and the Church. Mary is to JC what the Church is to its members. Thus an understanding of the role of the Mediatrix is essential to an understanding of the role of the Church.

But Mary is also the ideal personification of the Church, the perfect model of the perfection to which the Church aspires. She represents the utmost limit towards which the Church constantly tends but which it will never reach, the ideal and perfect figure in which the Church can see what Christ requires of it and what He wishes it to be. Thus she also represents the limit of subjective redemption.

Later I will trace the way Zizek argues the dialectical process at work in the secularisation of the religious processes associated with the Church. Taking the role of the Church in objective redemption as that of the vanishing mediator, this will bring us to a consideration of the question of the vanishing Mediatrix, and to the nature of the third sense of the Mediatrix.

Grace

Again setting aside Mary's ontological mediation by virtue of her position in the hierarchy of beings between the Creator and His creatures, the three moments described earlier are referred to as Mary's *moral* mediation: the first two (Incarnation and Coredemption) belonging to the first phase, and the third *present* moment to the second. To get more of a sense of these two phases of redemption, let's look a bit more closely at the role of the Church.

That the Church might be able to exercise its mediation with men, Christ endowed it (exclusively so the argument goes) with the three types of powers of the prophet, priest and king through which grace could reach mankind and unite human individuals with God. When this threefold activity is at work in regard to any particular individual, then the latter becomes gradually assimilated to the Church through the Church's *ordinary* mediation.

However, whenever because of its social limitations, the Church is unable to mediate with all mankind in this complete and perfect way by applying its threefold power, it still can and does reach the other members of the human family through *extraordinary* mediation: either through the power of the priest alone, reaching mankind through the Sacraments; or reaching men through its prayers, its merits and its sacrifice. Prayer, as the fourth power of mediation, becomes important here therefore in reaching whatever is of private character in the religious life of souls. For every one of the faithful is a member of the Church, and in his most intimate prayer or most secret sacrifices it is the Church who in him is united to God.

So we have the Church and its ministry, addressing itself to its work of objective redemption invoking the three forms of power. In subjective redemption however, the fourth form of power - the power of prayer - becomes crucial. Spiritual theology addresses itself to the work of subjective redemption.

Spiritual direction

"Spiritual Theology" indicates the portion of theology that in the older terminology was called ascetical and mystical. In this development of the life of grace, its two elements - ascetical and mystical - are both essential to every form and degree of spiritual life. The ascetical element (from the Greek signifying personal effort, physical and mental training) including everything that a man does; and the mystical element consisting in a deepening of the spiritual life under a more pronounced action of the Holy Spirit through His gifts.

It is called "spiritual" in order to emphasise forcefully that it has to do with the application of Christ's redemptive work to the individual soul and with the manner by which each soul receives and cooperates with it. It embraces the part of the sacred doctrine that treats of the "spiritual life" ie the life according to the spirit understood in opposition to a life according to the "flesh".

The growth and development of the spiritual life is itself divided into three ways, or stages which are homologous with the three types of power: the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. These are not three parallel or divergent ways so much as three stages, or degrees, of the spiritual life that souls must traverse on the way to perfection. Perfection itself consists in love, and again a homologous three degrees in the love of God are identified:

- (i) the love man has for God because of His gifts;
- (ii) the love of God for His own sake; and
- (iii) love of God which is altogether disinterested.

Insofar as the processes of objective redemption become increasingly secularised therefore, it becomes important to understand the nature of this subjective redemption in its own terms. Psychoanalysis can be understood as secularising this process of subjective redemption.

Subjective redemption

The division into the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways is a traditional one, and comes from pre-Christian sources. Theological charity, which is like the soul and form of all Christian morality, is specifically the same in all Christians who possess it. Christian morality, then, corresponds to the acts elicited by charity and to acts of other virtues only insofar as they are ordered and vivified by charity. The

degrees and steps of charity on its upward movement toward union with God are reducible to three, which are known as the incipient, proficient, and perfect, corresponding to the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways.

- (i) Casuistry⁽³⁾ deals with the moral life of those recently converted from sin to grace, and is concerned in particular with the licit and the illicit in what is called the purgative way.
- (ii) Ascetical theology is less concerned with the good and evil, the licit and the illicit, the permitted and the forbidden, but is more interested in the greater and lesser good in what is called the illuminative way.
- (iii) Mystical theology is not concerned with the good or better so much as with what is, properly and absolutely speaking, the best, which consists in intimate union with God and permanence in Him in what is called the unitive way.

These three ways or stages do not constitute autonomous and separate compartments, but are rather mutually intermingling and interacting phases. They constitute a movement from the active life towards the contemplative life: the first consisting in the exercise of the moral virtues for the purification and ordering of the soul - the *praktike* aimed at moral perfection or *apatheia*; and the latter two being the contemplative way of *gnosis*, presupposing and crowning the active life, being the higher human activity, moving through the illuminative form of contemplation - the *physike theoria* - towards the *theologia* - the contemplation of God, and hence the exercise of theological virtues.

Important in this movement are the transitions. The first transition we have already mentioned - being converted from sin to grace. From here, the beginner strives to know God and know himself; his prayer life is that of meditations. If he is generous to the inspirations of grace, he quickly brings order into his moral life and his prayer becomes more affective and more simple. Through faithfulness to *active* purification he enters the second transition - the *dark night of the senses* - and *passive* purification. This dark night is the door to the illuminative way and the beginning of manifest mystical life. Contemplation, especially the gift of understanding, which penetrates divine mysteries, specifies the prayer life in this process of passive purification. But the proficient is not yet perfect.

A still more radical purification must occur, the *dark night of the spirit*. This is the third transition into the way of the perfect, which in turn is characterised by the highest infused contemplation, that of the gift of wisdom, which is the quasi-experimental knowledge of God. Only those in this last group negotiate the crisis of total abnegation and thus enter the unitive way. This last stage is the way of perfect charity, the fulfilment of charity rather than any special contemplative prayer being the specific mark of the perfect⁽⁴⁾.

Prayer and contemplation therefore form an essential spiritual exercise in this spiritual direction. Their exercising are expressly to discover the design God has for the individual practicing them, to seek and find the divine will in the disposition of his

³Casuistry: that part of Ethics which resolves cases of conscience, applying the general rules of religion and morality to particular instances which disclose special circumstances, or conflicting duties.

⁴Traditionally, this condition is one of *paraclesis*, or being comforted. The Greek means "to call to one's side", and normally has a passive meaning, "one called to another"; yet in usage, the meaning derives primarily from the function of the one called. Another instance of the mediatrix vanishing? The Paraclete is a term for the Holy Spirit as intercessor, mediator, consoler, teacher and defender. Implicit in the Fourth Gospel however is the fundamental thought that JC Himself is the primary Paraclete.

life. St Ignatius of Loyola developed a systematic series of meditations to this end. Concerned with a state of life or with the amendment of a state already chosen, they were considered to be particularly for those who must reach a decision with regard to their state of life, but also profitable for those at a turning point in their spiritual life.

The Case of the Vanishing Mediatrix

This then is the Case of the Vanishing Mediatrix. I hope it has given you a sense of a progression of forms and transitions; and the way in which the individual ends up with an absence of a presence - an abnegation which becomes filled by the presence of an absence: *grace* manifesting itself as *charity*.

To summarise the case so far, the mediatrix has three moments in relation to JC as mediator:

- (i) Incarnation, (ii) Coredemption, (iii) The present moment

It is in the third moment that the mediatrix vanishes. What leads up to this moment? Insofar as the third moment is to be understood in terms of the operation of grace, tracing the operation of grace up to that point gives us some clues.

The Church assumes JC's work of *objective* redemption through its assumption of the three forms of mediating power. These three forms can be thought of as an *outer face* of the second moment of redemption:

- (i) prophetic, (ii) sacerdotal, and (iii) regal.

The second moment also has an *inner face however*, addressed by a *fourth* mediating power of prayer and associated with *subjective* redemption. This inner face of subjective redemption too falls into three:

- (i) purgative, (ii) illuminative, and (iii) unitive

These have their associated forms of theology (Casuistry, Ascetical and Mystical theology), and their predominant virtues of fear, hope and love. This inner face itself carries with it inner-directed and outer-directed aspects: the *praktike*, aimed at moral perfection; and *gnosis*, aimed at the gift of wisdom.

There are also the transitions between the three ways associated with this inner face of redemption:

- (i) conversion from sin to grace, (ii) the dark night of the senses, and (iii) the dark night of the spirit.

The three forms of love corresponding to these three forms of subjective redemption end in a love of God which is altogether *disinterested*. It is this position which corresponds to the *destitué* position of the saint. We will approach the nature of this position through an examination of Lacan's three moments of logical time. From here I want to return to the question of the vanishing Mediatrix and the good of psychoanalysis.

But before we do that, what is the nature of this process of secularisation? How does Zizek approach this question?

Traces of an argument

The direction of the treatment

Here is Lacan on the subject of the direction of the treatment:

"Certainly the psychoanalyst directs the treatment. The first principle of this treatment, the one that is spelt out to him before all else, and which he meets throughout his training, to the extent that he becomes utterly imbued with it, is that he must not direct the patient. The direction of conscience, in the sense of the moral guidance that a Catholic might find in it, is radically excluded here. If psychoanalysis poses problems for moral theology, they are not those of the direction of conscience, speaking of which I would add that the direction of conscience itself poses problems." (Ecrits p227)

Lacan's allusion to spiritual direction here as posing problems for moral theology are well founded.

Certainly the Ignatian exercises stand accused of fostering individualism on the one hand; and on the other with not respecting the liberty of the individual, of being an instrument of pressure, autosuggestion and a powerful psychological machine. But these dangers are not inherent in the exercises. St Ignatius wished the retreat master to be retiring and "permit the Creator to deal directly with His creature", to adapt the exercises to the conditions of him who is to engage in them, to apply only the directions and regulations that will be helpful. On the other hand, though St Ignatius demanded much generosity and effort on the part of the individual, he clearly gave priority to grace, to the work of the Holy Spirit, to an attitude of spiritual receptivity.

Compare St Ignatius with Lacan on the subject of the 'retreat master':

"The direction of the treatment is something quite different. First of all, it consists in making the subject apply the analytic rule, that is, the directives whose presence cannot be ignored in the principle of what is called 'the analytic situation', on the pretext that the subject would apply them perfectly well without thinking about it.

These directives are initially presented to the patient in the form of instructions which, however little comment the analyst makes on them, will convey, in the very manner of presentation, the doctrine the analyst has made up for himself and how seriously he takes it for himself." (Ecrits p227)

Not so very different on the face of it. The analyst is "bringing to his aid what in bridge is called the dummy (*le mort*), but he is doing so in order to introduce the fourth player who is to be the partner of the analyst here, and whose hand the analyst, by his tactics, will try to expose: such is the link, let us say the abnegation, that is imposed on the analyst by the stake of the game in analysis". Thus the analyst, by his abnegation, performs a bringing into question of the present - the fourth player.

Understanding the place of the analyst then comes down to the analyst's relation to this fourth player himself. How are we to get a sense of this place?

The vanishing mediator

I must confess at this point to being no expert on Hegel. What follows is a summary of Zizek's argument. Again, my interest is to try and show its shape.

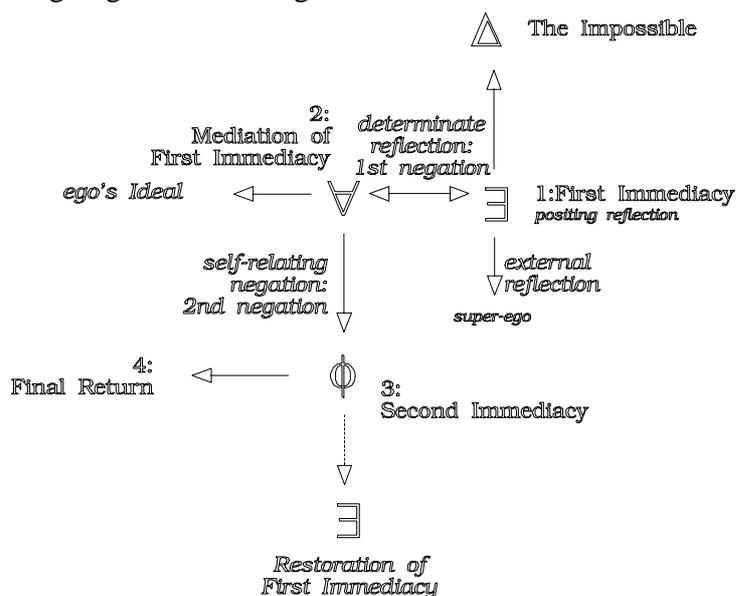
Zizek's paper ⁽⁵⁾ on why a dialectician should learn to count to four points out that most interpreters of Hegel, not to mention his critics, try to stick with three, competing with each other as to who will call our attention more convincingly to the 'fourth side', the non-dialectisable excess, the place of death (of the dummy - in French, *le mort* - in bridge), supposedly eluding the dialectical grasp insofar as it is the inherent condition of possibility of the dialectical movement: the negativity of a pure expenditure that cannot be sublated, re-collected, in its Result.

Zizek goes on to point out that the reproach drawn from these critics actually forms the crucial aspect of the very dialectical movement. Not only are there numerous cases like the four types of judgement from the first part of the 'subjective logic', but also Hegel thematises a quadruplicity proper to the dialectical movement as such, ie the excess of the pure nothingness of self-relating negativity, which vanishes, becomes invisible, in the final Result. In the last chapter of his *Logic* Hegel points out that the moments of this process should be counted as three or as four, with the subject being counted as the surplus-moment which 'counts for nothing' ⁽⁶⁾. How does this work?

The first moment is the immediate positivity of the starting point - a positing reflection. This is already a negation of the impossible Real, and is the naive reading, claiming immediate access to the true nature of things. There are two ways of moving off this first immediacy:

- (i) external reflection, as some transcendent entity excluded from the first immediacy; and
- (ii) determinate reflection, which comes forth precisely when we endeavour to grasp the first moment, the immediate in and for itself, as such. In this way we mediatise it and it turns into its own opposite. This second moment is thus not the negative of the first, its otherness. It is the first moment itself *as its own other*, as the negative of itself.

Later on I will argue that the shift from external reflection to determinate reflection is a *rectification* of the subject's relation to the Real. But to follow this dialectical process, I am going to need a diagram to make sense with:



5Why Should a Dialectician Learn to Count to Four? Slavoj Zizek. *Radical Philosophy* 58, Summer 1991 pp3-9.

Herein consists the fundamental dialectical idea of 'inner negativity' (2nd moment): an entity is negated, passes over into its opposite, as a result of the development of its own potential. This is the reason why negativity must be counted twice: to negate the starting point effectively, its own inner negation must be negated.

This second, self-relating negation, this otherness reflected into itself, this determinate negation, is the vanishing point of absolute negativity, of 'pure difference' - the paradoxical moment which is *third* and yet is also the *first* moment which has passed over into its own *other* - the third moment is the vanishing moment out of which comes.... what? The restoration of the first immediacy: a new cycle in the dialectical process; or the Final Return? Which of these seems to depend on the subject's response to the third moment - as Master or as Analyst.

The subject, Hegel argues, is this 'vanishing mediator', the third moment which so to speak enacts its own disappearance, ie whose disappearance is the very measure of its 'success', the void of self-relating negativity which becomes invisible once we look at the process 'backwards' from its Result.

How are we to flesh this out in a way which can make some sense for us? Zizek uses the example of Protestantism in relation to Catholicism in creating the conditions for the emergence of capitalism by invoking Fredric Jameson's essay on Max Weber (⁷). Lets try and follow it, since it also allows us to consider the nature of the process of secularisation.

The process of secularisation

How does Jameson argue that Protestantism creates the conditions for the emergence of capitalism? Not by limiting the reach of religious ideology, by undermining its all-pervasive presence characteristic of medieval society, but on the contrary by *universalising* its relevance.

Luther was opposed to cloisters and Church as institutions apart, separated by a gap from the rest of society, because he wanted the Christian attitude to penetrate and determine our entire secular everyday life. Contrary to the traditional (pre-Protestant) stance which basically limits the relevance of religion to the aims towards which we must tend, while leaving the means - the domain of secular economic activity - to the non-religious common judgement, the Protestant work-ethic conceives the very secular activity as the disclosure of God's grace.

This shift can be exemplified by the changed place of asceticism. In the traditional Catholic universe, asceticism concerns a stratum of people separated from everyday secular life, devoted to representing in this world its Beyond, ie the Heaven on Earth (saints, monks with their abstinence), whereas Protestantism requires every Christian to act ascetically in his or her secular life, to accumulate wealth instead of spending it thoughtlessly, to live in temperance and modesty: in short, to accomplish his or her instrumental-economic activity 'with God in mind'; asceticism as the affair of a stratum apart thereby becomes superfluous. This universalisation of the Christian stance, the affirmation of its relevance for secular economic activity, generates the

⁶Hegel's *Science of Logic*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1969, p836.

⁷Fredric Jameson, 'The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller', in *The Ideologies of Theory*, vol 2, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 1988.

attributes of the 'Protestant work ethic' (compulsive work and accumulation of wealth ie renunciation to compulsion, as an end-in-itself).

Simultaneously, yet unknowingly and unintentionally, following the 'cunning of Reason', it opens the way to the devaluation of religion, to its confinement to the intimacy of a private sphere separated from state and public affairs - a secularisation. The Protestant universalisation of the Christian stance is thus merely a transitory stage in the passage to the 'normal' state of bourgeois society where religion is reduced to a 'means', ie to a medium enabling the subject to find new strength and perseverance in the economic fight for survival, like those techniques of 'self-experience' which put the encounter of our 'true Self' in the service of our fitness.

It is easy to see the final result of the Protestant endeavour as being to abolish the gap between religion and everyday life and to transform religion to a 'therapeutic' means. What is more difficult to conceive is the necessity of Protestantism as the 'vanishing mediator' between medieval corporatism and capitalist individualism. In other words, it is Protestantism which, by means of its universalisation of Christianity, prepared the ground for its withdrawal into the sphere of privacy.

This argument can be summarised in the form of the preceding dialectics:

- (i) Medieval Corporatism is taken as a 1st moment.
- (ii) Catholicism is a determinate reflection which mediates this first immediacy. Here is the Church functioning in its redemptive role.
- (iii) Protestantism is a self-relating negation - a negation of Catholicism which in universalising the disclosure of God's grace negates Catholicism 'exclusivity'. This is the vanishing mediator which leads to the final result of
- (iv) capitalist individualism in which the question of grace itself re-appears secularised in therapeutic form. This 'final result' then is a return to a first immediacy from which the whole dialectical process can repeat itself.

The inversion of the 'normal' relationship of 'content' (1st moment) and its ideological 'form' (2nd moment) consists therefore in the emancipation of form (3rd moment) in relation to its content that characterises the 'vanishing mediator'.

The break of Protestantism with the medieval Church therefore does not 'reflect' new social content, but is rather *the criticism of the old feudal content in the name of the radicalised version of its own ideological form*. It is this 'emancipation' of the Christian form in relation to its own social content that opens up the space for the gradual transformation of the old into the new (capitalist) content (4th moment as new 1st moment).

But can the 'emancipation' of the ideological form be explained from the inner antagonism of the 'base' itself: is it enough to say that it emerges when these antagonisms become so violent that they can no longer be legitimised by their own ideological form?

The answer seems to be that the emergence itself is an 'event' in relation to the established structure, the moment when its 'truth' emerges, the moment of 'openness' which, once the eruption of the 'event' is institutionalised into a new positivity (4th moment -> 1st moment -> 2nd moment), is lost or, more precisely, becomes literally *invisible*.

This 'impossible' moment of openness constitutes the moment of *subjectivity*. 'Subject' is a name for that unfathomable X called upon, suddenly made accountable,

thrown into a position of responsibility, into the urgency of decision in such a moment of undecidability. This is the way one has to read Hegel's proposition that the True is to be grasped 'not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*'⁽⁸⁾, not only as an objective process governed by some hidden rational Necessity, but also as a process punctuated by the moments of openness/undecidability when the subject's irreducibly contingent *act* establishes a new Necessity. In this, 'Dialectical Necessity' is always, by definition, an *apres coup*.

But here we go again, disappearing into abstractions of experience which are very difficult to follow. There are two problems here, both of which need to be elaborated. The first has to do with the relationship between 'substance' and 'subject'. Insofar as the substance is taken for the subject, the second related point has to do with how we assume the dialectical process as supposed subjects.

A preliminary answer is that to take substance in the place of subject is to *fetishise*: reality as having a perverse structure. This is the sense in which an analysis must start with a *rectification* of the subject's relation to the Real - the subject must be present as a subject *qua* determinate reflection. External reflection makes no such demand on the subject, but in determinate reflection, the subject must *presuppose himself as positing*.

Lacan shows this move in his paper on logical time.⁽⁹⁾ In this paper, Lacan gives us an example through which he shows the subjectivation of the dialectical process.

Logical time

A prison governor brings three choice inmates before him and announces to them as follows:

"For reasons which I need not disclose to you now, gentlemen, I must free one of you. To decide which, I leave your lot to be determined by a test which, if you are willing, you will undergo.

There are three of you here. Here are five discs which differ only in their colour: three are white, and two are black. Without making known which of them I have chosen, I am going to stick one of these discs between each of your shoulders, that is to say, out of the bearer's direct vision, all possibility of his being able to catch sight of it indirectly is also excluded by the absence of any means of looking at himself.

Thereafter you will be free to consider at your leisure your companions and the discs which each of them will be wearing, without being allowed, of course, to communicate to each other the fruits of your inspection - which, in any case, considerations of your own self-interest would alone prevent you from doing. For the first who can deduce his own colour shall profit from the measure of liberty of which we dispose.

Moreover, his conclusion must be grounded in logic, and not in probability. To this end, it is agreed that, as soon as one of you is ready to formulate such a conclusion, he will cross the threshold of this door, so that, taken aside, he will be judged by his answer."

This proposal having been accepted, each of our three subjects is arrayed with a white disc, without using the blacks, of which there were, it should be remembered, only two. How can the subjects solve the problem?

8G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977 p10.

9Logical time and the assertion of anticipated certainty: a new sophism. March 1945.

Lacan describes in this situation three *evidential* moments, of which the logical values are shown to be different and of increasing order. The temporal instance presents itself in a different mode in each of these moments, showing their hierarchy. Each moment absorbs the previous one, but only in the last moment is their succession and the genesis of their logical movement to be understood.

1. The instant of a gaze

"When faced with two blacks, one knows that one is white."

This is the first moment - the first immediacy which is also the positing reflection. There is the instant of the gaze which is the interval between being faced with two blacks; and knowing that one is white. This instant introduces the form which, in the second moment will become a hypothesis about what is hidden from the subject himself.

2. The time for understanding

"If I were a black, the two whites that I see would not delay in recognising that they were whites."

The clarity of this moment presupposes the duration of a *time for meditation* that each of the two whites must ascertain in the other, and which the subject expresses in phrases that he attaches to the lips of each of them:

"If I were a black, he would leave without waiting an instant. If he stays meditating, it is because I am a white."

The limit of this interval of time for understanding can be reduced to the instant of the gaze, but this gaze can include in its instancy all the time that is needed to understand. Thus the objectivity of this time vacillates with its limit. Only its meaning subsists in the formal feature it generates, of subjects *undefined save by their reciprocity*.

Here then is a first hesitation, a determinate reflection producing a mediated immediacy which is the second moment. But there is a second hesitation.

"I hasten to affirm myself to be a white, in order that the other whites, as thus considered by me, do not preempt me in recognising themselves for what they are."

This is the self-assertion through which the subject concludes the logical movement in the decision of a *judgement*. This is the repetition of the movement of understanding, persisting in the subject as a reflection a moment of being later than the others, and logically presenting itself as the urgency of the moment to conclude.

It is the *understanding of the moment to conclude*. Whereas the interpretation of the first hesitation was a hesitation in the others, this hesitation is a hesitation in which the hesitation of the others is interpreted.... out of which comes the urgency to conclude, since the other two will leave with or without him, and if he hesitates longer than the other two's second hesitation, then he will never know either way. Thus the timing itself has its own logic (¹⁰).

This second hesitation is the self-relating negation of the mediated immediacy which results in the third moment.

¹⁰It is interesting that with three subjects there are two moments of hesitation, with four subjects (and three black/four white discs) there are three moments, etc. Thus the topology of the situation unfolds in the practice of the time for understanding as a particular diachronic structure - logical time.

3. The moment to conclude

"I hastened to conclude that I was white, because otherwise they would have preempted me in reciprocally recognising themselves to be whites (and because, if I had left them the time to do so, they would have led me, through what would have been my very own act, into error)".

The logical value of the subject of the assertion in the third moment is well demonstrated by reference to the subjects of the first and second moments. In the first moment, the subject is in the third person - 'he' or 'one' as in 'one knows that...' In the second moment the subject is in the second person 'you' insofar as each must recognise himself in the other. The 'I' of the third moment however detaches itself from the march of logical time, through the 'making subjective' of a competition with the other through the function of logical time. As such it gives the *essential* logical form (rather than the so-called existential form) of the "I".

What demonstrates clearly the essentially subjective value of the conclusion is the incapacity of an observer (the prison governor overseeing the game, for example), when confronted by the simultaneous departure of the three subjects, to assert of any of the three whether they had concluded correctly as to the disc he carried. In fact, the subject seized the moment to conclude that he is a white according to the subjective evidence of an interval of delay which hurries him towards the exit, but, if he has not seized this moment, he does not act any differently, under the influence of the *objective* fact of the departure of the others, and he leaves in step with them - but assured that he is a black. All the observer can predict is that, if there is a subject who, on inquiry, declares himself to be a black, hastening in the wake of the two others, he will be the only one as such to declare himself in these terms.

In fact the assertive judgement appears here as an *act*. What constitutes the singularity of the act of concluding is *the subjective assertion that anticipates its own certainty*. For the observer this is the vanishing mediator which is the subject. Are we therefore to take the *symptôme* as the mediatrix? If we can formulate the nature of this third moment as a subjective assertion *for self*, is there a way of formulating it *for another*?

Restoration of the first immediacy or Final Result?

The *apres coup* of the observer, like the assertion of a 'Dialectical necessity' represents a new immediacy. The subjective assertion that anticipates its own certainty *vanishes* in the certainty which follows. The moment when the subject 'posits its presuppositions' is the very moment of its effacement as subject, the moment it vanishes as mediator, the moment of closure when the subject's act of decision changes into its opposite, ie establishes a new means by which History again acquires the self-evidence of a linear evolution. This subject is reduced to being 'one among the others', it loses its character of One which holds the place of Nothing (of radical negativity). This subject is the 'vanishing mediator', the third moment which enacts its own disappearance, ie whose disappearance is the very measure of its 'success', the void of self-relating negativity which becomes invisible once we look at the process 'backwards'.

This act of the subject is a Lacanian *act*: a move that defines its own conditions. The act is thus performative in a way which exceeds the 'speech act'. Its performativity is retroactive, which from the perspective of the existing positive laws

appears by definition as Crime - a scandalous act for which there is no rhyme or reason from the point of view of existing laws: as was the appearing of Christ in the eyes of the keepers of the existing law, before Christ was 'christianised', and made part of the new law of Christian tradition.

This act then is the emergence of a new master signifier - an S_1 which 'sutures' anew its own past, its own conditions, effacing its 'scandalous' character.

The Master and duty

What then of the analyst? Going back to the Case, the process of secularisation brought us from the substance of the Church to the capitalist individualism of the subject; and Lacan's formulation of the subject has brought us from subject as the instant of a gaze to subject as assertion of anticipated certainty. Hegel formulated three forms of self which are strikingly parallel not only with Lacan's three moments, but with the three forms of subjective redemption: the first was "the perverted, perverting and distracted self of the world of culture"; the second the self of the legal person, its existence consisting in its being acknowledged by others; and the third as the "self of conscience, Spirit that is directly aware of itself as absolute truth and being." (Phenomenology of Spirit p384) But this is not the end of it, because Hegel speaks of this third self in terms of a distinction between *being-for-self* and *being-for-another*. In this distinction, are there two different ways of moving in relation to the third moment? First consider *being-for-self*:

"And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not just being, not the immediate form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure *being-for-self*." (Phenomenology of Spirit p114)

The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognised as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. The Master is the consciousness that exists *for itself*. It is the trial by death spoken of as "the dark night of the senses" which is the moment of encounter with this being-for-self.

Hegel, however, goes on to speak about the 'beautiful soul', evil and its forgiveness. This 'beautiful soul' is the 'Unhappy Consciousness' whose "activity is a yearning which merely loses itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above its loss, and falling back on itself, finds itself only as a lost soul. In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called 'beautiful soul', its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air..... Insofar as the self-certain Spirit does not possess the power to renounce the knowledge of itself which it keeps to itself, it cannot attain an identity with the consciousness it has repulsed, nor therefore to a vision of the unity of itself in the other, cannot attain to an objective existence." This is the form of consciousness which is *evil*, because of the disparity between its inner being and the universal.

Being-for-another comes when the self-relating negativity negates being-for-self. This is the self which is both a pure knowing and a knowledge of itself as this individual consciousness. Consequently, this self constitutes the content of what was previously the empty essence. This self, Hegel argues, is the absolute universal, so that just this knowing, as its own knowing, as conviction, is *Duty*.

"Duty is no longer the universal that stands over against the self; on the contrary, it is known to have no validity when thus separated. It is now the law that exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of the law. Law and Duty, however, have for that reason the significance not only of *being-for-self* but also of intrinsic being; for this knowing, because it is self-identical, is precisely the in-itself. In consciousness too, this in-itself separates itself from that immediate unity with being-for self; as thus standing over against the latter it is *being*, a *being-for-another*." (Phenomenology of Spirit p387).

This is the dark night of the spirit, in which being-for-self turns its back on its actual existence, and makes itself into a superseded *particular* consciousness. The forgiveness which it extends to the other is the renunciation of itself. This is the third transition into the way of the perfect. But it is also the place of the analyst - the negation of the position of the Master.

"This being-for-another is the substance which remains in itself or unexplicated, which is distinct from the self. Conscience has not given up pure duty or the abstract-in-itself; duty is the essential moment of relating itself, qua universality, to another. Conscience is the common element of the two self-consciousnesses, and this element is the substance in which the deed has an enduring reality, the moment of being recognised and acknowledged by others." (Phenomenology of Spirit p388)

Insofar as we understand the retroactivity of the Master's *act* as being the source of order and movement in an original chaos - as *nous* ⁽¹¹⁾, so this position of the analyst is *paranoetic* - beside itself. ⁽¹²⁾

The good of psychoanalysis

Although we seem to have reached the limits of the second moment of the Mediatrix, its third moment is still vanishing. It is doubly vanishing, now not only in the sense that this Other side of the Master is not present in Zizek's account; but also because by being this Other side, it vanishes whenever the retroactivity of the Master's act is operative.

This emergence of Duty associated with the *being-for-another* is the Final Result of the dialectical process. Lacan formulates it as the desire of the desire of the Other which arises in the place of the lack of the Other:

"Absolute Spirit enters into existence only at that point where its pure knowledge about itself is the antithesis and alternation of its dual aspect. Aware that its pure knowledge is an abstract essence, absolute Spirit is this conscious duty in absolute antithesis to the knowledge that is conscious of itself as essence, is intrinsically a nullity, is evil. This, however, is the absolute discreteness which is conscious of itself in its pure oneness as absolute, and of the universal as something unreal, which exists only for someone else. Both aspects are purified into the unity in which there is no longer in them any existence devoid of self, any negative of consciousness, where, on the contrary, *duty* is the unchanging identical character of its self-

11"Existence is Quality, self-identical determinateness, or determinate simplicity, determinate thought. This is the Understanding of existence. Hence it is *Nous*, as Anaxagoras first recognised the essence of things to be. Those who came after him grasped the nature of existence more definitely as *Eidos* or *Idea*, determinate Universality, Species or Kind. It might seem as if the term Species or Kind is too commonplace, too inadequate, for Ideas such as the Beautiful, the Holy, and the eternal that are currently in fashion. But as a matter of fact *Idea* expresses neither more nor less than Species or Kind. But nowadays an expression which exactly designates a Notion is often spurned in favour of one which, if only because it is of foreign extraction, shrouds the Notion in a fog, and hence sounds more edifying." (Phenomenology of Spirit p34)

12The distinction between *noesis* and *noema* is the distinction between mediated immediacy (*noesis*) and the first immediacy (*noema*). The fundamental composition is that of the intentional object, or *noema*, and the act of intending, or *noesis*. For example, that which one judges and the act of judging. Based on Husserl, this introduces a third in relation to these other two - the *paranoetic*.

knowledge, and *evil* equally has its purpose in its *being-within-itself*, and its actuality in its utterance." (Phenomenology of Spirit p408)

Psychoanalysis is here radically anti-Platonic: the Universal is the domain of falsity *par excellence*, whereas the truth of psychoanalysis emerges as a particular contingent encounter which renders visible its 'repressed'. It differs greatly therefore from Bion's formulation of O - a thing-in-itself (13). For Bion, the significance of O derives from and inheres in the Platonic Form (Transformations p138).

"The analyst must focus his attention on O, the unknown and unknowable. The success of psychoanalysis depends on the maintenance of a psychoanalytic point-of-view; the point of view is the psychoanalytic vertex; the psychoanalytic vertex is O. With this the analyst cannot be identified: he must *be* it." (Attention and Interpretation p27)

Whether the difference exists in Bion's practice is not so clear, but at least in the formulation, the difference in the good is that between a Kantian and a Hegelian good - the fruits of a transcendent or an immanent reflection. This immanent reflection is the direction of the Lacanian good - the direction of *being-for-another* which is the foundation of the analyst's abnegation.

We are moving from working on an Imaginary//Symbolic axis to an axis of the Symbolic//Real. Thus the transcendent reflection would be in terms of the psychoanalysable *symptôme* - the symptom which is interpretable. The immanent reflection, however, would be an approach to that *jouissance* which is the limit of the power of interpretation - *jouis-sen* - the subject 'inscribed on the surface of the Real'.

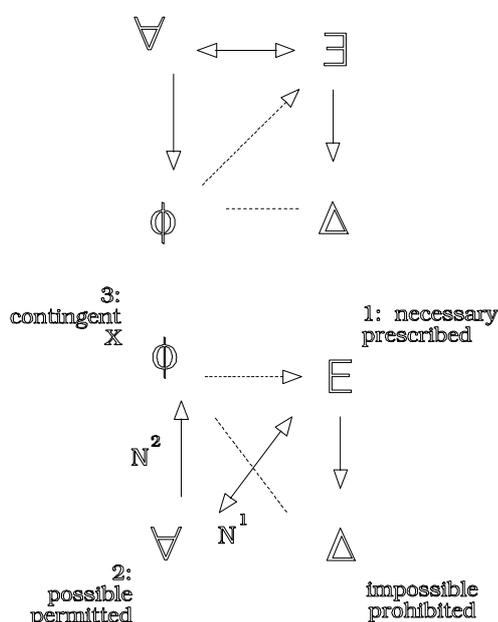
Perhaps this is the ultimate secularisation of disinterested love.

13Bion deals with a progression from Paranoid-Schizoid positions through Depressive positions to this Omniscient position. The equivalent movement for the subject is through relations of Hate to those of Love and ultimately to Knowledge.

Conclusion

So what is the good of psychoanalysis? Does the case of the Vanishing mediatrix give us a line on this?

The relation between substance and subject can be formulated in terms of an externally reflected 'reality' as distinct from a 'reality' arising from a determinate reflection. In its substantial form, this 'reality' can be subjected to the laws of Dialectical Necessity. But if the same topology is read as structuring the social relations between subjects, then a slight modification of the diagram introduced earlier results in the following formulation. This is the one which Zizek reads against the Greimasian 'semiotic square' (¹⁴), but which, with a further transformation, becomes Lacan's structure of discourse:



If we look back with this, then what do we see?

Progressive secularisation as rectification?

The work of Elliott Jacques in the development of stratified systems theory was based on Kleinian formulations of the subject's relation to the other. It raises the issue of the subject's relation to anxiety, and how the organisation is able to 'contain' it. In Lacanian terms, this anxiety means the subject's relation to his *manque-a-etre* - primary anxiety. The original 'containing' organisation has to be the Church in its redemptive role, and indeed an important application of SST has been in seeking to understand the functioning of the Church in these terms. Such organisational structures can also be understood as external reflections which are disabling insofar as

¹⁴Greimas argues that the perception of oppositions underlies what he terms the 'elementary structure of signification' on which his semantic theories rest. "We perceive differences" he writes, "and thanks to that perception, the world 'takes shape' in front of us, and for our purposes" (Semantique Structurale, p19). The differences we discern between these basic 'semes' involve, at an elementary level, four terms, seen as two opposing pairs, which our 'structuring' perception requires us to recognise in the following form: A is opposed to B as -A is to -B.

they are not open to immanent critique; but insofar as they are, like the Church's rituals, they offer the subject a place from which to start in the direction of being.

The process of rectification of the subject's relation to the Real therefore becomes intimately bound up with the process of 'secularisation' in the sense of a process in which the subject assumes for himself religious process which was previously externally reflected in the structure of the religious movement. In effect, the subject is assuming responsibility for his own division as a subject. Here is the loss of the efficacy of the Ideal functioning which is the characteristic of the Group.

Working with organisations in such a way therefore calls into question their function as a defense against anxiety for those who constitute it as such. In this process the subject recovers the possibility of transforming his relation to anxiety, and as a result the organisation. Culture is seen here as deontological therefore ⁽¹⁵⁾, reflecting the current forms of duty and obligation which are 'the way things are done around here'. 'Culture change' therefore involves first recovering the ontological out of the deontological - a rectification which then makes possible a dialectical process in which there is a return to the 'truth' of the organisation through a progression to a new vanishing moment - the emergence of a new S_1 .

This then is a formulation of working with the Group which is concerned not only with the de-Idealisation of the Group's processes. It goes further to assert an ethic of the *symptôme* - the *jouis-sens* of the Group displaces the Ideal. What part does the strategy analyst play in this?

Policy, Strategy and Tactics

Lacan points out that it is not only the patient who must pay in the process of analysis. The analyst must pay too:

- "-pay with words no doubt, if the transmutation that they undergo from the analytic operation raises them to the level of interpretation;
- but also pay with his person, in that, whatever happens, he lends it as a support for the singular phenomena that analysis has discovered in the transference; and
- can anyone forget that, in order to intervene in an action that goes to the heart of being, he must pay with that being which is essential in his most intimate judgement: could he remain alone outside the field of play?" Ecrits p227.

Lacan refers to the former two as the tactics and strategy of the analyst. The last is his policy, in which he is least free, and where "he would be better advised to take his bearings from his want-to-be (*manque-a-etre*) rather than from his being. In what sense 'pay' with his being then?

The answer seems to lie in the nature of this *being-for-another* associated with Duty. Arising through the dark night of the spirit - the death of the master - as it does, this transformation of *being-for-self* does indeed involve the analyst paying with his being.

If the end of analysis is to be understood in terms of this transformation of duty into 'Duty', is this a way of saying what good it is? If so, then this good is formulated in terms of the subject's relation to the *symptôme* - *jouis-sens*. Here is the

15Deontology: that which is binding, duty....

direction formulated in Kant *avec* Sade, in which the beyond of the pleasure principle is what sets the direction of the crossing of the phantasy - gives way to S(A-bar).

Some sense of the direction of this good can be gathered from reading the Case as its parallel - a case which, as it becomes progressively secularised through the rectification of the subject's relation to the Real, becomes increasingly invisible, as the external becomes immanent.

The second coredemptive moment of the Mediatrix works in support of first *objective* redemption, and then *subjective* redemption: what was a problem for the world becomes a problem for the subject. This subjective redemption itself divides between the *praktike* - the formation of practice - and *gnosis*- the wisdom that arises in working thought and beyond the practice. This *gnosis* then itself divides into a *physike theoria* - an Understanding of the world as *substance* which becomes *subject* in the *theologia*. And the limit of this *theologia* is this disinterested love: *being-for-another*.

So the analyst ends up like ~~the~~ woman - not existing, but insisting. A very problematic formulation to end on, but no less problematic than that of the present moment - the vanishing third moment of the Mediatrix.

Postscript

The crossing of the phantasy

Here is Hegel again on the subject of religion. This moving from 'revealed religion' towards absolute spirit is the same movement of redemption.

"The Spirit of the revealed religion has not yet surmounted its consciousness as such, or what is the same, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness; Spirit itself as a whole, and the self-differentiated moments within it, fall within the sphere of picture-thinking and in the form of objectivity. The content of this picture-thinking is absolute Spirit; and all that now remains to be done is to supersede this mere form, or rather, since this belongs to consciousness as such, its truth must already have yielded itself in the shape of consciousness."
(Phenomenology of Spirit p 479)

Instead of the 'picture-thinking' of phantasy - - form itself becomes lacking, and in this crossing of the phantasy, $\$ \diamond a$ gives way to $S(\bar{A})$.

"This surmounting of the object of consciousness is not to be taken one-sidedly to mean that the object showed itself as returning into the Self, but is to be taken more specifically to mean not only that the object as such presented itself to the Self as vanishing, but rather that it is the externalisation of self-consciousness that posits the thinghood of the object and that this externalisation has not merely a negative but a positive meaning, a meaning which is not only for us or in itself, but for self-consciousness itself. The negative of the object, or its self-supersession, has a positive meaning for self-consciousness, ie self-consciousness knows the nothingness of the object, on the one hand, because it externalises its own self - for in this externalisation it posits itself as object, or the object as itself, in virtue of the indivisible unity of being-for-self. On the other hand, this positing at the same time contains the other moment, viz that self-consciousness has equally superseded this externalisation and objectivity too, and taken it back into itself so that it is in communion with itself in its otherness as such." (Phenomenology of Spirit p 479)

It is not so much that the subject is without an object, as that the subject becomes the object - *symptôme*.

"Thus the object is in part immediate being or, in general, a Thing - corresponding to immediate consciousness; in part, an othering of itself, its relationship or being-for-an-other, and being-for-itself, ie determinateness - corresponding to perception; and in part essence, or in the form of a universal - corresponding to the Understanding. It is, as a totality, a syllogism or the movement of the universal through determination to individuality, as also the reverse movement from individuality through superseded individuality, or through determination, to the universal. It is, therefore, in accordance with these three determinations that consciousness must know the object as itself." (Phenomenology of Spirit p 480)

We end up with this part Thing, part dual form of being-for-itself and being-for-another, and part universal: Σ in the place of nothing, Borromean singularity of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic - the subject *destitué*.