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Psychoanalysis and politics: the theory of ideology in Slavoj Žižek

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Every individual or collective
phantasmatic organisation
is the invention of drugs.
J. Derrida

Ideologies, in as much
that they have also been
revolutions are
compatible elements in the
struggle for human identification
and not only museum pieces.
E. Bloch

Over the last decade, the critique of ideology has known an unusual vigour after it seemed to be diluted following the onslaught of postmodern thought. Caught within both some oversimplifications of structuralism as well as the self-declared post-ideological condition of the last writings by Adorno and Horkheimer, this critique of ideology found few defenders when the times of death declarations approached: death of utopia, death of ideologies, death of art; all of these seemed to mark the renewed conceptual / theoretical universe of the “rejuvenated” social sciences, and by all means of philosophy, at the end of the twentieth century.

Following the fall of historical socialism we saw emerge triumphal(ist) positions in Capitalism. These varied from views on the “thought without alternative” to the death of history and revolution. More often than not, those maintaining such positions carried out a sort of pragmatic mixture of ideas and values to vindicate the absolute supremacy of the *status quo* [1]. However, in the midst of this (according to some, post-ideological) orgy, Žižek’s thought has traversed new routes, which *via* Hegelian dialectics, have both laid new foundations to a Lacanian theory of ideology as well as recovering some elements of the Marxist theory of fetishism.

Moreover, the theory of ideology raised by this Slovenian philosopher allows us also to retake a discussion on the relations between psychoanalysis and politics that, likewise, Alain Badiou brought forward recently (2004): what has the place of the subject to do with the status of ideological discourse? Can ideology be thought, from psychoanalysis, as the ghost/spectre of politics? These questions are central in Žižek’s conceptualization of ideology. Next, we present some general lines of inquiry to understand the position of this author, in which Lacanian psychoanalysis appears as a fundamental interlocutor for contemporary social analysis [2].

Dialectical moments

In general terms, Žižek characterises ideology as the generating matrix that regulates the relation between the visible and the invisible, the imaginable and the non-imaginable, as well as the changes/shifts in these relations (2003: 7). He agrees with Jameson, who, following Marx - and Lacan (Jameson, 1989b) -, thinks of ideology as a relative closure at a representational level within certain historical conditions which structurally limit the production of sense in given societies and the social classes within them (3).

Thus, the concept of ideology would not have anything to do with the idea of a distorted or inverted reality, at least not in a representational sense [4]. For Marx, like for Nietzsche and

Freud, the question of ideology points towards the hidden foundations of discourse and the supposed rationality on which such discourses are based, which do not mask a foundational reality but a position of the enunciating subject who hides the material conditions of enunciation (Sloterdijk, 2003). For Marx, as much as for Nietzsche and Freud [5], this materiality is embodied in, and still more, is constituted by conflicts of power [6].

Žižek assumes the issue of ideology as a process of production of practices and sense the function of which is the production and legitimation of power relations. The ideological analysis always refers back to the extra-discursive, to practices that are mediated by, but not exhausted in language. For that reason, following the Hegelian analysis of religion - a cultural form that Marx considered ideological *par excellence*-, Žižek characterises ideology (and its critique) as stemming from three basic moments: ideology *in itself*, as a series of ideas; ideology *for itself*, in its materiality (ideological State apparatuses); and ideology *in and for itself*, when it enters into operation in social practices (2003: 16-24).

As Žižek points out, these moments conform the effective operation of ideology. Without one of them, ideology could not be condensed in concrete social practices, nor could these social practices generate doctrines or beliefs. Žižek is particularly interested in the third moment of ideology in and for itself, the moment when ideology seems to disappear. This is the moment, for instance, when commodity fetishism takes place. Here capitalist fantasy takes shape in social practice, and therefore it takes the form of the *symptom* of that very same inter-subjective fantasy.

To the extent that the subject is inserted in the symbolic structures that regulate their practices and representations, ideology in and for itself is the condition of possibility of identity. As Žižek points out, "in the network of inter-subjective relations, each one of us is identified and attributed a certain phantasmatic place in the symbolic structure of the other" [7]. It is from this symbolic network (and eventually against it) that the subject formulates, in the first instance, a vision of the world that is necessarily partial.

Žižek exemplifies the notion of ideology in and for itself by referring to consciousness in late capitalist 'post-ideological' societies. This implies a series of necessary ideological presuppositions for the reproduction of existing social relations, even if that consciousness thinks of these social relations as led by strictly utilitarian and/or hedonist motivations. In this way, ideology functions as an "elusive network of attitudes and implicit, quasi 'spontaneous' presuppositions, which constitute the irreducible moment of the reproduction of 'non-ideological' practices" (economic, legal, political, sexual)" (2003: 24).

In reference to concrete social practices, the effectiveness of this moment of ideology does not depend on the ignorance of whoever exerts it. According to Žižek, therefore, ideology does not depend on the fact that in their praxis human beings *do not know it* (that they act in benefit of certain power groups) *but they do it* (Marx, 1986: 41); it depends rather in the fact that they can know it perfectly well, but they act as if they did not know. Ideology in and for itself does not reside in *knowing* but in *doing*. Hence, in main contemporary societies, the ideology *par excellence* is cynicism [8].

For Žižek *what is inherent to ideology is the way by which its content is related to the subjective position implied in its very process of enunciation*. Ideology discursively *rationalizes* (in the Freudian sense) the deep reasons by means of which the subject thinks or acts in certain ways. To this extent, ideology always implies a concealment: “*to be effective, the logic of the legitimation of the relations of domination must remain hidden*” (2003: 15; emphasis on the original). As we see next, the background of all ideology is constituted by a phantasmatic organisation. As a consequence, breaking away from ideology leads us to the Lacanian theme of traversing the (spectral) ghost.

Ideological interpellation

Althusser rose the point that ideology necessarily functions by interpellating (or hailing) the subject; moreover, *subjectivity and ideology are mutually constituted*. According to Althusser, “the category of the subject [...] is the constitutive category of all ideology, whatever the determination and historical moment”. By the same token, “all ideology has the function (that defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals into subjects” [9]. For Marxist analysis it is then possible and necessary to historicise the concrete mechanisms and devices (of power) in the production of subjectivities [10].

Following Lacan - like Althusser-, for Žižek the subject has the *status* of an answer to the Real [11], to the question of the Other, the symbolic order (1997: 231-232) [12]. By itself the subject is a void. The libidinal function of ideology is to suture that lack [13]. It is precisely because such lack exists in the structure that all the modes of subjectivation attempt to repress it or to fill it in. This primordial/foundational antagonism of the subject – who is not totally able to recognize the traumatic kernel of his being (2003: 264-265) - is the principle from which Žižek assumes his Hegelian reading of Lacan. If for Lacan the subject, as subject in lack, is rooted in antagonism, for Hegel this void is the negativity that defines the subject [14]. According to this

understanding of the dialectic process, the contradiction, far from being a constant of progressive overcoming, becomes the internal condition of all identity (inherently in lack). This is why, according to Žižek, the Hegelian dialectic opens a gap that later some Marxist interpretations will attempt to close, among other forms, with the theory of ideology as false consciousness [15].

As the subject is an answer of the Real, the Real is, then, the absent cause [16] from which the subject acquires his ideological identifications (and alterities). Fundamentally, the Real produces a series of structural effects such as displacements, repetitions, etc.; the Real is an entity, says Žižek, which must be constructed *a posteriori* so that we can then explain the deformations of the symbolic structure. The Real is the impossible thing, and it is this impossibility that must be captured through its effects (1992: 214).

It is indeed from this perspective that Žižek raises the problematic of class struggle. Beyond the specificity of a given economic and social formation, the constitution of social reality presupposes the *primordial repression* of an antagonism that sets out the process of symbolisation. The last foundation in the critique of ideology is the 'real' [17] (2003: 36). Žižek exemplifies this aspect with the classic case study of the symbolisation of space in the tribes studied by Levi-Strauss: whereas the dominant sub-group perceives its village as circular, the subordinate/subaltern sub-group perceives it as two spaces separated by an invisible border (Lévi-Strauss, 1976: 119-146). The Real does not reside in any of the two perspectives, nor does it in the "objective" disposition of the village houses. The Real resides instead in the traumatic kernel that those inhabitants could not symbolise, a fundamental imbalance in the social relations of their village.

Class struggle is not, then, the ultimate horizon of meaning which gives sense to all social phenomena, but, in the words of the Lacanian-Hegelian philosopher, it is "a certain limit, a pure negativity a traumatic limit that prevents the final totalization of the social and ideological field" (, 1992: 214) [18]. It is as a result of this trauma that ideological fantasy appears. For Žižek, in the words of Elliott (1995: 242), "the function of ideology is to provide men and women with a fantasised/phantasmatic scenic sequence of the possibility of its own social condition. In synthesis, ideology provides an idealised vision of a 'society' that cannot really exist".

For Žižek, in fact, "the standard notion in regards of the functioning of fantasy within the context of ideology is that of a phantasmatic space that blurs the true horror of the situation. Instead of a true description of the antagonisms that cross our society, we allow ourselves a perception of society as an organic whole which remains unified due the forces of solidarity and cooperation". (1997: 15).

Fantasy hides the true horror of the Real, but, simultaneously, fantasy also attempts to create the replacement of what it conceals, the repressed factor that always operates beyond the place we hoped to meet with it. According to Žižek (1992: 61), what is crucial to ideology is not that it is an illusion that masks the real state of things, but that it consists of an (unconscious) fantasy that structures our own social reality [19]. In fact, as Žižek points out, “fantasy creates a great amount of ‘subject positions’, among which the free floating subject is able to move from one identification to the other” (1997: 16) [20].

This is why the role of fantasy is complex; not only it materialises desire in hallucinatory ways, but it also contributes to organise the subject’s regime of desires. The critique to the conception of ideology as effect of a lack (*à la* Feuerbach) is then - as Foucault stated-, insufficient: it is not enough to indicate that the contents of ideology arise from the real lack of such contents; what is necessary is to determine why ideology appears precisely within those contents. It is fantasy which “teaches to us how to desire” (Žižek, 1997: 17, ss.), and, therefore, this function has direct political implications.

Enjoyment as *jouissance* and the ideological big Other

As Eagleton maintains with respect to Žižek’s theory of ideology, “reality and its appearances take place jointly in ideology. Ideology is linked to its diverse objects with the blind tenacity of the unconscious; and an important attractive of ideology on us is its capacity to produce enjoyment” (1997: 232) [21]. As it refers to the fantasy that sustains identity (and the “reality” symbolised by the subject), ideology is sustained in enjoyment [22], and reaffirms itself through the libidinal satisfaction that the subject obtains from their symptom (the ideological identification, which tends towards compulsive repetition). Moreover, for Žižek (1992: 122) ideology shares with enjoyment a characteristic attributed by Lacan to the latter: it does not serve for anything (Lacan, 2006: 11) beyond its own aims, and becomes an end in itself [23].

Enjoyment (as *jouissance*) is always an excess. Without this *surplus* enjoyment is not possible at all (1992: 82-86); it is the last support of ideology, beyond the contents (relative to the meaning) of the ideology at stake. The *surplus* that takes place through renouncing enjoyment is the *objet petit à*, the embodiment of the surplus-enjoyment (1992: 119), which is described by Žižek – once again drawing literally from Lacan- as “the object-cause of desire: an object that, in a certain sense, is brought by desire itself. The paradox of desire is that it brings its own cause retroactively: the *objet petit à* is an object that can only perceive a gaze

`distorted' by desire, an object that *does not exist* for an objective gaze `'. In other words, always, *by definition*, the *objet petit à* is perceived in a distorted way, because outside this distortion *it does not exist* `in itself' since *it is nothing else* but the embodiment, the materialisation of this distortion, of this excess of confusion and disturbance introduced by desire in the so called `objective reality'" (2000: 29-30). The *objet petit à* is, then, a remainder of the subject's fundamental constitutive lack.

On the other hand, the big Other represents the radical alterity rooted in the symbolic order. As ideology refers to the issue of the relations between identity and alterity, and, in particular, to the implications this entails with respect to the question of power, Žižek affirms that the elementary gesture of ideology takes place in the act of presupposition that allows the big Other to exist (Žižek, 1994: 79). It is no surprise, therefore, that in ideological discourse, "the agency of the big Other is present in two reciprocally excluding modalities. Before anything, the `big Other' appears as the hidden agency `that pulls the strings' and runs the show behind the scenes: Divine Providence in Christian ideology, the `craftiness of Hegelian Reason' [...], the `invisible hand of the market' in mercantile economy, the `objective logic of history' in Marxism-Leninism, the `Jewish conspiracy' in Nazism, etc." But, on the other hand, "the ideological big Other functions at the same time as the exact opposite to the hidden agent pulling the strings: the agency of the pure external appearance, of an appearance, however, which is *essential*, that is to say, that must be preserved at any price" (1994: 56-57).

As stated previously, it is the symbolic order (the language as big Other) which assigns a social location as fantasy is directly related through such symbolic order to the identity of the subject. For that reason, ideology refers, in any of the three moments Žižek raises (in itself, for itself, in itself and for itself) to this big Other. The stitching point (*point de capiton*), the fundamental mechanism for the functioning of ideology, according to Žižek, works in the order of the symbolic. The stitching point (*point de capiton*), central to Lacanian theory, allows Žižek to explain the incorporation of new elements within the existing ideologies.

The stitching point makes possible to locate the proto-ideological elements which, in so far they are not yet structured in an ideology, are only "floating signifiers": in so far we do not know the discursive context in which the concept appears, its meaning remains open and overdetermined. Thus, for example, *ecologism* designates a different concept depending on whether we think of it from a Statist, Socialist or Conservative position [24]. The elementary ideological operation consists, therefore, in a "conversion of the form" that allows the functioning of the signifier in the ideological space. A new symbol (in this case, the term *ecologism*) does

not add any new meaning to ideology, but reorganises those meanings which were already there (1994: 164-165).

According to Žižek, “the *point de capiton* is the point through which the subject is ‘stitched’ to the signifier, and at the same time, the point that hails / interpellates the individual to transform himself into a subject by sending him the call of a certain master signifier (‘Communism’, ‘God’, ‘Freedom’, ‘the United States’)” (1992: 142-143). This master signifier condenses all the semiotic richness of the (ideological) semantic field to which it refers. To this extent, it is a “nodal point”, a “knot of meanings” (1992: 135) which defines the identity of the subordinated signifiers. The stitching point is the point of subjectivisation in the chain of signifiers, since this stitching point hails the individual to become a subject through the call of the master signifier (1992: 156). In this respect, it is precisely the *point de capiton* which holds the place of the big Other in the diachronic chain of the signifier, for acting as a “rigid hailer” totalizes an ideology, preventing the metonymic shift of its meanings (1992: 135-141)

The dynamics of ideology would be, then, the same that Freud raised with respect to a dream. In a dream, in effect, the sleeping subject can perceive external stimuli, but these stimuli are both assumed within the logic of, and explained by the dream itself. In the mind of the sleeper it is the dream which gives sense to the stimulus. As a consequence, according to Žižek, “an ideology prevails, in fact, when even the facts that at first sight contradict it begin to function as arguments in its favour” (1992: 80).

Once the dynamics of ideology are described, the question still arises of knowing how it is still possible to step out from this apparently closed universe of meaning. Since fantasy functions as an element which blurs the real field of the antagonisms within which the subject develops, the political objective in Žižek’s formulation is to traverse ideology as social fantasy.

Traversing ideology

Žižek’s position presupposes, therefore, the possibility of something beyond ideology. Against the “postmodern” solution which sustains that the only non-ideological position is renouncing to the idea of an extra-ideological reality, and defends that only a plurality of discursive universes and symbolic fictions exist - a clearly ideological solution, by the way-, Žižek points out that the *critique* of ideology must occur from an place which is empty and not defined positively; giving a positive place to critique is falling into ideology [25]. The only way of not falling into ideological

thought is, then, to maintain the tension between ideology and reality [26], although they cannot be clearly separated from one another (2003: 26) [27].

The fundamental aim of ideological fantasy is to silence social antagonism. For that reason, if, as Žižek affirms, fantasy constitutes the means by which ideology accounts of its own failure beforehand, it is necessary to place emphasis on the issue of antagonism by showing how ideology conceals the trauma of the impossibility of a society thought of as a closed and homogenous totality (1992: 173-174). This is why it is also necessary to retake the topic of the symptom, because this is the mechanism whereby fantasy justifies its foundational / primordial lack. The symptom does not belong to the order of things that disturb the subject from the outside. It is rather the manifestation which makes visible the antagonism on which the constitution of this very subject depends.

Traversing ideological fantasy implies going through the identification with the symptom, in so far as the symptom is a point of escape to evade the impossibility of the subject's desire. Following Žižek's explanation, the Jew is the symptom of fascist corporativism. In Latin America, we can add, the Indian and the Communist have been the symptoms through which ideological fantasy has explained the impossibility (inherent and foundational) of the nation in (empire-) dependent Capitalism. In the same way Marx understood as necessary outcomes of Capitalism what bourgeois political economy and sociology saw as "dysfunctions" of the system, ideological critique must show how the symptom reveals the true operation following ideological interpellation (1992: 175).

When identifying with its symptom, the subject is confronted with the impossibility of ideological fantasy. In this way, "we traverse and subvert the phantasmatic framework that determines the field of social meaning, the ideological self-understanding of a given society, that is to say, precisely the framework within which the symptom appears as an external, disturbing intrusion, and not as the point of departure of the truth of the existing social order, in another hidden way" (2000: 230).

The above implies that in order to leave ideological closure it is also necessary "to undo" the founding ideological gesture – that makes ideological interpellation possible; it is necessary to suspend the (presu)position of the big Other, (1994: 79), which is possible because just as much as the Lacanian subject is split, so is the case too with the big Other [28]. The des-alienation of the subject is possible because the big Other is in lack; the route subjective destitution consists precisely of the possibility that the subject identifies his own lack with the lack of the Other (1992: 168).

Here stands out the anti-sacrificial character of the proposal that Žižek retakes from Lacan. In doing so, moreover, the Left radical character of such proposal also becomes manifest. Whereas Fascism - as the prototype of ideology according to Žižek - identifies with the symbolic big Other and extols it, ideological critique must, on the contrary, suspend it. Subjective destitution presupposes, in Žižek's words, assuming that "the big Other does not possess what the subject lacks, and no sacrifice can compensate the former's lack" (1994: 78) [29].

The aim of psychoanalysis is not, therefore, that the analysand should be able to accept his resignation / renouncing as a condition to access desire. Rather than assuming this lack, the subject would have to assume the lack of the big Other - which, as Žižek points out, is incomparably more unbearable. As the big Other is the (presu)position of an immaterial and ideal order, its (libidinal) function is to guarantee the ultimate meaning and consistency of the subject's experience. This withdrawal with respect to the big Other is not a sacrifice - because sacrifice is always directed towards the Other-, but "an act of abandonment that sacrifices the very sacrifice" (1994: 79).

As a consequence, the ultimate aim of ideological critique is to place the historical subject (barred, of course) face to face with the possibility of its own action confronting the Other, so far considered to be full and complete. Far to prepare for the acceptance of a totalitarian symbolic order, the ideological critique based on Lacanian psychoanalysis would be a propedeutics for the rupture with the *status quo*; it would first of all attempt to confront the trauma generated by ideological fantasy [30].

In this way, visualising the conflict and assuming it is a fundamental part for breaking from ideology. Hence, according to Žižek, the Left "must preserve the historical traces of all the traumas, dreams and catastrophes that the prevailing 'end of history' ideology would prefer to obliterate; it must become a live monument, so that while the Left remains, those traumas remain marked. This attitude, far from confining the Left to a nostalgic love affair with the past, is the only possible way to take a distance from the present, a distance that allows us to discern the signs the New" (1998: 352-353).

Epilogue

Without moving too far away from Lacan, Žižek's critical theory of ideology makes a significant contribution to the understanding of contemporary phenomena. Žižek changes the perspective of an object supposedly known previously (Lacanian psychoanalysis) and shows a perspective

that, albeit already there, was necessary to be shown again: the aim of his theorization is not to raise something new, but making the reader conscious of a disquieting side he already knew about (2006, x).

Significant here is how, starting off from a Freudian critique of *illusion*, Žižek articulates a Lacanian critique of ideology in dialectic terms by cross-reading Hegel with Lacan. Alain Badiou recalled the (Lacanian) analogy between Lacan/Freud and Lenin/Marx [31] by pointing to the structural similarity between both traditions of *thought* as well as the possibility that each one “learns” from the other. In this sense, Žižek’s theory of ideology is a pertinent example of how psychoanalytic theory converges fruitfully with Marxist political theory; - the reader will recall that Lacan himself showed how Marx discovered the symptom.

On the other hand, Žižek’s production within the field of the critique of ideology refutes the thesis of the predominance of a post-ideological universe in our present times [32], and he does so with a conceptual framework that allows for a relevant approach to the complexity of contemporary phenomena. What is exhausted is not ideological critique, but certain critique fundamentally related to the narrow conception of ideology as false consciousness. By locating the issue of ideology in the sphere of *doing* and not in the realm of *knowing* (as correctly raised by Marx with respect to commodity fetishism) ideology for Žižek is not based on claiming a truth inherent to a given (discursive) practice; it is rather based on that surplus that allows the subject to sustain the frame of a cynical reason [33] leaving the field intact in which ideology structures social reality: the field of ideological fantasy.

Classic Marxism neither could nor attempted to anticipate the future phenomena which would force the reconceptualisation of this problematic. According to Žižek, thereby, while Marxism emphasizes ideology as offering a partial perspective (a class gaze) [34], the Lacanian perspective makes an effort to show ideology as a totality that tries to erase the traces of its own impossibility. While Marxists place emphasis on a kind of false universalisation and their critique aims at revealing the bourgeois and capitalist character of these contents, in the Lacanian perspective the aim would rather be to include and understand a sort of hyper-fast historisation that binds us to the kernel of an insistent repetition of the diverse historisations/symbolisations attempting to suture the emptiness of the subject.

Central to Žižek’s proposal is his reconceptualisation of the problematic of ideology, with which not only does he reinvigorate the Marxist theory of ideology, but also proposes Lacanian psychoanalysis as an unfailingly contesting/progressive trend. Against the interpretations usually presenting Lacan as a fatalist, Žižek recovers the critical edge of Lacan as a theoretician opposed to the *status quo*. This he does by showing how subjective destitution must break

necessarily away with ideological phantasms by assuming class struggle as the foundation of the (im-)possibility of capitalist society.

The confrontation with the original horror of the subject - which in terms of ideological critique means recognising the constituent fracture of society- is, then, the necessary condition to assume oppositional political practices against both the alienation and fetishisms imposed by the world-system of present Capitalism as well as against the subjectivities – (in)formed in and by a submission to, and the enjoyment of self-destruction produced by that very social order. Žižek is well aware that while Capitalism persists its critic will remain necessary. His merit resides in developing the political possibilities of Lacanian psychoanalysis for a hermeneutics of present capitalist societies and their legitimating ideologies.

Notes:

[1] Terry Eagleton makes fun of the scorn part of contemporary social theory throws to the concept of ideology. He does so by taking the example of one of the most reputed philosophers at present: Richard Rorty. In *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, after boasting for the moral and political necessity to consider black young people in the United States as Americans *compatriots*, Rorty goes on reaffirming the uselessness of the notion of ideology. Lamentably, Rorty does not seem to notice the irony of this very position. (Eagleton, 1997).

[2] With respect to Freud and Lacan, we have used the editions in Castilian, respectively, of the *Complete works* of Amorrortu and *The seminars* of Paidós. In the first case, we leaned for the translation by Jose Luis Etcheverry due to its greater terminological rigour, whereas in the case of *The seminars*, we followed Paidós' version for being the edition Jacques-Alain Miller backed up. Miller was Žižek's mentor and a fundamental mediator and introducer of Lacan to Žižek.

[3] This closure is relative since it is open to the Real. As in the case of Foucault according to Deleuze, this opening to the Real allows coming near to the symbolic in terms of *diagram*, rather than in terms of *structure*. (Jameson, 1989: 49; Deleuze, 1987).

[4] Likewise, for Marx ideology is not an epistemological but a practical theme (rooted in *praxis*) and hence political. Kolakowski illustrates this irreducible character of ideology to epistemic criteria when pointing out, for instance, that the *Manual of historical materialism* by Konstantinov, in spite of containing a great number of true statements, is nevertheless as ideological as *The city of God* by San Agustín. (Kolakowsky, 1970: 25-45).

[5] In the theory of ideology, as it is well known, Freud's concept of *illusion* and Nietzsche's genealogical critique are framed within the same problematic opened by Marx in regards of the socially located

character of thought. What these 'thinkers of suspicion' have in common is the critique of reason as rationalisation of the subject's place. Freud, 1976; Nietzsche, 1997. Although Lacan does not use the word *ideology*, his theory aims, as Žižek shows, in the same direction. Needless to say, the consequences of this aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis are developed beyond Lacan's own predictions by Žižek himself in *The sublime object of the ideology*.

[6] In this sense, contemporary theoreticians such as Foucault and Bourdieu have not based their work in embodying a new object of study, although they have deepened and re-grounded the approaches of these thinkers of suspicion. In addition to texts mentioned in the previous note, see Freud, 1984.

[7] Žižek, 1994: 18. The emphasis on the place of subjects in an inter-subjective symbolic structure immediately recalls the phenomenology of Schütz and Goffman's theory of roles. Schütz, 1972; Goffmann, 1971. In Lacanian terms, these authors elaborate theories on the register of the Symbolic.

[8] Politically speaking, with cynicism the main concern is not so much the concrete consciousness of the subject, but their practices. Žižek illustrates this with the Kantian exhortation to obey the emperor, adapted to current academic considerations: "in theory (in the academic practice of writing), deconstruct as much as you want and all you want, but in your daily life participate in the predominant social game". Žižek, 1994: 11; Kant, 2002: 37.

[9] Althusser, Louis. *Ideology and ideological State apparatuses. Notes for an investigation*. In: Althusser, 1989: 139. Adorno elaborated his thesis that identity is the original form of ideology in a similar vein. Adorno, 1986.

[10] Following the Althusserian arguments on the ideological State apparatuses, Eagleton also attempted this through his category of the *mode of production of subjects*. Eagleton, 1985-1986.

[11] Žižek's characterisation of the Real fits the Lacanian concept: "The Lacanian 'Real' denotes, in the last instance, this non-mediated left over that serves to sustain the symbolic structure in its formal purity". Žižek, 1994: 110. It must be noticed that, precisely because of his opening towards the Real, Lacan's views escape the trap of the self-referentiality of language pre-supposed in postmodern anti-foundationalist positions..

[12] "The subject is an answer of the Real (of the object, of the traumatic kernel) to the question of the Other. The question as such produces in the addressee an effect of shame and blame, divides it, hysterizes it, and this hysterization is the constitution of the subject: the status of the subject as such is hysterical. The subject is constituted through this division, this split in reference to the object within him; this object, this traumatic kernel is the dimension which we have already named as 'death drive', a traumatic imbalance, an eradication and erasure". Žižek, 1992: 235.

[13] The support of the subject is purely phantasmatic; the subject itself does not possess but a void that arises from the impossibility to answer the question of the Other. This question is constitutive of the subject in that it is directed to the very kernel of the subject, to the object that splits him from within, since it both attracts him (offers a certain consistency) and repels him (regarding the impossibility of an answer).

[14] For Žižek, this decentred subject (“barred” in Lacanian graphics) arises with Kant when he established the difference between the “I” of transcendental apperception and the noumenic “I”. Moreover, Žižek thinks that the transcendental object is the Kantian version of the Lacanian *objet petit a*. Žižek, 2003: 275-278.

[15] A position that, since we have already pointed it out previously, does not correspond to the formulation of Marx and Engels. In any case, it is not accidental that the ideological critique of the Enlightenment project is certainly limited to the problematic of representation: the very project of subjectivity in classic bourgeois philosophy is framed within an attempt to suture the constituent lack. Hence its obvious ideological character.

[16] Žižek assumes the same position as Jameson, also inspired by Lacan and Hegel, as opposed to the subject of causality. . Jameson, 1989: 20-30.

[17]“*The status of the Real is completely not-substantial*: it is the product of the failed attempts to integrate it within the Symbolic”. Emphasis of the original. Žižek, 1993: 129.

[18]Note the privileged role that Žižek - more Adornian than he surely would admit- grants to negativity. There resides, in fact, the impossibility of a consistent totalisation as the essential inability of the Symbolic to foreclose the meaning of the Real.

[19]Ideology “is a construction of fantasy that functions as support of our `reality': an `illusion' that structures our effective, real social relations, and by doing so conceals an unbearable, real, impossible kernel [...] The function of ideology is not to offer a point of escape from our reality, but to offer us the very social reality as a escape from some real, traumatic kernel” (Žižek, 1992: 76).

[20] Here Žižek speaks of `subject positions' as specified in the ideological ploy, and points out that, in any case, the void of the subject is foundational and a necessary condition of such positions. On the other hand, it must be understood that the spectre “as the fiction that hides a lack, an inconsistency in the symbolic order, is always particular; its particularity is absolute, it resists any mediation, it cannot be incorporated to a wider, universal, symbolic sphere”. Žižek, 2000: 259. Hence also the relation of the spectre with the *objet petit a*.

[21] The translation to Spanish that keeps the meaning of *juissance* intact within the context of psychoanalytic discourse is “goce” (*enjoyment*), and not “gozo” (*joy*), as it appears in the mentioned text.

[22] Let us remember that this *surplus* enjoyment simultaneously generates a sense of unease: “all exercise of enjoyment involves something that it is registered in the debt Book of the Law [...] Everything in enjoyment that turns to prohibition goes to increasingly reinforcing prohibition [...] Whoever advances in the direction of boundless enjoyment in the name of any form that refuses moral law finds obstacles the vivacity of which is shown to us every day under innumerable forms in our experience”. Lacan, 2000: 214. See also Braunstein, 2005.

[23] In this sense, Žižek points out, “in the prohibition of desire, if the purpose is obtaining effectiveness, it must become erotic. The regulation of desire leads to the desire of its own regulation”. Quoted in Griffiths, 2000: 384.

[24] In this point Žižek refers to Laclau and Mouffe's positions. Žižek, 1992: 125-126.

[25] Once again Žižek's approach shows its convergence with Adornian negative dialectics, and is simultaneously consequent with the critical role that Lacan assigns both to psychoanalysis and Marxism. According to Lacan, Marxism is not a world conception, but "the announcement that history restores a different dimension of discourse, and opens the possibility of completely subverting the function of discourse as such". Lacan, 2006: 42.

[26] This reality does not have to be understood in the sense of a "pre-ideological" daily experience, for everyday life is always-already immersed in ideology, but like the idea (in a Kantian sense) of a governing objectivity. Breaking away from ideology is not possible through the confrontation of ideologemes with the perceivable "reality", because what characterises ideology is not that it proposes false statements, but the way by which it tries to make the conflict generated by the Real invisible. As we have observed previously, ideology works totally when the subject does not feel any opposition between her and reality.

[27] For an interesting critique of poststructuralism and Gadamer's hermeneutics, Žižek, 1992: 201-204.

[28] Let us remind ourselves that Žižek's primary interest focuses mainly on the phantasmatic consistency that the *objet petit a* provides the subject with, thanks to which the subject perceives himself as worthy of the Other's desire.

[29] This questioning of language causes that Lacan does not participate in the poststructuralist idea that there is nothing outside language, which in the case of Baudrillard, for instance, takes him to an overvaluation of the system's capacities to co-opt and a fatalistic attitude in politics. 2004.

[30] Hence, particularly, the importance Žižek attributes to Lenin as a revolutionary. For an interesting interpretation of Bolshevism, see Žižek, 2004.

[31] Žižek himself has suggested that the relation between psychoanalysis and Marxism consists in the fact that they both share "the paradox of non-traditional Enlightened knowledge, founded on the transferential relation with the insurmountable figure of the founder (Marx, Freud): knowledge does not progress through the gradual refuting and reformulation of initial hypotheses, but through a series of 'returns to... (Marx, Freud)'. Žižek, 2003: 270.

[32] On this question, for instance, Rorty's arguments stand out again. Rorty, Richard. ".feminism, ideology and deconstruction: a pragmatic perspective", in: Žižek, S. (comp.), 2003.

[33] On the subject of cynicism, in interlocution with Sloterdijk; Žižek, 1992: 35-86.

[34] In fact, for Marxism gaze is not partial, but partialised and it is only transformed into being partial in contrast to the totality of social relations.

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