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Hegel avec Kleist: On Marriage

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Abstract

This thesis investigates Hegel's account of marriage in his *Philosophy of Right* as an ontological impasse which bears witness to a splitting and deadlock within his broader conception of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). As such, it is our aim to situate an opacity within the Hegelian self-conscious subject, as opposed to the subject attaining an inner self-awareness and transparently reflexive agency and, to this end, we put Hegel into conversation with his contemporary, Heinrich von Kleist. From this standpoint, we show in the first chapter how the thinker against whom Hegel formulates his account of marriage is Immanuel Kant who approached marriage as a contract. We map the rift between Kant and Hegel to the psychoanalytic concepts of desire and drive, in which Hegel takes desire to its breaking point, passing over to the problematic of sublimation (as distinct from the idealization we see in Kant's account). In the second chapter, we investigate the performative role the wedding ceremony plays in Hegel's account, in which the spoken vows, as the symbolic inscription and mediation of the marriage, show how symbolic repression through language does not take place without remainder. Finally, in the third chapter we interrogate the "*Entschluss*" at stake in marriage, a term that translates to decision and resolve, which we situate as an existential decision as opposed to an everyday choice; here we put Hegel into conversation with Schelling in order to see how German idealism situates the subject as 'not-All,' as opposed to an undivided identity.

Keywords: Hegel, Kleist, marriage, ontology, psychoanalysis, language

Summary for Lay Audience

This thesis investigates Hegel's account of marriage in his *Philosophy of Right* in order to interrogate the ambiguities of the subject's emergence as a socialized being. To this end, we put Hegel into conversation with his contemporary, Heinrich von Kleist, as they both discern a fundamental opacity within the subject's relation to symbolic rituals, especially marriage; they both see how the subject's actions necessarily fail to coincide with its intentions and what appears to be contingent takes on the significance of necessity. From this standpoint, we show in the first chapter how the thinker against whom Hegel formulates his account of marriage is Immanuel Kant who approached marriage as a contract. We map the rift between Kant and Hegel to the psychoanalytic concepts of desire and drive, in which Hegel takes desire to its breaking point, passing over to the problematic of sublimation (as distinct from the idealization we see in Kant's account). In the second chapter, we investigate the performative role the wedding ceremony plays in Hegel's account, in which the spoken vows, as the symbolic inscription and mediation of the marriage, show how symbolic repression through language does not take place without remainder. Finally, in the third chapter we interrogate the "*Entschluss*" at stake in marriage, a term that translates to decision and resolve, which we situate as an existential decision as opposed to an everyday choice; here we put Hegel into conversation with Schelling in order to see how German idealism situates the subject as 'not-All,' as opposed to an undivided identity.

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Abbreviations of Works

Sigmund Freud

SA: *Studienausgabe*.

SE (followed by volume number): *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

G.W.F. Hegel

FPR: *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg 1817-1818*.

JL: *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-06) with commentary*.

JR: *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*.

PH: *Phenomenology of Spirit (Phänomenologie des Geistes)*.

PM: *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences III: Philosophy of Mind (Enzyklopädie des philosophischen Wissenschaften III)*.

PR: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right (Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts)*.

VPR19: *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20*.

VPR22: *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie: 1818-1831, vol. 3*.

VPR24: *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie: 1818-1831, vol. 4*.

Heinrich von Kleist

KSä: *Sämtliche Werke and Briefe, vol. 2*.

KSW: *Selected Writings*.

F.W.J. Schelling

AW: “Ages of the World.” *Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World*.

FE: *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*.

MF: *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*.

SW: *Die Weltalter Fragmente: In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*.

References to Kant’s and Hegel’s texts are denoted by paragraph (§) number which are shared by both the English and German editions, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

According to Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, marriage represents a strange kind of contract that "begin[s] from the point of view of contract...*in order to supersede it [um ihn aufzuheben]*" (PR §163). Essentially, two subjects are brought together out of sensual interests and desire, only to have their desire relinquished and sacrificed to a higher social, "substantial end" (§163). What this means is that the marriage contract is, paradoxically, a contract formed precisely for its dissolution. That is to say, a contract for Hegel is a dual relation in which the contracting parties reciprocally carry out their own interests and thereby mutually recognize their subjective inclinations (*Willkür*) (§75). Marriage, however, deprives the subjects of precisely this *Willkür* because marriage is not a commitment for the subjects to narcissistically satisfy their own desires, but is, rather, where they give up their own interests for the sake of establishing a family, managing a household, raising children, etc. This dissolution bears witness to a moment of fracture and release inscribed in the *aufheben*, thereby capturing the full speculative weight of this ambiguous German verb meaning 'to lift up,' 'cancel,' 'annul,' 'preserve,' 'elevate.' In this way, marriage, as the *Aufhebung* of contract, inaugurates Hegel's account of *Sittlichkeit*, which is a broad term denoting those social norms and mores that make social life function, and constitutes its first major moment, the family, which is followed by civil society and the state. From this standpoint, it can be seen that marriage is "*the immediate ethical relationship [unmittelbare sittliche Verhältnis]*" because the 'mediated' ethical relationship arrives with the state which denotes not merely the higher echelons of government and bureaucracy but a broader spiritual existence and condition (§161). What makes marriage immediate is the fact that, unlike the state, marriage is "merely *inward* (or ha[s] being only *in-*

itself),” as marriage must initially begin from an arbitrary and contingent moment of interest and feeling before becoming a necessary union for social substance, whereas the state does not contain this accidental moment of choice as the subject is already born into it, as it were (§161).

Now, given that marriage occupies this relatively small sub-section of one moment of Hegel’s ethical edifice (totaling nine of Hegel’s numbered paragraphs in stark contrast to the one hundred and three for the state!), why should it be the main focus for an entire thesis?¹ Marriage is our privileged site of inquiry into Hegel’s ethical thought and philosophy overall because it presents, in perhaps the most crystallized form, an ontological rupture and deadlock inscribed within the dialectical operation of mediation and within the subject’s immersion as a self-conscious and symbolic being. This response, however, only raises more questions than it gives answers. To begin with, what do we mean here by ontological rupture and deadlock? It is our aim that the entirety of this thesis will bit by bit unpack why marriage for Hegel is not so much a regional topic of manners and customs, as it is a philosophical meditation that radically re-conceptualizes self-consciousness, taking it to its limits beyond notions of reflexive agency. The deadlock of the subject consists of a dialectical contradiction that inheres in the subject’s emergence, by which the subject, in order to become self-conscious and symbolically interpellated, must evaporate and alienate itself in the act which constitutes it, effectively relinquishing any standpoint that would enable the subject to know itself becoming self-

¹ It is a curious detail that in some of the more influential readings of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* marriage usually plays second fiddle to analyses of the state or civil society, in which marriage is treated as moment of minor importance and a mere form of these broader and higher moments (Marx 30; Marcuse 200-204; Avineri 139-140). Indeed, what Marx says is representative of this tendency:

Property, contract, marriage, civil society appear here (just as Hegel quite rightly develops them for abstract forms of the state, except that he means to develop the Idea of the state) as particular modes of existence alongside the political state; that is, they appear as the content to which the political state relates as organizing form, or really only as the determining, limiting intelligence which says now ‘yes’ now ‘no’ without any content of its own. (30)

What we are trying to show here is how marriage is moment in Hegel’s edifice that does have a content of its own which has the potential to destabilize a presumed evolutionist telos usually attributed to it.

conscious. In other words, Hegel's account of marriage attests to a constitutive opacity inscribed within self-consciousness. This explains why Hegel is forced to use the rather oxymoronic term "self-conscious love [*selbstbewußte Liebe*]" in order to characterize the kind of love actualized by marriage, because it indicates that becoming self-conscious is inseparable from the thoroughly pathological moment of falling in love, showing how the supposedly higher-knowing attained in self-consciousness coincides with a point of release and even failure (§161).

Yet, what we see in marriage is that love is no longer desire and self-consciousness is no longer self-awareness. More pointedly, we see in Hegel's account of marriage how the subject's immersion as an ethical (*sittlich*) subject, which has to do with the subject's symbolic immersion in general, is not a clean-cut, linear progress, from natural immediacy to cultural mediation, but is, rather, an abyssal moment of resolve (*Entschluss*) by which the subject must mediate itself over to the Other without, paradoxically, this mediation knowing itself as such. That is, mediation is structurally alienated from itself. Hence, what makes this deadlock *ontological* has nothing to do with this deadlock representing a positive substance or underlying essence, as if the marriage relation represented a kind of paradigm that could provide the normative framework for every 'really-existing' relation between subjects. On the contrary, we claim that marriage represents an ontological deadlock for precisely the opposite reason: namely that it bears witness to a stumbling block that bars access to any transparent moment of a subject knowing itself resolving to marry, thereby showing how the subject's mediation as ethical is a constitutively mis-recognized event.

The moment within Hegel's account of marriage that makes this ontological deadlock the most explicit is his description of the wedding ceremony. During the ceremony, the partners may think that they are simply participating in a simple, external formality which could be done

without, but Hegel shows how the ceremony is what performatively enacts the marriage and actualizes it. The contraction and repression of the feelings (*Empfindungen*) of the partners into the statement, “I do,” before the Other, posits the marriage. That is to say, the spoken vows performatively enact the marriage, actualizing a shift in the subjects’ position of enunciation and effectively showing how the marriage, in order to exist, must be posited before the Other (which, incidentally, accounts for Hegel’s play on words between posited [*gesetzt*] and law [*Gesetz*], as the positing and enactment is only accomplished before the Other, as opposed to existing in-itself, and vice-versa²):

It is accordingly only after this ceremony has *first taken place*...by means of the *sign*—i.e. by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual [*das Zeichen, die Sprache, als das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*]—that this bond has been ethically constituted. The sensuous moment which pertains to natural life [*Lebendigkeit*] is thereby put [*gesetzt*] in its ethical context [*Verhältnis*] as an accidental consequence belonging to the external existence of the ethical bond [*Verbindung*], which may even consists exclusively in mutual love and support.

(§164)

There will be more said about the function of the ceremony throughout the thesis, but for now we can see how the ceremony, as the symbolic registration and mediation of the marriage, or the passage of the marriage from contingency to necessity, shows how the moment of mediation has nothing to do with inner awareness and self-realization. On the contrary, we see how ethical mediation takes place outside the subjects in a bureaucratic formalism, utterly alienated from

² See for example PR §211: “When what is right in-itself is *posited* [*gesetzt*] in its objective existence [*Dasein*]—i.e. determined by thought for consciousness and *known* [*bekannt*] as what is right and valid—it becomes *law* [*Gesetz*]”

their intentions and desire (Žižek “Hegel on Marriage” 4). That is to say, the subjects becoming ethical, self-conscious subjects has profoundly nothing to do with their attaining a plenitude of self-transparency and fulfillment, as much as it takes place imperceptibly, as something that could or could not have happened. Hegel’s wager here is that, even if the subjects might view the ceremony as an external infringement upon their more ‘inner desires’ and thereby of no consequence, the inscription of the marriage into the Other effectuates a shift in their standpoint of enunciation, or in their most irreducible subjective being. Proof of this is when Hegel claims in one of his *Philosophy of Right* lectures that if the subjects should want to dissolve the marriage and divorce, divorce can only take place so long as the Other intervenes and grants it, thereby vindicating how the stakes of the ceremony and the partners’ emergence as self-conscious subjects reside on the side of bureaucratic customs and norms outside the subjects, not within the subjects in an ‘inner depth’: “A third ethical authority [*dritte sittliche Autorität*] is, however, required in order to uphold the right of marriage—i.e. of ethical substantiality—against the mere opinion that a hostile disposition is present...and to make sure that the partners are totally estranged before *divorce* [*die Ehe scheiden*] is granted” (PR §176).³

In effect, this ontological deadlock faced by the subject in Hegel’s account of marriage effectuates a rupture in the Hegelian ethical edifice, not in the sense of being an exceptional moment that fails to get absorbed by the totalizing teleological development which culminates in the state, but rather because marriage shows how Hegel’s ethical edifice is immanently fractured and ‘not-All.’ The fact that marriage is the first moment of Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit* which is

³ Hegel also says something similar in his first *Philosophy of Right* lectures:

In any event, a third authority, an ethical authority, is needed to act in the case of disputes between spouses. It is often the case that relatives themselves seek to settle such disputes. The authority may be an ecclesiastical or secular court. But since it is customs that constitute the essential moment of marriage, it is principally customs that such courts must bear in mind. (FPR §80)

supposed to be its foundation and ground, and that Hegel sees the roots of the state in marriage, only shows how the ‘origin’ of his ethical edifice is located at a point of fracture and impasse—a void. From this perspective, our reading of marriage has broader implications for Hegel’s alleged status as a state philosopher of homogenizing identity and synthesis whose ethics serves to bolster the Prussian state of his time.⁴ That is to say, marriage shows how *Sittlichkeit* for Hegel is not a question of establishing identities and morals to be normatively applied (Hegel’s use of the term *Sittlichkeit* in contrast to *Moralität* already implies this distinction), as much as it deals with vicissitudes and the Real inscribed within the social customs in which the subject is immersed. Marriage definitively shows how the subject is not equal to its acts, casting aside the discourse of ‘intersubjective’ and ‘reciprocal’ recognition which has saturated and continues to saturate readings of Hegel’s account of self-consciousness.⁵ Indeed, marriage bears witness to how the subject’s recognition and mediation by the Other is precisely not reciprocal because, in a thoroughly Kafkaesque manner, the stakes of the subject’s encounter with the Other necessarily remain unknown to the subject.

Now that we have established, in a preliminary way, why marriage should be the topic of our investigation into Hegel’s ethical thought, it remains to be seen why the German writer and contemporary of Hegel, Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), should serve as an interlocutor for our investigations. At first sight, the connection between the two is not immediately obvious. Not only does it seem that the two were not acquainted with one another and were not friends at any

⁴ To be sure, the academic literature on Hegel has known for some time now that Hegel being a blind follower of the Prussian state was a myth retroactively propagated by scholars in the late Nineteenth century, especially in Germany with Rudolf Haym’s *Hegel und seine Zeit* (1857) (See Knox “Hegel and Prussianism”; Avineri 115-16; Lukaćs xvii-xviii; Stewart 10-11). However, despite this scholarship, and despite the myth’s being inconsistent with Hegel’s point in the Preface that philosophy can only talk about a particular historical form strictly to the extent that the form has died, the myth of Hegel as a ‘state philosopher’ continues to stubbornly persist to this day as a generalized *doxa*.

⁵ Perhaps the most influential contemporary account is Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, trans. Joel Anderson, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

point (as Hegel was with Hölderlin and Goethe, for example),⁶ but it also does not seem as if they significantly influenced each other in their work.⁷ Hence, the question: why choose Kleist to help unpack the ontological stakes of Hegel's ethical thought and not other writers to whom Hegel explicitly referred? Or more pointedly, why use a literary reference to tease out one of the most notoriously rigorous philosophers? The first point to make here is that Kleist was not a stranger to thinking about philosophical dilemmas. Perhaps one of the most famous episodes in his intellectual and literary development is his so-called "Kant Crisis," in which Kleist was deeply affected by what he perceived to be the unmooring of the subject from the truth of objective reality brought forth by Kantian philosophy (Mehigan vii-x). As Kleist words it one of his letters:

If people all had green lenses instead of eyes they would be bound to think that the things they see through them *are* green—and they would never be able to decide whether the eyes show them things as they are or whether it isn't adding something to them belonging not to them but to the eye. It is the same with our minds [*Verstande*]. We cannot decide whether what we call truth is truly truth or whether it only seems so to us. If the latter then the truth we gather here is nothing after death—and all our striving to acquire something of our own that will go with us even into the grave, is in vain. (KSW 421; KSä 634)

⁶ For a general overview of Hegel's literary sources, which primarily deals with the *Phenomenology* but also touches on his sources more broadly, see Allan Speight, *Hegel, Literature, and the Problem of Agency*.

⁷ With the exception of Hegel mentioning some of Kleist's plays in his *Aesthetics*, Kleist is not a significant literary reference explicitly for Hegel (*Aesthetics* 578-9). On the side of Kleist, who admittedly died at a far younger age than Hegel after committing suicide in 1811, there is no mention of Hegel throughout his oeuvre whatsoever (indeed, he could not have referenced Hegel, as Hegel was not well-known at the time).

While it is not the aim of our investigations to comprehensively analyze Kleist's Kant Crisis, or to tease out the homology between Kleist and Kant more generally, it is significant for our purposes that Kleist, in a way similar to Hegel, was concerned with the status of the subject in a post-Kantian universe. That is to say, what Kleist claims here about the disconnect between the arbitrariness of the subject's "mind" (*Verstand*, which usually translates as Understanding), in apprehending the external world and truth does not so much align Kleist with Kant as it situates Kleist as one of Kant's critics, insofar as he is attempting (accuracy aside) to take Kantian subjectivity to its breaking point. It is our argument that the way in which Kleist thinks about the subject—not only here but throughout his literature and essays—bears witness to a splitting within the subject which brings him uncannily close to Hegel's formulation of the ethical subject.⁸ Indeed, as will be seen throughout our investigations of Kleist's short stories and essays, this splitting of the subject usually gets thematized by Kleist around questions concerning love, desire, and marriage ("The Marquise of O—," "The Chilean Earthquake," "Betrothal in St. Domingo," to name a few). We argue that Kleist's stories bear witness to this properly uncanny dimension of ethical commitment between contingent intentions and desires, on the one hand, and a fatalistic necessity and inevitability, on the other, which makes Kleist Hegel's ideal 'silent partner.' Both Hegel and Kleist situate the subject precisely at the point of

⁸ Even though he does not frame it in these terms, Werner Hamacher claims that, in looking to the accidents and unpredictable events that mark Kleist's short stories (here he is particularly referring to Kleist's "The Chilean Earthquake"), Kleist's work is irreducible to the Hegelian *Aufhebung*:

The accident—in all its meanings: collapse, contingency, coincidence, convergence—thus sublates itself. Because of its collapse the accident holds itself up when it collides with another accident. Because the fall—but not its collision with another fall—corresponds to the laws of mechanics, the interruption of its falling down is not stabilized into an enduring synthesis but proceeds toward a resumption of the general collapse. The sublation of the accident—and here Kleist's *Aufhebung* is different from that of Hegel—is itself sublated. (269)

Of course, from our perspective, Hamacher is dealing with a simplified notion of *Aufhebung* in Hegel, which he portrays as bringing about homogenizing identities without remainder. However, if we pay close attention to the *Aufhebung* we see in Hegel's account of marriage, is this not a perfect example of a contingency (the partner's encountering one another) retroactively sublating itself into necessity, in which necessity only gets actualized by way of an accidental event? Indeed, even though the marriage, through its sublation, subordinates itself to substance, becoming absorbed by it, Hegel reminds us that this absorption must remain accidental as "substance is essentially the relationship of accidents to itself" (§163). Hence, Hegel's *Aufhebung* maintains a crucial structural affinity to the coincidental nature of the Kleistian *Aufhebung*.

its splitting, showing how the subject's symbolic immersion is a point of fracture and impasse instead of reflexive transparency. As a result of both writers diagnosing the ontological traumas constitutive of the subject in a post-Kantian world, we can also see how they are brought closer to the psychoanalytic subject of the unconscious.

To this end, we investigate in the first chapter how Hegel differentiates his account of marriage from Kant's. In more ways than one, Hegel formulates his ethical thought against that of Kant, particularly as it is presented in Kant's *The Metaphysics of Morals* (*Die Metaphysik der Sitten*), and Hegel's Kantian reference is especially discernible in his account of marriage. Essentially, Kant conceptualizes marriage as a contract, in the sense of a contract that guarantees the possession of things and property, and it is against Kant that Hegel claims that marriage must sublimate the standpoint of contract (PR §75). But what specifically interests us about the rift between Kant and Hegel on marriage is that, far from this rift being a mere question of taste and sensibilities, their respective accounts reveal ontological impasses of the subject with respect to how the subject satisfies itself in social substance. From this angle, we map Kant's marriage contract onto the (Lacanian) psychoanalytic concept of desire and Hegel's onto the drive.⁹ To provide some background, desire has to do with the structural deferral and non-attainment of its object, and it is this perverse deferment and endless idealization we see in Kant's marriage contract. With Hegel, however, we see this structural deferral of desire brought to its breaking

⁹ It should be pointed out here that, in bringing Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts to bear on Kant and Hegel, we work from the recent body of scholarship of the Ljubljana School, especially the work of Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, and Alenka Zupančič. Broadly speaking, their orientation consists of translating the philosophical impasses of German idealism through Lacanian psychoanalysis and vice-versa, in order to more radically re-situate the ontological stakes of the modern subject beyond questions of identity. One of our aims in working from their thought is to further expand the implications their framework has for ontology, such that ontology does not simply designate a simple unearthing of something more fundamental beneath ontic reality, as much as it is seeing how this 'something' that allegedly lies underneath as an exhaustive depth is always-already implicated within the contradictions and antagonisms of everyday social life, thereby showing how any supposed 'essence' is split from itself. Indeed, this what I take to be the main argument of Zupančič's recent book, *What Is Sex?*, in using the Lacanian account of sexuality to establish "an ontology that pursues not simply being *qua* being, but the crack (the Real, the antagonism) that haunts being from within, informs it" (24). Seeing ontology in this manner belies the contemporary 'post-modern' criticism that ontology is simply the idealization and fetishization of *a priori* causes of reality.

point, and this form of satisfaction is what is meant by the drive by which the subject, instead of constantly aiming for a satisfaction beyond its reach, is compelled to repeat (working from the Freudian “compulsion to repeat” [*Wiederholungszwang*] [SE XII 151]) the satisfaction again and again, sliding into an endless orbiting with the object.

But where do we discern this repetitive traversal within Hegel’s account of marriage? The clue here is Hegel’s wedding ceremony because it shows how it is not enough for the desire of the subjects to exist “in-itself”; but it must also be posited, and effectively repeated “for-itself,” and it is this repetition of the desire of the partners before the Other that effectuates a passage of the marriage beyond the perverse deadlock of desire (PR §164). Indeed, on this score, it is not an accident that Kant’s account excludes the ceremony, as this crucial registration and repetition of the marriage before the Other. As a consequence of situating Hegel’s account of marriage through the drive, we argue that marriage for Hegel does not maintain the subjects in a state of idealization, in which the partners perceive one another as objects of a fantasmatic desire yet to be satisfied. On the contrary, we tease out how marriage for Hegel means renouncing the idealized image one partner may have of the other and encountering the Real of the other; this is how we read Hegel when he claims that marriage entails encountering the other as an “atomic individuality [*atome Einzelheit*]” instead of a “personality [*Persönlichkeit*]” (PR §167). In effect, marriage for Hegel passes over into a process thoroughly heterogenous to desire and idealization: sublimation. In sublimation, our point of reference is Lacanian psychoanalysis, in which sublimation “raises an object...to the dignity of the Thing” (*Seminar VII* 112). That is to say, sublimation is when the subject traverses an object without aiming to satisfy itself with it because the object, being neither idealized nor simply de-idealized, attains a

properly sublime stature in the sense that the subject is simultaneously repelled by and attracted to It; Lacan's main example here is the Lady in courtly love (150-51).

Sublimation is irreducible to the deadlock of desire and idealization because the subject always-already attains satisfaction with the sublimated object, attaining too much *jouissance* with it. It is precisely this deadlock of sublimation in turn that characterizes the predicament of Hegel's married partners during the wedding ceremony because, to their dismay, they are confronted with too close a proximity to the object of their desire and must thereby renounce this standpoint of desire. On this point, we work from Žižek's essay 'Hegel on Marriage,' in which he claims that Hegel "confuses idealization and sublimation" (7). That is to say, according to Žižek, Hegel sees marriage bringing about a de-idealization, insofar as the aim of marriage is "to vulgarize sex, to take all the true passion from it and change it into a boring duty" (7). But, even though this de-idealization takes place, there is nevertheless a different kind of satisfaction that survives it, and this is where sublimation enters the scene. Essentially, sublimation for Žižek has to do with the way in which the partners, despite seeing the everyday, banal side of one another, persist in claiming that this everyday person *is* the partner I desired, as opposed to leaving the other on account of no longer finding them desirable (7).¹⁰ However, our point is that the main consequence of situating Hegel's account of marriage as sublimation in this way shows how, far from sublimation being a reified logic of desire, of holding back and deferment (as Žižek presents it in his earlier essay "On Courtly Love" [*Metastases* 94-97]), Hegel shows how sublimation takes the logic of desire to its breaking-point, in which the endless shying away of

¹⁰ Furthermore, Žižek rightly concludes that Hegel's distinction between desire and love, and I would add Hegel's conception of ethical commitment *tout court*, is precisely where "sublimation survives idealization" (7); that is to say, instead of bemoaning the loss of Christ, one unconditionally accepts that the institutionalization of Christianity in the Church *is* the Christ-Event, or the Terror *is* the essence of the French Revolution and not its unfortunate by-product—this is what sublimation surviving idealization means.

the deferred object of desire is cut short, and satisfaction can longer be placed in a some “beyond.”¹¹ Instead, sublimation passes over the logic of the drive, and it is this passage that Žižek’s reading only implies but does not make explicit. To further tease out the sublimation that takes place in Hegel’s account of marriage, we also turn to Kleist’s short story, “The Marquise of O—,” which, as will be seen, shows lovers abyssally being “forced to fall in love,” as it were, bypassing the state of idealization.

After establishing this general framework of sublimation to read Hegel’s account of marriage, in the second chapter we investigate the performative function of the wedding ceremony. As previously mentioned, the wedding ceremony is not a simple formality, but rather it performatively enacts the marriage, without which the marriage would not come into being. But we further interrogate the performative function of the spoken pronouncement of the marriage during the ceremony because it is not simply the case that language for Hegel does something as opposed to merely describing something, but language, insofar as it performatively enacts something, also changes the very substance in which it intervenes. That is to say, the ceremony effectuates a shift in the subject’s position of enunciation, in which their everyday normality is fundamentally altered even if the subjects do not perceive this shift. In effect, the symbolic mediation that takes places during the ceremony, or positing the marriage through language, is not simply the notional mediation and subordination of nature by culture in a linear fashion. Rather, the ceremony retroactively produces what it represses, where it is only once the ceremony has taken place that the partners can speak of pre-marital bliss and immediate desire

¹¹ As we will see in more depth in the first chapter, this also means that one must supplement Lacan’s account of sublimation in *Seminar VII*— i.e. sublimation as the infinite holding back and recoiling from the Lady, or the Thing, in courtly love—with what he claims in *Seminar XI*—i.e. sublimation as ‘this *is* that’, or, as Lacan phrases it, “I am not fucking, I am talking to you. Well! I can have exactly the same satisfaction as if I were fucking” (165-66). As a result, sublimation for Lacan comes to mark the passage of desire into drive.

for one another (what Hegel refers to as *Lebendigkeit*). This retroactive gesture is, we argue, evident on a close reading of Hegel's characterization of the role of language, in which language is a repetition of something for the subject, like an intention or thought, *but*, it is a repetition that produces what it was supposed to be repeating. That is to say, language is what gives life to what was allegedly using it. It is here that we will look to Kleist's essay, "On the Gradual Production of Thoughts whilst Speaking [*Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden*]," which shows how speech produces the thoughts it was tasked with expressing. In investigating these paradoxes of language which are revealed during the ceremony, we see how Hegel's text does more than he may have intended, slipping from its stated aim, which, as a result, bears witness to how symbolic mediation is always-already fractured from within.

Finally, in the third chapter we interrogate the "*Entschluss*" at stake in marriage, a term that translates to decision and resolve, and evocative of an existential decision as opposed to an everyday choice. That is to say, marriage for Hegel is not chosen by the subject from a series of preestablished options, nor is it a decision that "knows itself," as much as it is abyssally decided; it is a metaphysically infused decision which fatalistically imposes itself upon the subject. Investigating the *Entschluss* in marriage enables us to see how Hegel, despite himself, effectuates a rupture in his ethical edifice, insofar as the resolve we see in marriage is structurally different from the decision (*Entscheidung*) of the monarch presented later on in his discussion of the state. This speculative distinction we draw from Hegel's ethics between *Entschluss* and *Entscheidung* has to do with a resolve in which the subject contracts and dissolves itself in the act (*Entschluss*), fundamentally altering the subject's position of enunciation in the process, on the one hand, and a decision by which the subject conserves its identity, without any shift in its position of enunciation. Fleshing out this abyssal and existential *Entschluss* in Hegel's account

of marriage makes it possible to discern the opacity of Hegelian self-consciousness, eschewing the notions of transparent reflexivity with which it is usually associated.¹² From this standpoint, we put our conception of Hegel's *Entschluss* into conversation with his contemporary, F.W.J. Schelling, who, albeit in a more metaphysical register, conceptualizes an abyssal *Entschluss* in his *Weltalter* project as a decision that is constitutively misrecognized by its agent. To concretize the tragic stakes of *Entschluss* in marriage, we turn to Kleist's story "The Earthquake in Chile." As a consequence of our investigation of *Entschluss*, we see how marriage offers a radical notion of ethical commitment in Hegel's edifice, which effectuates a rupture within it, in the sense that marriage inscribes a scission into *Sittlichkeit* that persists and haunts its later embodiment in the state.

¹² Perhaps the most influential reading in this respect, though not entirely reducible to this criticism, is to be found in Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel, in which he establishes a kind of eschatology where the Hegelian self-conscious subject brings about "the conscious and voluntary transformation of given existence" through an anthropological teleology (49).

1. Hegel and Kleist contra Kant: On Contract and Marriage

The (Ontological) distinction between Kant and Hegel on Marriage

One of the main opponents against whom Hegel formulates his conception of marriage is Kant, and this particular confrontation is centered upon Kant's conception of marriage as contract (*Vertrag*) as he presents it in his *Metaphysics of Morals* [*Metaphysik der Sitten*]. Thus, it only makes sense to first look to Kant's account of marriage if we are to make progress in apprehending what is at stake in Hegel's. But what is particularly interesting about Hegel's opposition to Kant is the way in which, instead of merely dismissing Kant altogether, he sees in Kant something initiated around the subject—a certain deadlock—concerning the subject's relation and commitment to ethical action. It is with reference to psychoanalysis that we show how this deadlock can be mapped onto the problematic of *desire*. In responding to this deadlock, it is not that Hegel finds a solution or synthesis—as a rather tiring tradition would like to situate *Aufhebung*¹³—as much as he over-identifies with this deadlock and initiates a new one in its stead, and it is here that we will see how Hegel gets into the territory of what psychoanalysis refers to as *drive*. And it is in his endeavor of working through and shifting away from Kant on the question of marriage that we show how Hegel finds an unexpected ally in one of his contemporaries, Heinrich von Kleist. By reading Hegel with Kleist contra Kant, this chapter will accomplish the task of establishing the essential theoretical background for seeing in Hegel's

¹³ It is not fair to place the blame for the “synthesis” reading of Hegel onto the doorstep of any single commentator, as it seems to have become a generalized doxa irreducible to any given name (which, unfortunately, is still taught in most universities today), despite the fact that most Hegel scholarship has rejected it for years. But there is reason to believe that it was Hegel's students who first used the ‘thesis—anti-thesis—synthesis’ triad to simplify his philosophy for pedagogical purposes (see Mueller 1958).

discussion of marriage as a framework for thinking about an act that attests, not only to the alienation of the subject from a fixed identity, but also an alienation of the subject from itself.

According to Kant, marriage is a form of contract that establishes a monogamous union, and what distinguishes it from other contracts between people is the way in which the partners mutually share their sexual organs. As Kant puts it, “Sexual union in accordance with law is *marriage (matrimonium)*, that is, the union of two persons of different sexes for lifelong possession of each other’s sexual attributes” (§24). Or, as Kant puts it in a more forceful manner, “A marriage contract is *consummated only by conjugal sexual intercourse*” (§27). Now, of course, it is not hard to see that Kant’s formulation of marriage is reductive (to say the least), since it seems to be the case that it is more of a relation between two narcissists who want to have sex than between two lovers, and it becomes difficult to distinguish marriage here from a concubinage. And in addition to its sheer reductive nature, there is also the clear issue of gender inequality inscribed within this schema, as it is certainly the case that Kant privileges the position of the husband over the wife (§20). But, instead of simply abandoning Kant’s formulation of marriage on account of these questionable descriptions, it is possible to tease out a certain logic at stake here, which should be seen as part and parcel of the emphasis on sex in Kant’s account. That is to say, it is not enough simply to question Kant’s descriptions without first seeing how, exactly, his formulation of marriage *functions*. The logic at issue here is none other than the logic of desire, as it is developed in (Lacanian) psychoanalysis, where desire has to do with an impasse for the subject that renders his/her object as something never attained and constantly deferred (‘Subversion of the Subject’ 689-92; Copjec *Read My Desire* 24-25). It is in this respect that the guiding question of my investigation of Kant’s account of marriage, which is necessary in order to delineate the impasses at stake in Hegel’s account of marriage, is: what is

being satisfied for the subjects within this marriage contract? In responding to this question, though perhaps not answering it exhaustively, it is possible to shed new light on the well-known philosophical rift between Kant and Hegel, which, far more than being a mere intellectual spat, goes directly to the heart of the ontological dilemmas of the modern subject.

Yet it would seem that each point raised so far demands more questions and further elaborations. To begin with, what are these ontological dilemmas of the modern subject? And why, of all places, should one look to marriage in order to raise the stakes of this question? It is my hope that the entirety of this thesis will bit by bit unpack why marriage, especially as it is presented by Hegel, is not so much a regional topic of manners and customs, as it is the structure of a deadlock, whereby subjects fall in love, only in order to have this love alienated and relinquished during the act of its constitution and institutionalization. And what makes this deadlock *ontological* has nothing to do with this deadlock representing a positive substance or more fundamental essence, as if the marriage relation represented a kind of paradigm that could provide the normative framework for every “really-existing” relation between subjects. On the contrary, marriage represents an ontological deadlock for precisely the opposite reason, namely that it bears witness to a stumbling block that closes off access to any transparent moment of subjective self-awareness, thereby barring the subjects deciding to marry from any idealized standpoint from which they could make this decision. In other words, there is an abyssal moment that takes place, which is perceivable in Hegel’s description of the wedding ceremony, when the subjects, in saying the official “yes” to marriage at the moment of its symbolic registration, alienate their desires, which initially brought them together, to this bureaucratic Other (Žižek “Hegel on Marriage” 4-5). This gesture, in its turn, attests to a split in the subjects between their desires, passions, and interests for one another, on the one hand, and the actual task

of marriage, on the other. As cursory and limited as this definition is here, the main *raison d'être* of this chapter is to shed light on a certain passage that takes place within Hegel's account of marriage, which, in being heterogeneous to the logic of desire, is the process of sublimation along with the dimension of the drive. If what is at stake with desire is the constant pursuing of an object for the sake of its deferral, what is at stake with the drive is, as Lacan puts it (borrowing from Freud), "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*) (SE XVIII 21-23; *Seminar XI* 161-173), which has to do with the constant traversal of an object without seeking to use it for some kind of fulfillment (*Seminar VII* 110-113). It is from this standpoint that it will then be possible to see how identities, which subjects attempt to take on upon their emergence in the symbolic order, are always-already split from themselves.

The Dialectic of Desire

Before entering into Kant's discussion of contract and marriage, it is worth reiterating that what is at stake in Kant is the functioning of desire, as it is conceptualized by Lacanian psychoanalysis. So how does desire function according to Lacan? One way to situate Lacan's conception of desire is by looking to his formula: "Man's desire is the Other's desire" [*le désir de l'homme est le désir de l'Autre*] ("Subversion of the Subject" 690). What Lacan is interested in with this dictum is Freud's thinking around narcissism and identification. According to Freud, when the subject can no longer attain narcissistic satisfaction by way of identifying with the "ideal-Ego" (SE XIV 93-94), which refers to the subject's image of himself/herself (one can think here of Lacan's mirror stage, where the ideal-Ego is the image the subject sees of himself/herself in the mirror ['Mirror Stage' 76]), the subject then displaces this image onto the

“ego ideal” (SE XIV 100). In identifying with the ego ideal the subject obtains narcissistic satisfaction in the guise of an ideal “imposed from without” (100), as opposed to their own image. To make a long story short, this structure of secondary narcissism can be seen as the structure by which Lacan conceptualizes the subject’s (missed-)identification with the big Other, which has to do with the subject’s entrance into the Symbolic domain—the domain of social norms, rules, institutions, language, etc. However, there is a further twist with this identification because it is not the case that the Other, and thus the Symbolic order, is something with which the subject succeeds in identifying, in the sense of a kind of ideal around which the subject makes his/her identity, because to claim this would necessarily presuppose that the subject is able to know what this image of the Other looks like—this image around which they could then formulate their desire. As Lacan puts it,

People claim that the ego-ideal is tantamount to the introjection of this Other. This is quite a stretch. It presumes the existence of a relationship of *Einfühlung* [understanding, empathy, or sensitivity] that is as total as what is implied by the reference to an organized being, the real being who holds the child in front of the mirror. This is, as you probably suspect, precisely what is in question. (*Seminar VIII* 354)

The Other does not function as a consistent and embodied entity which would only enter the scene at a particular phase in the subject’s life, from which we could claim that there was a state before the subject was enraptured in the dialectic of desire. On the contrary, there seems to be a way in which the Other, even while being incarnated in certain beings at certain moments, is an irreducible locus that cannot be nakedly exposed once and for all. Emphasizing this aspect is crucial because it is not the case that the Other is the guarantor of the symbolic domain, in the

sense of an exhaustive plenum to which one could look in order to receive the necessary series of norms and laws to be a socialized subject. Rather, the Other is the ‘guarantor’ (if, indeed, this term is still appropriate) for the opposite reason, insofar as it steps between the subject and the supposed ideals that make the symbolic function, serving as the locus of the desire that makes these norms constitutively impossible for the subject—yet, paradoxically, it is precisely *because of this impossibility* that desire functions.

In effect, it is on account of the Other being unknown and indeterminate for the subject that it comes to constitute a lack, which gives rise to the “*objet petit a*” (*Seminar XI* 257), and it is around this lack, in turn, that desire is always already a renounced desire and, as a consequence, split from the subject. As Lacan puts it, “A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse....It is there that what we call desire crawls, slips, escapes, like the ferret” (*Seminar XI* 214). It is in this sense that Lacan’s dictum, ‘desire is the Other’s desire,’ has to be read as a situation where what is being desired is desire itself—the ability to be able to desire from the standpoint of the Other—and it is here that Lacan’s account of desire cannot be seen as some kind of theory of human motivation and need, as desire is something never fulfilled and ceaselessly deferred (*Copjec Read My Desire* 55-56). Hence, the rally-cry of desire is the Sadeian “*encore*” (which was the title of Lacan’s late seminar), or ‘one more effort,’ in the sense that there is always something missing before we can fixate our desire upon something definite (*Zupančič Ethics of the Real* 106-7). That being said, what interests us here is not some statement to the effect that the object of desire always remains elusive, as if it were only a matter of some contingent difficulty that prevented the subject from attaining its object. Rather, what interests us is the way in which the very *form of desire* is, as such, self-negating, where it is a process that functions by way of its failure.

To illustrate what this predicament of desire looks like, it is worth looking to Franz Kafka's posthumously published short story "The Refusal." In this story, we see a legal procedure recounted in a remote village where a villager approaches their local magistrate, known simply as "the colonel," and asks him for a request, only in order for him to reject it (266-67). What is at stake in the formulation of the request is precisely what is at stake in Lacan's dictum "desire is the Other's desire" because, at the moment of the request, the colonel stands in for the villager as the Other, or the point from which the villager is supposed to receive their desire back; when the villager makes the request before the colonel, he identifies with the *objet a*. In addition to the elision of the actual request (where there is no determinate *something* sought from the colonel—"Finally he formulated the request—I think he was only asking for a year's tax exemption, but possibly also for timber from the imperial forests at a reduced price" [266]), one can say that the villager makes the request precisely *for its refusal*—that is to say, the villager formulates his desire around a void, thereby rendering the desire inherently insatiable. This latter aspect is confirmed by the sense of relief felt amongst the villagers immediately after the request's official rejection:

The colonel, still motionless save for his deep breathing, whispered something in his ear, whereupon the little man clapped his hands and everyone rose. "The petition has been refused," he announced. "You may go." An undeniable sense of relief passed through the crowd, everyone surged out, hardly a soul paying any special attention to the colonel, who, as it were, had turned once more into a human being like the rest of us. (266-67)

In other words, once the request has been rejected, the colonel, in becoming "a human being like the rest of us" (267), no longer serves his function as the Other for the villagers. It is

important to highlight the way in which the colonel is unable to speak for himself, as he must whisper his reply to his nearby aide, who functions as a kind of mediator. What is interesting about this moment is how it bears witness to the fact that, far from the Other existing immediately or presenting itself as fully transparent ideal, there must be, as Slavoj Žižek succinctly puts it, “the act of (symbolic) registration, the ‘second take’, [which] always comes after a minimal delay and remains forever incomplete, cursory, a gap separating it from the In-Itself of the registered process” (*Ticklish Subject* 67). Drawing attention to this aspect is crucial because the Other does not function as some omniscient being, which, unlike the subject, knows what it wants, how to attain it, and can exhaustively, once and for all, expound everything. On the contrary, to take Lacan’s dictum of desire literally means to see how the lack in the subject’s desire is always already a lack in the Other itself, where the Other is not exempt from desire’s indeterminacy; this is how Lacan’s further dictum, “there is no Other of the Other” (“Subversion of the Subject” 693), should be read, as the Other does not enjoy and get to fulfill itself in another space elsewhere. It will be shown how something analogous takes place during Hegel’s wedding ceremony, by which it is not the case that the Church, as the “Other’s mouthpiece,” knows the interests of the married partners better than they do themselves and therefore has the requisite authority to decide the marriage. On the contrary, this scene attests to the fact that the Other is a lack, or to use Žižek’s term,¹⁴ “a vanishing mediator” (*Indivisible Remainder* 34) that dissolves the moment it is invoked. But in pointing out this homology between Kafka’s refusal and Hegel’s wedding ceremony, it is equally important to see how there is something different at stake with the married partners, because it is not the case that they walk away from the wedding

¹⁴ Žižek borrows this term from Frederic Jameson. See Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber”.

ceremony with the same relief obtained by once more deferring their desires. But we will return to this point later on.

Desire and Kant's Marriage Contract

These remarks about the Other lead us directly to the heart of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's discussion of marriage, because in many respects, what Kant aims to do in formulating marriage as a contract, that is, as a bond that functions by way of the partners "lifelong and reciprocal possession of their sexual organs [*lebenswierigen wechselseitigen Besitz ihrer Geschlechtseigenschaften*]" [translation modified] (§24), is to have marriage without the moment of the wedding ceremony.¹⁵ This is certainly not to claim that Kant is indifferent towards marriage as an institution, as he does make it clear that marriage fulfills symbolic functions such as raising a family, managing a household, and making the married partners more than mere concubines (§23). On the contrary, we raise the modest question: why is the wedding ceremony omitted in Kant's account of marriage, i.e. why does Kant omit the moment of the marriage's symbolic inscription before the Other? Far from this omission being a mere accident or a matter of taste, it should be seen as a necessary consequence of Kant's contractual conception of marriage because, amongst other things, the marriage contract is meant as a way of maintaining the married partners in a union that maintains the "*possession [Besitzes]* of each other's person"

¹⁵ It is in this respect that our criticism here takes a somewhat different tact from Bertolt Brecht's famous sonnet, "On Kant's Definition of Marriage in the Metaphysics of Morals," that derided Kant's account of marriage for the commodification of private life (Kneller, 447): "So all that's left is to go to court / And have the organs confiscated. / Perhaps then the partners will trouble themselves / To study the contract more closely. / If they don't trouble themselves—and I'm afraid of that—/ Then the bailiff [*Gerichtsvollzieher*] will just have to appear." (Brecht 609; translation from Kneller, 470). Though he shows how the supposed autonomy of the partners only brings about a more traumatic incursion of the Other, this *Gerichtsvollzieher*, or literally "carrying out of the court", we should not, like Brecht's mocking tone seems to suggest, simply ironize this Other, as it only serves to maintain the same (perverse) distance from the Other as Kant does, thereby firmly keeping intact the deadlock of desire.

(§27) against external influence. In a word, if it is the case that the married partners are maintained in a contract founded upon their interest for one another, then there is simply no need for a third party, like the Church, to step in and confirm the marriage. However, this is precisely the problem, and the reason why Hegel is justified in referring to the formulation of marriage in terms of contract as a “*Schändlichkeit*” (PR §75), or disgrace (which was a remark undoubtedly aimed at Kant); for there is then nothing to distinguish, on a formal level, between the situation of the married partners in Kant’s contractual schema, on the one hand, and concubines, on the other, who also think that no symbolic registration is necessary for the truer and more authentic interests, feelings, and passions they share reciprocally.

But Kant’s omission of the wedding ceremony only leads to a new problem. If it is the case that we are to read Kant’s account of marriage in terms of Lacan’s dialectic of desire, then where is the Other? After all, as explained above, the Other is what constitutes the essential locus for the constitution of desire. Here it is worth clarifying the status of the Other, and the subject’s strange relation to it, because it is not simply the case that the Other and the dialectic of desire instigated by it function as a kind of conformism, as if it were a matter of doing away with the Other and the vicissitudes of desire in order to bring about some kind of transparent state where nothing more is desired. On the contrary, we have to see how it is precisely along the lines of a transgression, i.e. through the numerous attempts of trying to evade the Other and its call, that the elementary gesture of symbolic identification is constituted. It is crucial to clarify the stakes of this paradox for our purposes here because it can then be seen how Kant, particularly in his account of marriage, falls victim to and remains firmly embedded within the dialectic of desire on account of thinking he can do away with the Other. That is to say, to believe one can do away with the Other is only to fetishize the Other further, as doing so

presupposes that there is a fully consistent Other against which one can autonomously assert oneself. But more will be said about this latter point later on.

For the time being, however, in order to show how the dialectic of desire is constituted by way of a mis-identification with the Other, we turn to Lacan's "Kant avec Sade," in which he sees in two thinkers as disparate as Kant and Sade an uncanny common ground. One particular strand of Lacan's argument worth highlighting for our purposes is his discussion of the status of desire in the context of the French Revolution. Essentially, what Kant and Sade have in common, according to Lacan, is a rebuttal to Saint-Just's known claim that what made the French Revolution unlike all revolutions in the past was the way in which happiness becomes a political factor.¹⁶ On the contrary, Lacan is trying to get us to see how Kant and Sade, having formulated their thought and written their work during and in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, show how an ethics based on happiness is precisely what the Revolution and onset of modernity did away with. Instead, what is definitive for modern ethical thought, or the ethics enunciated from the historical constellation of the Revolution as manifested in Kant and Sade, is that it does not so much aim for the satisfaction of a particular desire—whether it is a desire for happiness, commodiousness, security, etc.—as for the desire for the ability to desire as such, "the freedom of desire" (663):

The proposition that happiness has become a political factor is incorrect. It has always been a political factor and will bring back the scepter and the censer that make do with it very well. Rather, it is the freedom to desire that is a new factor, not because it has inspired a revolution—people have always fought and died for a desire—but because this revolution wants its struggle to be for the freedom of

¹⁶ "Le bonheur est une idée neuve en Europe" (Happiness is a new idea in Europe) (Saint-Just 715).

desire....Were the right to jouissance recognized, it would consign the domination of the pleasure principle to an obsolete era. In enunciating this right, Sade imperceptibly displaces for each of us the ancient axis of ethics, which is but the egoism of happiness. (“Kant with Sade” 663)

The weight of this formulation resides in the way in which desire itself becomes an object. That is to say, in political terms, what is sought is no longer a specific a decision or decree, but rather the conditions for further deliberations, discussions, and dialogue.



(*The Blind Leading the Blind* by Pieter Breughel (1568))

And with this image of desire itself placed as object, there is an inherent indeterminacy at stake, which Lacan points to in referencing Breughel’s painting, *The Blind Leading the Blind*: what we see is a human chain formed by a group of people linking hands, one desire after another, albeit without any end goal in sight—only the desiring itself remains in sight (“Kant with Sade” 662).

I take pains to unpack Lacan's formulation because this image of desiring, as seen in Breughel's painting, bears witness to the fact that, even though no transparently distinctive and present Other is in sight (who would the Other be in the painting?), desire is nevertheless constituted, and all the more so (as attested to by the complicit expressions of the figures). To reiterate: the blindness here is not incidental to desire, but constitutive, as the desiring subject wishes to know nothing of the Other who prods his/her desire further (even if this Other might simply be another subject blindly being led by the hand). Yet, it is precisely because of this blindness that the subject gets caught in the dialectic of desire and that the Other is maintained with the all the more urgency and force. Hence, there is an inherent perversion at stake with desire, in which the subject knows that there is no Other, but the subject keeps in step with Other all the same, maintaining themselves firmly within the chain constitutive of the symbolic and constituting this chain as exhaustive and inexorable.

Now that we clarified the paradoxes of desire and its relation to the Other, we turn to Kant's formulation of the marriage contract, as it is here that the perverse core of his ethical edifice is particularly visible. But before getting there, it is worth taking a step back for a moment in order to see how Kant arrives at formulating marriage as contract in the first place and what he means by contract generally. Kant's discussion of contract arises out of a discussion of property relations and how a subject can rightfully (*rechtlich*) possess something, such that, even if a subject were to acquire an object and not actually use it or physically possess it, there would still be some guarantee that the possession in question is theirs, and it is here that he introduces the idea of "*possessio noumenon*" (§19). What Kant's formulation of contract as *possessio noumenon* amounts to is thinking about the establishment of a contract, and thereby the possession of something, beyond empirical circumstances; for example, someone's ownership of

a field is not guaranteed by the fact that they put more labour into it, obtained it before other people, or have more wealth (§10). Instead, what guarantees a contract is the “*common will* [gemeinsamen *Willen*]” (§19) of the contracting parties, which is, as Kant puts it, “a transcendental deduction of the concept of acquisition by contract” (§19). Now, what is interesting about Kant’s discussion of *possessio noumenon* for our argument here is the way in which he presents it as a solution to overcome the “difficulties [Schwierigkeiten]” (§20) of the “external [äußern]” (§19), and necessarily empirical and contingent, ceremonies, rituals, and modes of bureaucratic registration that enact contracts:¹⁷

The external formalities (*solemnia*) in concluding a contract (shaking hands, or breaking a straw, *stipula*, held by both persons), and all the confirmations back and forth of the declarations they have made, manifest the perplexity of the contracting parties as to how and in what way they are going to represent their declarations as existing *simultaneously*, at the same moment, although they can only be successive. They still do not succeed in this since their acts can only follow each other in time, so that when one act *is* the other is either *not yet* or is *no longer* [wenn der eine Akt ist, der andere entweder noch nicht, oder nicht mehr ist]. (§19)

The problem for Kant with all official enactments of contracts is how there can never be a moment of perfect simultaneity of the actions of the contracting parties, since both cannot uphold their promises at once without one doing so at the expense of the other (§19). But what interests us about Kant’s conundrum is how it exhibits the dialectic of desire, because there is always another effort needed, *encore*, in order for there to be a perfect simultaneity. Indeed, Kant goes

¹⁷ There is reason to believe that it was these difficulties concerning the performative enactment of contracts which led Hegel to place a strong emphasis on the symbolic effectivity of the performance (PM §493; PR §79). Indeed, Hegel almost seems to be speaking to Kant directly: “The contract is thus thoroughly binding: it does not need the performance of the one or the other to become so—otherwise we should have an infinite regress or infinite division of thing, labour, and time” (PM §493).

on to claim that further contracts would need to be put into place in order to guarantee that the tradeoff is perfect so that neither party can be placed in the awkward position of potentially losing out.¹⁸ Yet, far from this insatiable thirst for a perfect reciprocity being an unfortunate by-product of these ceremonial acts that initiate the contract, it is part and parcel of contract *as such*. As with desire, the illusion here is to believe that there will at last be a contract that will end the endless chain of desiring. Just as in the case of the narrator from Kafka's short story (and many characters throughout Kafka's *oeuvre*), Kant's contract becomes a way for the parties to obtain *jouissance* from the very failure of a perfect synchronous and simultaneous exchange, thereby making desiring an end in-itself. And part and parcel of Kant's phobia towards the impossibility of the contract being a perfect passage or transference (*Übertragung*) is the way in which the standpoint of contract seeks to do without an Other, or the entrance of a third party who would mediate it. This phobia is evident in Kant's obsessive reservations about the necessarily pathological ceremony. But as we will see, this evasion of the Other comes at a price, as it is precisely because of this supposed doing away with the Other, and this properly perverse autonomy supposed to maintain itself between the dual relation of the contracting parties,¹⁹ that we see the fetishistic instantiation of the Other as such, and this is especially evident in Kant's marriage contract. We find this perverse instantiation of the Other when Kant enumerates,

¹⁸ "Now if a contract does not include delivery *at the same time* (as *pactum re initum*), so that some time elapses between its being concluded and my taking possession of what I am acquiring, during this time I cannot gain possession without exercising a separate act to establish that right, namely a possessory act (*actum possessorium*), which constitutes a separate contract" (§21).

¹⁹ As Mladen Dolar has perspicaciously pointed out, this is also one of the main problems with the prevailing reading of Hegel's lordship and bondage dialectic as popularized by Alexandre Kojève (Dolar "Lord and Bondsman" 74-75; Kojève 8-9). It is not the case that the relation between lord and bondsman is dual—from which all the well-worn clichés about "mutual recognition" follow suit—because, in order for the lord to be recognized as lord by the bondsman, the bondsman must have achieved a symbolic death as opposed to "real" death. But if it is the case that the bondsman has only died symbolically, then the lord is only a lord symbolically. In other words, Dolar, following Lacan, is trying to get us to see is how there is necessarily a third party—in the guise of fantasy—that exists in place in order for the intersubjective recognition to function and materialize. Hence, to not see how the intersubjective recognition must be situated within the realm of the Other prior to entering the stage is to, following our investigation, to confine Hegel's notion of self-consciousness to the standpoint of contract, which it cannot be because that would fail to explain the paradoxical status of the bondsman as a kind of "living dead" required for the lord's status.

somewhat excessively, the right of the partners to possess one another: “That this *right against a person* is also *akin to a right to a thing* rests on the fact that if one of the partners in a marriage has left or given itself into someone else’s possession, the other partner is justified, always and without question, in bringing its partner back under its control, just as it is justified in retrieving a thing” (§25).

With this logic, Kant also falls into what Alenka Zupančič aptly terms “the Sadeian trap” (*Ethics of the Real* 58-62). Essentially, this predicament takes place when a subject uses their duty as an excuse to commit an action, in which the subject claims, “I am sorry if my actions hurt you, but I only did what the Other wanted me to do, so go and talk to It if you have any objections” (58). Far from this situation being an unfortunate by-product of Kant’s notion of contract (as if making “more equitable,” “fairer,” contracts were the simple solution for it), we should see this dynamic as the necessary consequence of Kant’s dual and mutual schema. That is to say, the Sadeian trap Kant falls into arises out of a disavowal of the Other, or his imaginary of marriage constituting a full and spontaneous sexual relationship that would need no symbolic mediation, thereby verging on the vicissitudes of perversion. The perversion at stake here is not only that of Freud’s sense of fetishism (i.e. the Other being disavowed by the partners and full license to possess each other sexually), but, because of this disavowal, we see a satisfaction—this surplus enjoyment—obtain, which makes it possible for this re-emergence of the Other (i.e. the Other upon which the partners can justify their properly sadistic claims and actions): “the subject attributes to the Other (to Duty or to the Law) the surplus-enjoyment he derives from his actions” (58).

Hegel and Marriage as Sublimation

Now that we have seen how Kant's account of marriage ends up in an endless loop of desiring for the sake of its failure, thereby leaving the subject in the ambiguities and impasses of perversion, we are in a position to show where Hegel's account of marriage effectuates a shift in the subjects' standpoint of enunciation where Kant's marriage contract fails. One way of formulating the shift is seeing how Kant's account of marriage remains in a state of idealization without sublimation, whereas what Hegel achieves is *deidealization* without *desublimation*. While this formulation sounds abstract for the time being, we situate idealization as part and parcel of the deadlock of desire that we have been discussing up to this point, in which an idealized object is pursued precisely in order not to be obtained, whereas sublimation has to do with a process that "raises an object...to the dignity of the Thing" (*Seminar VII*, 112), in which the Thing is not so much an object pursued in order to fill in a lack—which would make it a fetish—as it is an object repetitively traversed by the subject. For example, Lacan looks to a collection of empty matchboxes that Jacques Prévert had neatly arranged in his house (113-114). The reason why these matchboxes take on the dignity of the Thing is because, instead of being filled and used for practical purposes with attainable goals that can be satisfied, they constitute a void around which the subject, without consuming the matchboxes, incessantly turns and collects (113-114). As Joan Copjec aptly suggests, the point here is that the Thing carries out the split between the object and desiring the object within the object itself, such that the object no longer contains "the satisfaction that lies beyond it" (*Imagine There's No Woman* 39). In other words,

sublimation accounts for the way in which an ordinary object, under certain circumstances, can no longer be framed in the simple binary of an object split from a subject, as this split becomes a split within the object itself. Consequently, the Thing, far from being a distanced “beyond” that sustains a subject’s desire yet to be satisfied, confronts the subject in such a way that it cannot be enjoyed and deferred following the logic of desire.

In order to see where sublimation comes into play in Hegel’s account of marriage, and how sublimation accounts for Hegel’s turn away from Kant’s contractual schema, we first need to establish what marriage means for Hegel within his ethical edifice. To repeat Hegel’s formulation, marriage “begins from the standpoint of contract [*Vertragsstandpunkte*], in order to supersede it [*um ihn aufzuheben*]” (PR §163). As we already mentioned, marriage for Hegel cannot be a contract, because a contract is a dual relation in which two contracting parties reciprocally carry out their own interests and thereby mutually recognize their subjective inclinations (*Willkür*) (§75). Marriage, however, as an ethical relation, means that the subject’s interests are subordinated to higher ends, above the contingency of their passions and feelings, like raising a family, children to become citizens, etc. In other words, marriage cannot remain “in-itself [*an sich*]” (§164), i.e., in the form of a contract, but must also be posited “for-itself [*für sich*]” (§163), in the sense of being symbolically registered and subjectivized, and a contract only fulfills the first stage, “in-itself,” by way of maintaining two parties in their narcissistic self-interests. As Hegel puts it,

The ethical aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end [*substantiellen Zweckes*], and hence in love, trust, and the sharing of the whole of individual existence [*Existenz*]. When this disposition and actuality are present, the natural drive is reduced to the modality of a moment of nature which is

destined to be extinguished in its very satisfaction [*Befriedigung*], while the spiritual bond asserts its rights as the substantial factor and thereby stands out as indissoluble in itself and exalted above the contingency of the passions and of particular transient caprice. (§163)

We can already see here that Hegel, unlike Kant, makes a distinction between desire and love, by which “the rightful ethical love [*rechtlich sittliche Liebe*],” or “self-conscious love” involved in marriage means for Hegel that the subject is willing to give up its being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*) and unconditionally give itself over to the other (§161). For this reason, sexual intercourse does not play as central a role in Hegel’s account as it does in Kant’s, because the kind of satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) effectuated by the love in marriage is fundamentally different from that of the fantasmatic pursuit involved in desire. Hegel’s account of marriage, thereby, brings about a *deidealization* precisely in the sense that the satisfaction gained by desire—which, as we know from Lacan, is a deferred satisfaction—is cut short and extinguished. What this means is that the married subjects can no longer see one another as idealized and exalted objects, but rather, they are confronted with the everyday and banal side of the other in living a shared existence. This is what Hegel means by “marriage consist[ing] in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end [*substantiellen Zweckes*],” in which marriage serves, first and foremost, as a kind of duty to social substance to which the subjects must commit themselves unconditionally without getting distracted by the excesses of desire or what they may feel (§163).²⁰

²⁰ However, we have to pay careful attention to Hegel’s argumentation here, because it is not the case that Hegel, as Peter Steinberger claims in his analysis of Hegel on marriage, is finding a way to rationally calculate oneself into love, as it were, and trying to domesticate love (Steinberger 584). On the contrary, what Hegel means by “self-conscious love” is something more radical than ordinary conceptions of falling in love, as this decision to love has no Other that guarantees its success, i.e. it is love distinguished from the dimension of desire.

However, there is a further twist to Hegel's account because, even though *deidealization* takes place, it does not necessarily follow that *desublimation* also occurs. Hence the question is: where do we see (Lacanian) sublimation in Hegel's account of marriage? Responding to this question is crucial because it can be said that the secondary literature on marriage in Hegel sees marriage as bringing about a passage by which the sexual drives are shifted from an object that fulfills an explicitly sexual desire to a different, higher and more socially acceptable object;²¹ for example, Shlomo Avineri sees marriage "as the sublimation of the sexual drive into a will to identify with the other" (140). But what distinguishes the Lacanian conception of sublimation and the passage it brings forth is how it reverses the structure, whereby it takes an ordinary, acceptable object and raises it to the sublime status of the Thing (Žižek *Metastases* 96). And it is with this notion of sublimation that we can account for the strange subtleties of Hegel's argumentation because, if it is the case that marriage is this renunciation and alienation of the subjective *Willkür*, then it remains to be seen what makes this commitment function. Consider arranged marriage (which is the situation Hegel prefers [PR §162]): if it is the case that one day a partner is chosen for the subject by their parents and he has had no former acquaintance with them, to flirt with and date them, etc., but he is, nevertheless, expected to commit himself to them for life, why does Hegel think that such a marriage could function and not immediately break down into divorce or fail? It is here where the Lacanian formula of sublimation can shed light on the problem, because it enables us to see how, even if the partner does not meet the idealized expectations and images of the subject, the partner can still function as a sublime object, around whom the subject probes and does not encounter as an ideal supposed to fill a lack. Hence, we see a situation in which sublimation survives deidealization.

²¹ See Avineri 140; Moyar 177; Krell 1677; Steinberger 585. Shlomo Avineri explicitly formulates Hegel's account of marriage "as the sublimation of the sexual drive into a will to identify with the other" (140).

But it should be made clear here that we are not externally imposing the Lacanian psychoanalytic account of sublimation onto Hegel, as even Lacan already uses Hegel's conception of ethics as a kind of foil to what he presents as sublimation and the ethics of psychoanalysis (though it is quite evident that Lacan is working with the evolutionist and teleological image of Hegel found in Alexandre Kojève's lectures).²² On the contrary, we are using sublimation as a problematic and frame by which we can get a better handle on the ambiguities and gaps Hegel leaves open in his account, in order to see how the self-conscious subject that emerges here is irreducible to attaining a plenitude of self-transparency and harmony. Instead, the subject that emerges more explicitly in Hegel's account of marriage, unlike the more famous accounts of subjectivity in his work (such as the well-known master/slave dialectic from the *Phenomenology* [See PH §167]), is presented as a subject who can no longer find refuge through desiring (*Begierde*),²³ but must undergo a passage by which they are satisfied and succeed in attaining the pact with the other—sublimation is the name of this passage.

²² Indeed, it is quite unfortunate that Lacan's characterization follows the same tendency of the accounts of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* that overly exaggerate the state at the expense of the earlier (and perhaps more volatile) moment of marriage mentioned in the above footnote:

Note right off that it is quite unthinkable nowadays to speak abstractly of society. It is unthinkable historically, and it is unthinkable philosophically, too, for the reasons that a certain Hegel revealed to us the modern function of the state, and the link between a whole phenomenology of mind and the necessity which renders a legal system perfectly coherent. A whole philosophy of law, derived from the state, encloses human existence, up to and including the monogamous couple that is its point of departure. I am concerned with the ethics of psychoanalysis, and I can't at the same time discuss Hegelian ethics. But I do want to point out that they are not the same. (*Seminar VII* 105)

²³ Think of Hegel's formulation from the *Phenomenology*: "self-consciousness is desire in general [*Begierde überhaupt*]" (PH §167). For an extensive commentary on this formulation see Pippin 10-20.

Sublimation and the Vicissitudes of the Drive

Yet, another problem immediately arises: if sublimation takes place, whose main gesture resides in the non-encounter with the Thing (as Lacan's example of courtly love literature shows, which is defined by "techniques of holding back, of suspension, of *amor interruptus*" [*Seminar VII* 152]), then does this not lead us back to the dialectic of desire? It is at this point that we must clarify that, even though Lacan originally defined sublimation as part and parcel of the holding back and numerous postponements characteristic of the dialectic of desire, he claims later on in *Seminar XI* that:

Sublimation is nonetheless satisfaction of the drive without repression. In other words—for the moment, I am not fucking, I am talking to you. Well! I can have exactly the same satisfaction as if I were fucking. That's what it means. Indeed, it raises the question of whether in fact I am not fucking at this moment. Between these two terms—drive and satisfaction—there is set up an extreme antinomy that reminds us that the use of function of the drive has for me no other purpose than to put into question what is meant by satisfaction. (165-66)

In other words, the logic at stake with sublimation functions along the lines of the repetition compulsion characteristic of the drive, in which the kind of satisfaction brought forth through sublimation does not stand in a deferred beyond, yet to be satisfied, but rather, the satisfaction stands too close before us, always already satisfied again and again. Put differently, sublimation is the standpoint from which the satisfaction gained by talking does not stand beyond the satisfaction of sexual intercourse, as if it was another satisfaction that stands outside, yet to be satisfied. It is in this way that we should retroactively read what Lacan says about sublimation in

his earlier *Seminar VII*, because it is no longer the case that the Thing is traversed and probed with the aim of fine-tuning in order to eventually attain It, but rather It satisfies too much, too closely, without the hope of getting out of “the return into the circuit” of repetition (*Seminar XI* 178). In contrast to the *encore* of desire, the drive functions by way of an *une par une*, or one by one, in which the satisfaction is repeated each time afresh again and again without the aim of something more lying beyond. The exemplary figure Lacan gives to think about this repetition is Don Juan, who seduces women, one by one, repeating this same satisfaction each time without seeking something more (*Seminar XX* 10; Zupančič *Ethics of the Real* 129-132). And as a result of this repetition of the drive, the subject is faced by a new deadlock, because instead of being constantly distanced from the object of desire and obtaining a satisfaction, or *jouissance* by this very lack from the object’s constant deferral, the deadlock of the drive has to do with maintaining too close a proximity with the Thing and being confronted with too much *jouissance*. As Žižek puts it, “desire desperately strives to achieve *jouissance*, its ultimate object which forever eludes it; while drive, on the contrary, involves the opposite impossibility—not the impossibility of attaining *jouissance*, but the impossibility of getting rid of it” (*Ticklish Subject* 354).

What is striking about the impasse of the drive is the way in which, even though satisfaction has already taken place, a different kind of satisfaction is brought about in the very act of emptying *jouissance*, as if renouncing *jouissance* is itself a satisfaction. As Lacan puts it, “Even when you stuff the mouth—the mouth that opens in the register of the drive—it is not the food that satisfies it, it is, as one says, the pleasure of the mouth” (*Seminar XI* 167). Despite the hunger being satisfied, there is a passage to a different kind of *jouissance* which shifts the very

structure by which *jouissance* is obtained, and it is this shift that we see in Hegel's account of marriage.

One place where this passage of satisfaction takes place is in Hegel's description of the wedding ceremony. Hegel places strong emphasis on the ceremony because it is not enough that the partners love one another inwardly; this love must be externally *posited* and *repeated* in a formal ceremony, becoming symbolically registered and inscribed before the Other. Indeed, as touched on above, the wedding ceremony is *the* moment that distinguishes Hegel's account of marriage from Kant's, because we see an entrance of the Other who mediates the contract, only for this contract to dissolve, as their subjective agency, or *Willkür*, itself is literally alienated to the side of Other:

It is accordingly only after this ceremony has *first taken* place, as the completion of the *substantial* [aspect of marriage] by means of *the sign*—i.e. by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual [*das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*]—that this bond has been ethically constituted. The sensuous moment which pertains to natural life [*Lebendigkeit*] is thereby put in its ethical context [*Verhältnis*] as an accidental consequence belonging to the external existence of the ethical bond, which may even consist exclusively in mutual love and support. (PR §164)

We need to pay close attention to the role language plays during the ceremony, because it offers the clue as to how the wedding ceremony is fundamentally different from the situation we saw earlier with Kafka's character before the Other. For Hegel, far from language simply being a convenient tool to be used at the disposal of the *Willkür* and thereby serving a merely expressive function, he is trying to get us to see how language performatively enacts something. Language bears witness to an *immer schon*, or an always already, in the sense that it is not the expressive

means for something *yet* to be spoken and thereby *yet* to be *understood*. On the contrary, language sneaks behind up on us and forces out of our mouths the thing to be understood as already taken place and satisfied, where the very act of speaking shows what is to be spoken about as already taken place. The way in which this functions is by way of language repeating what it is that is being spoken about, but strictly in the sense that this repetition has nothing to do with repeating something that pre-exists its being spoken, i.e., its being enunciated, as much as it is a repetition that retroactively enacts what it is repeating. Emphasizing this dimension of language is essential because it is precisely this operation that is at stake with the structure of satisfaction implied by the drive and sublimation. In this structure, it is not the case that the drive, in a banal manner, merely repeats the same thing over and over again, or traverses the Thing without anything changing for the subject, as this process would only maintain desire; rather, the drive retroactively posits what it is that is being repeated each time, and it is in this way that the subject's standpoint of enunciation undergoes a shift, even if the subject is not consciously 'self-aware' of it (Žižek "Hegel on Marriage" 4). Hence, to return to the above question, what bears witness to the fact that Hegel's account of marriage does not simply fall back into place with and further feed the desire of the subjects is the way in which they are confronted with 'the object of desire' too closely, as something already 'satisfied,' thereby making the deferral of desire impossible.

The main consequence of this sublimation we see in the ceremony is that the emergence of the subject is intimately bound up with its alienation and evacuation over to the Other, showing how the subject is ontologically split from itself—this is the ontological deadlock of the subject inaugurated by Hegel and his shift away from Kant. Adrian Johnston provides a succinct way to frame what Hegel accomplishes in this shift: "the passage from Kant to Hegel is the

transition from an epistemological void to an ontological one, from the inaccessible Thing beyond the subject's reach to the subject itself as the Thing incapable of ever being reduced to the phenomena amongst which it is nonetheless condemned to circulate" (140). In terms of our argument here, this means that what we saw as a limitation in Kant's marriage contract, that is, the subjects being distanced from desire itself and always needing one more act to substantiate the contract, is for Hegel reflected into the subject, transformed into an *ontological deadlock* and no longer an *epistemological obstacle*. This aspect of Hegel's account is especially prominent when he defends the wedding ceremony against the Romantic conception of love (in Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher in particular) which would view the ceremony as a mere external formality that could easily be done without (PR §164). According to Hegel, what this Romantic view amounts to is conceiving love as something inward which cannot be disrupted by external influences or the Other:

Or indeed, [the ceremony] is the merely positive, arbitrary enactment of a civil or ecclesiastical precept, which is not only indifferent to the nature of marriage, but also—insofar as the emotions are inclined by this precept to attach a value to formal conclusion [of marriage] and to regard it as a condition which must be fulfilled before the partners can commit themselves totally to each other—brings disunity into the disposition of love and, as an alien factor, runs counter to the inwardness of the union. Although such an opinion claims to impart the highest conception of the freedom, inwardness, and perfection of love, it in fact denies the ethical character of love, that higher suppression and subordination of mere natural drive which is already naturally present in shame and which more determinate spiritual consciousness raises to chastity and purity. (§164)

Shame is not what we think about when we consider an ethical act, yet it is precisely there, albeit from a shifted standpoint of enunciation, that we find chastity and purity. The logic here is what Hegel claims in the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*: that we must “recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present” (22), as opposed to finding reason in a beyond or an ought awaiting us somewhere else. That is to say, the humility of shame *is* the chastity and purity characteristic of spiritual and ethical consciousness, as opposed to being something different or an unfortunate by-product. *This* is what sublimation means, in which the satisfaction does not lie in a deferred beyond, but is always already before us if looked upon from a different angle. It is this shift in perspective that the ceremony effectuates because, as opposed to there being the sensual aspect of marriage and actual love, on the one hand, and banal, everyday aspect of the shared existence between the married partners, on the other hand, the ceremony effectuates a paradigm shift by which the banal aspect of the marriage (the hard everyday life of marriage) *is* the sensual passion of it, as opposed to there having been “better times,” or a more “authentic” love existing elsewhere.

Hegel and Kleist on Marriage

To illustrate what marriage as sublimation looks like, we can now turn to Kleist’s story, “The Marquise of O—.” The story begins with the Marquise publishing an advertisement that she is pregnant and, as she is not sure who the father is, she would like him to present himself to her so that she could marry him. Then there is a flashback to a battle during the Napoleonic Wars when the fortress in Northern Italy, in which the Marquise and her family lived, is attacked by Russian soldiers. While the Marquise is trying to escape the attack, she gets cut off from the

rest of her family and a group of enemy soldiers surround her and try to rape her. But, amidst her despair, a young officer comes to her rescue and takes her away from the scene,

He seemed one of heaven's angels to the Marquise. Ramming his sword handle into the last man's face, so that the murderous savage took his hands off her slim waist and staggered back with blood spewing from his mouth, he addressed the lady courteously in French, offered her his arm and led her, stricken dumb by all these scenes, into the wing of the house not yet caught alight, and, losing consciousness entirely, she fell to the floor. Thereupon—when, soon after, her terrified women appeared, he arranged for a doctor to be called; assured them, putting on his hat, that she would soon recover; and returned to the battle. (282)

To begin with, what interests us is the status of the dash, “Thereupon—” (282). It goes almost without saying that it is through this dash that the reader infers how the Marquise has come to be pregnant: the officer, whom we come to know as Count F., takes advantage of her while she is unconscious (the small detail of the Count “putting on his hat” (282) is quite telling in this respect [Žižek *Did Somebody Say?* 32]). But leaving aside the obvious reasons of censorship, Kleist's insertion of the dash lends the scene, along with the whole story, a strange, surprising and ambiguous eroticization, which perhaps would not have been the case if he had written a graphic description of the rape. Indeed, if we were to take a step back for the moment and were to read the story naively, missing what could or could not have taken place during the decisive moment of the dash, then the story rather reads like a sublime love story—a story of conception not too dissimilar from the more famous conception of the Virgin Mary, as the Marquise's midwife reminds her (296). The dash is, first and foremost, a dash and nothing more,

which like Hegel's curtain hides nothing, no Thing-in-Itself, behind it (PH §165).²⁴ Hence, there is a way in which Kleist's dash is not a lack which stands in for and perpetually hides something that must remain inaccessible for the reader, as much as it designates an operation of subtraction, in which what is being subtracted is the "beyond" of the dash, or what could or could not lie behind it. More to the point, Kleist, instead of writing a traditional marriage story wherein we see the first encounter, the courting, dating, etc., all leading up to the wedding which usually ends the story and leaves the inevitable sex as something deferred, i.e. as a lack, he begins the story with this lack (but is it still actually a lack?) as always-already "satisfied," by which the narrative functions according to the logic of the drive.

But in what sense does sublimation take place within Kleist's story? At the end of the story, the Marquise and the Count get married after two wedding ceremonies. The first ceremony takes place after the Marquise officially realizes that the Count is the father of her child (after having recoiled from this fact earlier on, when the Count directly informs her). Accordingly, the ceremony is awkward for the two and they emptily go through the motions, exchanging rings dispassionately and refusing to look one another in the eye.²⁵ After this first ceremony, the Marquise and the Count keep a distance from one another, which shows that, even though they are both married, the marriage was forced and did not coincide with their standpoint of desire, and what follows thereby is an estrangement and de-idealization. Hence, their marriage follows Hegel's formula, by which "the decision [*Entschluss*] to marry comes first and

²⁴ Indeed, in their book *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing*, Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda investigate the dash with which Hegel ends the *Phenomenology* and begins in the *Science of Logic*, discerning an operation of subtraction, and, in effect, repetition, inscribed within absolute knowing (107-112).

²⁵ "Throughout the ceremony the Marquise stared fixedly at the painting on the altar; not one fleeting glance did she grant the man with whom she exchanged rings. When the priest had joined them the Count offered her his arm; but as soon as they were outside the church the Countess bowed and withdrew from him; the Commandant asked would he have the honour of seeing him in his daughter's apartments from time to time, to which the count stammered something that nobody understood, took off his hat to the company, and disappeared." (KSW 311)

is followed by the inclination [*Neigung*]” (PR §162). However, they eventually warm up to one another after the Count makes the Marquise heir to his entire fortune in the event of his death, and the couple get married a second time with another ceremony. What interests us here is that a shift takes place, in which it was quite clear before that the two were de-idealized, but, with the happier second ceremony, it is not so much that a “re-idealization” takes place as much as a sublimation. The instance of sublimation is particularly visible when the Marquise, when asked by the Count why she recoiled from him before, replies, “he would not on that occasion have appeared to her like a devil had he not on his first appearance seemed to her an angel” (311). In other words, for the Marquise, the Count occupies the position of the Thing, as the person who saved her from the soldiers and her ideal lover *is* her rapist and oppressor. Hence, for Kleist and Hegel, marriage takes desire to its breaking point because, to the dismay of the subjects, desire gets fulfilled and they are confronted with too much *jouissance*. And as a result, the subject finds itself in the impasse of sublimation, in which the subject’s love for the Thing before them survives the evacuation of its desire.

Finally, from this standpoint of sublimation surviving idealization, we argue that marriage effectuates an ontological rupture within Hegel’s ethical edifice, because marriage bears witness to how the subject’s subordination to and disciplining by the social substance does not take place without remainder. Even though marriage requires that the subject, in order to become self-consciously aware of a substantial end, gives up its being-for-self and standpoint of idealization, it is not the case that the subject achieves a symbolically rational and “non-pathological” existence. Indeed, as we mentioned above, there is a tension within Hegel’s term “self-conscious love,” by which the attainment of self-conscious and ethical existence passes over to its opposite: falling in love and finding oneself in an other without knowing why (PR

§161). And we can now see that this paradox of self-conscious love is that of sublimation, in which sublimation accounts for this stubborn attachment that does not coincide with the subject's standpoint of desire. But, despite the "intention" of Hegel's text, a remainder of the subject's self-conscious existence persists, in which the ethical existence of the subject has nothing to do with attaining a complete and full inner awareness of oneself, leading to an exhaustive transparency realized in the state. When Hegel asserts that "it is in ethical being that self-consciousness has its motivating end and a foundation which has being in and for itself," marriage inscribes an elision, like a perspective illusion, within this foundation and motivating end, insofar as they mis-recognized by the subject, thereby showing how the subject's ethical existence is constituted by a kind of failure (§142). Therefore, self-conscious existence is pathologically fractured, effectively "not-All" in the Lacanian sense of the subject failing to be fully interpellated as an identity, but becoming a subject precisely on account of this failure.

2. *Das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*: The Function of Language during Hegel's Wedding Ceremony

Now that we have seen how Hegel's account of marriage has to do with a sublimation and is thereby structurally different from a contract that perversely desires around a lack never to be satisfied, it remains to be seen how the wedding ceremony changes the subjects' standpoint of enunciation. While we saw how the wedding ceremony serves an important function for the conclusion of marriage, insofar as the spoken vows of the partners before the Other performatively enact the marriage—as opposed to being an external formality which can be abolished—this chapter aims to explore how the subject is implicated in these spoken vows, in ways they might not realize but which affect their very being. It is not simply the case that the language enacts the marriage, in the sense of enacting a bond that the subject is free to exit as he/she pleases. Contrary to this, it will be seen that there is a more silent change and it is *this* change that we refer to as the shift on the level of the enunciation. But, in order to grasp how marriage effectuates this shift, we must see how Hegel is re-thinking language as such, because language cannot be seen as an organ for expressing the inner intentions of the subject. Instead, and to rejoin our thinking on language from the first chapter, the language during the ceremony repeats the love of the partners, effectively producing what it was supposed to be repeating retroactively. Hence, to think about the performative function of language requires us to (re)-enter into the vicissitudes of repetition which we have already anticipated in our discussion of the drive, and to see how repetition need not be a repetition of the same as much as it produces a new beginning.

The Performative Function of the Wedding Ceremony

But to reiterate what takes place with the wedding ceremony: the ceremony marks the crucial moment within Hegel's schema of marriage in which marriage, as the first ethical relationship, gets symbolically registered and institutionalized by the third party, or the Other in the guise of the Church, entering the scene as the final formality which makes the marriage official (PR §161). The main reason why Hegel takes great pains to discuss the wedding ceremony as the crucial moment of marriage is because, far from it being something which could be dispensed with as a simple formality, and of no significant import for the inner choice to marry between the partners themselves, the ceremony effectuates a shift on the level of the subjects' standpoint of enunciation. But before delving into what is meant by this shift in enunciation, it is striking that the wedding ceremony seems to be omitted in Hegel's earlier iterations of the *Philosophy of Right*. To give a bit of background, the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*) with which we have been primarily dealing is the official course book or compendium (*Grundriss*) written by Hegel and published in 1820 that served as the course guide and textbook for his students (PR, 9). But Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* [*Rechtsphilosophie*] was taught as a series of annual lectures held from 1817 to his death in 1831, and we have more than one transcription of these lectures by his students.²⁶ What particularly interests us is that, even though these lecture notes are second-

²⁶ Prior to the publication of the *Elements*, there are two sets of student notes: one of which are notes taken by law student Peter Wannemann from Hegel's first year teaching the *Philosophy of Right* in Heidelberg from 1817-1818 (FPR) and the other is an anonymous transcription of the course taught from 1819-1820 (VPR19). And after the publication of the *Elements*, there are lecture notes from H.G. Hotho of the 1822-1823 course (VPR22) and notes from K.G. v. Griesheim of the 1824-1825 course (VPR24), both of which are appended as the additions (*Zusätze*) in the standard edition of the of *Grundlinien* and translated in the English *Elements*.

hand, and in some cases third-hand, accounts of what Hegel actually said, there is a trend by which the wedding ceremony is only mentioned in the marriage section in later lectures, after the publication of the *Elements*.²⁷ According to the earlier lecture notes, Hegel only distinguishes marriage from a contract and discusses the different realm of duties of the sexes (FPR17 §78-80; VPR19 130-141). But the lecture notes after the publication of the *Elements* (1820) show a marked interest in the wedding ceremony, as it is from these notes that we know Hegel reproached the Romantic view of marriage for seeing the wedding ceremony as an external infringement on the more internal love of the partners (VPR22 §164; VPR24 §164).²⁸

What explains Hegel's newly added emphasis on the wedding ceremony? And if this change did take place, of what interest is it to us? While we can only speculate in the last instance, as it could simply be the case that the wedding ceremony was omitted in the student notes but Hegel did actually talk about it in the earlier lectures, what we do know is that one of the principal aims of Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* was to rebuke various post-Kantian trends in ethical thought of the time (represented by thinkers like Jakob Friedrich Fries) which inflated the role of subjective intention over and above social institutions (Avineri 119-20).²⁹ Indeed, far

²⁷ In this connection, it is also worth pointing out that Hegel did not begin conceptualizing marriage in his *Rechtsphilosophie*. Indeed, as early as his *System der Sittlichkeit* (1802) and his *Jenaer Realphilosophie* (his Jena Lectures from 1805-1806) Hegel was already critical of the Kantian contractual view of marriage, although in these texts, like his earlier *Rechtsphilosophie* lecture notes, the wedding ceremony is not explicitly mentioned. However, in the *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, Hegel hints at the importance of the ceremony, as the “expressing [*Aussprechen*]” of the marriage, albeit without explicitly situating it as central as he does in the *Elements* (JL 136; JR 220): “In the eyes of the law, or in-itself, marriage is not enacted by the [mere] promise of marriage, nor by cohabitation, but through the declared will [*erklärten Willen*]—the expression [*Aussprechen*] is what counts” (JL 136; JR 220).

²⁸ It is also only from these additions and Hegel's cryptic notes (appended only in the German edition) that we know he explicitly discussed Schlegel's *Lucinde* in connection with the Romantic view against the ceremony. For an intriguing discussion of Hegel's discussion of *Lucinde* which contextualizes Hegel's reference to Schlegel and Schleiermacher and uses the latter as a critical counter-weight to Hegel's account of marriage, particularly with respect to Hegel's conception of sexual difference, see David Farrel Krell's, “Lucinde's Shame: Hegel, Sensuous Woman, and the Law”.

²⁹ As far as the historical context is concerned, I principally rely on Shlomo Avineri's well-documented book *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*.

from such ethical thinking being a mere academic concern confined to the university, there were violent student demonstrations at the time in Germany from what were called the *Burschenschaften*, student fraternities that promoted an organic German national identity against the unification processes taking place at the time (Marcuse 179-81; Avineri 119). Without entering into all the historical details, these violent demonstrations, which saw book burnings, rallies, outright racism, and in some cases murder, were grounded primarily on an anti-rationalist subjectivism. Hegel saw its roots in a perverted Kantianism (Avineri 119). It is for this reason that Hegel generally places a strong emphasis throughout the *Sittlichkeit* section of the *Elements* on the importance of institutions and bureaucracy which vindicate the importance of state authority above subjective caprice.³⁰ From this angle and context, Hegel's placing strong emphasis on the wedding ceremony takes on a significant weight because the enactment of marriage through language and the sign (and more will be said about this further on) is one such "pillar, arch, and buttress" of the state which enables social life to function (PR 16). That is to say, marriage is one instance of this broader social edifice into which the subject is interpellated, and marriage thus cannot be reduced to a relation dependent on the narcissism of subjective inclinations (*Neigungen*). Thus, Hegel's inclusion of the wedding ceremony, as this moment in

³⁰ A clear example of Hegel's attack on Fries and this subjectivism can be found in the Preface of the *Elements*:

The chief tendency of this superficial philosophy [*Seichtigkeit*] is to base science not on the development of thought and the concept, but on immediate perception and contingent imagination; and likewise, to reduce the complex inner articulation of the ethical, i.e. the state, the architectonics of its rationality—which, through determinate distinctions between the various spheres of public life and the rights [*Berechtigungen*] they are based on, and through the strict proportions in which every pillar, arch, and buttress is held together, produces the strength of the whole from the harmony of its parts—to reduce this refined [*gebildeten*] structure to a mush of "heart, friendship, and enthusiasm." (PR 15-16)

What can be gleaned from this passage is that Hegel was not celebrating the state as a totalizing social body to which the subject must be unconditionally absorbed, but rather, he is showing how, in order for society to not break down into a general disarray and barbarism, the philosopher, especially a philosopher who has influence, must comprehend the complex mechanisms by which social institutions function and sustain an underlying network of norms and rules. One must also bear in mind that the state for Hegel does not simply refer to the higher echelons of government and bureaucracy, but the broader social institutions and rituals, both written and unwritten it could be said, that sustain a social ordering.

which the state or social authority intervenes in a supposedly personal and individual affair, is symptomatic of his broader aim in refuting a subjectivist ethics.

But more to the point, and what particularly interests us about this shift of emphasis onto the wedding ceremony is that, as opposed to the other moments of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* such as civil society and the state, it is only with marriage that we see the ambiguities of the subject's immersion in the symbolic world in such a crystallized form. That is to say, Hegel's inclusion of the wedding ceremony is crucial because this moment marks the point when the subject must alienate itself over to a bureaucratic formality which affects their very being, or standpoint of enunciation. The wedding ceremony is when the subject first contracts itself into a symbolic statement, "I do," inalterably eradicating the standpoint that would enable the subject to perversely retreat within itself and be a beautiful soul who could live at the whimsy of its own intentions. Yet, as we will see in investigating the function of language in the ceremony and the way in which it affects the subjects' standpoint of enunciation, this scene bears witness to a trauma and pathologically unconscious stain that is structurally implicated in the symbolic immersion (and not beyond it). But what is meant by "standpoint of enunciation," and how does this shift in the enunciation characterize what takes place in the wedding ceremony? What we mean by enunciation is the Lacanian split in the subject between the subject of the statement and the subject of the enunciation. Essentially, we can see this split if we look to the sentence Lacan proposed: "I am lying" (*Seminar XI* 139). In this sentence the "*am lying*" is the subject of the statement, insofar as it is a signifier situated within the symbolic order and from the Other's "treasury of vocabulary" (*Seminar XI* 139; Zupančič 102-103), whereas the subject of enunciation would be the "*I*," who cannot be delimited in advance by the signifying chain, as it is the subject who could, for instance, be deceiving others with the statement (*Seminar XI* 139;

Zupančič 102-103). Put differently, the subject of enunciation has to do with the subject of the unconscious, in the sense of the subject who could have secret wishes, make slips of the tongue, or enjoy (Fink 24). What is crucial to grasp about this distinction is that the subject of the enunciation is “determined retroactively” (*Seminar XI* 139), where it is not the case that the enunciation is the hidden cause beneath the statement that would determine it in a linear fashion, but rather, in a paradoxical way, the irreducible *I* of the enunciation is the cause insofar as it *becomes* the cause *in the act itself*, which is to say it must pass through the Other, or the symbolic domain, as opposed to organically pre-existing it. In effect, the enunciation for Lacan is inseparable from its necessarily pathological immersion in the social field.

But, of course, as Lacan is quick to point out, an interesting paradox arises concerning the enunciation. To return to Lacan’s sentence, “I am lying,” if it is the case that the *I* of enunciation deceives someone, then wouldn’t they be telling the truth, thereby making the statement, *am lying*, self-negating and impossible? In other words, lying would be meaningless. Yet this is precisely Lacan’s point, because it is certainly the case that lying can very well take place, even if deployed deceptively, and this does not mean simply telling the truth. As Lacan puts it,

It is quite wrong to reply to this *I am lying*—If you say, *I am lying*, you are telling the truth, and therefore you are not lying, and so on. It is quite clear that the *I am lying*, despite its paradox, is perfectly valid. Indeed, the *I* of the enunciation is not the same as the *I* of the statement, that is to say, the shifter which, in the statement, designates him. So, from the point at which I state, it is quite possible for me to formulate in a valid way that the *I*—the *I* who, at that moment, formulates the statement—is lying, that he lied a little before, that he is lying afterwards, or even, that in saying *I am lying*, he declares he has the intention of deceiving. (139)

What is striking about Lacan's distinction of the subject of enunciation and the statement is the way in which, even within the very functioning of language that appears to be seamless and synchronous, a stain persists—this stain of *jouissance* that irreducibly clings to every symbolic operation. We draw attention to Lacan's distinction at length because it bears witness to a split at the heart of the subject, in which the subject does not constitute an indivisible unity who would employ symbolic statements in order to fashion an identity for itself in a transparent manner. On the contrary, in thinking about the split between the subject of enunciation and the statement, Lacan is trying to get us to see how “there is no subject, or ‘hero’, of the act,” as Alenka Zupančič aptly puts it (103). That is to say, by lying, the subject does not and can never succeed in making the act of lying perfectly coincide with their standpoint of enunciation, because doing so would be like saying that lying cannot be done deceptively.³¹

Now, where do we see the Lacanian split between the enunciation and statement at stake in Hegel's wedding ceremony, and why is situating a shift on the subjects' standpoint of enunciation essential for characterizing the passage that takes place? It is here that we should pay close attention to the role of language during the ceremony, or the spoken statement that concludes the marriage. It will be recalled that Hegel sees the pronouncement of the marriage as serving a performative function in enacting the marriage, instead of simply serving an expressive

³¹ For example, Lacan looks to the famous Jewish joke that Freud investigates in his *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*: “Two Jews met in a railway carriage at a station in Galicia. ‘Where are you going?’ asked one. ‘To Cracow,’ was the answer. ‘What a liar you are!’ broke out the other. ‘If you’re going to Cracow, you want me to believe you’re going to Lemberg. But I know in fact that you’re going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?’” (SE VIII 115). The key here is the paradoxical status of “Cracow” because, on the one hand, Cracow is a straightforward answer to the first Jew's question, or a statement recognizable as a concrete location by other subjects, but, on the other hand, as we learn from the first Jew, Cracow also refers to what it negates, Lemberg, yet Cracow is not on account of this any less of a valid statement to be used in a speech act. Although more could be gleaned from this joke, what is crucial about it for our purposes here is that it bears witness to how the subject is inherently “not-All” (*pas-tout*) (*Seminar XX* 7) on account of this split between the statement and enunciation, but this is not to say that we should drop all mention of a subject, as there is unmistakably something that acts. To quote Zupančič, “there is the ‘it’ (the Lacanian *ça*) and the subjective figure which arises from it” (104), and this is what Lacan refers to as “a headless subjectification, a subjectification without a subject, a bone, a structure” (*Seminar XI* 184).

function and instrument for the subject's intentions to marry. Indeed, language should be seen as the dimension of the ceremony *par excellence*, insofar as the spoken pronouncement, as we briefly touched on in the previous chapter, marks the moment when the love of the partners actually comes into existence, being mediated and posited through the mouthpiece of the Other, no longer remaining ineffectual as inward intentions: "It is accordingly only after this ceremony has *first taken* place, as the completion of the *substantial* [aspect of marriage] by means of the *sign* [Zeichen]—i.e. by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual [*das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*]—that this bond has been ethically constituted" (PR §164). In presenting the spoken statement of the marriage as the highest spiritual gesture, we should not simply see Hegel making a linear move to the notional mediation of nature by culture. On the contrary, we should pay careful attention to the way in which Hegel sees the wedding ceremony, through language, as bestowing on marriage its "speculative nature" (§164). What is at stake with this speculative nature is a retroactive gesture whereby the contingency of the interests between the partners that first sparked their love passes over to necessity (Žižek "Hegel on Marriage" 4). It is worth re-quoting the passage at length, in which Hegel defends the significance of the ceremony against the Romantic view that argues against it as an unnecessary and external infringement:

Although such an opinion claims to impart the highest concept of the freedom, inwardness, and perfection of love, it in fact denies [*leugnet*] the ethical character of love, that higher inhibition and subordinating of mere natural drive [*die höhere Hemmung und Zurücksetzung des bloßen Naturtriebs*]....More particularly, the view just referred to casts aside the ethical determination [of marriage]. This consists in the fact that the consciousness emerges from its naturalness and subjectivity to concentrate

on the thought of the substantial. Instead of further reserving to itself the contingency and arbitrariness of sensuous inclination, it removes the marriage bond from this arbitrariness and, pledging itself to the Penates, makes it over to the substantial; it thereby reduces the sensuous moment to a merely conditional one....It is impertinence and its ally, the understanding, which cannot grasp the speculative nature of the substantial relationship.... (§164)

What is striking here are these two terms, *Hemmung*, or inhibition, and *Zurücksetzung*, or positing/setting back, because they can be used to take Hegel's point more literally than he does himself. Not only is it the case that the wedding ceremony withdraws the marriage from the domain of the natural drives and inclinations and deprives it of this dimension. In staging its ethical constitution through language, Hegel is showing how it is only through this very inhibition and positing/setting back that the immediate natural substance is produced in the first place (§164). In other words, there is no primordial substance that pre-exists its process of repression, as the repressed *x* is only produced retroactively and we can only speak of this *x* *after* its repression (Žižek *Absolute Recoil* 150-51). And it is precisely in *this* process that we see the logic of Lacan's "headless subjectification" by which the passage in Hegel's wedding ceremony is the same as that which retroactively produces the irreducible *I* of enunciation, which bears witness to the subject as a subjective figure in the guise of an *It*, as opposed to an underlying organic substance or personality. That is to say, the spoken statement during the ceremony is not the expression of a more authentic love that exists inwardly in their hearts and intentions, but rather, the statement retroactively produces this underlying enunciation of inwardly shared love, effectively showing how it is only through formulating their love in a symbolic statement that the

married couple can look back on a prenuptial state of desire and passion of “the natural drives” (§164).

In effect, the function of language during the ceremony is performative not only in the sense that the spoken statements enact the marriage (following the classic sense of performative utterance from J.L. Austin’s philosophy³²), but also in the sense that language fundamentally alters the social substance in which it intervenes. Even though it might seem to the partners that the ceremony is simply an external formality, there is nevertheless, albeit imperceptibly, a shift in their position of enunciation that alters their everyday lives. What this means is that, unlike two parties who form a contract for exchanging property in which they conclude their business and return to their normal, everyday lives, the “normal everyday lives” to which the married subjects return is something different than what it was before the marriage. As Žižek words it,

Even if the ceremony appears to the love partners as a mere bureaucratic formalism, it enacts the inscription of the sexual link into the big Other, the inscription which radically changes the subjective position of the concerned parties. This explains the well-known fact that married people are more attached to their spouses than may appear (to themselves also). A man may have secret affairs, may be dreaming about leaving his wife, but anxiety prevents him from doing this when a chance presents itself—in short, we are ready to cheat on our spouses on condition that the big Other doesn’t know it (register it). (“Hegel on Marriage” 3-4)

³² Without entering into vast literature on performatives, it suffices to mention the classic formulation of the performative from J.L. Austin’s philosophy of language, in which he claims: “it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (6-7). In the context of our argument, it is worth mentioning that one of the most recurring examples Austin uses is that of a wedding ceremony: “When I say before the registrar or altar, &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it” (6). What is striking about Austin’s formulation of the performative is that he trusts the Other too much, since he tirelessly re-iterates that the performative can only function “in the appropriate circumstances” (7). But what we are showing in Hegel’s ceremony is that, even though the performative initially relies and counts on the efficiency of the Other in order to function, the Other vanishes in the act, thereby showing how the marriage performatively effectuates a broader shift in the very circumstances in which it intervenes.

What is striking about Žižek’s reading of Hegel’s ceremony is that the change which takes place for the married partners has nothing to do with a process of inward realization or self-awareness, refuting a whole tradition of readings which situate the Hegelian dialectical process through an eschatology of attaining self-transparency. On the contrary, what Hegel’s account of marriage clearly shows is that the symbolic registration, as a moment which appears as an external formality not changing anything within the subjects, fundamentally alters the subject’s “ground zero,” or the *I* before any commitment to symbolic action or statements—the *I* that is supposed to be neutral and irreducible, allegedly pre-existing its symbolic immersion. *This* moment, which necessarily appears to be a mis-recognition, is what is meant by a shift in the subjects’ standpoint of enunciation. Hence, the performative enactment of the marriage through the ceremony shows how the spoken vows produce the union they were supposed to merely confirm and signify, effectively shifting the very *being* of the subjects in the process.

In order to flesh out this performative function of language during Hegel’s ceremony, and the relation between language and the subject’s standpoint of enunciation, we will turn to Kleist’s essay, “On the Gradual Production of Thoughts whilst Speaking [*Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden*].” Essentially, Kleist makes the case that talking about a thought does not necessarily presuppose that the thought has already been understood and then simply expressed through speech. On the contrary, to use Kleist’s French motto, “*l’idée vient en parlant*” (KSW 405), or the idea arrives in the act of speech itself, it is not the case that speech is a means and instrument to express an idea, as much as it already coins, mints, and/or shapes [*prägt*] the idea itself (KSW 320). Instead of seeing language as simply the expressive medium of more substantial thoughts and an organ at the subject’s disposal, Kleist, in a manner consistent with Hegel, is drawing attention to how language performatively enacts what it was supposed to

have expressed retroactively. As Kleist words it in describing a situation by which he is able to formulate a thought without any prior knowledge of it:

But because I do have some dim conception [*Vorstellung*] at the outset, one distantly related to what I am looking for, if I boldly make a start with that, my mind [*Gemüt*], even as my speech proceeds, under the necessity of finding an end for that beginning, will shape [*prägt*] my first confused idea into complete clarity so that, to my amazement, understanding [*Erkenntnis*] is arrived at as the sentence ends. I put in a few unarticulated sounds, dwell lengthily on the conjunctions, perhaps make use of apposition where it is not necessary, and have recourse to other tricks which will spin out my speech, all to gain time for the fabrication of my idea in the workshop of the mind [*Vernunft*]. (KSW 405-6; KSä 319-20)

What specifically interests us about Kleist's argument is the way in which speech, though it may appear to us as a clumsy and imperfect medium for expressing an allegedly inner depth—this *Gemüt*, which translates to soul, disposition, or mind—produces this *Gemüt* in a such a way that it arrives from the outside. Kleist's *Gemüt* can be translated into what we referred to as the subject's standpoint of enunciation, in which it is the irreducible standpoint that sustains the subject's mediation into the symbolic—i.e. language—that, paradoxically, only produces itself retroactively through language. Hence, for both Kleist and Hegel language is performative precisely in the sense that it effectuates a shift in the enunciation, or on the very level which sustains the subject as a speaking being.

Hegel and Lalangue

However, the performative function of the ceremony also takes place on the level of Hegel's language itself, in which the passage *does* more than it *describes*. In particular, what interests us is the oddly exaggerated form of Hegel's description of the role of language during the ceremony—"language, as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual [*die Sprache, als das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*]" (PR §164). This brief word play, *das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*, captures the tongue off guard and condemns the tongue to enjoy, but, in so doing, it fatalistically imposes its sense through its repetition, enunciating something without an explicit statement, as opposed to Hegel literally writing out what he means by the most spiritual existence/being, in order to supply an "enunciated knowledge" which would rationally explicate its sense (*Seminar XX* 139). What we see here, in effect, is the domain of language that Lacan referred to as *lalangue*, which is Lacan's way of showing how *jouissance* inheres within the very process of enunciating any statement whatsoever (*Seminar XX* 138-39). Or, as Mladen Dolar succinctly puts it, "*lalangue* means that there is enjoyment in speech, not the proscribed object beyond it, that every sense is always *jouis-sens, le sens joui*, in another pun: the element of enjoyment in the very process of making sense" (*A Voice and Nothing More* 145). Essentially, *lalangue* is the instance in language, in which language, while in the process of making sense, finds itself rhyming, misfiring, or mindlessly repeating; it is the domain of language we see in Freudian slips of the tongue where the unconscious abruptly and fatalistically inserts itself (SE VI 53). From this angle, *lalangue* can be seen as situating the repetitious drive within language, in which language no longer seeks to express and "satisfy" what lies beyond it, but this beyond, i.e. *jouissance*, lies within, and gets enacted through, language. This is not to say that *lalangue*

shows how language is merely irrational and ludic non-sense, but it is, rather, the necessary remainder to rational logos which always already sustains symbolic sense and meaning (Lecercle 33). Hence, by inserting this word play at the moment when the Other enters the scene, Hegel reminds us that the Other which guarantees the symbolic network of signification, far from being an all-knowing authority or an undivided subject who knows, contains perverse *jouissance* within itself and functions, not in spite of, but *because of this jouissance*. It is this dimension of language that bears witness to what Dolar refers to as the voice (in one of his many formulations), in which language becomes a sonorous object in addition to its function of conveying meaning (*A Voice and Nothing More* 141). As Dolar puts it, “there is speech which makes sense, and in that horizon of sense-making there is suddenly a disturbance, the intrusion of the voice, the sound, which functions as a disruption of which we cannot make sense” (141). The dimension of the voice in Hegel’s reverberating phrase is clear enough, as we hear more from its poetic rhyme than we understand, but what the Lacanian *lalangue* clarifies, as Dolar adds, is that, through the very non-sense produced by the voice’s reverberation and repetition, the phrase “turns out to be endowed with an unexpected sense emerging from it” (141).

Thus, Hegel’s *lalangue* effectuates a rupture in the Hegelian text. Instead of Hegel simply stating what he means in a concise and systematic way, the *jouissance* of the phrase displaces such an objectified knowledge. That is to say, it is not a question of pinning down a Hegelian lexicon so that we could define each word individually—“*Geist*,” “*Dasein*,” “*Sprache*,” and so forth—in order to palm off and extract a neutral exegesis of Hegel’s phrase. On the contrary, the phrase confronts us with too much knowledge, something that makes too much sense because, like an aphorism, it confronts us with a truth, “knowledge as truth,” which requires no external source and explanation—no dictionary or answer key—to be apprehended

(*Seminar XVII* 36). We thought we had a delimited sense of what these terms signify for Hegel, but hearing them jammed together and deployed unusually in this way bears witness to the impossibility of such a definitive understanding. While it might seem like we are reading too much into this phrase, what is at stake is nothing less than the impossibility of Hegel transmitting “a knowledge that knows itself,” or a knowledge guaranteed by an Other (*Seminar XVII* 48; Zupančič 203). On the contrary, we are forced to confront a knowledge spoken like a wager—which is the definition of the Lacanian “knowledge as truth” we mentioned—whose truth constitutes itself in its act of enunciation. Thus, it is not a matter of figuring out what the truth is, in the sense of placing it in a definitive statement, as much as discerning the truth in the very form in which it is presented. What is this form? The form of truth is repetition, in the sense that the repeated “*geist*” in “*das geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*” draws attention to the fact that language, as the medium of the Other supposed to express knowledge and thought, is a clumsy medium and ‘not-All,’ unable to exhaustively say everything.³³ As a result, Hegel’s phrase performs the impossibility, or the Real, inscribed within language and, given that language here has to do with the spoken vows of the partners before the Other, the phrase bears witness to the Real inscribed with the subject’s symbolic immersion as such.

To concretize this repetition in the Hegelian text, we will turn to Jean-Luc Nancy’s earlier book on Hegel, *The Speculative Remark*.³⁴ In this work, Nancy examines the function of Hegel’s supplementary Remarks by which, even though they were manifestly inserted into

³³ This situation is reminiscent of Lacan’s first words from his *Television* lecture: “I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there’s no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it’s through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the Real” (3).

³⁴ In contrast to his later book on Hegel, *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative* (1997).

Hegel's texts³⁵ in order to reinforce and expand upon concepts and ideas brought up in the main body, they implicitly perform and enact a displacement, or sliding (*glissement*), to the main body (46). Consequently, the Remarks stage the fact that there is no totalizing meaning to which one could refer in order to exhaust the scope of the Hegelian text and system—that is to say, there is no “Hegelianism” (16). From this standpoint, Nancy's argument develops a linguistic reading of Hegel, which, instead of arising from an explication of passages, concepts, “triads,” etc. to reconstruct a Hegelian teleologically-based system, unearths a kind of Hegelian *Ursprache*, or an unwritten language. This unwritten language in the Hegelian text functions by way of a displacement and sliding—a “plastic exposition,” to use Nancy's phrase—from the main body to the Remarks, in which the Remarks repeat the main body of the text, but bring it off course as a result (29). The following interpretation of one of Hegel's Remarks is emblematic of his general approach:

[T]he Remark repeats, in and as the determination of the meaning of the word, the curious functioning of the text to which it is appended. A word slips into it, an extra word, on which the construction of concept in turn slides and skids....From its first paragraph the Remark carries us off course or makes its own conceptual reading slide, disturbs or forbids the grasping (*auffassen*) of meaning. One cannot here read—directly—the first or the second mark of a concept. But one is obliged to follow the re-marked and persistent trace of the text's singular slipping economy. Now, this text—as we saw going through it—brought into play more than one

³⁵ It is important to distinguish here that the Remarks Nancy refers to are those added by Hegel himself (usually designated as *Anmerkungen*), as opposed to the additions (*Zusätze*), which abound throughout the *Elements* and *Encyclopedia*, retroactively added by editors of Hegel's works.

determination, used numerous concepts, made more than one detour. All this goes against the direct reading of the Remark. (46)

What specifically interests us about Nancy's linguistic reading of Hegel is the role repetition plays, by which the Remark purports to simply repeat what was stated in the main body as if to confirm it, but, in so doing, the repetition of the Remark effectuates something altogether heterogenous to the stated aim of the text. That is to say, the Remark stages a repetition that bears witness to a remainder and supplement to the text which brings about an unexpected new enunciation of the "statement" in the main text. In other words, there is an operation of repetition in the Hegelian text which, unbeknownst to Hegel, or the "intention" of his text, serve as enunciations for these statements that radically effect their nature, and it is a repetition of this sort that we see in Hegel's phrase on language analyzed above (which, incidentally, is situated in one of Hegel's supplementary Remarks of the *Philosophy of Right*). Thereby, Nancy's reflections on the Remarks enable us to think about the kind of repetition in Hegel's *lalangue* phrase, *geistigste Dasein des Geistigen*, and by extension, the repetition inscribed in the wedding ceremony: namely, a repetition that produces what it was supposed to be repeating, or a repetition that is not so much a cyclical return of the same, as much as the authentic beginning of something New.

Repetition and the Sign

Now, why do we place such strong emphasis on the concept of repetition? It is crucial to think about the logic of this repetition—i.e. this repetition that produces something New—because it allows us to shed light on the repetition of the drive with which we conceptualized

Hegel's wedding ceremony in the first chapter. If it is the case that the ceremony repeats the partners' commitment and love before the Other through their spoken vows, then this repetition cannot be conceptualized as a return of the same, as such a perspective would show how marriage presents no actual change for the subject; at its best, marriage is a complement for the subject's desire, and at its worst, an externally imposed, societal infringement of no significance in shaping the subject's symbolic being. How do we conceptualize this paradoxical repetition? A useful starting point is Lacan's remark apropos the Freudian text, "repetition is not reproduction... *Wiederholen* is not *Reproduzieren*" (*Seminar XI* 50). That is to say, there is a way in which repetition, *Wiederholen*, at stake with the drive, even though it appears to be repeating the same thing over and over again, cannot be reduced to the classic cyclical notion of "the eternal return of the Same". What is at stake in this distinction between repetition and reproduction, and by extension the paradoxical nature of the repetition of the drive, is Freud's conceptualization of *Wiederholungszwang* in his thinking on the transference from his *Papers on Technique*. Essentially, Freud noticed with his patients that, instead of remembering repressed traumas of their past, they would act them out during the session. For example, a patient will not remember that he was defiant to his parents when he was a child, but rather, he will act defiantly towards the analyst during the analysis. As Freud describes it, "we may say that the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces [*reproduziert*] it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* [*wiederholt*] it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (SE XII 150; SA 209-210). The crucial aspect of the compulsion to repeat is its contingent nature, in that the patient does not know in advance that he will repeat something, as if he were to have stored up a series of data and were simply waiting to let it out at a certain moment—this would be reproduction. The compulsion to repeat, however, produces

for the first time what it was supposed to have repeated, in which there is no originary experience or substance from which the repetition can take place. In other words, the repetition at stake here follows Kierkegaard's formula that "genuine repetition is recollected forward," because it is only once the act of repetition has taken place that we can see that which was repeated (Kierkegaard 131; Copjec "Sexual Compact" 35).

We have already seen how this repetition that recollects forward is at stake on the level of Hegel's text,³⁶ but we can also see it on the level of his concepts, particularly with respect to the term Hegel uses to designate the role of language during the ceremony: the sign (*Zeichen*). In what sense does Hegel's conception of the sign capture this sense of *Wiederholen* against *Reproduzieren*? According to Hegel's discussion of the sign in the third part of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences: The Philosophy of Mind*,³⁷ the *sign* is distinguished from *symbols* inasmuch as signs do not embody what they represent (PM §457). Hegel gives flags or tombstones as examples of signs, as a flag is not the physical country it represents and a tombstone is not the corpse whose resting place it marks, whereas the image of the eagle used in Greek mythology, however, is a symbol insofar as it is the direct embodiment of Zeus (§475). The reason Hegel draws this distinction between the sign and symbol is not to make the trivial point that signs function as representatives for things and images, but rather, the sign retroactively

³⁶ In another vein, in her essay "Resistance and Repetition: Freud and Hegel" Rebecca Comay investigates the repetition at stake in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, in which the various figures of consciousness make the same mistakes throughout, effectively impeding the supposed progress of the narrative. From these mindless repetitions, she makes the case, as the title of the essay suggests, that repetition in Hegel's text is intimately bound up with resistance, in the sense of blocks and stoppages, but these moments of failure also reveal actualize moments of re-invention:

Even more striking than the profusion of the material is the prodigious inefficiency of the narrative: the incessant stalling and backsliding, the meandering and repetition, the stubborn obliviousness, the self-censorship, and constant black-outs. Consciousness proves to be a virtuoso at forgetting what it learns—disparaging its significance, disarming its impact, or drawing inferences that can be counter-intuitive and perverse....Hegel's most brilliant insight is that the category of 'change' is in itself an empty abstraction—it provides the perfect alibi for its own denial—while the resistance to change can be the greatest impetus to transformation." (263)

³⁷ However, discussions of the sign are not exclusive to the *Encyclopedia*, as Hegel also discusses it in his *Jenaer Realphilosophie* and his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (see next footnote on Paul De Man's essay).

produces what it was tasked with representing. That is to say, the sign does not work on a pre-existing intuition, as the point of Hegel's argument is to show how such an "immediate intuition" is a retroactive effect which produces the illusion that such an intuition was already in place and it only awaited the sign to express it (§458):³⁸

The sign is some immediate intuition [*Anschauung*], representing a totally different import from what naturally belongs to it; it is the pyramid into which a foreign soul has been conveyed [*versetzt*], and where it is conserved [*aufbewahrt*]. The sign is different from the symbol: for in the symbol the original characters (in essence and conception) of the visible object are more or less identical with the import which it bears as symbol; whereas in the sign, strictly so-called, the natural attributes of the intuition, and the connotation of which it is a sign, have nothing to do with each

³⁸ On this point, Paul De Man claims that the Hegelian sign effectively denaturalizes what it "represents," showing how the entity it represents is not an exhaustive whole, but "citational" ("Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*" 767). From this standpoint, de Man then looks to the fate of Hegel's distinction between sign and symbol in the 'symbolic art' section of the *Aesthetics*, showing how the distinction between the two gets blurred. While De Man's situating the sign in a broader aesthetic argument is beyond the scope of our argument here, it is worth noting his formulation of the Hegelian sign, in which he makes explicit the relationship between the sign and the subject:

To the extent that the sign is entirely independent with regard to the objective, natural properties of the entity toward which it points and instead posits properties by means by means of its own powers, the sign illustrates the capacity of the intellect to 'use' the perceived world for its own purposes, to efface (*tilgen*) its properties and to put others in their stead. This activity of the intellect is both a freedom, since it is arbitrary, and a coercion, since it does violence, as it were, to the world. The sign does not actually say what it means to say or, to drop the misleading anthropomorphic metaphor of a speaking sign endowed with a voice, the predication involved in a sign is always citational. When I say, 'The red, white, and green flag is Italian,' this predicative sentence is always what in scholastic terminology is called an *actus signatus*: it presupposes an implicit subject (or I) which frames the statement and makes it into a quotation: I say (or I declare, or I proclaim) that the red, white, and green flag is Italian—a specification that does not have to occur when, in ordinary conversation, I say, "The city of Rome and the Apennines are Italian." (767)

What is striking about De Man's formulation is that with signs, or statements that employ signs, there is always already a subject who frames the statement, or a way in which one must "take sides" in deploying signs. However, following the Lacanian framework we outlined above, the subject is always already split from itself between the enunciation and statement, whereas De Man's subject appears to be an undivided identity beneath the statement and pre-existing it. Moreover, while De Man is justified in showing how the Hegelian sign bears witness to the death of a more essential "signified," or how there is no fixed and congealed meaning that undergirds the sign, I would argue that Hegel's argument in the *Encyclopedia* takes things a step further, in that the sign does not merely displace "the perceived world" it was tasked with signifying, but, more radically, *creates* the world it signifies, in which the sign produces what it represses and abstracts. As a consequence of this, the repression and violence done by the sign onto the world is the repression and violence done to the world *by itself*, by which the "perceived world" does not exist externally and in another scene outside of the sign.

other. Intelligence therefore gives proof of wider choice [*Willkür*] and ampler authority [*Herrschaft*] in the use of intuitions when it treats them as designatory (significative) rather than as symbolical. (§458)

The sign is like the pyramid, which, to follow the path Derrida set in his intriguing analysis of this passage, keeps its content or image “like the water in a nightlike or unconscious pit (*nächtliche Schacht, bewusstlose Schacht*)” (77); the sign need only stand as the pyramid, keeping its pit within and underneath it. More pointedly, the sign is immanently split between the pit and pyramid, since the pit does not confront the sign as its other as much as it designates the “conscious-less” (to more literally translate *bewusstlos*) moment always already contained in the sign’s constitution. What this distinction amounts to is a kind of perspective illusion inscribed in the Hegelian sign, by which it is only when the subject gazes at the pyramid that the possibility arises for something to have been transferred [*versetzt*] and conserved [*aufbewahrt*] within it. That is to say, the Hegelian sign contains within itself the performative logic we see in the wedding ceremony, in which the sign retroactively produces the content and substance that was supposed to ground it. In other words, the Hegelian sign is a repetition of what it signifies, which, paradoxically, produces what it was supposed to be repeating and representing.³⁹

³⁹ Kleist, in one of his earlier and enigmatic writings “On the Enlightenment of Women” (so titled by the editor of Kleist’s works), appears to conceptualize the sign as the exact opposite of Hegel’s notion: namely, the sign for Kleist is the expression and external representative of inner feelings (*Gefühle*). As Kleist puts it,

For nothing can be believed too lightly, one has done everything if one seriously observes the rituals of religion, diligently goes to church, daily prays, and does communion twice annually. However, these rituals are only a *sign* of a feeling [*Zeichen eines Gefühls*] which can even be expressed entirely differently. For with the same feelings by which you take the bread from the hands of priests for communion, with the same feelings, I say, the Mexicans strangle their brothers before the altars of their gods (KSä 316-317).

Despite Kleist’s expressivist formulation of the sign, there is a way in which this passage works against itself because, on the one hand, Kleist is claiming that the same feeling can underlie these different manifestations or signs, but, on the other hand, Kleist relies upon the feeling being *posited* through customs in order to clarify his point, thereby showing how, first and foremost, the feeling, in order to *exist* as a feeling, must exist through something, some form. Why could Kleist not simply talk about this feeling by itself in its ‘immediate existence’? Hence, one could speculatively read Kleist as precipitating Hegel’s point about the symbolic effectivity of the sign.

As a consequence of this repetition inscribed within the sign, language for Hegel does not function as a “rational logos,” in the sense of a reflexive process that brings about a state of self-awareness and transparency. Indeed, just as the wedding ceremony does not bring about an inner awareness for the married partners, the repetition of the sign bears witness to an unknowingness—this pit— inscribed within language, and this unconscious dimension of language is particularly visible in Hegel’s conceptualization of the name (*Name*). Hegel defines the name as “the simple sign [*einfache Zeichen*] for the exact idea” because names cannot be decomposed into all their elements and thereby derived from the things they represent (PM §462). What Hegel means by this is that names, unlike other signs (flag, tombstone, etc.), are even more irreducible in that they are composed of letters which are entirely stripped of any representational relation with what they signify, and it is in this sense that they exemplify the logic of the sign:

To want a name means that for the immediate idea (which, however ample a connotation it may include, is still for the mind simple in the name), we require a simple immediate sign [*einfaches unmittelbares Zeichen*] which for its own sake does not suggest anything and has for its sole function to signify and represent sensibly the simple idea [*Vorstellung*] as such. It is not merely the image-loving and image-limited intelligence that lingers over the simplicity of ideas and reintegrates them from the more abstract factors into which they have been analyzed: thought too reduces the form of a simple thought to the concrete connotation which it “resumes” and reunites from the mere aggregate of attributes to which analysis has reduced it. Both alike require such signs, simple in respect of their meaning: signs, which

though consisting of several letters or syllables and even decomposed into such, yet do not exhibit a combination of several ideas. (PM §459)

A strange dialectical encounter is staged within the name because, even though the final name as such makes sense (lion, cat, dog, etc.) and functions in a symbolic network of meaning, there is an unthinking that ultimately sustains its signification.⁴⁰ Names, which Hegel does not simply reduce to proper names but words in general, can only make sense to the extent that they are blindly accepted and anticipated, like a habit that has become “second nature,” without trying to derive or think about it, as doing so would only lead to unnecessary confusion. Indeed, this moment of forgetting inscribed in the name is concretized in Hegel’s conception of the memory (*Gedächtnis*) that mechanically retains names, in which clinging on to the meaning of the names impedes their memorization: “[I]n this case the mind is estranged [*entäußert*] from itself, and its action is like machinery” (§463). Thereby, names are irreducible kernels because there is no reflexive and self-transparent ground that guarantees their sense and symbolic function. For example, using the name “lion” does not require any reflexive effort for it to be understood, as rationally thinking and deriving why these particular four letters represent the animal is entirely superfluous and unnecessary. In other words, names can only make sense insofar as they are accompanied by this irreducible kernel of non-sense, this moment of forgetting and evaporation of sense.⁴¹

⁴⁰ From this perspective, what I find problematic about Derrida’s reading of these passages in Hegel is that he draws from this irreducibility of the name an exhaustive, totalizing presence, or a substance, which undergirds language. As Derrida claims, “The word, and the name, which with its *catégorie* is the word par excellence, functions in this linguistics as the simple, irreducible and complete element that bears the unity of sound and sense in the voice....The irreducible privilege of the name is the keystone of the Hegelian philosophy of language” (96). While Derrida’s description is consistent with Hegel in that the name takes on a general significance for the operation of language and signification as such, as opposed to being a minor operation of immaterial importance for the broader dialectical functioning of language in Hegel, the irreducible nature of the name, far from offering an exhaustive presence or meaning underlying Hegelian linguistics, in fact bears witness to a Real which shows how language is always incomplete and divided from itself.

⁴¹ Despite Frederic Jameson’s reservations concerning the *Encyclopedia* passages on language, his observations about language in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* are apt for the vicissitudes of the name which we are investigating:

In effect, in the course of our discussion of the sign and the name we have imperceptibly shifted from repetition to repression, in the sense that the repetition of the object or thing into the significative name mandates a contraction and disciplining of “the thing.” It is only by way of this disciplining that an unrepressed *jouissance* of an immediate object can be conceived, thereby showing how the repression produces both the name that represses and the thing repressed. We use the term *jouissance* precisely in the sense that Lacan uses it in discussing Freud’s myth from *Totem and Taboo* when the sons murder the father with the aim of destroying the prohibitions set by the father, thereby breaking their state of repression and finally gaining access to the father’s alleged unbarred enjoyment (*Seminar VII* 176). But as Lacan points out, “not only does the murder of the father not open the path to *jouissance* that the presence of the father was supposed to prohibit, but it, in fact, strengthens the prohibition” (176). That is to say, just because god is dead does not mean anything is allowed, but rather, the exact opposite: everything is prohibited (184). In this sense, *jouissance* designates the properly imaginary *x* that is supposed to lie beyond symbolic repression and, in aiming for this *x*, the subject further binds itself to its symbolic world. To use Judith Butler’s term, albeit slightly modified, this *jouissance* establishes a “passionate attachment,” in which the subject’s symbolic subordination is a function of its trying to evade and foreclose its subordination (Butler *Psychic Life* 9-10). Along these lines, we argue that, according to Hegel’s framework on the sign and name, trying to move beyond symbolic mediation and repression is always already a product of repression and reinforcement for further subordination. Hence, it is not a question of thinking beyond names, or attaining a purified immediacy, as much as it is a question of showing how symbolic repression is already

Language...is more revealing for what it cannot say than it is for what it does manage to say: and this will so clearly mark the kinship of this moment of Hegel, not only with contemporary theory, but also with modernism in literature, where failure is so often more significant than success, and where the limits of language become the limits of representation as such. (*Hegel Variations* 35)

fractured from within and effectively not-All. Given this premise, the repetition that recollects forward can only take place in turn under the conditions of repression and symbolic disciplining, and it is only through symbolic repression and mediation that the subject's standpoint of enunciation can undergo an authentic shift.

From this perspective, we see how the vicissitudes of Hegel's accounts of the sign and name have important consequences for the wedding ceremony. Indeed, as we mentioned above, it is no accident that Hegel specifically uses the term *sign* in order to characterize the properly spiritual function of language in concluding marriage and transforming it into an ethical relation. Given Hegel's extensive discussions of the sign throughout his work, there is firm reason to believe that the spoken words of the ceremony, via the sign, both contract and repress the marriage into a succinct statement, which, in turn, testifies to an antagonism and splitting around which this spiritual mediation is structured, i.e. the immanent split between the pit and the pyramid. But Hegel's account of marriage presents the linguistic problematic of the sign as an ethical problematic, by which an authentic ethical act consists not in finding a way to liberate and detach oneself from the Law and Other, but rather consists in the subject (over-)identifying with its symbolic repression in order to actualize the repetition that recollects forward, or positing its presupposition and ground anew; this is what we refer to as the shift in the subject's standpoint of enunciation. An ethical mediation for Hegel, as we see it being constituted during the wedding ceremony, is thus not a question of assigning this or that identity, formula, principle, etc., but rather, it is intimately bound up with an act that shows the irreducible disparity and void between a particular statement and the enunciation thereby punctured and shifted. Therefore, an ethical relation for Hegel has profoundly nothing to do with what Lacan referred to as the

“morality of power” or “service of goods,” (*Seminar VII* 315) but, on the contrary, it is a relation immanently marked by a trauma and fundamental anxiety.

3. On the *Entschluss* of Marriage: Hegel with Schelling and Kleist

As already mentioned in the first chapter, a significant dimension of Hegel's thinking on marriage is the abyssal moment of decision (*Entschluss*), which in German means both decision and resolve. The *Entschluss* of marriage confronts us with a paradox within Hegel's ethical edifice: on the one hand, marriage is supposed to be the first moment in which the subject becomes self-conscious, by way of recognizing itself in an other and no longer being bound to the immediate and passive state of the natural drives (i.e., sexual interest and so on); but, on the other hand, Hegel seems to be against the idea that marriage should be decided based on the interests of the subjects, thereby imposing limits on the subject's reflexive agency. By investigating the *Entschluss* in marriage, we will see how the Hegelian subject is split from itself and fractured by an ontological splitting. From this standpoint, we will show how marriage effectuates a rupture with the Hegelian ethical edifice, as it serves to displace the sovereign decisionism intimately bound up with the state. In order to tease out the properly "metaphysical" dimension of the *Entschluss*, we will then turn to the work of F.W. Schelling—particularly to his *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) and *Ages of the World* (1813 draft)—showing how the two German idealist philosophers come uncannily close to thinking about a subject constituted by a fracture, instead of an undivided identity. We will also look to Kleist's story, "The Earthquake in Chile," in order to crystallize our observations concerning this moment of *Entschluss* contained within love and marriage. Hence, it is the aim of this chapter to tackle this abyssal moment of decision within marriage irreducible to a voluntaristic and transparent choice, thereby showing an act with which the subject necessarily fails to coincide and gain self-awareness.

Entschluss of Marriage

Indeed, Hegel goes so far as to claim that arranged marriage is “the more ethical course,” instead of marriages where the partners choose to marry for themselves (PR §162):

To enter the state of marriage is an objective determination, and hence an ethical duty. The external origin of a given marriage is by nature contingent, and depends in particular on the level of development [*Bildung*] of reflective thought [*Reflexion*]. At one extreme, the initial step is taken by well-intentioned parents, and when the persons destined to be united in love get to know each other as destined partners, a mutual inclination [*Neigung*] results. At the other extreme, it is the mutual inclination of the two persons, as these infinitely particularized individuals, which arises first.—The former extreme, or any way at all in which the decision to marry comes first and is followed by the inclination so that the two come together in the actual marital union, can itself be regarded as the more ethical course [*der Entschluss zur Verheleichung den Anfang macht und die Neigung zur Folge hat, so dass bei der wirklichen Verheiraturung nun beides vereinigt ist, kann selbst als der sittlichere Weg angesehen werden*].—In the latter extreme, it is infinitely particular distinctness [*Eigentümlichkeit*] which asserts its claims; this is associated with the subjective principle of the modern world (see Remarks to 124 above). (§162)

The remark with which Hegel concludes is where he distinguishes the freedom of the moderns from antiquity, whereby the notions of subjective autonomy and pathological self-interest—two things separated by Kant—are two sides of the same coin, definitive of the distinctly modern drive for subjective self-determination (PR §162). The *Entschluss* Hegel develops is, on the one

hand, neither a form of self-determination in the sense of a voluntaristic capacity to choose, nor, on the other hand, a resignation over to the subject's urges and instincts. In contrast to both these extremes—if they are extremes—the *Entschluss* is a contingent act of decision, albeit a decision which passes over to necessity, as the enactment of fate. To glimpse the full weight of this paradox—the paradox of a “forced choice” which is done as a contingent act because it is necessary—what is striking about Hegel's argumentation in the above passage is the way in which an inclination (*Neigung*), which is presented as the opposite of the *Entschluss*, is *something to be decided* as opposed to something which arises spontaneously. That is to say, what appears to be natural chemistry between two lovers is something that is always already marked by a decision in advance, or, just as we saw in our investigations of the wedding ceremony, posited retroactively. Hence in following this thread Hegel opens up, we may see how it is not only possible for parents to decide a marriage for the partners unacquainted with one another and for a genuine inclination to then follow; it is also possible that partners who appear to have been acquainted with one another and get married after having established the inclination only produce such an appearance of spontaneous harmony retroactively through the decision to marry. This is how we should read Hegel when he claims, to translate more literally, “the decision to marriage makes the beginning [*der Entschluss zur Verehelichung den Anfang macht*]” (§162). Emphasizing this paradoxical dimension of the *Entschluss*, by which it produces the beginning that was supposed to have grounded it, shows how Hegel's view on arranged marriage is not simply a “premodern” setback, as if Hegel were arguing for a pre-reflective and organic ethical disposition against reflexive agency and autonomy,⁴² but rather, the *Entschluss* is part and parcel of a radical re-conception of ethical commitment which functions

⁴² This is what Allen Wood suggests by presenting Hegel's view on arranged marriage as exceptional to an otherwise sound and reflective ethical subjectivity in Hegel's edifice (217).

not by way of closure but by opening up to a project, whose stakes and guarantee are unknown to the subjects.⁴³ Indeed, this tension between opening up or closing off, or decision and resolution, is contained in the term itself, as the *Schluss* comes from the verb *schließen* or to close, and the *ent* prefix can be seen as an undoing or negation of this closure.

From this standpoint, the *Entschluss* is abyssal precisely insofar as the stakes of the decision must be unknown to the subjects involved and it is only after the act (*nachträglich*) that its consequences come to light. It is in this way that Hegel is resuming a line of argumentation that goes back to his ethical thinking from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which he situates the *Entschluss* within the actions undertaken by the heroes from Sophoclean tragedy (particularly Oedipus and Antigone). Without entering into the far-ranging and interesting discussions on Hegel's use of tragedy within his ethical edifice,⁴⁴ what interests us is how Hegel specifically uses the term *Entschluss* to designate those actions of tragic heroes that ensnare the hero in a broader destiny of which they necessarily remain unaware while committing the act, such as Oedipus's unwitting slaying of his father and taking his mother as his wife. As Hegel frames it,

In the action, only one aspect of the resolve as such is clearly manifest [*nur die eine Seite des Entschlusses überhaupt an dem Tage*]. The resolve, however, is *in-itself* the negative aspect which confronts the resolve with an "other", with something alien to the resolve which knows what it does [*der das Wissen ist*]. Actuality therefore holds concealed within it the other aspect which is alien to this knowledge, and does not reveal the whole truth about itself to consciousness: the son does not recognize his father in the man who has wronged him and whom he slays, nor his mother in the

⁴³From this perspective, instead of the usual themes of "intersubjective recognition," "singularity in unity," and so on, Hegel's views on love and marriage come strikingly close to Alain Badiou's: "[Love] is an existential project: to construct a world from a decentered point of view other than that of my mere impulse to survive or re-affirm my own identity" (25).

⁴⁴ See Lacan, *Seminar VII* 243-287; Butler, *Antigone's Claim* 31-37; Speight 42-67.

queen whom he makes his wife. In this way, a power which shuns the light of day ensnares the ethical self-consciousness, a power which breaks forth only after the deed is done. (PH §469)

What we see with the *Entschluss* is an act with which the subject remains unequal, in the sense that the subject's standpoint of enunciation does not coincide with the act, or what the tragic hero 'intended' has no purchase on what the act accomplishes symbolically and how it is registered. This means that the subject necessarily undertakes the resolve in an abyssal moment of anticipation without the guarantee of the Other to guide it and inform it of what the resolve will accomplish. That is to say, unlike mediated decisions like voting in elections, where one decides from a set of options and can have access to information offered by the Other, the ethical resolve at stake with tragedy presents the subject with an abyssal moment of pure anticipation. This is why Hegel's primary example of an ethical act is Antigone's when she resolves to bury and give the proper funeral rites to the corpse of her brother, Polynices, against the ordinances set by King Creon after Polynices was killed attacking his city (Sophocles, "Antigone" 1-77). Antigone commits herself to her resolve by "sticking steadfastly to what is right, and abstaining from all attempts to move or shake it, or derive it" (PH §437). Hence, what constitutes these acts in tragedy as instances of *Entschluss* is that the subject dissolves and alienates itself in the moment of the act, vanishing and passing over into a subjective figure no longer present to itself—"a bloodless shade" (§474). Despite the entirely different and less dramatic mode of presentation of Hegel's later account of *Sittlichkeit* in the *Philosophy of Right*, it is this abyssal moment of subjective diremption that is at stake in the resolve to marry and which is thereby also implicated in decisions which appear to be quotidian and banal, part of our everyday social life.

In order to see how the *Entschluss* is a resolve that does not coincide with the subject who is supposed to make it, Kleist's story "The Earthquake in Chile" can be of use. The plot follows Jeronimo and Josephe, who fall in love with each other after being acquainted with one another when Jeronimo is hired as Josephe's tutor. However, Josephe's father, as soon as he discovers they have fallen in love, immediately dismisses Jeronimo and sends Josephe away to a convent. Eventually, Jeronimo finds Josephe at the convent and the two resume their liaison. Shortly thereafter, it is discovered that Josephe is pregnant. As a result, Josephe is sent to prison and sentenced to death, while, in the meantime, Jeronimo is sent to prison for unknown reasons. On the day that Josephe is being walked out to the gallows and Jeronimo is about to commit suicide in his prison cell after hearing this news, a violent earthquake suddenly rocks Chile and severely damages the city of Santiago. For the two lovers, however, the earthquake is a blessing in disguise, as they both, after having miraculously survived the earthquake, once again resume their liaison, and plan to flee the country and begin a new life together abroad. However, in a strange turn of events, Jeronimo decides that he would prefer to seek forgiveness from the viceroy of Chile, albeit with the caveat that they send him a letter from afar to see if the Viceroy's response will be favorable:

Jeronimo, when both had fallen silent among these reflections, took Josephe by the arm and led her, in more blithness of spirit than words can tell, up and down under the shady pomegranate trees. He told her that, hearts and minds being now as they were and all former circumstances now overthrown, he had abandoned his decision [*Entschluß*] to take a ship to Europe; that if the Viceroy, who had always been sympathetic to him in his plight, were still alive he was resolved to petition him, and that he was hopeful (here he kissed her) of being able to remain with her in Chile.

Josephe replied that similar thoughts had risen in her too; that she herself no longer doubted that, if her father were still alive, he could be conciliated; but that rather than throwing themselves at the Viceroy's feet they should go to La Concepcion and conduct the business of reconciliation with him by letter; for there, whatever the outcome, they would be near the port and, if things went well and as they hoped, they could easily come back to Santiago. Having reflected a little Jeronimo acknowledged the wisdom of this strategy, and a while longer, surveying the happiness ahead of them, they continued their promenade, before returning to the company. (KSW 319; KSä 153)

But, as it turns out, the two lovers, along with the group of survivors they have met up with, find out that a service will be held in one of the only standing churches, and this altered resolve is suddenly forgotten and they return to town and meet their death after the Viceroy incites a crowd to kill them after blaming them personally for the earthquake. Far from this unfortunate turn of events for the lovers being a mere matter of chance, we should pay close attention to how the lovers' resolve is forfeited twice: once when they changed their plans by not going to Europe to start a new life, then again when they go to the service and meet the Viceroy, taking the risk that they will be found. What makes the lovers conveniently forget about their resolve and meet certain death? Like most of Kleist's stories and plays, there is a missing gap and void within the story (similar to the dash in "The Marquise of O—"), but, even though this chain of events appears illogical, I think Kleist is questioning the functioning of the *Entschluss*: namely, the *Entschluss* is something that the subject makes, but is, in another respect, always already made and set in stone. That is to say, the subject's enactment of the resolve paradoxically actualizes the decision that was always already there all along and a decision is always a decision already

made. In this sense, there is a structural impossibility inscribed in the *Entschluss* that bears witness to a subject who is not-all, incapable of a perfect unity between what they intend and what actually takes place—there is an ontological gap between the two. And it is precisely this ontological gap we see so clearly with the *Entschluss* of marriage in Hegel, because there is a gap between what the partners might think and intend, on the one hand, and the actual course of the marriage, on the other.

In effect, the *Entschluss* we see in marriage, in turn, has significant consequences for Hegel's thinking on self-consciousness because, against the notion of self-consciousness as the attainment of self-transparency and a higher awareness which marks the subject's climb up the ladder of evolution (as hasty readings of Hegel would suggest), the *Entschluss* bears witness to an abyssal and irreducible moment of resolve. Usually, self-consciousness in Hegel is taken to mean a reflexive moment for a subject who attains awareness of itself by way of attaining awareness of others, or reflecting itself into others.⁴⁵ Without entering into the debates around what Hegel means by the moment of intersubjectivity at stake in self-consciousness—which usually take the infamous lord and bondsman dialectic from Hegel's *Phenomenology* as their paradigm⁴⁶—what such a conception of self-consciousness presupposes is a subject who is “equal to their act” (Zupančič *Ethics of the Real* 101-102). That is to say, the self-conscious subject is made out to be an undivided identity which narcissistically maintains itself as a whole that finds itself in social substance again and again.⁴⁷ However, with the dimension of

⁴⁵ This, I would say, is the view of Alexandre Kojève, who establishes a kind of Marxist eschatology in the Hegelian self-conscious subject based on an anthropological teleology (5). However, even in dispensing with such a teleological framework, this gesture of finding self-transparency through an other can also be discerned in Robert Pippin's more recent attempts to frame self-consciousness as satisfying “the conditions of genuine mutuality” (91).

⁴⁶ Kojève, again, provides perhaps the most influential of such readings.

⁴⁷ For example, this view is presented by Jameson:

We thereby search the whole world, and outer space, and only end up touching ourselves, only seeing our own face persist through multitudinous differences and forms of otherness. Never truly to encounter the not-I, to come

Entschluss we see in Hegel's account of marriage it can be seen that there is an evaporation of the subject in the process of becoming self-consciousness. A useful point of reference here is Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda's recent work that develops Hegel's *Entschluss* as if it were a part of his "official lexicon of speculative words (*Aufhebung*, *Urteil*, etc.)" (109), showing how there is a paradoxical short-circuit between decision and resolve, on the one hand, in the guise of a commitment to begin, but, on the other hand, there is also a renunciation and letting go of the very subjective position from which the decision could have been made (108-109). As Comay and Ruda put it, "The resolve is also therefore an abandon or release, *Entlassen*, a renunciation of agency at the heart of action. In other words, and it will have been the fundamental achievement of the *Phenomenology* to clarify this, Hegel is a resolutely non-voluntarist—post-Kantian, post-Fichtean, post-Romantic—thinker" (108). What is striking about their formulation of the Hegelian *Entschluss* for our purposes is that it is this gesture of decision and renunciation which we see in Hegel's wedding ceremony, where the partners, in saying the simple "I do" before the Other, are committing themselves to the beginning of a project and journey, but in so doing, they must renounce and leave behind their old subject position, which necessarily becomes fundamentally and permanently effaced. As a consequence, the abyssal *Entschluss* in marriage bears witness to a dimension of anxiety and trauma inscribed in the moment at which the subject attains self-consciousness, by way of an alienation of oneself in the act, without there being the comfort of an external guarantee that would ensure its success or failure.

However, there is yet a further dimension of this *Entschluss* that must be clarified. It is not the case that this decision, as an evacuation of the subjective position from which the

face to face with radical otherness (or even worse, to find ourselves in an historical dynamic in which it is precisely difference and otherness which is relentlessly being stamped out): such is the dilemma of the Hegelian dialectic....(*Hegel Variations* 131)

decision arises, bears witness to an inherent indecidability in the emergence of the subject, or “knowing of restlessness, knowing without rest” (Nancy *Restlessness* 75). It is essential to distinguish the *Entschluss* we are establishing from the kind of decision Jean-Luc Nancy, in his later book on Hegel, delineates in which “the infinite subject...decides...not to hold to any finite form of being or of itself” (9) because, while it is certainly not the case that the *Entschluss* is a matter of choosing this or that pre-established identity, it is also necessary to show how something finite is decided. As illuminating as Nancy’s discussion of decision in Hegel’s thinking is, a decision that maintains the subject in a restlessness that continually negates any fixed and stabilized subjective identity leaves out the other, albeit necessary, side of *Entschluss*: a resolve. That is to say, even though the *Entschluss* works on an infinite level, which is that of the enunciation, it nonetheless brings about a particular statement. For example, it is not the case that the moment of *Entschluss* in the wedding ceremony goes on forever, as there are concrete, and therefore necessarily finite, consequences of the resolve to marry, i.e. living a new life, losing the idealized image you may have initially had of your partner, seeing their disgusting habits, sharing the same house, etc. (Žižek “Hegel on Marriage” 5). Or, put in different terms, in order for a revolution to take place it is not enough to leave things at the infinite moment of change—like flipping cars, setting tires on fire, breaking windows, chanting and protesting in the streets; there must also be a more fundamental shift, which is less perceptible, that ensures the next day we have a new “normal,” or as Žižek puts it, “a new positive Order which gives body to this negativity” (*Ticklish Subject* 286). That being said, of course there has to be this infinite moment of decision within the *Entschluss*, but only insofar as there is also a resolve that leads to *something*, where there cannot be an infinity for infinity’s sake, as this would only lead to

perverse evasion of the act, or the bad infinite of “an absolute task, i.e. one which simply remains a task” (PH §603).

Entschluss vs. Entscheidung in Hegel's Philosophy of Right

But then the question immediately arises: are we simply reducing the *Entschluss* to a sovereign decisionism, akin to the decision of Hegel's monarch (PR §279)? Already on the level of Hegel's vocabulary, there is a distinction between the *Entschluss* which we see in marriage, on the one hand, and the *Entscheidung* of the monarch, on the other, in which *Entscheidung* is closer to the usual sense of making a choice; later on we will investigate Schelling's distinction between these two terms, which is structured differently from Hegel's. But for now, we will show how, in comparing Hegel's usage of the two terms in the *Philosophy of Right*, the *Entscheidung* Hegel discusses in the section on the monarch does not contain the properly speculative dimension of *Entschluss*, as it has to do with a decision from a prearranged framework of choices as opposed to the abyssal (and metaphysical) moment of deciding its own ground and beginning. To give some background, Hegel's discussion of the monarch comes out of a broader analysis concerning how any form of government must contain a subjectivity who can bring about an irreducible moment of decision without further debate and discussion, regardless of the government being a democracy, aristocracy, monarchy, etc. (§279); and it is here that Hegel makes the case for the personage of the monarch who is “the *personality of the state* [Persönlichkeit des Staats], its *certainty of itself* [Gewißheit seiner selbst]” (§279). Leaving to one side Hegel's rich discussion of constitutional monarchy, what I will draw attention to for

our purposes is the way in which Hegel formulates the decision of the monarch as emanating from himself, as opposed to arriving from the outside:

Sovereignty, which is initially only the universal thought of this ideality, can exist only as subjectivity which is certain of itself [*selbst gewisse* Subjektivität], and as the will's abstract—and to that extent ungrounded—*self-determination* in which the ultimate decision [*Entscheidung*] is vested. This is the individual aspect of the state as such, and it is in this respect alone that the state itself is one. But subjectivity attains its truth only as a *subject*, and personality only as a *person*, and in a constitution which has progressed to real rationality, each of the three moments of the concept has its distinctive shape which is actual for itself. This absolutely decisive moment [*entscheidende Moment*] of the whole, therefore, is not individuality in general, but *one* individual, the *monarch*. (§279)

While appreciating the subtle nature of Hegel's argument, in that he shows how the decision of the monarch is perfectly consistent with modern subjectivity (instead of being a premodern regress to the *ancien régime*, as one might suspect), there is a way in which the logic of the *Entscheidung* as a "self-determination" confronts us with a regress in Hegel's argumentation in which Hegel is not Hegelian enough (§279). The reason why Hegel sees the monarch as consistent with modern autonomy is because the monarch's decision, unlike state decisions in antiquity that relied on external phenomena (oracles, the flight of birds, inspection of animal entrails, etc.), arises from within, as a decision that is "self-knowing [*sich wissenden*]" and therefore "*isolated for itself and exalted above everything particular and conditional*" (§279). The problem here, however, is that the monarch does not undergo (the properly ethical) passage of the *Entschluss* that we see in marriage, in which the stakes of the decision must necessarily

remain unknown to the subject. That is to say, the monarch's decision does not get posited by the Other, but instead, remains an immediate inclination that has no consequences for his standpoint of enunciation—the monarch simply comes and goes as he pleases without any ethical commitment to establishing a new order. To be sure, it is precisely Hegel's point that the monarch is a sort of mute figure who is simply "someone to say 'yes' and to dot the 'I's," but the monarch nevertheless remains equal to these acts of saying "yes" and dotting the "Is," by which the *Entscheidung* maintains the coincidence of the subjects of the statement and the enunciation which are necessarily split and alienated in the *Entschluss* (§279). Hence, the monarch's *Entscheidung* does not contain the moment in which his subjective position from which he makes the decision is renounced, dissolving in its act.

Hegel goes on to claim that when the monarch makes his decision, what matters is not his particularity or his specific traits (his charisma, personality, etc.), but rather, strictly the role he performs within his delimited state function in making the "formal decision" (§279). The distinction Hegel is making here is not simply the distinction between the man and the office, but how this distinction is reflected into the monarch himself, in which, regardless of what the monarch may think and feel about his role as head of state, what bestows on him the function to decide necessarily remains out of his control and beyond himself—it is what it is in him more than him that counts: "The monarch...is essentially determined as *this* individual, in abstraction from every other content, and this individual is determined in an immediate and natural way, i.e. by his natural *birth*, to hold the dignity of the monarch" (§280). This latter detail belies the immediately obvious democratic criticism about monarchy as to whether or not the monarch's legitimacy rests upon arbitrary grounds, because the underlying assumption of such a criticism is that the monarch's personality is what counts and not the state itself (§280). But what interests

us with Hegel's argumentation apropos the monarch is that the moment of decision involves a renunciation, which consists of a negation of the particular features and content of the monarch's personality in order to assume the strictly state function. This is why Hegel claims (in the aforementioned passage) that the monarch's decision is an "ungrounded *self-determination* [*grundlose Selbstbestimmung*]" (§279): the monarch's capacity to decide state matters is derived from that which necessarily remains beyond his reach, that something "in him more than him" with which he can never coincide. However, this renunciation, or "constitutive lack," of the monarch bears a curious resemblance to the dialectic of desire we explored earlier on, as there must be some kind of standpoint of enunciation that is always already placed beyond him so that the monarch can continually make the same kind of decision repeatedly. In effect, there is a way in which Hegel's text works against itself, despite its supposed intentions (even though we are putting into question the very notion of univocal "intention(s)" underlying the Hegelian text), as the *Entschluss* of the married partners, as the decision that negates the very standpoint from which the subject could make the decision, inscribes a split and trauma in the subject which repeats itself later on with the monarch. That is to say, we see how the monarch's decision, as part of his symbolic title, cannot coincide with his position of enunciation, thereby showing how the trauma of the *Entschluss* presents itself as a "return of the repressed." Instead of a higher phase (the *Entscheidung* of the monarch and the state) in Hegel's edifice overtaking and fully repressing a lower phase (the *Entschluss* of marriage), which seems to be the 'intention' Hegel outlines, Hegel's text is effectively overdetermined and undermined from within. Hegel's text works against itself because, despite Hegel making this distinction between the *Entscheidung* of the monarch and the *Entschluss* of marriage, he does not follow through with the gap we clearly see in the monarch's position of enunciation which, we argue, bears witness to the *Entschluss* of

marriage returning to haunt the *Entscheidung* (the supposedly “higher phase”). Therefore, the *Entschluss* of marriage constitutes a trauma whose traces survive in later moments of the system, thereby bearing witness to how Hegel’s ethical edifice is “not-All.”

To return to the *Entschluss*, the release and letting go, *Entlassen*, inscribed within the *Entschluss* is not simply a constitutive lack that forms the subject, in the sense of a subject renouncing this or that particular thing or aspect of their identity. On the contrary, the renunciation is nothing less than this lack *itself* being renounced, thereby bearing witness to an operation of subtraction in which the very notion of a lack that survives its subtraction is what gets subtracted. To illustrate this, we can look to Paul Claudel’s play *The Hostage*. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Sygne de Coûfontaine, who is one of the last survivors of her noble family, lives with her cousin, Georges, in the former Coûfontaine palace. The central action of the play begins when we learn that Georges, to whom Sygne promises her hand in marriage in order to sustain what little remains of the Coûfontaine legacy, brings home an important guest to safeguard: the Pope. Shortly thereafter, Turelure, who was the former servant of the Coûfontaines but now a general in Napoleon’s army and responsible for murdering many members of the family, shows up and informs Sygne that he knows about them harboring the pope and threatens to take them into custody if Sygne does not accept his marriage proposal. But, being faithful to her family’s honor, Sygne initially rejects Turelure’s proposal. However, in a drastic turn of events, a former priest of the Coûfontaines, Badilon, emphatically reminds Sygne that, even though she has sacrificed much to preserve the family’s legacy, she must also sacrifice her very honor in order to save the pope and Georges:

Sygne: Never will I be the wife of Toussaint Turelure! Never! Never!

Badilon: He also holds George’s life in the hollow of his hand.

Sygne: Let him die, as I am ready to die! We cannot live forever. God gave me my life, and I am ready and anxious to give it back to Him. But the name is mine, and my woman's honor is mine, and mine alone!

Badilon: Good it is to have something of one's own; for then have we something which we can give. (C Claudel 54-55)

It is not enough for Sygne to sacrifice herself as she has done and be ready to die for her family's honor, but she must make a decision to marry which entails betraying and sacrificing this very honor, sacrificing the sacrifices she's already made for her family, in order to save the Pope and George. That is to say, even a sacrifice can still produce something that can be sacrificed, as it is still "something which we can give" (55). As Lacan puts it in his commentary on the play, "[S]he must renounce in herself something that goes well beyond anything agreeable, any possible pleasure, or duty. She must renounce her very being—the pact that has kept her forever faithful to her own family" (*Seminar VIII* 275). Sygne's sacrifice is not only a sacrifice in the sense of putting aside her inclinations and forcing herself to marry a man she despises—carrying out a dry duty without any regard for her own feelings—but also, and more fundamentally, this sacrifice must also abandon the subjective position of enunciation that sustained these sacrifices. In other words, it is not enough for her to force herself to marry Turelure, as she could still be in a position to detest the marriage, but she must also sincerely *want* the marriage, treating it as her only sanctified marriage. It is this in *this* sense that the Hegelian *Entschluss* in marriage is renunciation, such that love in marriage not only makes the subject autonomous and free of the natural drives, but it also, and more radically, renounces the standpoint from which this renunciation was grounded: "Love means in general the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not isolated on my own [*für mich*], but gain my self-consciousness only through

renunciation [*Aufgebung*] of my independent existence and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me” (PR §158).

It is also in this sense that the renunciation, or kenosis, in the *Entschluss* we see in Hegel’s account of marriage maps onto the release we see in the final part of the *Phenomenology*, “Absolute Knowing.” In particular, we will look to the end of the section where Hegel discusses “the self knowing Spirit,” and the way in which this self-knowing and becoming self-conscious are intimately bound up with an “alienation [*Entäußerung*]” and “sacrifice [*Aufopferung*],” by which it is not only the subject’s Self that is being negated, but also the negation equally negates the lack, and thereby satisfaction, produced from this first negation (PH §807). It is worth paying close attention to this passage:

The self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit [*Grenze*]: to know one’s limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself [*Seine Grenze wissen heißt, sich aufzuopfern wissen*]. This sacrifice is the externalization [*Entäußerung*] in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent happening*, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it and equally its being as Space. (§807)

What is particularly striking about this passage is how this self-knowing is neither attained by “finding oneself,” i.e. achieving a plenitude and harmony of self-transparency with oneself, nor, and this point is more subtle, is self-knowing, by way of this sacrifice, a question of positing a necessary lack or constitutive negativity in order to then become self-conscious (i.e. we must leave something behind in order to move forward). On the contrary, we need to take Hegel as literally as possible here and see how “knowing *one’s* limit” [*Seine Grenze wissen*] (my emphasis, §807) is, as the personal possessive suggests, not a matter of knowing some general

limit that is externally encountered by the subject, but is, rather, the limit that was with us all along, sustaining our very status as subjects.⁴⁸ If this is the case, then we must read this sacrifice as an instance of hyper-formalism, in the sense that what is being sacrificed is not only a particular content constituting the Self and the subject that can easily be exchanged for new content; we must see how the sacrifice is a renunciation of the very form by which we could have made this sacrifice. Or, to bring this back to the wedding ceremony, what is being sacrificed and renounced by the partners is not merely their immediate passions, interests, fancies, fantasies, etc., that initially brought them together, but is, more radically yet, a sacrifice that sacrifices this very sacrifice, insofar as the original sacrifice still presupposed that there was a firm and immediate ground for these original passions and interests from which this sacrifice was possible. As a sacrifice on this level, the gesture of renunciation and letting go inscribed in the *Entschluss*, this sacrifice at the core of subjectivity, is not simply a moment of grace in the form of punishment, but is, rather, the sacrifice of the potential *jouissance* obtained by the very gesture of renunciation, and is *in this sense* an operation of subtraction. Indeed, it is no accident that Hegel ends the *Phenomenology* a couple of lines further down with a dash which is

⁴⁸ In a similar way, Jean Hyppolite proposes that the figure of the unhappy consciousness (from the section, “Self-Consciousness” in the *Phenomenology*) is emblematic of the Hegelian subject, in which becoming self-conscious means enduring the negativity of not being to find unity with oneself:

[U]nhappy consciousness, in the strict sense of the term, is the result of the development of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is subjectivity constituted as truth, and this subjectivity must discover its own inadequacy and experience the pain of the self that fails to reach unity with itself...Consciousness of life is a separation from life, an opposing reflection: to become aware of life is to know that true life is absent and to find oneself thrown back on nothingness. This feeling of disparity within the self, of the impossibility of the self coinciding with itself in reflection, is indeed the basis of subjectivity. (190-191)

What is striking about Hyppolite’s characterization is that Hegelian self-consciousness is not cast as a naïve attainment of a plentitude of transparency; on the contrary, for Hyppolite the Hegelian subject is clearly marked by a sort of existential angst and constitutively fractured from being a harmonious whole. However, what if this existential despair still manages to produce a form of *jouissance* from its very act of negation? Is not the lesson of Hegel’s beautiful soul that a subject who negates the world around it can still remain complicit in its production? More pointedly, Hegel shows how a subjectivity which, even though it negates this and that content, can nonetheless preserve *the very form of subjectivity with which it negates the content*. Hence, our emphasis on Absolute Knowing and the gesture of *Entschluss* inscribed in its alienation and sacrifice takes the extra step of purging the subject of its very form, thereby showing how the subject is unable to obtain a surplus *jouissance* from the act of negating—*this* is the properly kenotic dimension of the self-conscious subject.

emblematic of this subtracting operation, as the dash can stand in as a subtraction sign in addition to its ambiguous linguistic function.⁴⁹

But a further point needs to be drawn out here. We mentioned earlier that the *Entschluss* is not a form of a restless indecidability, but rather, it forms *something*, “a new positive Order which gives body to this negativity” (Žižek *Ticklish Subject* 286). Yet, given our qualification of the renunciation, or *Entlassen*, at stake in the *Entschluss*, what positive order could possibly remain standing if the very subjective form with which the *Entschluss* is made gets negated? A useful place for responding to this question is looking to the Freudian concept “choice of neurosis [*Neurosenwahl*]” (SE XII 317). With this concept, Freud attempts to show how the subject’s psychical condition or neurosis is not something that is simply set and congealed at a certain point, from a certain constitutive trauma in the subject’s life. Instead, he notices how later and subsequent experiences can efface the effects of the older trauma which initially brought about the subject’s neurosis, inducing the subject to choose a new form of neurosis which takes the place of the older. Hence, given the possibility of the choice of neurosis, Freud is forced to revise his proposition that neuroses—specifically hysteria and obsessional neurosis—are dispositions which affect the subject independently of experience, as they were formerly thought to set in during childhood unbeknownst to the subject (318-319). What interests us about the choice of neurosis is the way in which it bears witness to a paradoxical situation, in which the subject chooses something that effectively determines it, thereby

⁴⁹ As Comay and Ruda point out, the standard translation of the *Phenomenology* in English done by A.V. Miller elides the dash—the one thing that required no translation—, but is to be found in the German (Comay and Ruda, 53). The passage reads, Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is history; but regarded from the side of their [philosophically] comprehended organization, it is the science of knowing in the sphere of appearance; the two together, comprehended history, form alike the inwardizing and the calvary of absolute Spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of its throne, without which it would be alone. Only—
From the chalice of this realm of spirits / foams forth for it its own infinitude. (Quoted from Comay and Ruda, 54)

paradoxically, and somewhat counterintuitively, choosing against their capacity to choose.⁵⁰ In other words, something is chosen by a subject, but this something is nothing less than a pathological condition which dictates its psychical fate. For example, Freud had examined one of his female patients who was a happily married wife, and she had exhibited the typical symptoms of hysteria that stemmed from her infantile wish to have children, but, during subsequent sessions, the patient exhibited stark symptoms of obsessional neurosis (SE XII 319-320). Without entering into the precise details of the case, Freud shows how this change came about: essentially, the patient realizes that, one time while having sex, her husband could not perform and she concluded that he was impotent (although it turns out he actually was not impotent, but only frustrated towards her on account of her refusing to be seduced in their sexual scenarios). It is from this experience (of her husband's 'impotence') that Freud concludes: "The obsessional neurosis was not a further reaction to the same trauma which had first provoked the anxiety hysteria; it was a reaction to a second experience, which had completely wiped out [*entwertet*] the first" (SE XII 319). It is in *this* sense that the *Entschluss* chooses some kind of positive order and destiny, as the married partners, like Freud's patient, choose a shared existence—with all the pathological moments this necessarily entails—that relinquishes their capacity to choose otherwise, and doing so deprives the former state of its worth (*entwertet*). This dimension of *Entschluss* is consistent with Hegel's use of the term to denote the kind of decision made by heroes in tragedy in the *Phenomenology* (like Oedipus and Antigone) which is

⁵⁰ On this point, we respond to Comay and Ruda's question: "What does it mean to 'choose to be governed by an unconscious that erodes the power to choose and that reveals itself only in the effects it forces?'" (122).

a choice that seals them to their tragic fate⁵¹—the *Entschluss* gives rise to a positive body and order, but only insofar as this resolve pulls the subject's fate out of joint.

Schelling's Distinction between Entschluss and Entscheidung

Now that we have drawn out a framework for thinking about Hegel's *Entschluss*, we will turn to Schelling's account of decision from his *Essence of Human Freedom* and his 1813 manuscript of the *Ages of the World*. Schelling offers us a valuable framework for concretizing the properly abyssal and metaphysical dimension that we have been investigating in Hegel's ethical thought. To be sure, Schelling talks of decision in a metaphysical and cosmological context, speculating on a primordial decision by a god before time and creation, whereas it is clear that Hegel's conceptualization of decision and resolve is part of an ethical thought in the symbolic world.⁵² However, despite these differences in content between the two, there is still a way in which both accounts construct a structure around a decision that posits the ground with which the decision is made. In this sense, the "ground" of the decision is a non-ground (*Ungrund*) (FE 68) and even an abyss (*Abgrund*) (to use Schelling's terms) (FE 19). From this premise, both Hegel and Schelling conceptualize a resolve the stakes of which necessarily remain unknown and unconscious for the subject, thereby critiquing what it means to be a self-conscious subject, insofar as they put into question the self-reflexivity and transparency of subjectivity. Instead, the *Entschluss* bears witness to a Real that inheres within the subject, showing how the subject is constituted through rupture, not linear progress. Hence, for both

⁵¹ See above quote from Hegel (PH §469).

⁵² Even though we do not have the space to get into it here, Hegel's *Science of Logic* can be seen as containing this theological decision to begin (Comay and Ruda 108-109).

Hegel and Schelling the *Entschluss* bears witness to how the subject is not present to itself as a unitary identity and is not-all.

That being said, we will first investigate Schelling's *Essence of Human Freedom*, as it is here that he first formulates a certain deadlock around a "decision" (*Entscheidung*) (FE 51; MF 78), which, far from being an everyday choice made from a series of options and deliberations and thereby a certain linear and symbolic continuum, "occurs outside of all time" (51), effectively putting time itself into motion. According to Schelling, in order for there to be time, by which we can distinguish between a past and a present, there must have been a beginning that first set in motion a linear time, effectively establishing a standpoint from which we can speak of a past. For, as Schelling puts it, when man was first created he was "an undecided being" (51) and needed to accomplish a "self-positing" (51) in order to emerge as a subject. Without going into theodicy, the pantheism controversy, and other religious concerns of the *Essence of Human Freedom*, what is striking about this decision that constitutes the self-positing of the subject is the way in which it is, for Schelling, a repetition of the same decision that God himself must have taken in order to create the world and man (51; Žižek *Indivisible Remainder* 21). That is to say, we must discern a tension that runs through Schelling's account of this primordially charged decision since, on the one hand, the decision is an exceptional and original act of foundation, but, on the other hand, there is an unmistakable sense in which the decision taken by the subject re-creates and repeats this founding decision each time, which bears witness to its eternal dimension:

Man is in the initial creation, as shown, an undecided being—(which may be portrayed mythically as a condition of innocence that precedes this life and as an initial blessedness)—only man himself can decide. But this decision [*Entscheidung*]

cannot occur within time; it occurs outside of all time and, hence, together with the first creation (though as a deed distinct from creation). Man, even if born in time, is indeed created into the beginning of creation (the *centrum*). The act [*Die Tat*], whereby his life is determined in time, does not itself belong to time but rather to eternity: it also does not temporally precede life but goes through time (unhampered by it) as an act which is eternal by nature. (FE 51; MF 78)

What is immediately striking about the *Entscheidung* here, especially in relation to our earlier discussion of the dimension of renunciation at work in the Hegelian *Entschluss*, is the way in which it does not take place because of some kind of lack, in the sense that the subject does not make this decision in order to acquire and pursue something that it does not have. On the contrary, what is being decided through the decision is the subject's very finitude—i.e. the decision as a necessary contraction—as opposed to attaining more of the infinite *jouissance* and satisfaction they already have in the undecided state. That is to say, the decision is made because the subject has too much and contains the gesture of release and letting go, *Entlassen*, that we saw with Hegel. Hence, what is interesting for our purposes here around Schelling's *Entscheidung* is how it is not a matter of installing the subject in a state of self-awareness (*Selbsterfassen*), in which it arrives through the decision to a higher state of consciousness up the ladder of evolution, as it were. Indeed, we should see Schelling's *Entscheidung* as a way to think about consciousness beyond such a notion of inner transparency, as this decision takes place without the subject being aware of its stakes. In this sense, the *Entscheidung* for Schelling is not the same thing as that of Hegel's monarch, but rather, it comes closer to the *Entschluss* in Hegel's account of marriage, which is abyssal and unknown to the subject. Yet there is a way in which we can take Schelling's conception of *Entscheidung* as making more explicit the scission

within the subject that we see seeping out of Hegel's *Entscheidung*, in which the monarch is not an undivided subject in fulfilling his symbolic role. In other words, Schelling's *Entscheidung* makes the Real within symbolic identities more explicit than Hegel, eschewing the equation of self-consciousness with self-reflexivity. This is how we should read Schelling when he claims, "This sort of free act, which becomes necessary, admittedly cannot appear in consciousness to the degree the latter is merely self-awareness [*bloßes Selbsterfassen*] and only ideal, since it precedes consciousness just as it precedes essence, indeed, first produces it" (FE 51-52; MF 79).

However, it is here that we must tread carefully because, for Schelling, it is not simply the case that there was nothing prior to the decision and eternity prior to the finite contraction of the decision was only a "mute eternity" (Žižek *Indivisible Remainder* 13). Indeed, as Schelling puts it in another context, there can be no New Testament, i.e. the contraction of God into the figure of Christ, without the Old Testament; that is to say, it is not the case that before the New there was nothing and that the New entirely negates the whole (FE 72). In other words, there is always the lingering premonition that, even though the decision is a contingent act, the "sprout" (*Keim*, which also means germ or seed) (52; 79) out of which it grew was always already there for eternity. Drawing attention to this aspect of Schelling's *Entscheidung* is crucial for our purposes because it is precisely this abyssal moment that we see in Hegel's wedding ceremony, in which the subjects are, as it were, committed to and absorbed in a process to which they necessarily give themselves over without being fully aware of its stakes. However, it is equally crucial to show how Schelling, in contrast to Hegel, does not allow the decision to retroactively shift what went before. So a Hegelian response to Schelling's Old/New testament example could be: yes, there is undoubtedly an Old testament that remains despite Christ, but Christ and the

New testament also permanently alter the way in which we talk about the Old testament, making it so that the Old will never be the same again.

However, we also have to take Schelling's reasoning behind this preservation of an immutable, albeit non-mute, eternity as positing this eternity, i.e. showing that in the act of decision we do maintain some vague premonition that it was necessarily bound to be so ensures that we cannot perversely hide behind a blind necessity when carrying out our actions (Zupančič *Ethics of the Real* 58-59; Žižek *Indivisible Remainder* 170; FE 52). This is how we should read what Schelling means when he claims, "this is no act [*Tat*] of which no consciousness at all remains in man since anyone, for instance, who in order to excuse a wrong action [*Handlung*], says 'that's just the way I am' is surely aware that he is like he is through his guilt, as much as he is right that it was impossible for him to act otherwise" (FE 52; MF 79). If it is not the case that consciousness is simply a question of a "bare self-awareness [*bloßes Selbsterfassen*]" (52; 79), then what does Schelling mean by consciousness here? Now, there is no exhaustive answer to this question, but I think Schelling's strange conceptualization of consciousness here should be put into conversation with Hegel's self-consciousness, if, in following our previous analysis, we are to minimally define self-consciousness as the abyssal moment for a subject in which their very standpoint of enunciation is at stake; but this moment, however, must necessarily appear to them as something trivial and superfluous, like the wedding ceremony. The *Entschluss* constitutive of self-consciousness requires a necessary illusion, even elision, of the resolve that needs to take place—i.e. for the subjects involved, the resolve inscribed in the *Entschluss* is a missed experience—so that the *Entschluss* only takes place "like a thief in the night," to quote St. Paul's well-known phrase about the appearance of the Lord (*New Oxford Bible* Thess. 5.2).

Finally, it is at this point that we are now in a position to look towards the end of Schelling's *Ages of the World* draft when he attempts to conceptualize the *Entscheidung* once again. What is striking about his enigmatic discussion of it here is that, in repeating and making more explicit what he claimed in *Essence of Human Freedom*, namely that the subject cannot attain self-awareness during the act of decision, he makes it clear that the decision, insofar as it must be postulated in order to think about an authentic beginning, cannot recognize itself to be the beginning: "the beginning may not know itself [*der Anfang darf sich selbst nicht kennen*]" (AW 182; SW 184). For Schelling, the decision precipitates the repetition of the *Entscheidung* to the *Entschluss*, or of the "decision" to the "resolve," the opening up and contraction to the closing off and positing, if we are to translate this shift. To see this almost imperceptible shift, it is worth paying close attention to Schelling's formulation,

That primordial deed which makes a man genuinely himself precedes all individual actions; but immediately after it is put into exuberant freedom, this deed sinks into the night of unconsciousness [*der Nacht der Bewusstlosigkeit*]....Only in this way is a beginning possible, a beginning that does not stop being a beginning, a truly eternal beginning. For here as well, it is true that the beginning itself may not know itself. That deed once done, it is done for all eternity. The decision [*Entschluss*] that in some manner is truly to begin must not be brought back to consciousness; it must not be called back, because this would amount to being taken back. Who within the decision is to be left to pull it into the light again, never makes a beginning [*Wer beim Entschluss sich vorbehält ihn wieder ans Licht zu ziehen, macht nie einen Anfang*]. (181-182; 183-184)

What is striking about Schelling's final formulation of the decision in this the text (before he broke it off altogether⁵³) is, as Žižek points out, "the logic of the 'vanishing mediator'," by which the decision that brings about the initial contraction out of the pre-history of the drives can only be decided from a standpoint that dissolves in the act (*Indivisible Remainder* 34). It is as if in this passage, Schelling is answering his own question he repeatedly poses earlier on in the text, "How is a decision [*Entscheidung*] possible here, even only with respect to the What?" (AW 172; SW 174). What actualizes the *Entscheidung* is the standpoint that dissolves in the act and the name of this dimension of the decision is the *Entschluss*. But is not this precisely what we see with the Church in Hegel's wedding ceremony, when it vanishes the moment it inaugurates and institutionalizes the marriage? Schelling's conception of the *Entschluss* thereby points towards the *Entschluss* of Hegel's wedding ceremony, insofar as it is a decision that is abyssal precisely in the sense that it, paradoxically, shifts the subject's standpoint of enunciation by way of sacrificing this standpoint. Therefore, despite the differences between Hegel's and Schelling's conception of decision, both formulate an act in which a fundamental passage takes place that mandates the non-existence of the subject, or at least a univocal standpoint from which we can speak of a subject who exists.

⁵³ Schelling broke off writing the 1813 Ages of the World manuscript, claiming in a marginal footnote shortly after the cited passage that "the treatise falls into utter falsehoods *from this point forward*" (AW 182). He subsequently began the project again in an 1815 manuscript, in which the decision falls back into a rotary movement of the drives without the moment of contraction and repression (see Schelling, *The Ages of the World: Third Version (c. 1815)*, translated by Jason M. Wirth).

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