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p. p. 306, 1001 Ljubljana
Tel.: (01) 470 64 70

Editorial Office Address

Filozofski vestnik
P.O. Box 306, SI-1001 Ljubljana, Slovenia
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Magdalena Germek*

The Anatomy of the World

The World of Anatomy

In this text, a philosophical concept of the world will be introduced through a somewhat unusual phrase “the anatomy of the world”. The anatomy of the world seems like a convenient term, since it accurately describes the attempt to construct a philosophical concept of the world, taking into account its constitution, architecture, and structure – its *anatomy*. In order to do so, we must also apply the method of *philosophical anatomy*. A general image of anatomy as a scientific discipline and a surgically precise practice, allowing a *clean cut*¹ in seeing and understanding, can be helpful here. Anatomy studies internal organs, making visible what is otherwise invisible and not pleasing to the eye, uncovering what is covered by the skin. This is exactly what we are aiming at with the philosophical anatomy of the world. We want this anatomy to show what the world is hiding under its skin, what the world’s inner constitution looks like, to reveal the internal organs of the world, to make them worldly – in short, to expose the world to the world. But it is precisely at this point where an unexpected issue arises. For an anatomy of the world to be carried out, we need a corpse of the world. And to have the world’s corpse, the world needs to die first. Just how can the world die? Does the process of dying require a subject of dying? Can the world be murdered? It is exactly these kinds of questions that reveal the difficulty of our topic: it is difficult to obtain the corpse of the world. In his renowned book *Logics of Worlds*, Alain Badiou suggests a materialistic concept of the world, where the world is the place of taking-place where objects appear. As we intend to show, this is a specific phenomenological-topological concept of the world that ignores death. But in order to obtain the corpse and perform a dissection of the world, we need a specific theory of the world, where the world

¹ The very etymology of anatomy can be useful here: from the Ancient Greek, ἀνατομία (anatomía) – ἀνατομή (anatomé, “dissection”): from ἀνά (aná, “up”) + τέμνω (témnō, “I cut, incise”) – literally means “cut up”.

* Independent researcher, Ljubljana, Slovenia

is able to live and die. Here, we can nevertheless turn to Badiou again. From the perspective of his doctrine of truths, the world reveals itself not only as an objective scene where objects appear, but also as a subjective category susceptible to the processes of living and dying. But before getting to Badiou's theory of the world, we will first take a detour. We will make a stop in the world of anatomy to check if there is any other connection between the world of anatomy and the anatomy of the world, besides the word game. Perhaps, the world of anatomy itself can provide the corpse of the world.

But let us proceed in an orderly fashion and in meaningful steps. We need to learn the basic rules and principles of anatomy. A short lesson in anatomy is needed and we must return to the lecture room, perhaps the very same lecture room immortalised in the painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) by the Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. Our professor of anatomy will be the respected Dr. Claes Pieterszn, better known to history by his name Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, the author of the renowned work *Observationes Medicae*. The book was written in Latin, because the author "did not want the public to read it and treat their own illnesses,"² which is by all means an interesting concern also from today's perspective. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* is a group portrait of seven participants observing Dr. Tulp and the corpse of the man who is the immediate object of the anatomy lesson. They are all dressed in ceremonial, black, formal suits, with a broad black hat adorning the lecturer's head. The latter is a small detail that Rembrandt used to emphasise the privileged position of the holder and master of knowledge. The least clothes can be found on the naked corpse of the dead man, with only a tiny cloth covering his groin.

Public anatomy demonstrations had been held in Amsterdam since the middle of the 16th century and a supervisory office, the Praelector, was founded to this end. In 1555, Philip II, King of Spain and Holland, granted the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons a privilege, thereby allowing them to dissect human bodies in order to teach anatomy.³ The bodies of executed criminals were used and the activities were practised once a year in the winter, when the temperatures were

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² Sam A. Mellick, "Dr Nicolaes Tulp of Amsterdam, 1593-1674: Anatomist and Doctor of Medicine", *ANZ J. Surg.*, 77 (2007), p. 1102.

³ Cf. Frank F. A. Ijpma, Robert C. van de Graaf, Marcel F. Meek, Jean-Philippe A. Nicolai, and Thomas M. van Gulik, "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp Painted by Rembrandt in 1632", *ANZ J. Surg.*, 78 (2008), p. 1059; Eelco de Bree, J. Tsiaoussis, and G. Schoretsanitis,

low enough to preserve the organs from rapid decomposition. These were social events attended by physicians, surgeons, and other noble citizens. There were dedicated anatomy theatres for such occasions that could accommodate up to 300 people. These events were also immortalised in group portraits painted by the most famous portrait painters of that period. The painters in Holland, mostly neglected by the Church and its funding at that time, were supported by civil groups and rich guilds. The portrayed people had to pay for their spot in the painting, and so one can easily imagine Dr. Tulp paying a little extra to have a more prominent position than the other seven participants.

It is not exactly clear how the then 26-year-old and relatively unknown Rembrandt managed to gain the commission for such a portrait; in any case, this painting made him famous. Unlike other portrait painters before Rembrandt, who had painted group portraits of anatomy practise without the human object of the anatomy lesson, Rembrandt has given the central position to the corpse itself. The meticulously painted male body still fascinates both art and medical experts today. Equipped with special technology,⁴ they examine and discuss the anatomical accuracy of Rembrandt's depiction of the forearm muscle. It is also obvious that the painting is not a realistic representation of the actual event. It shows only the left arm dissected, which is uncommon in the autopsy procedures of the 17th century. In order to avoid the rapid decomposition of the internal organs, the standard anatomy procedure usually began with a dissection of the organs in the abdomen and thorax, while the extremities would be dissected last. In Rembrandt's painting, however, the left forearm is opened, while the rest of the body parts are untouched. Another unorthodox element is Dr. Tulp himself, painted as he performs the procedure, which is also a scenario deviating from the usual practice, where such procedures were performed by other, less important participants, allowing a lecturer of Tulp's significance to proceed with the lecture unhindered.

"Anatomy Lessons by the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons. Medical Education and Art", *Hel-
lenic Journal of Surgery*, 90 (5/2018), p. 260.

⁴ During its restoration from 1996 to 1998, "the painting was minutely examined using a stereomicroscope, ultraviolet light, infrared photography, reflectography and roentgen photography." Cf. Ijpm, *et al.*, "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp Painted by Rembrandt in 1632", p. 1060.

Although Rembrandt's painting is more of a symbolic than a realistic interpretation of the classic anatomy lesson, it represents the world of anatomy well. The seven observers are located behind the head of the deceased, leaving the place of honour to the anatomist. All together, the doctor, the participants, and the corpse form a triangle with interesting relations between them that Rembrandt created by differentiating and distributing their gazes. There are different interpretations as to where exactly the gazes of the men are directed. We believe the constellation is the following: three of the seven participants are intensively observing Tulp's left arm, the man in the back of the group is gazing at the head of the esteemed doctor, and the remaining three observers are staring straight "into the camera". Nothing in the painting is inviting us to a spectacle of wild imagination. There is nothing intended to shock. The death is not presented as haunting; instead, it is accepted as such and dissected. It seems that no one present is looking at the deceased. The gaze of Dr. Tulp is also directed at his students and not at the procedure he is performing or at the object he is analysing. The entire scene maintains the scientific character of the given situation, which by no means diminishes the vivid curiosity of the students. In contrast to them, Tulp appears to be dignifiedly indifferent and professional, as someone in his position of knowledge should be. He is not affected by the life and death of human organs. He is on a mission to research, analyse, and demonstrate the subtle flows of life on the background of death itself. The most indifferent head is that of the corpse, of course. Its involvement in the world of anatomy is minimum. Although it may be the central object of that world, it is not subjectively connected thereto. We can draw the conclusion that every participant is, in his own way and in connection with the other participants present, involved in the world of anatomy, which is exactly a world of transferring knowledge, learning, observing, demonstrating, and teaching. There is another object in the painting that emphasises the fact that this is indeed a world involving the historic production and transfer of anatomical knowledge. By the feet of the deceased there is a wide open hardcover book. It is assumed that this book is *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), a classic anatomy work by the famous Dutch anatomist Andreas Vesalius.

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Andreas Vesalius was a medical reformer from the 16th century who greatly contributed to the formation of the study of human anatomy as a modern science. A spectacular drawing (*Frontispiece*, 1543) on the cover of the book depicts Vesalius's surgical procedure on the abdomen of a female corpse. The anatomist's

right hand is in physical contact with the open body.⁵ The direct contact of the surgeon's hand with the wide open abdomen of the corpse can be understood as a symbol of the surgical occupation – “the surgeon's hands act as an instrument of mediating knowledge gained from studying the body.”⁶ Vesalius's right hand may be pointing to the crowd of observers or above it, to the heavens, which gives him the transcendent assertion of a mediator, a representative and instrument of God's creation. It is also possible that the painting depicts medicine becoming independent of God's will. The anatomist's hand, the hand of medicine, will be in the service of science from now on. The hand is also emphasised by another portrait of Vesalius, a woodcut by Steven van Calcar, where the anatomist is performing a dissection of the *flexores digitorum* muscles on the forearms of a corpse. There is no place for God's intervention between the anatomist's hand and the hand of the deceased. The entire arrangement indicates the superior position of the anatomist, the scientist, as the master of the human object. He has the greatest treasure of God's creation in his possession. While God brings life to humans, the anatomist is the one researching this life when people die. Such mastery arises from the scientific production of knowledge: the human corpse is transformed by science into a scientific object of study.

A scientific analysis, a medical dissection, the hand of the subject of science, the hand of the object of science, the demonstration and transfer of knowledge – all this belongs to the world of anatomy, of which we have learned in the lecture of Dr. Tulp. The human body is no longer covered by the veil of the sacred, the mystical, and the unknown. Despite it being ripped, dirty, and smelly, with its no longer hidden mucus and fluids, the body does not belong to the anatomy of disgust, but to anatomy as such. In the world of anatomy, taboo will gain its worldliness through science; it will be exposed to the light, presented to the public, and illuminated by human instruments. It will undergo demystification and profanation and thus become worldly. Something had to die to become a part of this world. In the world of anatomy, death does not represent a loss of world, it is not a departure from the world, but an entry into the world through

⁵ Below, we refer to the analysis of Adéla Janíčková, “Surgeon's hands in Vesalius's portraits and Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*”, *Hektoen International*, 2016, <https://hekint.org/2017/01/19/surgeons-hands-in-vesaliuss-portraits-and-rembrandts-the-anatomy-lesson-of-dr-tulp/>, accessed 30 November 2021.

⁶ *Ibid.*

scientific knowledge. Death is no longer a transcendence; it has become nothing more than scientific formalisation instead.

But how has philosophy perceived this world? For Hegel, such an anatomical formalisation of death, life, body, and organs, presents something more dead than death itself. Hegel sees in anatomy a modus of thinking that imposes a problematic concept of (pseudo)science. Anatomy is not based on the true concept of science as an organic totality and self-moving unity. On the contrary, its basic practice is dissection. Furthermore, its theoretical approach breaks conceptual connections, cutting the organic essence into fragments, deriving therefrom an empty generality:

Furthermore, that kind of an aggregation of little bits and pieces of information has no real right to be called science, and a conversation about its purpose and other such generalities would be in no way distinct from the ordinary historical and uncomprehending way in which the content, or these nerves and muscles, and so forth, is itself discussed. In the case of philosophy, on the other hand, this would give rise to the following incongruity, namely, that if philosophy were indeed to make use of such a method, then it would have shown itself to be incapable of grasping the truth.⁷

The method of anatomy is a method of pseudo-science and as such inappropriate for philosophy. At this point, we can make a detour from Hegel with a present-day example that explicitly demonstrates Hegel's fears. The example concerns a series of portraits of Jacques Derrida by Monique Stobienia and Thierry Briault.⁸ The portraits show a sequence of the same head in multiple variations: the head in warm colours and sharp edges; the head in cold colours and sharp edges; the head with a reflection in a broken mirror; the head as a broken mirror; the head in a geometric maze; the head shining; the head with one eye replaced by a wire installation; the head creating an electromagnetic field; the head entangled in a baroque line; the head entangled in wiring; the head mired in colour; the head disappearing; the head arising; the head as just a small expression; the head

⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 10.

⁸ I made an analysis of these portraits from another perspective in my article "V ozadju filozofije", *Filozofski vestnik*, 33 (1/2012), pp. 191–211.

made to appear haunting; the head made to look disgusting; the head as the head of a monster; and the head as the head of a philosopher. Looking at these portraits, we can hardly resist the impression that these portraits are an attempt at performing a kind of *artistic anatomy*. This anatomy is specific, because it does not show the interior of a human skull, but nevertheless keeps us in the spectrum of a metaphoric interior, which is connected to the philosophy of the dissected philosopher. It is not the skull that is dissected, but a philosophic thought. The artistic anatomy is a deconstruction *in actu* and thereby also an artistic construction of Derrida's philosophy. With this series of portraits, Derrida might have arrived at a unique and the simplest representation of his philosophy. Just by looking at his portraits one can directly see what the philosopher's thought looks like, here being presented not through an artistic representation, but precisely through an anatomical procedure. The head is broken, the anatomy of his thoughts is displayed. Thierry Briault and Monique Stobienia have not created an artistic interpretation, but have performed an artistic-surgical intervention.

This is exactly what Hegel would never dare to do in his concept of philosophy. Philosophy is not an immediate display of one's concepts, but rather a dialectic becoming, a deriving of concepts. On the other hand, anatomy is a paradigm of what philosophy must not become. The object of anatomy is a corpse, its practise is cutting, its theoretical method is an analysis, destroying the very concept of science as such. A true science should insist on life and organic unity, while anatomy is nothing but a mortifying aggregate of knowledge. And if anatomy is a new model of science, then the world as an object of such a science will suffer too. It will become a corpse subjected to its analytical, dissecting method. Our initial question of how to obtain a corpse of the world thus gains an answer: we get a corpse of the world when we subdue the world to science. The letter of science murders the world; it formalises it, separates it from the world's own internal organic parts; it rips out all of its life force. "Mortification, applied literally in anatomy, can perhaps be posed as a metaphor for scientific practice in general: the inaugural gesture of 'modern age science' was perhaps mainly in mortifying its object, no longer perceiving it as a harmonic and living unit, as an '*organische Einheit*' and '*das Leben des Ganzen*'; it reduced the cosmically open book of God's disposition to a 'dead letter'."⁹

⁹ Mladen Dolar, *Heglova fenomenologija duha*, Ljubljana, DTP Analecta, 2017, pp. 26–27. An illustrative example is given in the philosophy of David Hume, who posits in his *Enquiry*

Now, let us turn to a modern example of the concept of the world from the philosophy of Alain Badiou. Badiou takes the concept of the world – subdued to the letter of scientific formalisation – to the extreme. The world itself can be reduced to the formalisms of mathematical logic. This, however, does not lead to the conclusion that the world is a corpse or a hollow shell. As we will see, the world is a phenomenological-topological category representing a specific logic of place; as a representative of the logic of place, the world is a place of objectivity that registers death only to a certain degree. What is called death is merely an objective degree of appearance that makes no difference concerning the world. But in order to detect, in this framework, the processes of mortification and the death drive, we need the world to be subjectivized, i.e. subjective processes need to appear in the world. In this manner, Badiou transposes the entire question of life and death in the doctrine of truths and subjectivity. The world suffers from mortifying impulses, as the reactive and obscure forms of subjectivity actively work against the realisation of truths in the world. We will discuss this in detail below.

A Topology of the World

We have already mentioned the portrait series of the philosopher Jacques Derrida by Thierry Briault and Monique Stobienia. But the latter is also interesting for her cooperation with another philosopher – Alain Badiou. Based on private sketches drawn by Badiou himself, she created a series of painting variations under the common name *Landscapes*. *Landscape No. 5* can be found on the cover of the French and English editions of Badiou’s book *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*.¹⁰ The cover is painted with rich, geometrically-shaped patches of colour,

Concerning Human Understanding the difference between the behaviours of an anatomist and a painter, aiming to illustrate two possible approaches to moral philosophy or the science of human nature. On one hand, there are philosophers, who “paint virtue in the most charming colours, getting help from poetry and eloquence,” thus actively shaping the behaviour of their readers by vividly illustrating a life of virtue or a life of sin (“They make us *feel* the difference between vice and virtue.”); on the other hand, there are philosophers who understand human nature as an object of theoretic, rigorous, and precise research. Hume addresses the first approach as philosophical painting and the other as philosophical anatomy. Philosophical anatomy is supposed to be a rigorous and precise science about experience. Cf. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis, Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, EPUB, Section 1, n. p.

¹⁰ In the following section, a part of the material that I published in the article entitled “Vozadju filozofije” will be used.

crossed all over by straight lines and sharp edges, without the geometrical logic hindering the vivid tonality of colours in any way. It is not completely clear what we are looking at: sea, sky, dream, an abstraction awaiting its meaning. In any case, instead of the philosopher's head, we are faced with a kind of landscape. One might find such an absence of dynamism slightly unusual for a portrait of a militant philosophy such as Badiou's. One impression is overwhelming, however. As we look at the cover of the *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, there seem to be no obstacles hindering our view. We get an impression of boundless expansion. There is no central point to the net of geometrical coordinates, no guidelines dictating the direction our gaze is supposed to take. This effect is not achieved with a parallelism, but with the lines intersecting under different angles. Our sight is not entangled in a chaos of threads, but rather freed by its colourful and geometric consistency, arrangement, symmetry, and certainty that only order can provide. We are presented with a cosmos. An orderliness that spreads; the boundlessness of the universe. Cold and warm nuances. Our sight is calmed by concrete colours. All in all, it is a scheme of a general concept of the world. An image of the universe. The main motif of the *Landscape* is a motif of worldliness. The topology of the world it presents gives us an excellent starting point to further contemplate the anatomy of the world.

Stobienia's painting reveals several key features of Badiou's concept of the world. The first obvious feature of the world is that it is depicted without a source, without a creator responsible for its constitution; there is no point from which everything can be deduced, neither is there a point to which everything can be reduced. Another significant feature of the world is that it is an orderliness, emphasised by the geometrical net "where the lines' structured force merges with an original conception of colour."¹¹ The landscape is painted in colours with a prevailing geometric-architectural style, which is an excellent choice to present another important feature of Badiou's concept of the world, namely that it is logical. The world is a site of a unique objective transcendental logic, which is independent of the constitution of any transcendental subject. This logic arises from a few basic transcendental operations that are able to describe an infinite number of different worlds, given that there is also an infinite number of different logics of worlds. For Badiou, the world is an objective (non-subjective) cat-

¹¹ Alain Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. L. Burchill, Cambridge and Malden, Polity Press, 2011, p. vi.

egory *par excellence*, studied by an objective (non-subjective) phenomenology. In his *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou proposes an unorthodox concept of phenomenology that refuses the categories of subjective consciousness, perception, and experience and is derived from the concepts of the transcendental, object, and relation, which are all deemed to be strictly independent of the category of the (transcendental) subject.

For Badiou, the world is “the place in which objects appear”¹² or “the place of taking-place.”¹³ This means that the world is a phenomenological category that must also be considered topologically – through the logic of place. Whereas Badiou is mostly noted for his ontological project, we must note that Badiou’s consideration of the logic of place (providing him a path to phenomenology) reaches all the way back to the works from his youth. In his text “The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism” from 1967, Badiou critically addresses Althusser’s theory of structural causality, namely by means of the thesis that Althusser’s partition to numerous practices and instances requires a general and formal theory of multiplicity: “There must exist a *previous* formal discipline, which I would be tempted to call the *theory of historical sets*, which contains *at least* the protocols of ‘donation’ of the pure multiples onto which the structures are progressively constructed.”¹⁴ In Badiou’s proposal, one can recognise the first signs of referring to mathematical set theory, which will take centre stage in his ontological project at the end of the 1980s. However, it is important to note an additional aspect here. Badiou goes on to say that his proposal refers to a discipline “which is closely tied in its complete development to the mathematics of set theory,” but nevertheless exceeds “the simple donation of a procedure of *belonging*.”¹⁵ The new formal discipline of historical sets would exceed mathematical set theory (where all basic operations on sets are reducible to the primary relation of belonging) by following the rules of spatiality: “the conjuncture had to be thought as a definite system of ‘places’ in which the instances come

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¹² Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds. Being and Event*, 2, trans. A. Toscano, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 598.

¹³ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham, London, Bloomsbury Revelations, 2013, p. 26.

¹⁴ Alain Badiou, “The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism”, in *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, B. Bosteels (ed. and trans.), London and New York, Verso, 2012, p. 163.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

to articulate themselves onto one another.”¹⁶ The concept of determination will include both of these elements: on the one hand, it will have at its disposal the *P* set as a set of places, and on the other hand, the *F* set as a set of functions and practices receiving their value from *P*. The mathematical theory that here serves Badiou as a paradigm to think the “system of places” is the mathematical *theory of categories*, of which he says the following:

The theory of categories is perhaps the most significant epistemological event of these last years, due to the radical effort of abstraction to which it bears witness. Mathematical structures are not properly speaking constructed in it according to operational links between elements of a pure multiplicity (set); but they rather appear as “summits” of a network of trajectories in which the structural correspondences (the morphisms) are primary. In the Universe (such is the concept used) that is thus drawn, Structure of structures, multiplicity is not one structure among others: one will speak of the Category of sets as well as of the Category of groups, etc.¹⁷

In a series of seminars published in 1982 under the title *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou reintroduced the idea of a general concept of place (*P*), which he developed through the abstract and formal differentiation between pure being and the being-there. He introduced this difference using the Hegelian pair of “something” (*Etwas*) and “something else” (*Anderes*): there is an *A* (*Etwas*), a pure being, and another, duplicated *A* (*Anderes*), which is *A taking place*, the *placed being*, *Ap*. In the first case, we are dealing with a “pure identity”;¹⁸ in the second case, with a “placed identity”.¹⁹ This placed identity marks the pure identity of all possible ways of an *A* belonging to a *P*, which is abstractly perceived as a generality of the place and represents the “being-placed” as such. The significance of *P* is merely that it represents a reference in the relationship to which we note the placed identity *Ap*. In a way, *A* does not even exist as a pure being, since by saying something about it, we already place *A* in a certain identity, i.e. *Ap1*, *Ap2* ..., which means that *A* is always presented as *Ap*. If *A* is pure being, then, ontologically speaking, *A* is nothing; but if *A exists*, an indexed identity will be

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, note 166.

¹⁸ Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. B. Bosteels, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

assigned to it, dividing it from the inside. A is never equal to A , except when it is simply *not*; rather, it is inevitably its own duality of a pure and placed identity. A can thus be comprehended through “a constitutive scission: $A = (AAp)$.”²⁰ The contradiction between a pure being and structure drives the dialectic, which is not a dialectic of the idealistic synthesis (thesis and antithesis), but a materialistic dialectic of the scission “based upon the contradiction between A and P , between the existent and its place.”²¹ A pure identity is thus never pure; instead, the pure being and a structural place, a certain P , to which it belongs, is inscribed in it.²²

Although Badiou had seriously unfolded his theory of place for the first time in his book *Theory of the Subject*, the mathematical theory of categories gained its central philosophical significance with the *Logics of Worlds*, where it is made equal to the *phenomenology* of the world in the same manner as the mathematical theory of sets is made equal to the *ontology* of the pure being in his *Being and Event*. The trajectory of the tense relation between the pure and placed being in Badiou’s philosophy therefore advances as follows: in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou sets out the contradictory relationship between the pure being and the general structure of place P ; in *Being and Event*, however, he is focused on the pure being as a being that is presented in the ontological form of a pure multiple; and in *Logics of Worlds*, the focus is again on the logic of place and the localised identity. Hence, it seems that there is a continuity between *Logics of Worlds* and *Theory of the Subject*, briefly interrupted by *Being and Event*. We must add, however, that there is nonetheless a moment in *Being and Event* where Badiou hints at the logic of place. Ontology refers to the structurability of a structure, whereby something of this structure is being structured as presented and consistent. Badiou named the process of structuration as the count-as-one, leading us to the presented multiple or situation. Any presented multiple is a situation where this situation is “the place of taking-place” that is indifferent to the elements of the set.²³ At this point, Badiou introduces two ways of comprehending situ-

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² How this logic also remains crucially pertinent to the analysis of contemporary capitalism has been most recently highlighted by Uroš Kranjc. Cf. Uroš Kranjc, “On the Notions of Police/State (of Situation): An Economic Perspective in Light of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”, *Critical Horizons*, 22 (3/2021), pp. 312–315.

²³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 26.

ations: situations as *consistent presented multiples* and situations as *worlds*, as *the domain of models*.²⁴ What we are interested in is the situation comprehended as a world that is “the place of taking-place.”²⁵

According to set theory, belonging to a pure multiple is a formal way of saying that something is at all.²⁶ But to belong to a set simultaneously bears witness to the fact that something of the being is *placed in* the given set, that something of the being is situated and localised in relation to this set. In ontology, the elements of a pure set are also pure sets themselves and therefore one can build complex structures based on the pure form of a multiple. However, ontology does not question the form of a multiple, which is measured in relation to localisation. Hence, ontology is focused on the composition that can be formed with the elements of a set, but it tells nothing about their relation to this set. In this regard, it is possible to introduce a distinction between the proposition that a certain *x* is, that it *belongs* to situation *S*, and the proposition that *x* *exists*, that it belongs to *situation S*, “in so far as it exists, *x* is situated, it exists in a situation (or in several).”²⁷ In relation to the latter proposition, Badiou says, “the belonging of *x* to the situation is called its *appearance*.”²⁸

As opposed to the ontological form of the pure multiple, the phenomenological form points to the being placed in a situation; it points to how *x* “happens at some place”, how *x* appears. We must emphasise, however, that it is always the same being that is at stake: the being that is intrinsically thought as *the being qua being*, and the same pure being, thought as a being that is localised, *that is there*. The difference arises from the modus of thinking and the formal operations used by mathematics. In the first instance, the being is thought ontologically and this ontological thinking uses set theory to present the being axiomatically. In the second instance, the being is thought topologically, which

²⁴ Burhanuddin Baki, *Badiou's Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set Theory*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 71.

²⁵ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 26.

²⁶ For an interesting recent analysis of this see Rok Benčin “Rethinking Representation in Ontology and Aesthetics via Badiou and Rancière”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36 (5/2019), pp. 95–112.

²⁷ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, trans. R. Brassier and A. Toscano, London and New York, Continuum, 2004, p. 181.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

is the kind of thinking that is at work in the mathematical theory of categories that uses the “topos” operator. According to Badiou, topological thinking is phenomenological, because it is the same to consider the appearing of the being and to consider the being as being-there. Hence the world is thought in relation to the placed, situated being, which is there. Taking place as such, the world is not limited to the coordinates of the physical space and time. Badiou also vigorously rejects Aristotle’s paradigm of the “natural place” to which the unmoved mover forces all natural things. “We will posit that there is no natural place.”²⁹ “Place” is a concern of logic and it is established by Russell’s paradox. Russell had demonstrated that the concept of universe, perceived as the Whole or a totality, is a contradictory concept. If we reject the Whole as inconsistent, we get the concept of the world. The world is necessarily localised. If there is no whole, there are multiple worlds. The logic of place is therefore not a logic of the “natural” distribution of places within a certain universal place, but rather an inevitable consequence of the fact that there is no general Place. The latter is an inconsistency, while the former is a consistency *in actu*. Appearing is logical precisely because logic is violent in a way that is logical only for logic: logic breaks inconsistency, forbids chaos, sanctions paradoxes, and forces inconsistency into consistency and order. And order is related to violence; *cosmos* is not given, but gained. The violence of logic is not conditioned or caused by anything; it is violence for no cause. This means that being does not appear through a deduction, but through the violence of contingency.

The world is a logical consistency and a consequence of the totality being inconsistent. As a consequence of logic, it does not need the work of a subject to be constituted. For its existence, it only needs a topological push, which happens as a pure contingency: “The fact that a multiple is in some way localized, such that the multiple-indifference of its being is assigned to a world, goes beyond the resource of this multiple-being as thought by mathematics. A sort of impetus, topological in essence, prevents the multiple from being merely what it is since, as what appears, it is *there* that it has to be what it is.”³⁰ Nothing in being qua being requires it to localise, as being is indifferent to its appearance. The topological push does not cause the multiple to appear, but rather causes the multiple’s *discontent* with *being what it is*. The indifferent form of the multiple

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, p. 30.

disregards its disinterest and its indifference: this indifference to indifference causes being to become interested and to move from indifference to difference. The first difference of being is that being is *there*. The first difference is therefore a topological, i.e. phenomenological, one.

In such a formalised concept of the world, there is no pathos towards the processes of death and dying. The world exists by way of its transcendental operations and these operations also constitute existence in the coordinates of the world. The existence of a multiple is measured in relation to a certain world and marks the degree of identity by which this identity appears identical to itself in this world. This degree can be minimum (in this case, we are dealing with “the inexistent”), maximum, or some intermediate degree between the minimum and the maximum of appearing. Death is not a category of being as such, but is rather something that happens to the existent, “an affection of appearing,”³¹ a transition from the positive degree of appearing of the existent to its minimum degree of appearing in relation to the world given. Death happens to the existent as something external, a consequence of a contingent cause. Here, Badiou does not consent to the idea that death is an intrinsic characteristic of the existent, that we are inevitably mortal beings; instead, he understands death as a logical correlation that contingently enforces itself upon the function of appearing: “At most we can accept that death is possible for it, in the sense that an abrupt change in the function of appearing may befall it and that this change may amount to a minimization of its identity, and thus of its degree of existence.”³²

At the same time, the central part of Badiou’s philosophy belongs to the doctrine of truths that offer the essential link between the world and subjective processes. According to this doctrine, truths are procedures that appear on the basis of the emerging of events and the subjective realisation of traces of these events. Truths are happening in the world, but are also exceptions in relation to the logics of these worlds, something that introduces a new arrangement of the given transcendental setting of the world. For our topic, however, the most important thing is that the whole attitude of the world towards death and life can be measured exclusively in relation to the eternal truths and their immortal subjective representatives. Paradoxically, it is only in the context of eterni-

³¹ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 269.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 270.

ty and immortality that one can understand the concept of death. Within the framework of his theory of truths and subjects, Badiou offers concepts that enable us to think the anatomy of the world, such as resurrection, the body, and the organs of the body.

The Anatomy of the World

We demonstrated the concept of the world based on its topology, where we perceived the world more as a kind of unique topological network. By introducing the concept of subject and truth, we can add to the world a dimension of life, enriched by the concepts of body, organs, life, new birth, resurrection, death, mortifying drives, corpse, and dying. Thus, we are getting to the field of the anatomy of the world. The place for anatomy is exactly where the creation of truth and subjective invention are. As Badiou mentions in *Logics of Worlds*, Galois's mathematical discoveries in the field of algebra and Bourbaki's monumental mathematical treatise are inventions which are "more akin to an anatomy of the mathematical body than to a dynamics of its creation."³³ At the same time, Badiou does not persist with the word "anatomy", but instead subsumes the entire theory of bodies under the signifier of physics.

Badiou makes a systematic classification by which mathematics is ontology (a general theory of being), mathematical logic is phenomenology (a general theory of being-there) and physics covers the doctrine of truths and the general theory of change.³⁴ In a narrower sense, physics is a theory of the body that retroactively makes sense of the metaphysics Badiou introduces at the start of *Logics of Worlds* – the formal theory of the subject-without-object (without a body). In his "physics", Badiou points to the processes of the incorporation of subjective formalisms in the way that a body "is this very singular type of object suited to serve as a support for a subjective formalism, and therefore to constitute, in a world, the agent of a possible truth."³⁵ We must add, however, that by using the word physics, Badiou intends to simultaneously distance himself from biology. Even though Badiou speaks of the body as an organicity and devotes the last

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³³ *Ibid.*, p. 472.

³⁴ Badiou, Alain, *The Subject of Change: Lessons from the European Graduate School 2012*, D. Rousselle (ed.), New York and Dresden, Atropos Press, 2013, pp. 45–46.

³⁵ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 451.

chapter of his *Logics* to an analysis of the category of life, he nonetheless avoids defining biology as the main signifier of his theory of the body. At first sight, biology might seem to be more appropriate than physics, especially if one considers that modern biological discourse, in particular the branch of molecular biology of Jacques Monod and François Jacob, is explicitly critical of all forms of vitalism and animism, which are part of “the anthropocentric illusion”³⁶ of the science of life, thus compromising the scientific development of biology. The new science of life strives to set itself free from all the theological assumptions, the categories of the creationist force, and the *elan vital*. It perceives life as a *logic* that develops through random mutations and offers an anti-humanistic idea of life that would probably adhere well to Foucault’s paradigm of the “death of man” and Badiou’s radically anti-vitalistic idea of “in-humanism” from *The Century*.³⁷ Yet, Badiou chooses physics and not biology, because biology is a discourse strongly exposed to ideologisation.³⁸ Badiou discusses this in the preface to *Logics*, wherein he denotes democratic materialism as a *bio-materialism* or a *materialism of life*. The equation “existence = individual = body”³⁹ applies in bio-materialism, assuming a “natural belief” in the human “bare nature”, in the “natural law”, or some kind of a “biologised legality” as the carrier of rights. Badiou’s view of the ideology of “bare human nature” is strikingly illustrated by the following citation from his *Ethics*:

Considered in terms of its mere nature alone, the human animal must be lumped in the same category as its biological companions. This systematic killer pursues, in the giant ant hills he constructs, interests of survival and satisfaction neither more nor less estimable than those of moles or tiger beetles. He has shown himself to be the most wily of animals, the most patient, the most obstinately dedicated to the cruel desires of his own power. Above all, he has succeeded in harness-

³⁶ Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity. An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology*, trans. A. Wainhouse, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971, p. 41.

³⁷ Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. A. Toscano, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, p. 178.

³⁸ This ideologisation can take place within the discourse of biologists itself, as Althusser directly demonstrated with the example of the discourse of the mentioned molecular biologist Jacques Monod. Cf. Louis Althusser, “Appendix: On Jacques Monod”, in L. Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays*, London and New York, Verso, 1990, pp. 145–166.

³⁹ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 2.

ing to the service of his mortal life his own peculiar ability – his ability to take up a position along the course of truths such that he acquires an Immortal aspect.⁴⁰

The last sentence of the cited paragraph clearly expresses Badiou's position regarding the relation of life and death. Life is not so much opposed to the category of death as it is to the category of survival. A true life strives for truths, while survival is an ideological axiom of modern times, which is concerned only with the existence of body and languages, excluding any idea about the existence of eternal and universal truths. When Badiou, in the conclusion of his *Logics*, asks what it means to live a true life, he is asking about the kind of life that a human can live as a subject "participating in Immortality" and not as a human animal. Already in *Being and Event*, Badiou sets the thesis that nature as such does not exist (only natural situations exist), which also means that there is no human nature. The ruling ideology of bio-materialism, on the contrary, insists on the fragility of our nature, making of mortality a principal value and of life the central category of bio-ethics. "The conjunction of 'ethics' and 'bio' is *in itself* threatening"⁴¹ and leads to the proliferation of different "bio-discourses" that duplicate the category of life into the *bio(s)*-life. This fascination with controlling the mortality of life is nothing but a death wish or the death drive itself, resulting in different forms of mortifying survival.⁴² The alternative is to insist on the category of life that is not put under the signifier of *bios*, but rather under the signifier of *eidōs*, the idea: "Against this abolition of life-thought, philosophy declares that to live is to act so that there is no longer any distinction between life and Idea."⁴³ It means that we subjectify ourselves under the idea of the existence of truths through the form of a faithful subject that eliminates mortifying impulses and pursues truths.

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Whether the world is alive or dead depends on the forms of subjectivity, which are the bearers of the realisation and materialisation of truths in the world. The life and death of the world refer to the ability of the subject to act as a support of a certain process of truth. There are three forms of subjectivity (or three subject "formulas") that Badiou defines as the *faithful*, the *reactive*, and the *obscure*.

⁴⁰ Badiou, Alain, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. P. Hallward, London and New York, Verso, 2012, EPUB, Chapter 5, n. p.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 3, n. p.

⁴² Cf. Badiou, "Conclusion: What is it to Live?", in Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, pp. 507–514.

⁴³ Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, p. 14.

Regardless of its form of subjectivity, the subject always has an active relation to truth, even when it is determined to act against it. We will say, therefore, that the subject is an active form of the production or rejection of truth. Only the faithful subject works in the direction of the active production and realisation of truth. The reactive and obscure subjects work against life lived in the name of a truth. The problem is that when the faithful subject is constituted as bringing a world to life, the reactive and obscure subjects already act towards the mortification of this world. This brings us to Badiou's main point, namely: "we should note that the contemporaneousness of a figure of the reactive or obscure type depends on the minimal production of a present by a faithful figure. From a subjective point of view, it is not because there is reaction that there is revolution, it is because there is revolution that there is reaction."⁴⁴ Reaction is always a re-action to the revolution: "the denial of the present supposes its production, and its occultation supposes a formula of denial."⁴⁵ A political revolution, for example, is not simply a re-action against social oppression, but is first of all the production of a new political form, generating an uprising of the reactive and obscure spirits. Science provides good examples of how emerging new scientific theories can provoke extremely oppressing reactions, and long-term struggle is sometimes needed to establish new scientific perspectives and matrices.

It is the same with the concept of the world. The world is neither alive nor dead, if there is no subjectivity to think it, perceive it, feel it. When reflecting on the 20th century, Badiou identifies the subjectivity of the century exactly with the way the century understood and thought itself. How it was thought is revealed by examples from science, politics, and art, which are the four "truth procedures" according to Badiou's philosophy. Therefore, we have to be within the domain of a truth procedure in action to peek into the anatomy of the world – in this case, to be able to register that the letter of science murdered the world. But contrary to what might be expected, this truth procedure is not necessarily (only) science; we have also found an example of this in Rembrandt's masterpiece.

Returning to the Rembrandt's canvas, we can see the implicit reaction of the artist's subjectivity to the world of science. By skilfully using the *chiaroscuro* painting technique (the use of strong contrasts between light and shade), Rem-

⁴⁴ Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 62.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

brandt created a special light that radiates from the dead man's body. The medical observers are presented in dark clothing, blending in with the shadow of the background, while the corpse has a spiritual light.⁴⁶ Here, we can observe how Rembrandt resolves the so-called "Rembrandt's dilemma". Rembrandt was a religious man, yet he portrayed a dissection of a dead man's arm. The Catholic church had condemned autopsy practices, since the resurrection principle required the burial of intact bodies. For this reason, Leonardo da Vinci was forced to dissect human bodies in secret. On the other hand, dissection was not only a common practice, but a public spectacle in Protestant Holland. The resolution of "Rembrandt's dilemma" is that Rembrandt had decided to paint the medical staff in dark nuances and the corpse in a shiny light. According to the tradition of painting in Holland, dark symbolised spiritual blindness and white symbolised purity. It is, therefore, telling that Rembrandt assigned light and holy purity to the corpse, while covering the representatives of science with darkness and spiritual blindness.⁴⁷ The corpse was that of Aris Kindt (an alias for Adriaan Adriaanszoon), who had spent his life as a criminal and also ended like one – he was executed for robbery. The X-ray analysis of Rembrandt's painting reveals that the right arm of the corpse was partially amputated at first. Legal practice in the 17th century sometimes demanded the amputation of limbs prior to execution, which may be the reason why Rembrandt painted the arm as amputated.⁴⁸ However, in the final version of the painting, the entire arm is painted, pointing us again to the possible interpretation that the artist was struck by the fate of the executed. Adriaan Adriaanszoon is presented in the light of and with the affection of the artist. He is a representative of those members of society that are usually attributed a hidden, minimised role of appearing and visibility, such as outcasts, tramps, criminals, and underprivileged individuals. It seems that Adriaan Adriaanszoon is not simply an object of anatomy, but a subject, a carrier of a symbolic connection very well known in Christianity: the connection (made visible only in death) between Jesus and the criminals executed alongside him on Golgotha.

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⁴⁶ Below, we refer again to the analysis of Adéla Janíčková, "Surgeon's hands in Vesalius's portraits and Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*".

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ijpm, *et al.*, "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp Painted by Rembrandt in 1632", p. 1060.

Let us dwell for a few more moments in the 17th century and look for another example in art. *The world has died* is a shocking thought announced by the poem suggestively entitled *The First Anniversary: An Anatomy of the World* (1611) by the English poet John Donne. Written for Donne's patron Sir Robert Drury, the poem talks about the death of Drury's fourteen-year-old daughter Elizabeth. What the poem shows is not simply the death of a young person, but the death of the world itself. The world dies with Elizabeth. The world collapses. Without her, the soul of the world, the world falls apart. The rest of the residents of the world act indifferently, as if nothing happened. But something did happen. And if there is no one to notice it, the world will be the one to grieve.⁴⁹ The world will become a subject of love that is grieving, collapsing, and dying.

But this world is also the old world, which is now changing religiously, metaphysically, and politically. New scientific and philosophical concepts are arising and bringing radically new perspectives of the universe itself. According to Alexandre Koyré, the 17th century brought about new concepts of the world; the idea of the world as a closed and harmonically organised totality was replaced by the modern idea of openness and the infinitisation of the universe. The new astronomy gradually replaced the geocentric concepts with heliocentric ones, a new scientific matrix was being born, arising from the geometrisation of space, the uniformity of the world, and the mathematisation of nature. These processes were not concurrent. The mixing of the old and new concept of the world had sparked different ambivalences and imaginaries. It is this tension that Donne's poem speaks of in the art medium. The poet feels that the old world is changing and slowly dying, and something new is coming. Protestantism is coming to England; the old dogmas in science are collapsing, new philosophies and concepts of the world are emerging. The poet is overwhelmed by ambivalent feelings, by curiosity and hope, by confusion, fear, and doubt about what is

⁴⁹ "This world, in that great earthquake languished; / For in a common bath of tears it bled, / Which drew the strongest vital spirits out; / But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt, / Whether the world did lose, or gain in this / (Because, since now no other way there is / But goodness, to see her, whom all would see, / All must endeavour to be good as she). / This great consumption to a fever turned, / And so the world had fits: it joyed, it mourned; / And as men think that agues physic are, / And th'ague being spent, give over care, / So thou, sick World, mistak'st thyself to be / Well, when alas, thou'rt in a lethargy." John Donne, "The First Anniversary: An Anatomy of the World", in *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, R. Robbins (ed.), London and New York, Routledge, 2013, EPUB, n. p.

coming. All forms of subjectivity are present: Should we greet something new, even if we have no knowledge about what it will bring, or preserve at any price what is already known to us, and fight the novelty or even to deny it? The new philosophies (of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler) bring something more than just interesting ideas. They are the beginning of something that will develop in a dominant paradigm of the world with Newton – an entirely different picture of the world from an integral, holistic, and teleological paradigm. Donne's *An Anatomy of the World* is perhaps a reaction to the coming analytical, rationalist, dissectional, anatomically-scientific view of the world, which was also a subject of Hegel's critique.

Both artistic examples, Donne's poem and Rembrandt's painting, point to two views of the world: the objective and the subjective. On one side, there is the cold, calculative, objective world of science; on the other, there is the artistic, religious, existentialist, and subjective experience of death, world, life. From the perspective of the artistic truth procedure, scientific discoveries may not be recognised as creating genuine and subjective productions, but are rather felt as invasive, objective mechanisms of the approaching inevitability that disregards the living and dying to which a work of art can react emotionally and melancholically. From this perspective, science is perceived to be on the side of the cold, external world, and art as the carrier and representative of internal, subjective, existential values. Science creates a dead world, while art is concerned with life.

However, looking at this through the prism of Badiou's philosophy, we can reject this dualism as superficial. We saw that due to its phenomenological-topological constitution, the world is simply an objective place that disregards death and perceives it as an existential value. Instead of one world, it would be correct to talk about an infinite number of worlds. These worlds can be understood in terms of cold, deadening objectivity. They are indeed objective as long as there are no events, no truths, and consequently no subjects appearing in them. But when an event happens, which can be an event of love, politics, science, or art (which Badiou considers to be truth procedures), the site of the given world transforms into an eventual site, into a place where something radical can happen. Whether something revolutionary will actually happen (which can only be revealed retroactively) depends on the forms of subjectivity that will either faithfully address and affirm the event in the production of a new form of a concrete truth, or deny and prevent the processes of truth from realising it. If the reac-

tive and obscure subject forms win, we get a mortifying world – a corpse of the world. On the contrary, with the active production of the event-emerging truth, a new world of a given truth procedure will emerge and arise. This means that the life and death of the world can only be followed in relation to the appearing of the concrete truth procedure.

In this text we have discussed the concept of the world – by aid of examples from Rembrandt and Donne – in the context of the artistic truth procedure, which brought us to the scientific world of anatomy. Without here going into the complex relation among individual truth procedures,⁵⁰ we can draw the conclusion that in the case of Rembrandt and Donne, what is at stake are not two distinct worlds of two separate truth procedures – the scientific and artistic – understood along the opposition of dead and alive, but rather that of one world of art, subjectively realised in a dynamic range of artistic critique, uncertainty, enthusiasm, resistance, curiosity, and compassion. From the perspective of art (and Hegel's philosophy), the world according to the model of (anatomical) science can be understood as a corpse; but we must note that from the perspective of science this is not an inevitable conclusion. According to Badiou's doctrine of truths, an event is always localised and refers to a specific truth procedure; meaning that what is an event in one truth procedure is not necessarily an event in another. If we were to delve deeper into the concrete procedure of scientific production, we might be able to follow the birth of new scientific theories that the faithful subjects of scientific truth advocate and thereby realise the birth of new scientific worlds. In this respect, what becomes a dead letter of science is not necessarily a corpse, a product of the mortifying production of reactive or obscure subjects, but something that comes alive exactly through the letter of science.

⁵⁰ We can thus note that one must look at truth procedures through the autonomy of their own subjective production. Every true procedure is autonomous in its field, which means that, for example, science cannot annihilate the possibility of the production of truth in the field of art or vice versa. Further analysis would definitely require us to develop this point more precisely and to concretely check the possibility that the production of the new and universal of certain truth procedures can provoke reactive and obscure subjectivities of other truth procedures.

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