Filozofski vestnik | Letnik XXXVII | Številka 2 | 2016 | 235–271

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Est deus in nobis or the Will to Enjoy

> In moral-practical reason, there is contained the principle of the knowledge of my duties as commands (*praeccepta*), that is, not according to the rule which makes the subject into an [object], but that which emerges from freedom and which [the subject] prescribes to itself, and yet as if another and higher person had made it a rule for him (*dictamen rationis practicae*). The subject feels himself necessitated through his own reason ... to obey these duties. [...]
>
> The subject of the categorical imperative in me is an object which deserves to be obeyed: an object of adoration. This is an identical proposition. The characteristic of a moral being which can command categorically over the nature of man is its divinity. His laws must be obeyed as divine commands. Whether religion is possible without the presupposition of the existence of God. *Est deus in nobis*.
> – Immanuel Kant[1]

What is in question in this passage from *Opus postumum,* Kant's unfinished, last major work, a work described by Kant himself as his *opus magnum* and as the keystone of his entire philosophical system, is nothing less than a discretely announced division of the subject that Lacan succeeded in bringing to light by reading Kant "with Sade," that is, by reading Kant, reason incarnate, through Sade's lenses, the knight of jouissance, and, as a consequence of this reading, taking his reflections on the division of the subject in some new and radical directions. To put it in a word to anticipate what follows below, it is precisely this relation between reason and jouissance that I will take up as a guideline for

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum,* trans. Eckart Förster and Michael Rosen, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993), pp. 208-9.

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some tentative comments that I propose to present here in order to situate the relation between philosophy and psychoanalysis. It should be noted, however, that in "Kant with Sade" Lacan stages not one but two incompatible couples, incompatible precisely to the extent that they bring together reason and jouissance: Kant and Sade, obviously, as this couple is already indicated in the very title of the essay, and, more discretely, Sade and Epictetus. Without being able to tackle the argument developed in "Kant with Sade" in depth, let me attempt to present in a rather schematic way the essential characteristics of this curious double *mise-en-scène*. To grossly summarise: if Sade is coupled with Kant in order to reveal a hidden driving force behind Kant's moral law, the will to enjoy, Epictetus' joining Sade is revelatory of Sade's deficiency as a desiring subject.

Following just the theme that interests me here – for there are so many others – and Lacan's indications concerning the radical change in the status of the subject resulting from the establishment of a new relationship between desire and will at the end of analysis, I will examine two modalities of the subject's confrontation with the Other's will to enjoy: that of Sade and that of the Stoics. Insisting on a few crucial points of convergence and divergence of these two modalities of the subject's coming to terms with the will to jouissance, my aim here is to explore the conditions of the possibility of an ethics without the Other, an ethics of the drive that allows for a non-perverse transgression of the pleasure principle.

Overcoming the Will-Desire Dichotomy

Although it is true that Lacan posed the question of the rapport of psychoanalysis with philosophy on various occasions, there is no denying that this was precisely to signal and elucidate a misunderstanding that conceals the undeniable heterogeneity of these two thoughts: philosophy and psychoanalysis. More to the point, Lacan delivers a penetrating critique, not against how philosophy works, but with regard to the effects of its working. Thus, Lacan seems to "correct" philosophy on numerous points. One such point is the question of jouissance. The problem is highly significant since, for Lacan, a dialogue with a philosopher is possible only if the latter is presented not only as a thinking subject, but also as a desiring subject, a subject divided by his passions, in short, a subject with a body that he does not know what to do with. Yet it is exactly this non-mastery, which the philosopher shares with any speaking being, that

philosophy seeks to conceal. More importantly, philosophy, as Lacan sees it, obscures what is crucial, indeed, what is most intimate to thought, namely: jouissance, enjoyment, considered as the secret driving force behind thought. Unable to do or say anything about this jouissance, philosophical discourse succeeds in blocking access to what matters the most for each speaking being: where exactly to situate this jouissance, this enjoyment that can never truly find its proper place?

In this light, it is rather odd that, for Lacan, as an analyst and despite his relentless criticism, philosophy strikes a reverberating chord. I am interested especially in those references to philosophy in which Lacan makes a comparison between a school conceived for psychoanalysis and ancient philosophical schools, in particular the one established by the Stoics. Emphasising a certain affinity between his School and the ancient schools, Lacan insists in particular on the following point: "A school is something different if it deserves its name, in the sense that this term has been employed since antiquity, it is something in which there ought to be formed a style of life."[2] The position Lacan outlines here bears some striking resemblance to the ancient conception of philosophy as a lived practice that aims at a transformation of one's mode of existence. Of course, Lacan does not equate the practice involved in his school of psychoanalysis with the sort of philosophical training engaged in by the ancient schools of philosophy, which aimed at rendering, in the words of Hegel, "the soul absolutely indifferent to everything which the real world had to offer."[3] The parallel is rather at the level of learning not how to grit one's teeth in the face of adversity, but rather how to see things differently, so that one does not need to grit one's teeth. To put it somewhat differently: just like the ancient schools of philosophy, Lacan's school of psychoanalysis was created in order to provide a kind of safe haven from civilisation and its discontents. What ancient philosophy and psychoanalysis share in common is the thought that the task at hand is to attempt to reform ourselves in order to be able to gain one's bearings, to orient oneself in existence and thought in a situation wherein anything at all can happen.

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2 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XII, Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychoanalyse,* unpublished seminar, 27 January 1965.

3 G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Werke in zwanzig bände. Theorie Werkausgabe,* Surhkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 1971, Vol. 19, p. 402.

The Stoics' school is particularly interesting in this respect given that one of the key aims of the school was to teach and learn how to face whatever fate throws at us. In other words, in conceiving the world as something external and hostile, in learning a way of life, one is supposed to learn how to take blows, how to respond to whatever this hostile world throws at one. This also explains why this attitude of indifference to pleasure and pain, this patient fortitude, and voluntary sufferance, is characterised by Lacan as a "*politicised masochism*". Hegel's presentation and criticism of Stoicism confirms Lacan's designation of Stoicism as "politicised masochism". For Hegel, Stoicism marks the emergence of "the freedom of self-consciousness" which, in breaking free from "what is external and exposed to chance," only exists "as inward freedom."[4]

To describe the sage as free in this sense would be to portray him as being without the passions, whose satisfaction would depend on circumstances beyond his control. Epictetus is characteristically clear on this point: "And can anyone compel you to desire what you do not wish?—'No one.'" And conversely: "You are handing yourself over to be a slave and putting your head under the yoke if you admire anything that is not your own and hunger for anything that is subject to others and mortal."[5] The sage, by contrast, desires nothing that would make his success or happiness limited by chance or the whim of other people, and he can therefore never be defeated by external occurrences: "That man is free who lives as he wishes; who can be neither compelled, nor hindered, nor constrained: whose impulses are unimpeded, who attains his desires and does not fall into what he wants to avoid."[6] Ultimately, for the Stoics, the passions depend entirely on our will.

Thus, the greatness of Stoic philosophy, as Hegel sees it, consists in the fact that "the will of the subject, which in itself only wills itself, ... allows itself in its steadfastness to be moved by nothing different from itself, such as desires, pain, etc., desires its freedom alone, and is prepared to give up all else – which is thus, if it experiences outward pain and misfortune, yet separates these from the inwardness of its consciousness."[7] As a consequence, the Stoic sage, in his indifference

4 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 287.
5 Epictetus, *Discourses* IV. 1. 7.
6 Epictetus, *Discourses* IV. 1. 1.
7 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 287.

to whatever is outside himself, only knows "the notion of freedom not living freedom itself."[8] Simply put, what the Stoic seeks is a freedom of thought because he has no control over the external world. Thus, the Stoic sage can well be "free on the throne as well as in fetters," as Hegel notes, because, for him, "there is just this freedom, this negative moment of abstraction from existence, an independence which is capable of giving up everything, but not as an empty passivity and self-abnegation, as though everything could be taken from it, but an independence which can resign it voluntarily, without thereby losing its reality; for its reality is really just the simple rationality, the pure thought of itself."[9] To be sure, in Hegel's reading, the Stoics' freedom is "a necessary moment in the Idea of absolute consciousness," but precisely for that reason, it is also "a necessary manifestation in time."[10] This is worth noting, considering Hegel's rather harsh criticism of Stoicism. Indeed, Hegel is willing to acknowledge that such a freedom "is a freedom which can come on the scene as a general form of the world's spirit only in a time of universal fear and bondage, a time, too, when mental cultivation is universal, and has elevated culture to the level of thought."[11]

For the Stoics, self-sufficiency (*autolês*, *autarkês*) or freedom (*eleutheria*), which has strong political connotations for it is contrasted with tyranny and especially with slavery (*douleia*), implies that the wise man is answerable to no one. At the same time, the Stoics' freedom, as Epictetus defines it, namely as having all things happen in accordance with one's *prohairesis*, a term used by Epictetus to name will or choice, which should not be considered as the freedom to act arbitrarily, but must instead entail "learning to will that things should happen as they do,"[12] is not a freedom from casual determinism or fate. Far from being exempt from fate, the sage is precisely the one who not only accepts fate and is not troubled by irrational passions or affects rebelling against the inevitability of events, but strives to accept that which occurs which requires active cooperation with fate. To quote Epictetus: "The philosophers are right to say that if a wise and good man had foreknowledge of events, he would work to assist

8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, Harper Torchbooks, New York 1967, p. 200.

9 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, pp. 293-4.

10 Ibid., p. 294.

11 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 199.

12 Epictetus, *Discourses*, I. 12. 15 and I. 12. 17.

nature even when it comes to sickness and death and mutilation, being aware that these things are allotted in accordance with the ordering of the universe."[13] Ultimately, freedom, as the Stoics conceive of it, is conduct in accordance with fate insofar as the latter is itself in accordance with God's reason. Yet such a freedom which consists in matching our will with the will of fate requires special conditions. If we are to follow Hegel, such a freedom is "a freedom which can come on the scene [...] only in a time of universal fear and bondage."[14] In view of this, one can better understand the task of Stoic philosophy: instead of striving to change the will of fate, we should attempt to change ourselves by adopting the attitude of the Stoic sage, who teaches us to not seek that events "happen as you want, but [to] want events as they happen."[15]

This is only to remind us that what is at stake in ancient philosophy is less theory or knowledge than a kind of practice that involves a "*savoir y faire avec*", a certain 'knowing-how-to-do-it' as regards the difficulty of living in a particular turbulent moment of history. In this vein, Epictetus remarks: "In every subject, the man who possesses a skill must necessarily be superior to the man who lacks it. So in general, the man who possesses knowledge [of] how to live, how can he be anything other than the master?"[16] Seen from this perspective, the School can be considered to be a place in which troubles concerning jouissance can be dealt with. Or more exactly, the School is destined to provide a treatment for the difficulties arising from the always unsatisfactory answers to the question of knowing what is to be done with one's body. Indeed, if finding the right measure is such a problem for man, this is because there is in him something that goes beyond every measure, namely jouissance.

It is surely no accident that in taking up the question of jouissance in his seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* and in "Kant with Sade", Lacan employs the notion of will, a notion that, unlike that of desire, is not an analytic concept. Indeed, it is hardly necessary to dwell on the effects of the analytic experience with respect to desire. The fundamental stage of any mapping out of the subject with respect to what is called his will consists in rediscovering within the

13 Epictetus, *Discourses* II. 10. 5.

14 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 199.

15 Epictetus, *Handbook*, trans., with an introduction and annotations, Nicholas White, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Cambridge 1983, 8.

16 Epictetus, *Discourses* IV. 1. 8.

discourse of the Other which models him what he really desires. The neurotic comes to see an analyst because he cannot find a way to deal with his desire, which is a source of constant trouble. He cannot accomplish what he would like to do; he does not know what he desires; he does not realise what he wishes; he does not pursue what he has undertaken; he would like to succeed in doing something, but what he desires is not in agreement with his will. There is then a muddle between desire and will. A quotation from Lacan's "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire" can shed some light on these difficulties inherent in desire: "what he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want – a form assumed by negation in which misrecognition is inserted in a very odd way, the misrecognition, of which he himself is unaware, by which he transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless obviously intermittent, and, inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences."[17]

Lacan draws a portrait of the neurotic and his complicated rapport with desire in a study dedicated to Hamlet throughout *Seminar VI, Desire and its Interpretation*. Hamlet, says Lacan, is someone who does not know what he wants. Indeed, even though Hamlet does not doubt for a moment that he has a task to accomplish, namely, to avenge his father, he foams with despair because he cannot decide to take this action. "Why does Hamlet not act? Why is this *will* [in English], this desire, this will [*volonté*], something which remains suspended in him?" asks Lacan. In effect, what is in question in Hamlet's drama, according to Lacan, is neither that he does not want, nor that he is unable to accomplish his act; what is at stake here is rather that "he is not able to will."[18] Here, as Lacan points out, we touch on something essential: what makes the task that is assigned to Hamlet repugnant to him, what makes his act difficult, indeed, what puts him effectively in a problematic rapport with this act, is not the impure character of his desire, the fact that his act is not disinterested, that it is not motivated in a Kantian way. If Hamlet is powerless to establish himself as a basis of the decision and cannot, for this reason, accomplish his act, this is because the desire that is at stake here is not his own desire. What Hamlet has to deal with,

17 Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London 2006, pp. 690-691.

18 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI, Le désir et son interpretation,* Editions de La Martinière and Le Champ Freudien Editeur, Paris 2013, p. 329.

what Hamlet is grappling with, Lacan insists, is a desire that is very different from his own. It is not the desire for his mother, but, rather, his mother's desire.

Several traits can then be distinguished on the basis of this minimal clarification. Continuing the reflection from *Desire and its Interpretation* cited previously, Lacan reiterates and expands on the notion of the dependence of the desire of the subject with respect to the Other's desire, developing the argument regarding this dependence in two stages: "The first factor that I indicated to you in Hamlet's structure was his situation of dependence with respect to the desire of the Other, the desire of his mother. Here now is the second factor that I ask you to recognise: Hamlet is constantly suspended in the time of the Other, throughout the entire story until the very end."[19] While one might be tempted to see in procrastination one of the crucial features of Hamlet's inability to act, and, indeed, Lacan himself focuses on procrastination as "one of the essential dimensions of the tragedy," because, for Hamlet, "the appointment is always too soon,"[20] which is why he postpones it, it should be noted, however, that, as Lacan clearly emphasises, "when Hamlet does act, it is always too soon. When he does act it is when all of a sudden something in the realm of events, beyond him and his deciding, calls out to him and seems to offer him some sort of ambiguous opening, which has, in specific psychoanalytical terms, introduced the perspective we call flight into the dimension of accomplishment."[21]

A wonderful formulation used by Lacan in order to identify one of the key structural traits of the entire tragedy, i.e. "Hamlet is always at the hour of the Other,"[22] is the central but crucially ambivalent linchpin of Lacan's reading, which takes a surprising turn in the very next sentence. The latter, namely, appears at odds with the one proposed before insofar as, in it, Lacan clearly states that "for Hamlet there is no hour but his own. Moreover, there is only one hour, the hour of his destruction."[23] How do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory formulations? This is also, as Lacan explains, the reason why the entire structure of the tragedy of Hamlet is constituted as a *mise-en-scène* of "Hamlet's unrelenting movement toward that hour." However, there is a more pressing point. If "the

19 Ibid., p. 374.
20 Ibid., p. 383.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 384.
23 Ibid.

subject's appointment with the hour of this destruction is the common lot of everyone," the question that arises, therefore, is: "what is the specificity of Hamlet's fate? What makes it so extraordinarily problematic?" and, more to the point, "What does Hamlet lack?"[24] Lacan's answer to this question helps us bridge the rival dimensions of Hamlet's desire. According to Lacan, Hamlet's deficiency as a desiring subject is due to the fact that "he has never set a goal for himself, an object for his action that has always something 'arbitrary' about it."[25] Or, to put it "in commonsensical terms, Hamlet just doesn't know what he wants."[26]

Now we are in a better position to grasp why the drama of Hamlet makes it possible for an analyst to arrive at the articulation of a deficiency of desire and the inability to act. In fact, this articulation can only be seen in retrospect, that is, from the perspective of what Lacan designates as "the final act," thus termed because Hamlet has to put his own life on the line as the price for being able to accomplish it. What is significant here is that this act itself, as Lacan insists, "serves only to enable Hamlet to identify himself with the fatal signifier,"[27] i.e., the phallus, Lacan's term for the signifier of the subject's alienation in the symbolic order. Thus the question of the phallus appears in a particularly striking form as the point around which Hamlet's desire and, consequently, act turn and vacillate. What is peculiar in the drama of the fulfilment of Hamlet's desire, especially when compared to that of Oedipus, is that "the phallus to be struck at" is still there, indeed, it is real, as "it is precisely Claudius who is called upon to embody it."[28] Therefore, if Hamlet finds himself in a situation in which he is unable to act, this is because, as Lacan points out, "the phallus is located here in a position that is entirely out of place with respect to its Oedipal position."[29] As Lacan remarks, what is paradoxical in Hamlet's situation, insofar as it can be considered as "the Oedipal situation," what makes Hamlet hold back, is not fear of Claudius, in his double role as the real king and the usurper, but the awareness that "he must strike something other than what is there."[30] Another crucial point here is that Hamlet is unable to accomplish the act that will strike at the

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 385.
27 Ibid., p. 392.
28 Ibid., p. 416.
29 Ibid., p. 415.
30 Ibid., p. 417.

real phallus, despite the fact that the body that incarnated it in the real, Claudius, "wasn't the right one," not only because he is still narcissistically connected to the phallus, but also because he is stunned, so to speak, to discover something that is utterly unexpected, namely, that for his mother, as Lacan notes, "there must be something very strong that nevertheless attaches her to her partner."[31] What makes Hamlet reproach his mother, in the end, is nothing other than "for having filled herself with it," but in so doing he only sends her back "to that fatal, fateful object, here real indeed, around which the play revolves."[32]

Hence, in "consenting to the desire of his mother, laying down his arms before something which seems ineluctable to him; namely, the mother's desire that takes on for him the value of something which in no case can be controlled, raised up against, removed,"[33] Lacan argues, Hamlet's desire finds itself crushed by the desire of his mother *qua woman*, who, immediately after her husband's death lets another man in her bed, and not just any man, as we know. Hence, Hamlet's nasty comment: "The meal for funeral served the following day for the wedding banquet. *Thrift*, *thrift!* ... As regards her, she is simply a gaping cunt. When one goes, another arrives. This is what it is all about."[34]

This is the pivotal point of the whole drama, at least in Lacan's reading, since, for him, the drama of Hamlet is the drama of desire. It is in this regard that Lacan can state that there is no moment at which the formula "the desire of man is the desire of the Other," would in a more accomplished, tangible, manifest, complete way cancel out the subject, than in the case of Hamlet.[35] For what Hamlet encounters in his mother's desire is "something of the real Other," as Lacan points out, something that is "less desire than gluttony, even engulfment."[36] Before what is thus revealed to be "the fatal necessity of this sort of mother's desire which nothing sustains, which nothing retains," Hamlet's desire undergoes what Lacan qualifies as an "abolition", a "destruction".[37] In effect, this devastation, which was brought about by the mother's desire, provides a perfect

31 Ibid., p. 416.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 334.
34 Ibid., p. 339.
35 Ibid., pp. 338-9.
36 Ibid., p. 356.
37 Ibid., p. 356.

example of man's desire being "trampled by the elephantine feet of the Other's whimsy,"[38] which characterises "a lawless will" inherent in a whim that regulates the mother's desire. Thus, if Hamlet, for Lacan, is the tragedy of desire, it is precisely because his mother's feminine will manifests itself as the will to jouissance, whose principle of action is precisely a sort of "because I want it!" that can attain the point of "the irredeemable, absolute, unplumbable betrayal of love,"[39] which, as such, goes against the duty that founds the order of the world.

What is significant here is that the impasse between desire and will is a structural one. As Lacan clearly points out: "man's desire is the Other's desire in which the *de* provides what grammarians call a 'subjective determination' – namely, that it is qua Other that man desires."[40] The implication here is that, due to the extimacy of desire, the subject can only confront the question of his desire, "What do I want?", starting from the question of the Other's desire. Pressing this point further, one may argue that, for Lacan, if the best way to lead the subject to the question of his own desire is "the Other's question," formulated as "*Che vuoi*?", i.e. "What do you want?"[41], this is because, as Lacan explains in his seminar on *Desire and its Interpretation*, in expecting to receive a response to his question, in the place of the Other, "the subject advances with his question as such," yet "what he is aiming at in the final term is the moment of this encounter with himself, of this encounter with his willing."[42]

In this way, the subject will have to confront the muddle of his desire insofar as this muddle is proper to the very function of desire, which is that of defence: "a defence of going beyond a limit in jouissance."[43] Admittedly, already in the neurotic fantasy, the Other's jouissance is considered as a version of the will to jouissance, yet within the limits of the pleasure principle. But we have not yet touched on the most surprising and, to me, most significant aspect of the relationship between desire and will. At risk of gross simplification, one could say that fantasy, as Lacan defines it, allows the subject to sustain himself as desiring. At the same time, fantasy, which is a kind of defence, assigns to desire

38 Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject ...," p. 689.
39 Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI*, *Le désir et son interpretation,* p. 352.
40 Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject ...," p. 690.
41 Ibid.
42 Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI*, *Le désir et son interpretation,* p. 349.
43 Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject ...," p. 699.

its intermittent trait; as a result, it can only appear as a flickering desire. In this light, it could then be argued that the ultimate aim of the analysis would be none other than to lead the subject to the point at which desire, once rid of its own confusion, turns into will in order to realise itself as a desire that wants what it desires, a "*désir decide*", a determined, resolute desire, to use another of Lacan's terms, one that complicates the picture, however, as we are dealing here with *a contradiction in adjecto,* which is why Lacan speaks of "*un désir inédit*,"[44] a novel, unheard of desire. For this new, resolute desire is a desire that turns into will, in short, it is a desire that knows what it wants, and is therefore capable of passing to the act. But this is only possible once desire is unencumbered by the muddle that inhibits it. It should be noted, however, that the will qua determined or resolute desire emerges together with a new subjective position that can be attained only at the end of analysis.

Hence, despite the manifestly minor importance of will for the analytic experience, it is worth noting that several elements plead in favour of a positive re-evaluation of the status of the will in its relation to desire. The first of these elements is this new affinity between desire and will insofar as it presents a desire that shares some distinctive traits with the drive: namely, its capriciousness. For this determined or resolute desire is will, but a will that knows no law or, rather, a will whose accomplishment is situated outside the law, outside all convention and common sense.

Therefore, to open a new perspective on the relationship between desire and will – in terms of agreement rather than in terms of disjuncture – I have taken as my focus an indication given by Lacan in his text "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation". The end of analysis is conceived in terms of an injunction: "it is as desire's object *a*, as what he was to the Other in his erection as a living being, as *wanted* or *unwanted* when he came into the world, that he is called to be reborn in order to know if he wants what he desires."[45] I will formulate a few remarks regarding this relationship insofar as it requires a radical transformation of the status of the subject because the subject, to repeat once more, "is called to be reborn in order to know if he wants what he desires." In the light of the path designated by Lacan, an analysis should allow the subject to release his condi-

44 Jacques Lacan, "Note italienne," *Autres écrits,* Seuil, Paris 2001, p. 309.

45 Jacques Lacan, "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Proposition," *Ecrits*, pp. 571-2.

tion of the *objet petit a* in the Other's desire. This is a necessary precondition for the subject in order to have a possibility to respond to the question concerning the singularity of his being and, in so doing, to accede to "this point beyond the reduction"[46] of the universality of the ideal. This solution, i.e. "to want what one desires," can be seen as a reformulation of the Freudian imperative: "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*," insofar as it "calls for an overhauling of ethics."[47]

As Lacan points out in this essay, this absolution, more precisely the moment when desire is transformed into a determined, resolute desire, into a desire that desires or, rather, wants itself, can only be attained at the point of the last judgment.[48] Do I truly want what I desire? For this question requires a final, definitive response, a judgement that seals, if I may say so, the subject's destiny. Assuming, perhaps contentiously, that this is the reason why Lacan speaks of the rebirth of the subject, a difficult question to pose is the question of knowing to what extent the Stoic position – which I propose to examine here – can be considered as one leading to such a rebirth of the subject. But, first of all, why should one choose this particular, odd example: the Stoic sage, which is far from obvious?

Fiat voluntas tua!

Anticipating what I will be developing in what follows, I will argue that the subjective position of the Stoic sage, characterised by an inflexible, unbending will, should be explored in some detail because we are dealing here with a subject for whom the conundrum of desire is already resolved, insofar as he considers the relation between the will and desire in terms of an agreement rather than in terms of a disjuncture. What is more, the originality of Stoicism resides precisely in a certain "culture of the will" brought to the point where it aims at the point

46 Ibid., p. 571.

47 Ibid., p. 572.

48 "And it is because we know better than those who went before how to recognize the nature of desire, which is at the heart of this experience, that a reconsideration of ethics is possible, that a form of ethical judgement is possible, of a kind that gives this question the force of a Last Judgment: Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?" Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII,* trans. Dennis Porter, Tavistock/Routledge, London 1992, p. 314.

of the identification of the subject with his will.[49] What I am going to propose concerning the relation between desire and will in the context of Stoic thought will in fact allow us to introduce some new elements in order to elucidate the following question: What status of the subject corresponds to the reconciliation between desire and the will?

In order to discuss the Stoic view of the tension between will and desire in any depth, it will first be necessary to lay out the Stoic's conception of the human soul as a foundational departure from the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. The Stoic conception of the will obviously derives from Aristotle, who, in fact, characterises will as a rational desire, more precisely, as either a "desiderative reason" or a "ratiocinative desire".[50] Aristotle, like Plato, distinguishes between the part of the soul that "has reason" and the part that, although it is not non-rational, can "obey reason".[51] The conceptualisation of desire, "the appetitive part" (*to epithumêtikon*) of the soul allows that obeying reason requires "reason-involvement" of some sort. It is clear from Aristotle's characterisation of desire, which is capable of both obeying reason and contradicting it, that desire's compliance with reason is nonetheless conceived as a relation of exteriority between two distinct faculties of the soul. What we have in Aristotle is an extremely subtle relationship between will and desire: while will is undeniably rational, it is attached to desire, a faculty that by definition is separated from reason. Thus, desire can only comply with reason when it desires what reason decides what it should desire. What Aristotle designates as *boulêsis* is precisely this desire of the desiring faculty to obey reason. Following the consensus among contemporary scholars, the Stoics, by rejecting the Aristotelian division within the soul, posited, in contrast, the rationality of desire on behalf of a unitary concept of the soul. Hence the specific Stoic contribution to the understanding of the relationship between will and desire is the formulation of an account of an assent that makes of it a nascent concept of the will. In the light of the Stoic rejection of the so-called "quarrel between reason and appetite," that is, desire, it then follows that the will, or *boulêsis*, conceived as a species of will, is not to

[49] Consider, for example, Epictetus' claim: "you are not flesh and hair, you are will (*prohairesis*)," Epictetus, *Discourses*, III, 3, 8-9.

[50] "Hence choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire, and such an origin of action is a man." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. H. Rackham, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1975, VI, 1139b4-5.

[51] Ibid., I, 7, 1098a4.

be understood as a desire that obeys reason, but rather a reasonable impulse resulting from reasoning, in short, a *desiring reason*.

In this light, it is clear that the Stoic usage of this term, *boulêsis*, radically breaks with the Aristotelian theory of will: if will, as Aristotle conceives of it, i.e. as the submission of desire to reason, can only emerge from a struggle between reason and desire, a potentially conflictual relationship as reason can only impose itself on desire from the outside, the Stoics posit that will is from the outset identified with reason, thus, not a desire obeying reason but rather a desiring reason. Faced with the alternative "reason or will" and in stark contrast to the once dominant view that, due to Stoic rationalism, which is founded entirely on the central role of reason presiding over the universal order of nature as well as the subject's course of action, there appears to be no room left for will,[52] I would rather take up the forceful reading proposed by A. J. Voelke, according to which, for the Stoics, "reason is will."[53] This additional point, however, implies the rejection of the very alternative "will or desire," insofar as Stoicism knows no idea of desire except in the guise of its identification with the will. Indeed, in Stoic teaching, the will is a rational desire that abides by the rules of the logos.

In order to examine this reconciliation inherent in the Stoic notion of will, I will draw on the few indications that can be found in Lacan's work. I have found the first indication in his essay "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire", in which Lacan actually broaches the end of analysis in terms of the will. He presents the end of analysis as the moment when the subject confronts not only the Other's demand, but its will. So, anyone who really wants to come to terms with the Other's will has two paths open two him: "to either realize himself as an object, turning himself into the mummy of some Buddhist initiation, or satisfy the will to castrate inscribed in the Other, which leads to the supreme narcissism of the Lost Cause."[54] Therefore, to "anyone who really wants to come to terms with the Other's will," Lacan outlines two paths: either to become a mummy, or to sacrifice oneself for the lost cause. But, what does it mean, in the final analysis, to say either "Yes!" or "No!" to the Other's will? Why did Lacan

52 Adolf Dyroff, *Die Ethik der alten Stoa, Berliner Studien für classiche Philosopgie und Arheologie* (2014).

53 André-Jean Voelke, *L'idée de volonté dans le stoïcisme*, PUF, Paris 1973, p. 7.

54 Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject ...," p. 700.

provide only these two paths: tragic rebellion or Buddhist acceptance, which are both anything but appealing? Indeed, both options in the proposed alternative involved in the "coming to terms with the Other's will" imply the subject's complete submission. It is quite obvious that this "coming to terms with the Other's will" ends in complete acceptance. In what follows, I will argue that it is precisely this perspective proposed by Lacan that might enable one to understand the Stoic's infamous assent to fate. What we have here is one of the most paradoxical aspects of the Stoic conception of will: to consider that the subject's freedom is realised by saying "yes" to the Other's will. As Seneca put it, "Freedom is to obey God, (*Deo parere libertas est*)."[55] For to assent to fate means to say "Yes!" to fate the very moment its will is manifested. The very moment the event takes place our will welcomes, as it were, its achievement, despite the fact that it can neither cause it, nor prevent it efficaciously. By founding the freedom of will on this "*Fiat voluntas tua!*", the Stoics – we have to grant them that – have the merit of having truly wanted to confront the Other, of having truly wanted to experience, as Lacan remarked, not only the Other's demand, but also or primarily its will.

Curiously enough, this is exactly the solution that Sade himself proposes when he confronts the Other's will, and to be even more exact, to confront the will to jouissance that it incarnates. In affirming the Other's right to jouissance, Sade appears to be aiming at the impossible: to preserve both jouissance, which is by definition "egoist", autistic even, and the Other, that agency namely that is incompatible with the solipsism of jouissance, as the latter would appear to rule out the very possibility of the Other's existence. While the solution proposed by Sade may well be elegant in terms of the means used to reach the desired end, it remains paradoxical nonetheless: for the affirmation of the existence of the Other is established through the satisfaction of the will to enjoy, more precisely, through the victim's subjection to the will of jouissance. Ultimately, what we are dealing with here is a retroactive resurrection of the Other, which does not yet exist, as it is only the attempt to satisfy the will to jouissance that brings it into existence or makes it exist or at least strives to make it exist. At the same time, the subject's position changes radically: faced with the imperative of jou-

[55] Seneca, *De vita beata,* XV, 7. See also "Of a Happy Life," Book XV, trans. Aubery Stewart, from the Bohn's Classical Library Edition of *L. Anneaeus Seneca, Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog "On Clemency,"* George Bell and Sons, London 1900.

issance, the subject turns himself into an instrument at the service of the will of jouissance. Sade who, as is well known, insists on the strict separation between will and the law, could only succeed in "pairing" the will of the Other and jouissance, that acephalic, headless agency that knows no norm, no rule, no law and remains impervious to all domestication, by equating the Other's will and a sheer whim. The Sadean maxim of jouissance, such as Lacan formulates it, expresses this will whose law is precisely the negation of all law: "'I have the right to enjoy your body,' anyone can say to me, 'and I will exercise this right without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate with your body.'"[56] This opens the way for a re-examination of Sade's subjective position. He does not go so far as to turn himself into a mummy. Still, he is very close to that position because he is set on being a martyr to the will to jouissance. Sade's ultimate aim is to achieve "the sort of apathy that involves having 'returned to nature's bosom, in the waking state, in our world,'"[57] to take up Klossowski's formulation as quoted by Lacan himself in "Kant with Sade". In choosing to return alive, "in the waking state", in the inanimate state, in opting for *me phynai,* "never to have been born", *à la* Oedipus, abundantly commented on by Lacan in several of his seminars, Sade strives to free himself from the signifier in order to cease to be its victim. Yet the price to be paid for not being a stain on the universe of language, to subtract himself from the order of the signifier and thus to finally erase his own being from it, is to become a "mummified" object, an object that is no longer troubled by the subjective division.

This brings us to the second indication, taken precisely from "Kant with Sade". This one refers, in fact, to the Stoics, yet in a very peculiar context, namely that of a missed encounter, if one may say so, between Sade and Epictetus. The fact that Lacan, in this text, puts on stage not only the infamous couple, Kant and Sade, but also – more discretely, to be sure – another couple, that of Sade and Epictetus, will help us greatly to further develop the relationship between will and desire. If Sade, according to Lacan's thesis, uncovers Kant's truth, then I am tempted to argue that Epictetus is revelatory of Sade's truth, that is, his failings as a desiring subject. What Sade and Epictetus are supposed to share in common here is the thought that the subject should put himself in the "service of the Other", of his will, to be exact. For in both cases the distinguishing trait that

[56] "Kant with Sade," p. 648.

[57] Ibid., p. 667.

characterises the subject's position is the Other's will rather than the Other's desire.

It is therefore very telling that Lacan addresses the same objection to both Sade and the Stoics, by saying, concerning the Stoics, that "their *ataraxia* deposed their wisdom. We fail to realize that they degraded desire; and not only do we not consider the Law to be commensurably exalted by them, but it is precisely because of this degrading of desire that, whether we know it or not, we sense that they cast down the Law."[58] In other words, it is because the idea that the Law itself would motivate and activate its proper transgression is utterly inconceivable to the Stoics that they are unaware of the fact that in exalting the Law, instead of rendering it efficacious, they actually render it inoperative. Saint Paul, in contrast, proves to be, according to Lacan, more perceptive: Paying very close attention to the ways in which sin manipulates and abuses the Law to seduce and then to destroy the subject, he insists that there is no greater jouissance for man than to go against the Law.[59]

Seen from this perspective, one is surely justified in stating that Sade, having no other objective than, precisely, to violate the Law, certainly went further than the Stoics in the dialectic of desire and the Law. But, at the same time, "Sade went no further," as Lacan emphasises, since he, too, was blind to the mutual parasitism of desire and the Law. Indeed, his desire can only maintain itself in defiance of the Law. It is therefore against this background that Lacan reproaches Sade for having "stopped at the point where desire and law become bound up with each other."[60] More precisely, if Sade failed in maintaining desire in the guise of defiance of the Law, this is because "something in him let itself remain tied to the law," which prevented Sade from taking "the opportunity, mentioned

58 Ibid., p. 663.

59 "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I will not, I consent to the law, that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will, is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me." *The Letter of St. Paul To The Romans,* 7,14-17.

60 "Kant with Sade," p. 667.

by Saint Paul, to become inordinately sinful."[61] What is, according to Lacan, the sign of Sade's limitation, of his deficiency as a desiring subject? If Lacan is justified in speaking of Sade's failings, this is because Sade never presents to us a situation in which the victim would be seduced, won over, by the torturer to the point of giving her consent to him.

It should be noted, however, that the Sadean desire, despite its limitations, is a particular desire that in breaking with the paradigmatic desire – the desire of the Other – overcomes the desire's inherent "nescience".[62] In this respect one could argue that Sade is a subject concerned not with a faltering desire, but is inhabited instead by a "determined, resolute desire", to borrow Lacan's term, a desire that knows what it wants. Obviously, this desire is not decided, determined, by Sade, rather it is determined by that which causes it, jouissance or, more precisely, the will to jouissance, because Sade says: "I have the right to enjoy your body."[63] "Legitimised" by the right to jouissance, the Sadean subject knows what he wants, namely to engender jouissance – without asking for permission. And to the extent that the Sadean subject exercises this imprescriptible right to jouissance without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate with your body,'"[64] as is clearly expressed in the Sadean maxim, we can consider the Sadean desire, a desire reduced solely to the will to jouissance, as being equivalent to the drive, that agency namely that satisfies itself without authorisation, outside all intersubjectivity, which means without the subject's knowledge and without any regard for the Other's interdiction.

A first provisional answer to the question of knowing what makes it possible for Epictetus to be impervious to Sade would be to say that Sade cannot affect, cannot shake, the Stoic subject precisely because his experience does not require the subject's consent, it does not require her being willing. Actually, the victim's consent is of no concern to Sade. However, what the Sadean torturer does aim at in his victim is the point of her subjective division. More exactly, what the tormenter seeks in his victim is the point at which the victim is connected to a jouissance that divides her. And to be even more precise, the aim of the Sadean

61 Ibid.
62 "The Subversion of the Subject…", p. 689.
63 "Kant with Sade," p. 648.
64 Ibid.

torturer is to strive to bring out this divisive jouissance with no reference whatsoever to the victim's consent.

How are we to understand this maxim of jouissance that implies the right to enjoy the victim's body? No doubt such a maxim only makes sense on condition that the whole experience produces some kind of effect on the victim. And it is precisely in this context that Lacan evokes the failure of the Sadean experience that would be inevitable were it to have no effect on the Stoic subject, who, instead of being shaken to the core, would turn to his torturer and say: "Please, continue, I beg you." Lacan even imagines what Epictetus' response would be to the cruel infliction of pain he would have to endure in the Sadean experience. If the torturer were to break his leg, he would mockingly comment: "You see, you broke it."[65] In other words, if Sade fails in his attempt to apply the right to jouissance to Epictetus, this is because the Stoic differs from the pervert in that for him pain does not constitute an ontological proof.

Stoicism is usually regarded as a kind of asceticism. And it is asceticism, indeed, because it reaches the point at which pain means nothing to the subject. It is precisely in such a context that Lacan evokes "the Stoics' artifice": namely, scorn. "What pain is worth in Sadean experience will be seen better by approaching it via what might be disconcerting in the artifice the Stoics used with regard to it: scorn."[66] By responding to torture with scorn, by showing to the torturer that his body is of no concern to him, that it is a matter of indifference to him, Epictetus would reveal what is derisory in the Sadean *mise en scène*. To quote Lacan once again: "To reduce jouissance to the misery of an effect in which one's quest stumbles – doesn't this transform it into disgust?"[67].

The Stoics' artifice thus consists in removing oneself from everything that does not depend on us, in withdrawing oneself from everything that is not what Epictetus calls "up to us" (*eph'hêmin*), only to rely on prohairesis, which can best be rendered as one's choice or will. As Epictetus himself put it:

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65 Ibid., p. 651.
66 Ibid., p. 650.
67 Ibid., p. 651.

> Some things are up to us, while others are not up to us. Up to us are conception, choice, desire, aversion, and, in a word, everything that is our own doing; not up to us are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, everything that is not our own doing. Furthermore, the things up to us are by nature free, unhindered, and unimpeded; while the things not up to us are weak, servile, subject to hindrance, and not our own. Remember, therefore, that ... if you think only what is your own to be your own, and what is not your own to be, as it really is, not your own, then no one will ever be able to exert compulsion upon you, no one ... will do absolutely nothing against your will, ... no one will harm you, for neither is there any harm that can touch you.[68]

Hence, the very fact that the sage is capable of "stoically" enduring torture, that he remains perfectly impassive, proves that the Other has no hold over his will. The quotation from Epictetus clearly indicates that the Stoic position consists in entirely abandoning the whole substance of jouissance to the Other because, in a sense, it does not count. Ultimately, what we are dealing here with is an asceticism of disinvestment, of the withdrawal of the subjective involvement. The essential point here is that pain is not libidinally invested; it is not libidinised, eroticised. One can see that in refusing to subjectify pain, the Stoic sage finds a way of parrying, of warding off, the subjective division that Sade wanted to inflict on him. What is truly Stoic, to repeat once more, is an attitude that demands that one only trust one's prohairesis, one's power of choice, and to abandon all the rest to the Other.

Once we realise the true location of our self, Zeus himself has no power over the subject's prohairesis. Prohairesis, then, is what, in man, is in essence removed from all constraints. If one is situated at this point, one can, just like Epictetus, say to a tyrant threatening to throw him in chains: "Me in chains? You may fetter my leg, but my will not even Zeus himself can overpower."[69] Prohairesis is sheltered from the tyrants. It constitutes an unassailable point, a hegemonic place – which explains its Greek name: *hēgemonikón* – which, conceived as a fragment of the divine *logos*,[70] designates the rational ruling faculty of the soul. The he-

[68] Epictetus, *Handbook*, I.I-3.

[69] Epictetus, *Discourses*, I, 1, 17, 27; I, 1, 23.

[70] Epictetus imagines Zeus talking to him: "... I have given you a part of myself, the power of impulse and repulsion, of desire and avoidance – in a word, the power of using impressions." (*Discourses* 1.1.12). Later, he writes: "For if god had so arranged his own part, which

gemonikon – separates the subject from all the rest, and in so doing keeps him out of the reach of the Other. Ultimately, the hegemonikon, or prohairesis, to use Epictetus own term, marks what the Other cannot enjoy in any case, it is a point out of reach.

Where, then, is the missed encounter between Sade and Epictetus situated? Or, to be even more precise: what makes it possible for the Stoic sage to avoid the trap that Sade set for him? As Lacan presents it, what is at stake in Sadean experience is not simply to "monopolize" the victim's will, to subjugate the victim and make her submit to a constraint, ultimately to prescribe the law to her. What the Sadean subject instead aims at is to take over, to seize the seat of the subject, to occupy what the Stoics designate as the hegemonikon or prohairesis. On the other hand, however, Sadean experience does not consist simply in imposing the law on a subject, it is not about simply "monopolizing a will" but rather "instating itself at the inmost core of the subject,"[71] as Lacan puts it. If we follow Lacan's hypothesis, this Sadean operation would have no chance of succeeding if, "in his innermost core," the subject himself were not already situated "in the place of the Other." Hence, if Sade succeeds in evicting or evacuating the subject from his innermost core, this is because the subject himself, in his deepest intimacy, is considered to be an intruder in the locus of the Other.

It is exactly at this point that Lacan takes up the example of modesty (*pudeur*). The subject feels violated by the very fact of having passively suffered the Other's immodesty. Even if the subject could not prevent it, one feels as guilty as if one had given one's consent to the Other. The subject, once situated at this level, is defenceless against the Other's attacks. Situated in this dimension, it would seem as if the refuge provided by prohairesis no longer exists. It would seem as if there is no longer any shelter for the subject, no hiding place. In view of this, it is necessary for the Stoic subject to establish a different kind of rapport with the Other, a rapport that precisely allows him to find shelter from the Other's attacks. Stoicism can thus be seen as an attempt to be absent from the locus of the Other, to situate oneself there where the subject is out of reach of the Other.

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he has given to us as a fragment of himself, that it would be hindered or constrained by himself or by anyone else, he would no longer be god, nor would he be caring for us as he ought." (*Discourses* 1.17.27, 36.)

71 "Kant with Sade", p. 651.

For the Stoics, the separation from the Other is a matter of will. To maintain the autonomy of one's will, of one's prohairesis, the subject is willing to pay any price: separating one from everything, including life. Adopting an attitude of indifference to externals, the Stoic subject can relegate his own preservation, his entire being, to the rank of things of no interest. The subject identified with the conscious ego, with the hegemonikon or prohairesis, freely uses his body as something that is at his disposal and can go to the point of abandoning his body to the Other, without this abandonment having any effect whatsoever on the self. Torture and even death do not loosen the hegemonikon's grip on the subject.

Here we need to focus on the Stoic identification of prohairesis with the ego insofar as it is founded on the rigorous separation of having and being: "You are neither flesh, nor body. You are prohairesis," says, for instance, Epictetus. In this respect, the opposition between prohairesis and the body can be reformulated in terms of an opposition between ego and that which is not ego. The Stoic subject thus incarnates a position of impassivity that allows him to thwart the Other's will, a position that paradoxically implies a *non-rapport with the Other*. One could say that the Stoic subject enjoys the separation from the Other and in order to achieve this he is ready to separate himself from the nearest Other, namely his own body; my leg in chains, as Epictetus puts it, I am quite willing to leave to you, it does not bother me in the least where I am. In view of this, one is even tempted to say that the Stoic subject is capable of escaping the will of the Other precisely at the point at which he appears to be entirely submitted to it.

How are we to situate such a paradoxical position – which is one of the most demanding, one of the most austere – since it requires that the subject renounce all pleasure, his body, and even his life?

To endure whatever fate throws at one rather than to go against the order of the world and attempt to change it is, by definition, the attitude of a slave. While the slave complies with orders and does whatever he is forced to do, the Stoic sage, by contrast, embraces whatever happens. Therefore, far from being wrenched from him, his assent originates in the act of will. For the blows of fate are not something to be suffered, but rather something to be willed. Indeed, the sage affirms whatever occurs, better still, he wills it as if it were what he would have chosen for himself. What is unsettling about this position can be seen in the fact that *mastery is coincident with assent*. While it may well require the subject to

assent to whatever occurs, it is nevertheless a position that is eminently that of the master. Involving "learning to will that things should happen as they do,"[72] the attitude of the Stoic sage is quite different from resignation or, even worse, passive submission to unwanted external events that cannot be avoided anyway. However, relying only on prohairesis, the sage is nevertheless able to avoid the constraints of the existing social and political order. Since what the stoic sage performs is nothing less than the rejection of the status imposed on him, that of a slave. But this operation of the "destitution" of the master consists in a gesture that is itself a gesture of the master.

To see to what point it is difficult to identify the Stoic position with one of the subjective positions deployed by philosophy, it suffices to consider it in the light of the Hegelian critique of Stoicism. Besides, Hegel himself emphasised a curious conciliation of these two aspects by presenting the position of the Stoic sage as a paradoxical synthesis of the master and the slave. For to attain his independence and freedom, the Stoic sage, incarnating what Hegel designates as a pure abstraction of self-consciousness, can only present himself as "a pure negation of [his] objective form,"[73] more exactly, since he is "fettered to no determinate existence," he is, likewise, "not bound at all by the particularity everywhere characteristic of existence as such, and is not tied up with life."[74] And if "it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained," as Hegel remarks, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the Stoic sage who "obtains" his freedom, to use Hegel's own term, by proving that "the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence,"[75] since life as mere self-preservation is of no concern to him, could not be further from a slave who, on the contrary, wants to stay alive, to maintain himself in life, at any cost.

If the Stoic sage is ready to risk, to put at stake, the entirety of his life at any moment, this is because life as self-preservation is a matter of indifference to him, it is of no interest to him. This is precisely the point that brings the Stoic sage closer to the Hegelian master and separates him at the same time. The putting at stake of one's life is what the Stoic sage and the Hegelian master have in

72 Epictetus, *Discourses*, I, 12. 17.
73 Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 232.
74 Ibid., p. 232.
75 Ibid., p. 232.

common. To prove that he is free and self-conscious, to affirm his independence, the Hegelian master is ready to sacrifice all that characterises his animality: his body and even his life. However, to be able to experience his truth and preserve the stake he has won by risking his life, it is necessary that the master "[i]n this experience becomes aware that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness."[76] In other words, the master must preserve the very life that he was so willing to expose to risk, otherwise the "trial by death ... cancels both the truth which was to result from it, and therewith the certainty of self altogether,"[77] and the constitution of self-consciousness is only accomplished through the mediation of servile consciousness, i.e. though its recognition, which is why Hegel claims that the "truth of the independent consciousness is ... the consciousness of the bondsman."[78] Just like the Hegelian master, the Stoic is not afraid to die but, contrary to the Hegelian master, this is not in view of attaining the Other's recognition. If the Hegelian master, in the very gesture of subjugating the slave, remains dependant on him, the Stoic sage is a master in the very act of giving assent to the Other, yet a master that does not need the slave to be recognised as his master. A peculiar master, to be sure, because the Stoic sage does not have to "cling" to the Other in order to know that he is the master. Actually, he could be considered as a master without a slave. We are dealing here with a subversive guise of mastery, a mastery ready to relinquish mastery itself.

On the other hand, however, by raising oneself above life, indeed, by being prepared to sacrifice it, life surreptitiously succeeds in staying alive.[79] One could even say that by sacrificing life the stoic position eternalises it. What is at issue here is not of course the biological life that the Stoic subject is only too ready to sacrifice at any moment, but a life that exceeds this biological existence and which can only be identified with prohairesis. In this respect, Stoic will can be considered as a life that never ends, a life that persists, independently of biological existence. As the insatiable More! that knows no rest, prohairesis therefore

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., p. 233.

78 Ibid., p. 237.

79 It should be noted that this "ruse of life," in the context of Hegel's philosophy, is already analysed in Bataille's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, in particular in his "Hegel, la mort et le sacrifice," in Deucalion 5, Neuchâtel 1955, and emphasised in Derrida's commentary "From Restricted to General Economy," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Routledge, London and New York 1978.

represents that which is eternal or immortal in the subject. Indeed, for the Stoics, will is that agency that incarnates the eternity in the subject and of the subject. And to the extent that will, according to the idiosyncratic Stoic conception of its unity, represents this agency that, while being immanent in the subject, exceeds it, one could argue that it carries the very hallmark, if I may say so, of the drive. In view of its tyrannical demand for satisfaction, Stoic will clearly points to a reality situated beyond the pleasure principle. In this respect, the distinctive trait of the Freudian drive, the forcing of the pleasure principle, is precisely what characterises Stoic will.

The Real of Reason

The main critical question, even before getting to the actual analysis of the drive-like nature of Stoic will, is whether the forcing of the pleasure principle carried out by Stoic ethics is perverse or not. To contextualise this analysis, I will follow Lacan's indication from his Seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, according to which "the course of the drive is the only form of transgression that is permitted to the subject in relation to the pleasure principle."[80] However, even before posing this question, it is necessary to justify the identification of will with the drive; this is my hypothesis in the present paper, and precisely so because Stoic will is rational, it is the reason's will, which is to say, the ego's will, the will of the conscious ego, while the drive can only have an antinomic relation to consciousness. The insurmountable obstacle confronting any attempt to situate Stoic ethics in the domain of the drives resides exactly in the fact that this position does not allow for a distinction between the ego and the subject. The Stoic subject, in contrast, appears to be inseparable from the ego. At first sight, nothing is more foreign to the concept of the drive than the Stoic will, an eminently rational will, a will of reason. How then can Stoic ethics be brought closer to the domain of the drives if the fundamental axiom of psychoanalysis aims at setting up an insurmountable barrier between the drives and the ego?

Certainly, the Stoics, too, just like psychoanalysis, highlight the chasm between the ego and the drives – or passions, to use their proper term – but this is pre-

[80] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* trans. Alan Sheridan, Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, London 1977, p. 183.

cisely because this allows them to situate the subject on the side of *logos* qua agency called in to rein in the drives, to domesticate them. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, situates the self in an agency that is dislocated with respect to the ego: the unconscious desire, the drive, the *objet a* can be considered to be such modes of being of this remainder, in which the subject does not find him. The Stoic sage, on the other hand, is not someone who is searching for an answer to the question of knowing if he wants what he desires. For he has already found the answer to the question of desire. Hence, we could say that, for the Stoic sage, "a true master", a "true self", is exactly that which escapes the ego, i.e. reason, that which the subject does not recognise, that which he does not want to know anything about.

How then can the drive find its place within the economy of Stoic thought? Contentious as my thesis may seem, it is unapologetically so, for I believe that to say anything of philosophical and psychoanalytical interest about the Stoics requires a readiness to step beyond the available Stoic texts. In order to discuss the location of the drive within the Stoic system it will first be necessary to examine the very structure of the rational ruling element of the soul, the hegemonikon, defined as consistent with itself, firm, immutable, and hence indomitable. The problem is as follows: generally speaking, all faculties of the soul are also permeated with rationality. It follows from this that there is no room in the Stoic soul for irrational elements. Consequently, in order not to contradict their major thesis that the soul is unitary because it is entirely rational, the Stoics deny that there is an irrational power, in the guise of passions or desires, that rule over reason. Amongst the problems this conception raises, most pressing regarding the issue of will is the fact that, for the Stoics, passions must be in some fundamental sense *rational* movements. Indeed, for the Stoics, regardless of its particular character, "the impulse of man is reason prescribing action to him."[81] The main Stoic thesis worth salvaging is that everything that occurs in the soul is the product of one and the same rational faculty: the hegemonikon. Hence, if the soul is monistic and the unity thesis should be taken to refer to the hegemonikon, the latter presents what could be rendered as *the paradox of self-mastery*: by divesting the body of all its prerogatives, the Stoics are forced

[81] See Plutarch's reporting Chrysippus' saying in *De stoicorum repugnatiis*, 1037F in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987 (quoted as LS 93R).

to incorporate everything in the hegemonikon, including that which resists its domination, namely passions.

More importantly for my purposes here: if there is no force beyond the rational faculty's power to control, how, then, to account for the subject's assent to something that is "not obedient to reason," indeed, something that is "disobedient to reason and rejects it," while knowing that it is against reason. If there is no room for divisions between the rational and irrational faculties in the Stoic soul, since it has no parts and there are no parts that could come into conflict, how, then, to account for an act, a decision, a choice that manifestly disobeys reason? The much stronger reading of the unity thesis is, I suggest, that the hegemonikon cannot "turn from reason" or "fall from reason" without knowing that one is doing so, without knowing what reason calls for at the moment of choosing otherwise. Put simply, the problem is irresolvable unless one assumes a conversion of one and the same reason to its two contradictory movements.

Hence, the paradox of Stoic ethics could be formulated in the following manner: the very moment it asserts the domination of the hegemonikon qua the absolute master that nothing can escape, it is forced to acknowledge the existence of a remainder that resists the hegemonikon, a remainder that stems not from the body, as one would expect, but rather from the hegemonikon itself, but a hegemonikon that goes off the rails, which is why it does not function as it should. It is the hegemonikon itself that is divided, split up into two parts, of which one functions as it should, while the other, by giving in to the pleasure principle, endures its own perversion. This will is certainly reason, yet a perverse, corrupted reason, a reason that no longer functions as it should.

One of the great merits of Stoic thought is therefore not only that it introduced the concept of will into the vocabulary of philosophy, but even more that it demonstrated the possibility of will's "*extimisation*", of its emancipation from reason. In Stoic philosophy will is presented as reason's unsettling double precisely because it is at one and the same time heterogeneous and identical to reason. This is what I refer to as the paradox of the absolute mastery of reason. The fact that nothing is supposed to escape it constitutes the very possibility of its perversion, the possibility of the emergence of will as an agency capable of subverting reason. Thus, reason becomes the battlefield of two wills: one that obeys reason and the law imposed by it, and another one that, in emancipating itself

from reason, becomes a power foreign, even hostile, to reason. Hence, alongside the reasonable will, there exists an odd, perverse, corrupted will, a will that is at one and the same time foreign to reason and inherent in reason. This will, while being immanent to reason, evades its control. Which is why I propose to call it: *the real of reason itself*.

This ambiguous conception of the will of the Stoics allows us to have a glimpse of the way in which the Stoics think what psychoanalysis defines as the division of the subject. It is true that the Stoics do not use this term "the division of the subject", they rather speak of the perversion of reason.[82] In this light, it could be argued that one part of reason (in the guise of the passions) emancipates itself and does not respect the measure prescribed by reason itself. One part of reason loses all temperance and its head in order to do exactly what pleases it. But to be without one's head is not to be without one's will, because it demands what is due to it, regardless of the consequences. This gives us a first formulation of the will to jouissance, indifferent to both reason's demands and the subject's well-being. For the Stoics, the passions constitute a will that is in the subject, yet it is not the will of the subject; indeed, it is not a will that the subject could acknowledge as his own, a will in which one could recognise oneself, and for a very precise reason: we are dealing here with a will that assents to something that is against reason and in so doing acts against the subject's well-being, against his interests. We can see now to what extent the Stoic identification of the hegemonikon with the conscious ego could become problematic. The hegemonikon that gets lost, that gets muddled up, that is looking for its way, is a hegemonikon qua desire, a blind desire that does not know what it wants. In contrast, a hegemonikon "equal to its task", if I may say so, does not ask for the way, it does not ask anyone for permission to do what pleases it, not even God, but heads straight to its goal. In this sense, one could argue that the hegemonikon could best be compared to an infallible "programme" extremely reliable in its performance.

If I insist on the structural analogy between the drive and the hegemonikon, this is precisely because from such a perspective, which is the perspective of

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[82] On this issue, see LS 1, 420-1: "A passion is a weak opinion, whereby 'weakness' describes the state of a '*perverted*' reason, assenting to impressions that trigger off impulses inconsistent with a well-reasoned understanding of what their objects are worth." (My italics.)

the drives, although it may appear at first sight to be alien to the Stoics, it could be demonstrated that Stoic ethics is necessarily an ethics without the Other, an Otherless ethics. The hegemonikon's modus operandi reveals an essentially self-referential, one is tempted to say an "auto-erotic", structure in which there is no place for the Other. From this perspective, the ultimate stake in Stoic ethics is nothing other than to learn to "ask nothing of anyone."[83]

The paradox of Stoic ethics, which appears to be so exacting and rigorous, which is almost inconceivable to us, in short consists in assigning to the subject a goal that appears at first sight to be most humble, even "minimalist": to be content with what one is, with what one has, since it is not a matter of becoming better, more generous, more honest, or having more compassion for others. The ultimate goal is nothing other than, to borrow the famous formula ascribed to Zeno, to "live in accordance with" (*homologouménos zen*). Variously re-transcribed as "in accordance with nature" or "in harmony with nature," it is most commonly interpreted as "in harmony with universal reason," following Diogenes Laertius, who fills "in accordance with" as "in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe, ... identical with this Zeus, lord and ruler of all that is."[84] In contrast to this scholarly reading, I will follow Goldschmidt's strong reading, which aims at salvaging the peculiar nature of the object of the hegemonikon, namely to maintain its absolute sameness despite the infinitely changing concrete objectives of the hegemonikon's various operations.[85] From this perspective, the ultimate objective, i.e. "to live in accordance with," is what the Stoics designated as *télos*, which has to be distinguished from a series of contingent aims, designated as *skópos*. By splitting the object of the hegemonikon into *télos* and *skópos*, the Stoics can be said to have anticipated the solution to the Freudian problem of the object of the drive. In this regard, it is not by chance that Lacan in his attempt at clarifying the peculiar status of the object of the drive and its paradoxical satisfaction turns to

[83] The point that the Stoics strive to reach is a kind of turning point at which the final experience of *Hilsfslosigkeit*, where he "can expect help from no one," namely the state in which the subject finds himself in that relation to himself which is his death, is converted into positivity since at that point the subject "touches the end of what he is and what he is not." Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* p. 304.

[84] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* R. D. Hicks, ed. Heinemman, London 1925, 7. 88.

[85] Victor Goldschmidt, *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps,* Vrin, Paris, 1979, pp. 145-158.

the Stoic distinction between *télos* and *skópos,* by means of its translation into English. Thus, according to Lacan, the French term *but* has two meanings that can be rendered in English better:

> When you entrust someone with a mission, the *aim* is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The *aim* is the way taken. The French word *but* may be translated by another word in English, *goal*. In archery, the *goal* is not the *but* either, it is not the bird you shoot, it is having scored a hit and thereby attaining your *but*. If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply this return into circuit.[86]

To be satisfied with "wrong" objects while aiming at the true end is precisely that paradoxical feature that, in the eyes of Lacan, characterises the Freudian drive, which "may be satisfied without attaining … its end." This is because, in both cases, we are dealing with the same circular, enclosed structure "of which nothing else ensures the consistency except the object, as something that must be circumvented."[87] The object that the drive and the hegemonikon aim at is like no other object, an object which, in a sense, is situated beyond all objects, an object which has nothing "objectal" about it, since, initially, "this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object."[88] On this point, it could be said that the object of the drive is a peculiar object to be sure, as it is nothing but the absence as object, an object reduced to its empty place, around which it circulates.

It is on the basis of this puzzling characteristic of the object of the drive that Lacan will try to solve the problem posed by the paradoxical conjunction of the implacable demand of satisfaction, on the one hand, and the indifference regarding the materiality of the object of satisfaction, on the other. Lacan's indication concerning the object of the drive might shed some light on this matter. For Lacan, if "the drive may be satisfied without attaining its end," this is because "its aim is simply this return into circuit." In the end, the true object of the drive

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86 Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 179.

87 Ibid., p. 181.

88 Ibid., p. 180.

is nothing other than its satisfaction. One could therefore claim that the drive succeeds precisely there where desire fails. Already for Freud, desire cannot by definition attain its satisfaction. The evidence of this is in the fact that, for desire, no object is the "good" one insofar as the true object of desire is what allows it to remain unsatisfied and thus "operational". The drive, by contrast, cannot not be satisfied since, for the drive, any object is the "good" one. Actually, any object whatsoever is suitable food to satisfy it, because, as Lacan points out, using the oral drive as a paradigm, "no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object."[89]

In the same way, for the Stoics, the hegemonikon may be satisfied with "wrong" objects, without attaining its end, because, just like the drive, the hegemonikon ultimately aims at being "in accordance with". So, the infamous formula "to live in accordance with" designed to identify the object of the hegemonikon, only requires the conformity of action with reason, which is, in the final analysis, the conformity of the hegemonikon with itself. Hence, to "live in accordance with" ultimately aims at nothing less than at reconciliation with oneself. However, if there is something paradoxical about this position it is because that which appears to be considered a "minimalist" programme, proves in fact to be a "maximalist" ambition, to the extent that, as psychoanalysis teaches us, the most difficult task for the subject is exactly to be reconciled with oneself, this oneself being, of course, that which "drives" the one, sets one in motion, without one being aware of it. It is essential therefore to accurately situate the seat of the self in Stoic ethics in order to answer the question of knowing how the Stoic sage can remain impassive, imperturbable, impervious to Sadean experience. What is it in the Stoics' attitude that prevents Sade from shaking the sage? This brings us back to the two paths elaborated by Lacan in his "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire", two paths offered to anyone who would like to confront the Other's will.

At first sight, it seems very difficult to tell the difference between the Stoic position and the Sadean position because in both cases the subject's will is the Other's will. But if the position of the Stoic subject has nothing in common with that of a pervert, as I am arguing, where exactly can one draw the line of demarcation between, say, Sade and Epictetus? My provisory answer would be the

[89] Ibid.

following: While Sade, in order to satisfy his most eccentric whims, turns to the Other's will, that of nature, in this case to justify these whims, the operation accomplished by Epictetus is quite different: he makes the subject responsible for the Other's will. The very fact that the subject is unhappy, frustrated, dissatisfied with what happens to him, is for Epictetus proof that he is not equal to the Other's will. It is from this point of view that a new light can be shed on one of the central maxims of Stoic ethics, insofar as it teaches us, in the words of Deleuze, whose affinity with Stoic philosophy is well known, "not to be unworthy of what happens to us."[90] As Deleuze ingeniously points out, what we are dealing with in the Stoic subjective position is less a matter of heroically enduring or welcoming whatever fate brings, as considering whatever chance throws at one as an opportunity to become who one really is. Here, we can take up a formulation of Joë Bousquet, quoted in Deleuze: "my wound existed before me, I was born to embody it."[91] This is also a way to eliminate all temptation to divest the subject of his responsibility: in a sense, no misfortune is inflicted on the subject undeservedly. Quite the reverse is true. It is rather up to the subject to become worthy of his misfortunes. For regardless of the misfortune that the Other might dish out to the Other, one is always in a position to "withdraw" oneself by claiming: "I want it", "This is my will!".

"The Stoic's artifice" consists therefore in this: by one and the same gesture, the subject submits himself to fate, that is, to the will of the Other, and separates himself from it. It follows from this that no stroke of fate can shake the subject. He has already situated himself out of the reach of the Other, "taken shelter" from the Other. This is precisely the gesture that Nietzsche aims to repeat with his "eternal return" since, for Nietzsche, the liberation from the irrevocable past consists precisely in the opportunity to choose between *ressentiment* and *amor fati*. As has already been noted by Agamben, Nietzsche locates "the origin of the spirit of revenge, the worst punishment devised by men" in "the repugnance … of will toward the past and its 'thus it was'."[92] In effect, "powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will

[90] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* trans. M. Lester, Columbia University Press, New York 1990, p. 149.

[91] Ibid., p. 148.

[92] Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency" in *Potentialities. Collected Essays in Philosophy,* Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (eds.), Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 267.

backwards ... its fury is that time cannot go backwards. 'What was' – this is the stone the will cannot turn over."[93] Paradoxically, it is precisely the will's impossibility to will backwards that allows Zarathustra to teach the will to "will backwards" (*zurückwollen*) and to transform every "thus it was" into a "thus I willed it."[94] In turning "thus it was" into "thus I willed it," will rediscovers its liberation. Contrary to what we might believe, we are dealing here with a true ethics of the master, who by adding his "Yes!" aims, in the final analysis, at mastering the whims of fortune because at each stroke of fate the Nietzschean subject, just like the Stoic sage, is capable of responding: "Thus I willed it!". Hence, the Stoic assent should not be confused with the posture of one passively resigned to the inevitable. It should rather be considered as an act of acceptance by which the subject subscribes to the will of the Other. It is an act of will that involves – contrary to what one might believe – that the subject, instead of submitting to the Other, to fate, evades the Other. We are dealing here with a will that realises itself through the separation from the Other, or, rather, a will that enjoys separation from the Other, that enjoys the subject's withdrawal from the Other's grip.

Could we then say that the Stoic sage wants to "subjectify" what happens to him? According to this hypothesis, the task of the Stoic sage would be to assume – in the existentialist meaning of this term – whatever happens to him. But to accept this hypothesis, attractive as it may be, would lead us astray and we would miss what is truly at stake in the will of the Stoics. For my part, I would rather claim that the Stoic position is the very opposite of subjectivation: indeed, it is a position involving a de-subjectivation, or, to be even more precise, an objectivation of the subject. Certainly, the will that wants whatever occurs changes nothing as regards that which happens to the subject. But if nothing changes at the level of facts, the acceptance nevertheless has the power of transmutation, because what is at stake here is a transformation from the past "Thus it was!" into a "Thus I willed it!". The acceptance marks a break, insofar as the subject after this act is not the same as the one before it. We are dealing here with two literally incomparable agencies. For the Stoic is someone who wants to be worthy of what happens to him, accepting that which occurs as an opportunity for one's rebirth.

93 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. Walter Kaufmann, Penguin, London 1954, p. 139.

94 Ibid.

Such a status of the subject can be seen as resulting from subjective destitution, an instance affected by an incurable truth, a final, definitive truth that no longer allows the posing of questions such as: "Do I want what I desire?". Once the subject is radically transformed, this sort of question becomes meaningless for the subject because, from now on, it is not possible for the subject to lose his way. Rather, the subject, programmed as an automaton, can only follow his "rail". What, exactly, is the subjective position of the Stoic sage? My contention here is that this is a position that allows the subject to get rid of the Other in order to continue to function in a wholly acephalous manner, almost blindly. For the subject no longer looks for a path. He knows the way already because the path he will be following from now on is in a certain sense inscribed in his flesh as an infallible programme. This automaton is nothing other than the subject having undergone a subjective destitution, the subject turned into an object and functioning from now on blindly, headlessly, for he no longer needs his head, because he knows at any moment what he has to do. The "terminal stage" of the Stoic subject is thus nothing other than a "knowledge in the real", just like the Galilean nature.[95]

There appears to be a sort of a competition between the Stoic sage and the Sadean subject as to who should take the place of the *objet a*. There is nevertheless an important difference between these two subjects: the sage qua object marks a modification in the subject's position, a modification that results from a reconciliation between the subject and the drive and, as a consequence, involves a subjective destitution, which entails the loss of the Other's support. Whereas the pervert, who wants to be the object of the Other, can only become this by precisely avoiding reconciliation with the drive. For this perverse operation, it is indispensable that jouissance be relegated to the Other. It is as a lacking, a not-whole, that the Other, from a perverse perspective, calls to the subject to make it whole, by restoring to it the lacking jouissance of which it was deprived. It is through such an operation that the instrumentalisation of the pervert himself – to be the *objet a* of the Other – gains some ethical dignity. The pervert knows from the outset how to produce, arouse, jouissance and where to

[95] E. Bréhier emphasises precisely this capacity of the Stoic sage to "vanish in the real." According to Bréhier, "having attained the accordance with nature, the stoic sage … passes out in the force of nature." E. Bréhier, *Transformation de la philosophie française,* Flammarion, Paris 1950, p. 131.

look for it. But if he is to achieve this effect he must pay an exorbitant price: his own instrumentalisation, even though this appears to him a lesser price than the price to be paid for a true reconciliation with the drive, a reconciliation that requires a radical transformation of the subject, the birth of a new subject who is no longer looking for an alibi in the Other. In such a case, the subject is in a sense condemned to a senseless, insane jouissance, because, from that moment on, it is impossible for him to attribute this jouissance that bothers him to the will of the Other, namely that agency that is supposed to demand, command, jouissance. Stoic ethics, by contrast, implies a reconciliation with the drive/s without requiring the instrumentalisation of the subject. In the final analysis, what is demanded of the subject is nothing less than his transformation into an automaton. For the Stoics, the ultimate aim is to become like God, who cannot act otherwise than he does.[96] The God of the Stoics, in this respect, can be seen as an incarnation of the drives, of a programme that can only operate in the same manner, an agency, in short, in which will and necessity coincide.

Hence, when the pervert claims that it is the Other that speaks through him, it is in fact his own jouissance, yet unrecognised, unacknowledged by the pervert, of course, that speaks through this Other, a jouissance that the subject cannot or does not want to take upon himself. With respect to the Stoic, by contrast, who has nothing of the subject, it would be more appropriate to say that we are dealing here with a "non-subject", a "post-subject", through whom speaks that extimate Other within him, *Deus in nobis*,[97] evoked by Kant in his *Opus Postumum*. From this perspective, the pervert's operation can be considered to be an "inclusive" one, because perversion consists precisely in a striving to include the Other in the closed, *auto*-erotic system of the drives, to make the Other responsible for the jouissance that troubles one. The Stoic operation is, by contrast, exclusionary insofar as it consists in an effort to expulse the Other from

[96] Seneca is quite explicit on this point: "Remark, too, at this point, that the gods are constrained by no external force, but that their own will is a law to them for all time. What they have determined upon, they do not change, and, consequently, it is impossible that they should appear likely to do something although it is against their will, since they have willed to persist in doing whatever it is impossible for them to cease from doing, and gods never repent of their original decision." Seneca, *De Beneficii*, *On Benefits*, VI. xxi. 4-xxiii. i.

[97] See Ovid, *Fasti*, VI, 15 – 16: "Est deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo; impetus hic sacrae semina mentis habet." (There is a God within us. It is when he stirs us that our bosom warms; it is his impulse that sows the seeds of inspiration. Trans. J. G. Frazer.)

the circular, self-referential movement of the hegemonikon. But it is only by attaining this point that the hegemonikon can function "as it should, properly"; it is only at this point that will and fate coincide.

In conclusion, I would argue that the position of the sage is quite close to that of the saint, a position elaborated by Lacan in his *Television*. Designating the "saint's business" as that of acting like trash, while "allowing the subject, the subject of the unconscious, to take him as the cause of the subject's own desire," the saint provides the subject, precisely "through the abjection of this cause" with "a chance to be aware of his position." Yet this is only possible if the saint himself is "the refuse of *jouissance*."[98] If the position of the sage resembles that of the saint, it is precisely to the extent that they have in common the status of the *objet a* qua dropout, yet an unsettling dropout and such precisely to the extent that it makes others "go off the rails," since they inevitably start to ask themselves: What is it that I truly want when I desire (something)? The Stoic sage is an object whose task is precisely to "hystericise" others to the point of encouraging them to confront the most difficult question of the desiring subject: Do I really want what I desire? It is in so doing that the Stoic sage, just like a Lacanian analyst, leads them to reconcile their desire and their will. And in so doing, he brings them to an incurable truth. In this sense we could say that, just as with Lacan's analyst-saint, the Stoic sage could be considered to be a new name for the destiny of the drive.

[98] Jacques Lacan, *Television,* trans. Jefferey Mehlman, Norton, New York 1990, pp. 15-16.