# TOC – R2 – 1AC

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#### The drive to appropriate the cosmos is founded upon fantasy – private entities cast conflicts within the psyche towards outer space which fail and cement serial policy failure.

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Since the 1970s (though with some precursors) a number of citizen ‘pro-space’ organizations have been established to promote human activity in outer space. Some groups/activists are devoted to exploration (human or robotic), some focus on human sensuous consumption and tourism, whilst others set their sights on mining resources and space settlement. While most are for the exploration and development of space in general, some have specific targets like the Moon or Mars. There is variation in their political activity, but many groups regularly lobby governments about space issues. Outside of this, most groups also promote space activity by sponsoring research, holding scientific discussions, supporting private sector projects, educating the public and producing news magazines for their membership. They also organize trips, parties and other social events. National-level organizations such as the Mars Society, National Space Society or ProSpace convene only once or twice a year. Gatherings are much more frequent amongst local chapters of these organizations and local groups affiliated to them such as the Huntsville Alabama L-5 Society.

The movement has never been particularly large in social movement terms. Membership is largely formalized through joining one or more pro-space organizations (costing roughly $30-40). Yet surveys of membership in recent years have been limited. The last record as of 1985 suggested there were 150,000–200,000 citizen pro-space activists (Bell cited in Michaud, 1986). Movement numbers probably peaked in the late 1980s/early 1990s at about 200,000–250,000. Since the 1970s, the vast majority of organizations have been based in the US, though independent organizations and international chapters of US groups do exist in other developed countries (including Australia, Canada, the UK, France and Japan).

Despite members of pro-space organizations referring to themselves as part of a prospace movement, Michaud (1986) points to the existence of some debate as to whether or not it is a true social movement (see also Bainbridge, 1976). In 1980, writer Trudy Bell believed that the emerging movement could go on to be as powerful as other social movements. Even two years later she was less optimistic (Bell cited in Michaud, 1986), and in 1985 concluded ‘that the space community was too fragmented and had too diverse an agenda to be called a movement’ (1985, p. 305). Michaud argues that some older groups do not qualify as being part of a social movement because of their economic interests and nor do enthusiast groups (within which category one could include astronomy and rocket clubs and science fiction fans), but believes some of the newer groups ‘seeking significant change ... may indeed reflect a social movement’ (Michaud, 1986, p. 304). It is on these latter groups, in particular the National Space Society, ProSpace and the Mars Society, that my own research has focussed.

It is true that the movement utilises formal political channels to a greater extent than many new social movements, but it does also have a life outside of politics as demonstrated by the list of activities above. Elsewhere (Ormrod, 2006, p. 31–9)1 , I have examined the case for the pro-space movement being a new social movement as defined by theorists like Alberto Melucci (1985). I concluded that in so much as the movement does not imply a ‘breaking of the system limits’ (indeed it has always had what Diamond, 1995, refers to as ‘system supportive’ elements and found allies within both Congress and NASA) nor engages in alternative lifestyle practices, it does not approach the ideal type of new social movement. Yet its commitment to political action means it is definitely not just a collection of clubs and organizations, its generalised goals which transcend any particular objective distinguish it from a campaign, and its life away from formal politics and the representation of interests mark it off from lobbies or associations.

This paper emerges from an ethnography of contemporary pro-space activism conducted at various pro-space events in the US and UK in 2003 and 2004. Data comes from formal and informal interviews, conference papers by activists, panel discussions and lobbying appointments with congressional staffers, whilst older studies have relied on the publications of early movement leaders, large-scale attitude surveys or interviews with a few selected activist-informants.

The Centrality of Fantasy

The centrality of fantasy or daydreaming to those pursuing the human exploration, development and settlement of space is well established. McCurdy (1997) argues that motivation has been based on constructed romantic images of space travel. It is reported that the early rocket pioneers like Robert Goddard were driven by imaginative daydreams. Carl Sagan describes a young Goddard sitting in a cherry tree and envisioning exotic new vehicles (cited in Kilgore, 2003, p. 42). My own interviews showed that pro-space activists continue childhood daydreaming about space in later life, as Melvin, a 35 year-old parttime student from the UK testified; Me: Do you find yourself still daydreaming about space a lot? M: [resounding] Yes. Probably too much, but its one of those things that’s so rigid in my psyche I don’t suppose I’ll ever be able to get it out really. Nor would I want to, I don’t think. Yeah, a lot of people say I spend too much time up there. There were also more subtle clues that vivid space fantasies lay behind individuals’ activism. Middle-aged Bruce McMurray gave the most speculative talks about space settlement at one of the pro-space conferences I attended. What was noticeable about his talks was the authority with which he pronounced not that we could build houses for our space colony in a particular way, but that we will build our houses in a particular way. This was not unique to Bruce but suggested that what he was doing was not forwarding possible solutions to potential engineering problems, but instead describing a very elaborate fantasy he had constructed.

Pro-space activists report two main catalysts for their fantasising. The first is reading science fiction. The second is having witnessed previous space missions. Despite crucial differences from science fiction fans (discussed later), science fiction is an essential part of many activists’ paths to joining the movement. One veteran estimated that seventy per cent of members got into the movement through reading (or, less commonly, watching) science fiction. For many of them, the interest in science fiction began at an early age, even as young as four (‘Rupert and the Spaceship’). From this point, activists often developed an insatiable appetite for the genre. Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein (along with Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury) have a particularly close relationship with the pro-space movement. But crucially, pro-space activists did not simply read science fiction passively, they elaborated their own fantasies based on it. The creative aspects of science fiction fandom have been emphasised by Jenkins (1992).

When discussing how they ‘got into’ space, nearly all pro-space activists will mention something about their memories of watching space missions, usually huddled around the family TV, or perhaps witnessing a launch in person. Again, childhood memories are the most pertinent. Amongst those I interviewed, first memories ranged from Sputnik I, the first satellite to be put into space in 1957, to the first launch of the American Space Shuttle in 1981. There is a large cohort that grew up during the Apollo era, clearly the most stimulating American space program, but there are many activists inspired by other programs. Journalist Marina Benjamin (2003) explains how NASA’s ‘dream-peddling’ had filled her and others like her with inspiration when they were young, and gave them high hopes for what mankind could achieve in the future. Looking back, she asks reflexively whether these were delusions; ‘Was I naı¨ve to believe we’d simply hop from the moon to other planets and thence to the stars?’ (Benjamin, 2003, p. 3). It is clear that for Benjamin, as for so many pro-space activists, seeing space missions unfold before them had encouraged daydreams and fantasies every bit as much as reading science fiction.

Activists’ fantasies about the future have largely been ignored in social movement research. This is despite the fact that any utopian movement must, by definition, imagine some form of alternative future society which exists only in the mind and not in reality, as Robin Kelley (2002) has pointed out in his celebration of the imagination in radical social movements. There are many theoretical positions from which fantasy can be approached, however (Ormrod, 2007), and my psychoanalytic framework is quite different to Kelley’s. Where Kelley sees the imagining of future worlds as a positive creative force operating on a conscious level, I argue that conscious imaginings are best understood as manifestations of underlying unconscious phantasies about the self. 2

Space Fantasy and Unconscious Phantasy

One initial piece of evidence for the unconscious origins of space activists’ motivation is that often they cannot explain why they want to get into space. Jim, a software engineer from Illinois, is articulately inarticulate on the matter 3 ; Me: For what reasons would you want to go? J: For the fun of it or for the ... It’s hard to say it’s just been a dream of mine to be in space, you know. So, why do you want to be in space; it’s exciting, you know, it’s not something that everybody does but still its not trying to beat the Joneses or anything. It’s just one of those desires you grow up with from when you’re a kid, it’s just a strong desire so you kind of loose track of the original reason [... .]. So let me think about that, I might be able to answer you better in the future, but it’s not one of those things... It’s sort of like asking somebody ‘why do you scratch your head up here instead of over here?’ It’s like ‘I just got into the habit of doing it’.

Jim could no longer remember why it was he wanted to go into space (assuming he ever knew). Lots of other pro-space activists got agitated when pushed on the origins of their selfconfessed ‘drive’. One resorted to saying ‘the mystics amongst us might say God put it there’.

My argument is that the conscious fantasies of pro-space activists play out intrapsychic conflicts and desires relating to the break from the state of primary narcissism experienced in the first few years of life.4 After reading science fiction or watching space missions, these unconscious phantasies are translated into fantasies about the exploration, development and settlement of space.

Two pleasurable aspects of the stage of primary narcissism are relevant here. Arguably the precedent one is the unity of the infant with the mother (‘the monad’, Grunberger, 1989) and indeed the rest of its universe. This is a state in which the infant does not even recognise the separate existence of other selves. Some have suggested this begins with the pre-natal relationship between child and mother in the womb. As the child grows older, it learns to appreciate the independent existence of others (Mahler et al., 1975). The other aspect is the experience of omnipotence - of power and control over the world - afforded to the infant treated as ‘His Majesty the baby’ (Freud, 1995, p. 556). This is a world in which all demands are satisfied. In normal development these experiences are, of course, shattered by the realities of family life and social existence. Pro-space activists’ fantasies can be understood, however, as translations of phantasies about regaining the self of primary narcissism.

I distinguish three dominant themes in pro-space fantasy, though often they occur in combination. The first relates to trips, often just into Earth’s orbit, in which the activist experiences the pleasure of floating around in zero gravity. This weightlessness has been likened to being in the womb (Bainbridge, 1976, p. 255; White, 1987, p. 23). And if sexual partnerships are sought in part as a return to the monad as many psychoanalysts contend, then one activist’s fantasy of having zero-gravity sex perhaps represents the ultimate nirvana. An alternative interpretation is to relate the ease of movement in zero-gravity environments to the way in which at will infants command their parents to pick them up and carry them around. The social and oedipal restrictions that gravity comes to represent are symbolically escaped.

A second theme is the fantasy of seeing the Earth from space as a unified (and in many accounts insignificant) whole. This demonstrates the activist’s need for separation from the mother coupled with power over her. Earth is commonly referred to as a ‘mother’, and activists talked about being able to obscure the Earth with their thumb – literally being ‘under the thumb’. But at the same time there is the anticipation of a new feeling of unity with the whole Earth, seen without political boundaries. Indeed in White’s (1987) account of astronauts’ experiences he describes it as ‘the ultimate journey from part to whole’. There is a magical resolution here to the infant’s developmental dilemma. Mother Earth is at once transcended and brought back into one being with the observer.

The third theme is present in fantasies about the development and settlement of other planets, the Moon and asteroids. Here the omnipotent desire to tame, conquer, control and consume the universe is manifest in fantasies such as playing golf on a course on the moon, mining asteroids or building a colony on Mars (possibly having terraformed the planet – changing its climate to make it more Earth-like). The envisioning of such distant objects being brought under personal control and symbolically consumed back into the all encompassing self plays out the desired but impossible regaining of the phantasized omnipotent self of primary narcissism around which the whole universe was oriented.

Fantasy and Action

It may initially be difficult to see how fantasies like these can support social movement activism. After all, fantasies of regressing back to a narcissistic state are often seen as escapism in the face of the vulnerable, troubled, and often confusing reality of adult social relations (Ellman & Reppen, 1997). This is Anna Freud’s interpretation of fantasy in older children; it is a regressive response to frustration which involves turning away from reality. Donald Winnicott (1971, p. 31), however, makes a distinction between ‘fantasying’ that you are doing something else in the here and now, which he sees as dissociative, and ‘imagining’ future events, which has the potential to enrich life (note that this is not the way in which I distinguish the terms). Cognitive psychologists emphasize the positive consequences of daydreaming. It can not only relieve stress and boredom, but motivate - enabling children to practice future scenarios and adults to come up with creative solutions to problems (Singer, 1975).

As is well-discussed, Freud was writing in an era of excessive repression, and his social commentary (if not his basic analytic framework) has needed revision when psychoanalytic concepts are applied to a later modern culture which many see as characterised by increasing moral permissiveness (Lasch, 1979, p. 37; Giddens, 1991, p. 154; Craib, 1994, p. 6). Structural and cultural changes in those societies have changed our relationship with desire. Fantasising is now fostered, especially to the extent that it can be channelled into system supportive consumption practices. More importantly, we are then encouraged to act out our newly translated and acceptable fantasies in the name of self-actualisation, self-gratification and self-expression. In a climate in which Richard Branson has recently pledged to massively reduce the cost of space travel with the aim of opening it up to thousands of consumers every year, it is increasingly hard to pronounce judgement on whether or not pro-space fantasies are realisable. (It is still possible, however, to retain a concern with the conflicts between fantasy and the realities of social life, and with the consequences of this for the well-being of the activist and others).

Resisting a distinction between realistic and unrealistic fantasy does not mean that all manifestations of narcissistic fantasy are the same. A developmental theory of narcissism enables us to distinguish between the narcissistic fantasising of science fiction fans and that of pro-space activists. As pro-space activists themselves explain, science fiction fans have very different types of personality. They were described as flaky, passive, ‘escapist dreamer types’. It was suggested that they had suffered an ‘emasculation’ of their self-image, and had had ‘the idea of being able to influence the world in any way ... crushed out of them by life experience’. It could certainly be argued that science fiction fans’ understandings of what the possibilities are for social action have been curtailed by their parental and social relationships in a way that pro-space activists’ have not. Space fantasies play a different role within the two different personality types. For the science fiction fan, fantasies about a return to primary narcissism are experienced as escapist and unrealisable by the fan him or herself. In activists, often similar fantasies are experienced as realisable by the activist him or herself. One possible developmental argument is that this difference can be explained by the mother ‘failing’ the child too early or too late respectively (see Frosh, 1991, p. 98).

Psychoanalysis, the Irrational and Social Movement Theory

Our attempts to understand crowd behaviour predate social movement studies. The literature is usually traced back to the 1890s. Sighele, Tarde and LeBon, amongst others, laid some of the foundations for the discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with their observations of often violent collective action, mobs and riots. Written in the context of a French society in turmoil, Le Bon’s account stressed the irrational, primitive, cathartic and contagious nature of such events. Crowd psychology, a phenomenon to be bracketed off from normal meaningful social action, was identified as the root of collective behaviour. The underlying assumption, and one now comprehensively critiqued (e.g. Melucci, 1985) was that once swept up in crowds, individuals lost their normal capacity to reason and instead gave vent to more primitive instincts and urges. ‘The crowd mind’ was therefore by its very nature pathological.

Despite criticisms that they neglected the social causes of collective behaviour, Sighele and LeBon continued to be the starting point for discussions of collective behaviour until the 1960s (Elsner in Park, 1972, p. xvi-xxii). Robert E. Park (1972, orig. 1904) retained LeBon’s focus on internal dynamics, though tentatively offered two important additions. Firstly, he recognised that the crowd occurred in times of social instability, the first acknowledgment of external social factors contributing to psychological expressivism. Secondly, in dismissing Le Bon’s poorly developed concept of ‘emotional contagion’, he developed a theory of ‘part-conscious’ imitation and affective mirroring or ‘psychic reciprocity’ (p. 22) in which the beginnings of the symbolic interactionist tradition can clearly be seen. The combination of mechanisms operating within the crowd and those within the public was responsible for what Park termed ‘social movements’. Turner & Killian (1972) later moved further away from talk of irrationality to develop the idea that group behaviour gives rise to new ‘emergent norms’ as a mechanism for social change.

However, if this development of American sociology was a move away from the irrational, it was not universal. Freud (1989, orig. 1921) took up LeBon’s observations of the childish and animalistic crowd and, rejecting his theory of suggestibility, translated it into psychoanalytic language. His theory of group behaviour assumed that group participation fulfils unconscious psychic needs in the individual created by the developmental process. His attempt to project individual psychodynamics onto the group was heavily criticized. Nonetheless, psychoanalytic thinking continued to exert an influence explicitly or implicitly on theories of collective behaviour through the work of Neil Smelser (1962), and others like Hoffer (1951) and Kornhauser (1959) which also had strong functionalist underpinnings. As Scott (1995) explains, functionalist sociology was forced to treat the mass movements that had occurred during the middle part of that century as disruptions to the smooth running of society and therefore as indicative of strains within the social structure. Yet rather than see activists’ claims as legitimate responses to structural inequalities, they were seen as pathological expressions of the system’s failure to maintain cohesion. In Hoffer’s words; ‘It is not the wickedness of the old regime they rise against but its weakness; not its oppression, but its failure to hammer them together into one solid, mighty whole’ (1951, p. 94).

As is well documented, the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s radically changed thinking about social movements and inspired economic and political turns in the North American literature. The new paradigm assumed organizations operated on the understanding that they furthered the interests of the actors involved (Olson, 1965, p. 5). Olson dismissed the possibility that such things as the need for association might motivate collective action. Rational action in the pursuit of interests was cleft from affective action which was assumed to be non-rational. Psychoanalysis was marginalised in social movement theory from this point onwards, even as European ‘new social movement’ theorists challenged the assumption that rational social actors only acted in pursuit of personal interests, showing that activists were engaged in battles over the meanings and values of the social system itself.

By the turn of the century, however, social movement theory had begun to answer a call for the reintroduction of social psychology and expressivism (e.g. Stryker et al., 2000; Goodwin et al., 2001). Yet this reintroduction was founded on a very different set of paradigmatic assumptions to that which underpinned the collective behaviour approach. One of the aims of recent work has been to normalise emotions as part of the cause of social behaviour rather than seeing the expression of emotion as a pathology. There have been attempts made to break down the dichotomy which sees the affectual or expressive as the antithesis of the rational (Hetherington, 1998, p. 51). Emotions are not simply the spanner in the works of meaningful behaviour that Weber implies, but ‘feed into the communicative processes which constitute the fabric of the social world and therein their reasonableness is assessed and ways for acting upon them devised’ (Crossley, 2002, p. 108). Forms of cultural expressivism within social movements, such as music and art, have also received increased attention, although again efforts have been made not to portray them as irrational expressions (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison’s, 1998, notion of music as cognitive praxis).

The place for psychoanalysis within this development in social movement theory seems uncertain. For many it is hard to uncouple from its associations with collective behaviour approaches. For Hetherington, interested in how identity is formed through collective behaviour, psychoanalysis represents an irrationalization of the affectual and expressive mechanisms involved, and is largely rejected. For sure, all affect cannot be reduced to unconscious dynamics. Psychoanalysis’s role is in the exploration of the relationship between the (by definition non-rational) unconscious in the individual and the social world in which identity, motivation and emotion are shaped and managed by conscious and material processes (see Goodwin et al., 2001). These debates are likely to cast a shadow over any attempt to reintroduce psychoanalytic interpretations of social movements unless adequately addressed.

Psychological Reductionism and Ontology in Social Movement Theory

The pro-space movement is perhaps an easy target for a pathologising psychoanalytic discourse, and such analyses have been used as either a dismissive critique of human activity in outer space (Lewis Mumford describing them as ‘technological disguises for infantile fantasies’, cited in Michaud, 1986, p. 71), or as an anecdotal example of the extremes that a pervasive psychosocial condition has reached (Lasch, 1979, p. 46 & 1984, pp. 87–90). On the other hand, sympathetic researchers have suggested psychoanalytic explanations and then disregarded them in favour of more rationalising approaches (Bainbridge, 1976, p. 255). Whilst in places Bainbridge admits the drive to go into space may be primitive and irrational (1976, p. 197 & 1991, p. 2), his own research has been an attempt to elicit what Snow & Benford (1988) might call pro-space ‘frames’, at which point the psychodynamics at work are conveniently repressed. Michaud (1986, p. 306) draws on Terry Moe’s (1980) concept of a ‘boundary rationality’ to explain the involvement of activists who do not have interests in the industry. Moe adapts a highly rationalistic model of actors pursuing economic interests to account for action motivated by sets of values, suggesting that similar calculations are made in both instances. Michaud takes from Moe the idea that ideological or moral satisfaction can be a motivator, as can solidarity, but he does not develop this idea any further.

Unconscious motivational processes can be held at the analytic centre of theories of collective behaviour without reducing the ontological complexity of our model. Movements should not be reduced to irrational processes, especially if their particular cause is ignored whilst focussing instead on their members’ needs for association. This means acknowledging other ontological levels at which social movement activity must be examined. Smelser’s (1962) ‘value-added’ approach did address these different levels, yet the relationship between structural strain and the emergence of a generalised belief was presented at a high level of abstraction, and fantasy was squeezed out of his account of social movements. His Parsonian influence also meant he was distracted from empirical detail by obsessive taxonomy construction.

In additional to a socio-biographical analysis that explains how phantasies find particular vehicles for their conscious translation, I wish to make the case for analysing three ontological levels to social movements to which phantasy must be connected, though here focusing mainly on the first. (1) The structural conditions in which particular kinds of phantasy are rooted. (2) The ways in which activist-agents reflect on their own fantasies, and rationalise their participation in a movement through the adaptation of existing ideological frameworks. (3) The culture and political organization of a movement, which mediates between unconscious motivations and political conditions and constraints. Melucci (1985) conceives of social movements in this sense as systems; ways of organizing orientations and goals within a social context.

Phantasy and Social Structure

There can be little doubt that the world that contemporary pro-space activists inhabit is very different from the modern one which inspired the early rocket pioneers and utopian science fiction writers. What Beck (1992, p. 15) refers to as the ‘axes’ of modern identities – gender, family, occupation – have been shaken. It is in such a climate that Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) locate increasingly ‘reflexive’ social actors for whom the active work of creating the self is an imperative. At the same time the modernist faith in science and technology as the vehicles for social progress has been undermined. What emerged in the 1970s and 1980s were a series of new social divisions; no longer struggles for material resources between classes involved in production, but between those still attached to industrial production and modern values, and new post-industrial sectors removed from production and therefore more sensitive to its destructive effects (Habermas, 1981, see also Bell, 1973).

Inglehart (1977) makes very clear the relationship between ‘system-level’ changes in the structure of society and the individual-level changes that result from them and which drive ‘post-material’ politics. The system-level changes are; the satisfaction of sustenance needs for an increasingly large proportion of the population as a result of economic growth; the absence of a total war as a distinctive ‘cohort experience’; the expansion of education; development of mass communications. For Inglehart, the first three of these have led to an increasing need for belonging, esteem and self-realization in the individual. It could be argued that the fourth is also implicated (Gergen, 1991). The result of these changes is a revolution in the terrain of politics, with actors looking to create their own sets of meanings and new lifestyle practices that challenge ‘the logic of the system’ (Melucci, 1985).

Inglehart’s observations are echoed in, and extended by, descriptions of a widespread ‘culture of narcissism’ that emerged in the Western world in the latter part of the twentieth century (e.g. Sennett, 1977; Lasch, 1979; Westen, 1985). In contrast to the society of excessive repression that inspired Freud in Civilization and its Discontents (1930), this is a society in which stable and coherent cultural ideals have been eroded. Establishing a secure sense of self, an ego ideal against which to measure the self, and an appreciation of other selves become increasingly difficult. Attending to the self becomes the moral mandate of the late-modern narcissist (Giddens, 1991). The culture demands selfexpression and self-gratification (Sennett, 1977), encourages impossible desires and makes reality testing difficult (Craib, 1994). The external world exists for the narcissist merely as a mirror for the reflection of the self.

There are major disagreements about the origins of the culture of narcissism (see Hetherington, 1998). For Drew Westen (1985), for example, its roots are traceable to the process of modernization, especially in its early stages, whilst for Gergen (1991) the ‘saturated self’ is more a phenomenon of postmodern fragmentation. There are also substantial differences in how narcissism itself is perceived. Lasch emphasises the elements of anxiety and even self-loathing that characterize the narcissistic psyche. He goes on to develop an account of the ‘minimal self’; one desperate only for survival (Lasch, 1984). And it is in the context of a climate of fearful survivalism that Lasch anecdotally mentions the early space colonization advocates like Gerard O’Neill (pp. 87–90). However, for Lasch, the space colonization idea appears as yet another manifestation of the culture of narcissism and not a response to it. He sees the escape to space from a doomed planet as part of the ‘prepare for the worst’ mentality, albeit one with hope for a new start. Elsewhere he uses it as an indication that ‘people no longer dream of over-coming difficulties but merely of surviving them’ (1979, p. 49). Lasch draws out a rhetoric of survival from his limited sources, but underplays the extent to which the development of space reinforces faith in human omnipotence in the face of impending problems.

As two experienced activists explained to me, their concerns about environmental destruction were not that it might threaten life on Earth, but that it might result in limits being placed on the human ability to consume. Expanding into space reinforced the idea that limitless consumption was possible. There are occasions, however, when anxiety is apparent, most notably in the frequent talk of a devastating asteroid impact on Earth. Laing (1965) observes that ontologically insecure people often face ‘anxiety about obliteration, of being engulfed, crushed or overwhelmed by externally impinging events’ (in Giddens, 1991, p. 53). But crucially this anxiety is countered by fantasies of control over such catastrophic events, and these re-affirm the security of self. A small group of scientists are continually monitoring large asteroids that may be on a collision course for Earth. In 2004, in an attempt to further limit the possibility of an unexpected impact, ProSpace lobbied to expand this staff and increase the range of objects that were being looked for. The prospace movement confidently believes it can overcome the danger of asteroid impact either by detection and destruction of the asteroid or by leaving Earth for good. In a discussion of the ProSpace agenda, one of my interviewees, Edward, described them as ‘bags of money’ that would kill us. His solution was to mine asteroids before they hit the Earth, which served not only to deflect the fear of impact, but to turn the asteroid threat into an opportunity for reaffirmation of the human mastery of nature. Smelser (1962, p. 190) suggested fear of asteroid impact has resulted in mass panic, but for pro-space activists it is simply another opportunity to symbolically overcome their own vulnerability.

Lasch’s emphasis may reflect the belief, shared with Giddens, that fantasies of omnipotence such as those displayed in the pro-space movement are only occasional and brittle defences for the narcissist. Lasch is critical of writers like Erich Fromm (1995), who stressed the over-estimation of self (if not ‘love’ of the self – a term he rejects) as the bedrock of the narcissistic condition. In fact, social movements can foster activists’ pursuit of omnipotence, rather than just offering to ‘drown’ the self. Hoffer (1951) argued that mass movements draw people who are in some way frustrated, marginalized and insecure, and offer to replace this unwanted self with a new sense of omnipotence. He actually provides an account of mass movements, largely based on Nazism, which has uncanny parallels with pro-space activism (see p. 11). Many commentators on late-modern life, including Giddens and others have highlighted actors’ reflexive responses to conditions of late-modern insecurity and social fragmentation, often celebrating the new forms of identity and association that are made possible with the crumbling of the modern order. But what such celebratory accounts ignore are less positive collective psychodynamic responses to the late-modern world.

Westen (1985) usefully distinguishes two processes occurring within narcissistic cultures. I would argue that a focus on one at the expense of the other has been responsible for the theoretical differences between the likes of Giddens and Fromm. One process is the erosion of structures of authority and meaning. This effects the form of the ego ideal. Westen’s argument is that ‘a number of aspects of modernization, particularly in its earliest phases, lead to a disruption of the smooth intergenerational transmission of ideals and systems of meaning, and a consequent experience of conflicting internalizations’ (p. 349). Many would argue that this disruption is still gathering pace. It is easy to see how this may lead to anxiety and the desperate quest for the self which characterise Lasch and Giddens’s accounts. The other trend is an increased belief in the efficacy and value of the self. This is manifest in a change in the ‘self-other balance’ within the content of the ego ideal. As noticeable in Fromm’s various and arguably simplistic writings on narcissism, a focus on this aspect leads to accounts stressing increasing self-centredness and feelings of omnipotence. Both processes are accountable for pro-space activism.

Phantasy and Ideology

There is a danger in what I have written so far that self-reflexivity and agency on the part of individuals in the movement is ignored, of suggesting pro-space activists are slaves to their narcissistic phantasies without considering their actions. Giddens (1984, p. 5) criticizes Freud’s crude psychic reductionism, ‘which, wanting to show much of social life is governed by dark currents outside of the scope of actors’ awareness, cannot adequately grasp the level of control which agents are characteristically able to sustain reflexively over their conduct’. Dobbin (2001) argues that in the accounts given by activists, it is often the case that action based in emotion is rationalized and presented as calculated and interest-driven. Socially acceptable ideologies are necessary to legitimate the expression of desire. But in the case of the pro-space movement they are not necessary only to cynically convince politicians and the general public to support their cause, but to make their unconscious urges intelligible to themselves. Most of the discursive activity of the movement is conducted within pro-space conferences, newsletters and websites. As one speaker at a conference I attended said, their discussions about the desirability of human activity in space are as much about ‘trying to find the answers for ourselves. And somehow we’re still trying to grope and feel and get a handle for what this is all about’. In this way activism is already both unconscious and conscious, irrational and rationalized.

Historically, the pro-space movement and the ‘astrofuturist’ literature it draws on has been politically divided (see Michaud, 1986; Kilgore, 2003). There is a history of leftwing politics in the movement, both radical (e.g. Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, J. D. Bernal) and liberal (e.g. David Lasser). The recent trend, however, is for activists to proclaim themselves libertarians. Launius (2003) points to the centrality of libertarian philosophy in the movement from the start. The particular form of libertarianism within groups like ProSpace is one associated with the political right, and emphasises the freedom to accumulate over other social freedoms. The ideology of the libertarian right brings a new coherence to pro-space discourse, especially as activists identify a necessity for private sector space development in the face of cuts in state space expenditure. A lot of pro-space discourse has always hinged on the argument that the frontier is essential to the American national character and that without a frontier American society will stagnate (Lasch, 1984). Key libertarian discussions about the importance of the individual’s freedom to consume fit comfortably with a discourse of space being the ‘high frontier’ (O’Neill, 1989), the conquest of which is seen as necessary for economic and social growth, in order to prevent wars over territory and resources, and in order to fulfil a human nature which drives us towards settling other ‘ecological niches’.

In reflecting on their own drive to create a spacefaring civilization, activists quite creatively develop their own ideological positions legitimating the pursuit of their own fantasies, but in doing so draw on pre-existing hegemonic ideas. This ideology is firmly rooted in the modern technoscientific industrial paradigm, and yet at the same time the libertarian emphasis on individual freedoms as the pathway to achieving social progress allows for the expression of increasingly narcissistic fantasies. Dark’s (2006) suggestion is that space colonization is a reactionary response to postmodern life, centred in particular around reclaiming the idea of ‘progress’. Activists do make explicit their desire to rediscover social and scientific confidence. But the only danger in Dark’s account is that it does not acknowledge that the fantasies being pursued by pro-space activists are narcissistic responses to a culture of narcissism, rather than a reaction against postmodernity

#### Private appropriation furthers a fantasy of human omnipotence but fails to satisfy repetitive cravings for whole subjectivity – this expands militarism and commodification.

Dickens and Ormrod 7 – Peter Dickens -- Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of Social and Political Science at the University of Cambridge; James S. Ormrod -- Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Brighton, Cosmic Society: Towards a sociology of the universe, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, pgs. 73-77, Agastya

As a number of authors have argued, we are now witnessing widespread adult narcissism as a predominant personality type in the West (Lasch 1979, 1984; Sennett 1974, 1977; Westen 1985; Craib 1994; Dean 2000; Dickens 2004). Freud (1995) was the first to outline this kind of personality disorder. Infants understandably make constant and wholly unreasonable demands on the world in general and their parents in particular, expecting their universe to orient around them. This is the stage of primary narcissism in which the child is treated, in Freud’s phrase, as ‘His Majesty the baby’ (Freud 1995: 556). Serious problems result, however, if these attitudes persist into later life as the self becomes the chosen love object (secondary narcissism). According to Freud, in normal development, people later recognize that they must rely on significant others. ‘Anaclitic’ attachments are formed, self-love being displaced onto other people. The family and social life in general also come to impinge on the child’s desires, and these limitations are internalized. The child becomes aware of the existence of other people with their own needs and demands.

This brings us to why this widescale shift in subjectivity is happening, a matter which Freud did not foresee. Societies like Britain and the US encourage impossible desires and make reality testing difficult (Craib 1994). Idealism, which was once focussed on altruism (and emancipatory politics), is now the pursuit of selfexpression and the satisfaction of personal needs and wants. Disappointment is normal to psychological development. The process of the id (the unconscious part of the mind from which basic drives emerge) meeting with the harsh reality of social relations is, at least to a certain extent, therefore a positive thing. But it is increasingly uncommon in late modern capitalism for some groups of people. And pro-space activists are amongst those least likely to recognize the importance of disappointment. Craib and others offer a much needed extension of Freud’s analysis of the overly repressed child to cover a contemporary society in which there is simply not enough repression. Indeed, Craib believes the demand for expression of the id is the ideology of late modernity.

Consumption fulfils a symbolic role in narcissistic culture for the ‘insatiable personalities’ it generates (Dean 2000). Consuming goods can provide the illusory sense of omnipotence and self that the narcissist craves. They fantasize about their access to the world and its goods, failing to recognize the reality that they are still dependent individuals. If they make sufficient demands (particularly with the aid of money) they appear omnipotent and capable of acquiring and achieving almost anything. The reality principle has not struck home. And this is damaging in many ways, not least to other individuals whose rights are overridden and unrecognized. Furthermore, self-absorption of this kind is damaging to external as well as internal nature. Narcissism and cosmic society

How does this discussion of contemporary subjectivity in a globalized society relate to our main theme, that of an emergent cosmic society? What forms of subjectivity are now developing in relation to a society that is socializing, privatizing and humanizing the cosmos? Again, we find a shift, one both encouraging a new vision of an owned cosmos and underpinning its acquisition. Contemporary cosmic subjectivity remains in some respects the heir to the early individualism created in the Italian Renaissance and developed between the Enlightenment and the twentieth century. But the development towards adult narcissism has now been even further enhanced. Potentially owning and occupying parts of the universe beyond Earth are the cause and consequences of a rising cosmic consciousness, one simultaneously envisaging a cosmos out there waiting to be occupied while demanding entry into that same cosmos. Today’s individualistic cosmic narcissism is therefore very different from the individualism of ‘universal man’ in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Here we suggest, based on empirical work, that pro-space activists campaigning to further explore and develop the universe demonstrate an extreme form of this kind of subjectivity, and one in which the individual’s relationship to the universe is central (Ormrod 2007). There are strong indications that these pro-space activists (many from the quasi-technical new middle class) are amongst those most affected by late modern narcissism. These activists are pursuing fantasies about exploring and developing space which manifest themes from the infant’s experience of self during the stage of primary narcissism. This includes those relating to omnipotence and to unity; with the mother in particular and the universe in general. The adult narcissist seeks to regain the experience of primary narcissism, and fantasies about conquering and consuming space represent pursuit of this idealized relationship with the universe.

These fantasies are further encouraged by new developments in space tourism and plans for the private development and settlement of space. They also achieve a certain legitimacy largely through the ideology of the libertarian right. Those who have grown up in the ‘post-Sputnik’ era and were exposed at an early date to science fiction are particularly likely to engage in fantasies or daydreams about travelling in space, owning it, occupying it, consuming it and bringing it under personal control. Advocates talk about fantasies of bouncing up and down on the Moon or playing golf on it, of mining asteroids or setting up their own colonies. Of course not all of those people growing up in late modern societies come to fantasize about space at such an early age like this, and most are less single-minded in their attempts to control and consume the universe, but we argue that this is nonetheless the way in which some dominant sectors of Western society relate to the universe. It is not only pro-space activists, but many wealthy business people and celebrities who are lining up to take advantage of new commercial opportunities to explore space as tourists and of other ways of symbolically consuming the universe. The promise of power over the whole universe is therefore the latest stage in the escalation of the narcissistic personality. A new kind of ‘universal man’ is in the making. Space travel and possible occupation of other planets further inflate people’s sense of omnipotence.

Fromm (1976) examines how in Western societies people experience the world (or indeed the universe) through the ‘having’ mode, whereby individuals cannot simply appreciate the things around them, but must own and consume them. Mean and Wilsdon (2004) make a causal connection between the disenchanted universe viewed only as object and this kind of consumerism. ‘The underlying anxiety and disorientation that pervade modern societies in the face of a meaningless cosmos create both a collective psychic numbness and a desperate spiritual hunger, leading to an addictive, insatiable craving for ever more material goods’ (ibid.: 32–3). For the narcissistic pro-space activist, this sentiment means that they feel a desperate need not just to look at the Moon but to have immediate sensuous contact with it, and thereby bring it closer to their control: Some people will look up at the full Moon and they’ll think about the beauty of it and the romance and history and whatever. I’ll think of some of those too but the primary thing on my mind is gee I wonder what it looks like up there in that particular area, gee I’d love to see that myself. I don’t want to look at it up there, I want to walk on it. (25-year-old engineering graduate interviewed at ProSpace March Storm 2004)

This sentiment is even more apparent when considering the companies which now allow consumers to symbolically purchase a star (e.g. International Star Registry).

Here, too, there is a dialectic movement back towards how the universe is experienced. Humans’ sense of power in the universe means our experience of the cosmos as well as our selves is fundamentally changing: It really presents a different perspective on your life when you can think that you can actually throw yourself into another activity and transform it, and when we have a day when we look out in the sky and we see lights on the Moon, something like that or you think that I know a friend who’s on the other side of the Sun right now. You know, it just changes the nature of looking at the sky too. (46-year-old space scientist interviewed at ProSpace March Storm 2004)

A widespread cosmic narcissism of this kind might appear to have an almost spiritual nature, but the cosmic spirituality we are witnessing here is not about becoming immortal in the purity of the heavens. Rather, it is spirituality taking the form of self-worship; further aggrandizing the atomized, self-seeking, twenty-firstcentury individual (see Heelas 1996). Indeed, the pro-space activists we interviewed are usually opposed to those who would keep outer space uncontaminated, a couple suggesting we need to confront the pre-Copernican idea of a corrupt Earth and ideal ‘Heaven’.

The universe as object

For these cosmic narcissists, the universe is very much experienced as an object; something to be conquered, controlled and consumed as a reflection of the powers of the self. This vision is no different from the Baconian assumptions about the relationship between man and nature on Earth. This kind of thinking has its roots in Anaxagoras’ theory of a material and infinite universe, and was extended by theorists from Copernicus, through Kepler and Galileo, to Newton. The idea that the universe orients around the self was quashed by Copernicus as he showed that the Earth was not at the centre of the universe and therefore neither were we (see Freud 1973a: 326). However, science has offered us the promise that we can still understand and control it. Earlier, we heard how Robert Zubrin, founder of the Mars Society, trumpets Kepler’s role in developing the omniscient fantasy of science, and on that basis begins to lay out his plan to colonize Mars.

However, narcissistic relationships with external nature are intrinsically unsatisfying. Objectifying nature and the cosmos does not actually empower the self, but rather enslaves it. Pro-spacers’ lack of reality principle shows its head in a number of quite disturbing ways. Many activists had wanted to be astronauts but had been turned down. The first barrier of not meeting the requirements of a governmental programme has not dampened their enthusiasm. Within the US space programme only the elite got to fulfil these dreams. Now, private industry is beginning to offer more people this opportunity. One young activist said she would pay any price to go into space, a sentiment echoed by two of her friends. She was so unable to accept the limit to her personal power posed by space that she was prepared to spend all her income for life on the chance to go up into space for one day. Other people, like Randall Severy, have created high-risk companies like Cyberteams with the sole aim of getting to space, extending a personal desire to their professional lives and risking a lot in doing so. The family of Barbara Marx Hubbard, an early advocate, was clearly quite disturbed by her lack of reality principle (Marx Hubbard 1989). Her sister pleaded with her to spend less time on pro-space activism because she was neglecting other areas of her life. Her brother and father meanwhile conspired to stop her inheritance because of the money she was squandering on the pro-space cause.

The universe: from object to subject

If this is the universe as experienced by pro-space activists, then a contrary development, which we began to outline in Chapter 1, is the return to a fearful and estranged relationship with the universe, again experienced as a frightening subject controlling Earthly affairs from on high. It is a twenty-first-century version of the Platonic and mediaeval universes in which humans are made into repressed objects and thereby brought to heel. This is a relationship experienced by those not in control of the universe: those on the margins of Western society. Commodification, militarization and surveillance by the socially powerful are again making the universe into an entity dominating human society, as are contemporary cosmological theories divorced from most people’s understanding. Once more, socially and politically powerful people (some even claiming to be on a mission from God) are attempting to make the cosmos into a means by which they can control society on Earth. The combination of these two trends is a ‘Wizard of Oz’ effect, in which power is maintained by those with technological domination over the universe. But this is hidden by a mask of mysticism, which keeps the public in a position of fear and subservience. These developments are explored further over the next two chapters.

But alternative forms of consciousness can be developed. A dominant form of identity appropriate to a ‘cosmic society’ may not be universal and certainly cannot be guaranteed. But, for example, those social movements opposed to the developments we have been discussing are working towards the use of space for peaceful purposes and an alternative form of consciousness. Historical materialism looks to real material conditions as underlying human subjectivity. But we simultaneously recognize the possibility of new resistances and forms of subjectivity. Here, too, lie real and actual instabilities.

#### Thus, appropriation is mediated by a structural relationship to the lack. The subject emerges through loss, unable to express its desires through language. This traps the subject in the symbolic, creating a constant desire towards the lost object.

**McGowan 13** – Todd; Associate Professor of Film Studies at the UVermont; “Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis,” Pg. 26-29; 2013; University of Nebraska Press/Lincoln and London, Agastya

The subject as such emerges through the experience of loss. It is the loss of a part of the subject — an initial act of sacrifi ce — that creates both subject and object, the object emerging through this act as what the subject has lost of itself. The subject takes an interest in the object world because it forms this world around its lost object. As Jacques Lacan notes, “Never, in our concrete experience of analytic theory, do we do without the notion of the lack of the object as central. It is not a negative, but the very spring for the relation of the subject to the world.”5 The loss of the object generates a world around this loss to which the subject can relate.

Obviously, no one literally creates objects through an initial act of sacrifice of an actual body part. Th is would be too much to ask. But the psychical act of sacrifice allows for a distinction to develop where none existed before and simultaneously directs the subject’s desire toward the object world. In his breakthrough essay “Negation,” Freud describes this process as follows: “Th e antithesis between subjective and objective does not exist from the fi rst. It only comes into being from the fact that thinking possesses the capacity to bring before the mind once more something that has once been perceived, by reproducing it as a presentation without the external object having still to be there. The first and immediate aim, therefore, of reality-testing is, not to fi nd an object in real perception which corresponds to the one presented, but to refi nd such an object, to convince oneself that it is still there.”6 Though Freud doesn’t use terms from linguistics, it is clear that he is making reference to the subject’s alienation in language and that he sees this alienation as the key to the emergence of both the subject and the object

When the subject submits to the imperatives of language, it enters into an indirect relation with the object world. The speaking being does not relate to books, pencils, and paper but to “books,” “pencils,” and “paper.” **The signifier intervenes between the subject and the object** that the subject perceives. Th e subject’s alienation into language deprives it of immediate contact with the object world. And yet, in the above passage from “Negation,” Freud conceives of the subject’s entrance into language — its “capacity to bring before the mind once more something that has once been perceived, by reproducing it as a presentation without the external object having still to be there” — as the event that produces the very distinction between subject and object. Th is means that the indirectness or mediation introduced by language deprives the subject of a direct relation to the object world that it never had.

**Prior to its immersion in the mediation of language, the subject had** no object at all — not a privileged relation to objects but a complete absence of relationality as such due to its autoeroticism. In this sense, the subject’s willingness to accede to its alienation in language is the fi rst creative act, a sacrifice that produces the objects that the subject cannot directly access. Language is important not for its own sake but because it is the site of our founding sacrifi ce. We know that the subject has performed this act of sacrifi ce when we witness the subject functioning as a being of language, but the sacrifi ce is not an act that the subject takes up on its own.

Others always impose the entry into language on the subject. Th eir exhortations and incentives to speak prompt the emergence of the speaking subject. But the subject’s openness to alienation in language, its willingness to sacrifi ce a part of itself in order to become a speaking subject, suggests a lack in being itself prior to the entry into language. Th at is, the act through which the subject cedes the privileged object and becomes a subject coincides with language but is irreducible to it. The subject engages in the act of sacrifi ce because it does not find its initial autoeroticism perfectly satisfying — the unity of the autoerotic being is not perfect — and this lack of complete satisfaction produces the opening through which language and society grab onto the subject through its alienating process. If the initial autoerotic state of the human animal were perfectly satisfying, no one would begin to speak, and subjectivity would never form. Speaking as such testifi es to an initial wound in our animal being and in being itself.

But subjectivity emerges only out of a self-wounding. Even though others encourage the infant to abandon its autoerotic state through a multitude of inducements, the initial loss that constitutes subjectivity is always and necessarily self-infl icted. Subjectivity has a fundamentally masochistic form, and it continually repeats the masochistic act that founds it. Th e act of sacrifi ce opens the door to the promise of a satisfaction that autoerotic isolation forecloses, which is why the incipient subject abandons the autoerotic state and accedes to the call of sociality. But the term “sacrifi ce” is misleading insofar as it suggests that the subject has given up a wholeness (with itself or with its parent) that exists prior to being lost.

In the act of sacrifi ce, the incipient subject gives up something that it doesn’t have. The initial loss that founds subjectivity is not at all substantial; it is the ceding of nothing. Th rough this defi ning gesture, the subject sacrifi ces its lost object into being. But if the subject cedes nothing, this initial act of sacrifi ce seems profoundly unnecessary. Why can’t the subject emerge without it? Why is the experience of loss necessary for the subject to constitute itself qua subject? Th e answer lies in the diff erence between need and desire. While the needs of the human animal are not dependent on the experience of loss, the subject’s desires are.

It is the initial act of sacrifi ce that gives birth to desire: the subject sacrifi ces nothing in order to create a lost object around which it can organize its desire. As Richard Boothby puts it in his unequaled explanation of the psychoanalytic conception of the emergence of desire, “Th e destruction and loss of the object . . . opens up a symbolic dimension in which what was lost might be recovered in a new form.”7 He adds: “Sacrifi ce serves to constitute the very matrix of desire. Th e essential function of sacrifi ce is less do ut des, I give so that you might give, than do ut desidero: I give in order that I might desire.”8 Th e subject’s desire is oriented around this lost object, but the object is nothing as a positive entity and only exists insofar as it is lost. Th is is why one can never att ain the lost object or the object that causes one to desire.9 Th e coming-into-being of this object originates the subject of desire, but, having no substance, the object can never become an empirical object of desire. We may see an object of desire as embodying the lost object, but whenever we obtain this object, we discover its emptiness. The lost object is constitutively rather than empirically lost.

#### The impact is escalating cycles of violence premised on the repetition of drives that proliferates a never-ending war against life and culminates in extinction.

Themi 8 – Tim, Prof @ Deakin U, “How Lacan’s Ethics Might Improve Our Understanding of Nietzsche’s Critique of Platonism: The Neurosis & Nihilism of a ‘Life’ Against Life,” Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy, 2008, Agastya

But with our advancements in technological power outmatching by far any correlative advance in the awareness gained as a whole of our prehistoric Thing within: the great 21st century ecological disaster that too many academics and activists now increasingly predict, seems more than just a little possible. But to this increasingly macabre scenario, we must also add the renewed proliferation of nuclear weapons which occurs, no less, amidst a world where vital resources for energy and democracy are wearing thin[50]. For just such reasons, wilful ignorance of the Thing now bares results which Lacan’s Ethics reveals as far too terrifyingly possible to rationally accept; given that we have the Thing armed to the teeth now from that primitive id-like part of the brain, with no Sovereign Good, and all the way into a nuclear age.

CONCLUSION: THE NEUROSIS &amp; NIHILISM OF A ‘LIFE’ AGAINST LIFE.

This is why Lacan proposes that **his enquiry into ethics must be one to go “more deeply into the notion of the real”(LE:11). Further into what he would rather call the real, given that previous notions of ‘nature’ have been too far ‘different’––from being far too Platonic––than his own; and because it’s the very exclusions in these previous notions which upon return, as return of excess, are yielding our** most tragic problems.

Today when faced with problems of the magnitude of global warming––a special but by no means solo case of adverse environment change at present due to our physical treatment of the planet––we often think the answer is to be more moral, more good, and we are thankful when exponents of the Good in some way bring attention to the problem. However, the idea of the Good as introduced by Plato, and nigh all of its descendants whether secular, rationalist, religious or not, continue to predicate themselves on a radically false picture of the human-condition: if not still of the entire cosmos––which only then lines itself up aside of an age- old repression, a repression of das Ding, that Freudian Thing in our inner real which, when it returns after being disavowed and denied in the name of the Good too long, is even more devastating.

Presently we are accelerating along the path of what Lacan discloses as our civilisation’s “race towards destruction”, a “massive destruction”, “a resurgence of savagery”, snaking the paths traced out before us by the centuries long dominion of Western morality [51]; and the nihilism detected by Nietzsche before the turn of the 20th has never threatened to reach such the grand finale. But what I would have us take from this enquiry here is that this is not because we aren’t in accordance enough with a moral ideal of the Sovereign good, but rather, it’s because we aren’t in accordance enough with a proper understanding of the real. It’s because we still at some level think that being more moral, in accordance with the Good’s inherited repressive structures towards our drives, desire, and truthfulness about the real, is actually the answer to––rather than the source of––our most tragic problems.

The goal here is by no means then to encourage all to let their Things run wild––which would probably be nothing short of an instant conflagration––but this is why and precisely why we must desist from deluding ourselves under the tightening grip of a Sovereign Good, for this is precisely the move which cuts the Thing loose after pressing down for far too long, a slippery hand’s palming on the coils of a spring, forever readying the subsequent explosion. For when that which is really real––as opposed to what Christian-Platonism falsely called the ‘real’––is forced from mind, it can’t really disappear because it is real, and it tends to end up only in our gun-sights as an imaginary overlaying of an external other, when the signifier ‘enmity’ appears. The earth itself can even seem like the enemy after while, one which like Plato in his Phaedo, we might think then to escape from “as if from a prison”, and especially from “the bonds of the body”, in the hope that we may live one day without the earthly altogether[52]. Following such negations to their logical conclusion, life itself becomes enemy too, for as being made up of the earthly and organic, life could never be free of what it is in essence. And what is the death-drive Freud tells from the start, if not to return us sundry to that dust-bowl of the inorganic; as per that “second death”[53] fantasm Lacan salvages from the Monstre de Sade, which wills to go beyond the destruction of mere beings, by destroying too the principle from which fresh sets could emerge. Such negative devaluations of our earthly, organic life though are really of our own construction: as de Sade, like any pervert, is only the mirror which shows expressed what Platonic- neurotics are but hide inside––a cess-pit of loathing contempt for life, built up from the unconscious and disowned, distorted and damned up, built up, instinctual-ideational elements of their own subjective psyches, phobically ferocious of that Thingly real lying not so dormant, and readying within…

But is it now still possible as Nietzsche teaches to say ‘Yes’ to the real of nature both without and within––to return to it!––even though it is more frightful and we are less guaranteed protection of it than the Platonic history of metaphysicians taught? For with the further disclosures of The Ethics of Psychoanalysis––Lacan’s following up and extension of the meta-ethical implications of Freud: perhaps even Nietzsche, our great intellectual übermensch, may too have bitten off more snake- head than he could chew? From certain moments in Nietzsche’s texts we can perhaps interpret that he may have had this Thing in his sights, but saw nothing much to come of it, so instead, elected to turn away, though not without some perhaps hinted at self- amusement.[54]

But with psychoanalysis, rightly or wrongly, such truths are out. It doesn’t seem all positive at first, and perhaps it never entirely will. But we must not let this deeper disclosure desist us now from the core Nietzschean project of locating and overcoming the nihilism which begs us to take cover in idealising fictions, as if life as life is not worth living. Not because nihilism and the annihilation of the species is wrong in the sense of being immoral, but rather because it is bad art, mediocre art, and the ‘knowledge’ claims it trumpets on should only make us flare. If we are at our full intellectual and creative will to power, we can only consider such cultural-civil regressions as we saw on display with that whole propaganda comedy that surrounded the war for more oil in Iraq as infantile; the hapless results of sibling rivalries gone too far astray. But **we must also resist being caught up in the imaginary of those who would only re-preach to us now of a return to the Good, who would only redeploy such versions of nihilism’s precursory defensive fictions, the pernicious ones, which would only then re-falsify our data,** and leave us disappointed when the truth then re-emerges. Doing more harm than good does Platonism in the end by **leaving us untrained for the real**, with the habit instead to take some truth as ‘error’, and error as ‘truth’––as ‘real’––to the point even of epistemic dysfunction. Take the grotesque intellectual poverty of that whole Christian middle-ages for example, whence put into relation with the heights of Aristotle and his fellow Greeks, as Augustine and Aquinas amplified some of the worst bits of Platonism, and threw the rest into abyss.

The overcoming of the moralising good of Christian-Platonism though does by no means imply then a subsequent affirmation of all that brutal Roman like greed, slavery, decadence, circus-bread corruption and mindless colonial expansion that we’ve heard all about, and are hardly so free of with our corporate today––just ask a Latin-American for instance![55] For it is possible within the perspectives opened up by Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, as Silvia Ons puts it, to view a social-historical or individual neurosis of any kind: including the expressed acted-out, perverse-sadistic form that escapes when the Good is temporarily loosed of its repressive grip––and say to the would be Platonist: ‘No, not that, that’s not a cure, that’s a mirage; that’s sheer fantasy, resentment, spite; that’s not a cure it will only make things worse; worse in a different way, but worse nonetheless!’ By greater mindfulness then, with guided affirmation towards even that fearsome Freudian Thing that The Ethics of **Psychoanalysis has us find now in our inner natures: we can eventually again say ‘Yes’-to-life** in such the way that it overcomes the nihilism of not caring too much whether we as individuals or species live or die, whether we as culture or civilisation advance or decline. But we can only do this with fullest efficacy by freeing ourselves of all that wasted neurosis sickness that feels it must deny our Thing like aspect of the real: because from all those Christian-Platonic prejudices of the Good, it has been taught that such ‘things’ are too far beneath it. We must continue instead to train ourselves to stare the real directly in the face, without flinching, and that’s all we can do at least to start. For unless we can continue to utilise, sublimate, enjoy and get a positive, well-guided **jouissance** out of all aspects of life––including that Freudian Ding in our real––then the chances are we’re going to be at least in part, happy enough in no longer living it: offering not even a puff of genuine political praxis! We either face up to the death-drive snaking long beneath the dank, hidden history of the un-real, anti-real Good of Platonism––or let the disowned, un-understood drive resurge of its own volition until it accidental**ly finishes us**!s Ethics, May 1960.

#### Vote affirmative to recognize the appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust as a method of traversing the fantasy.

#### Rejecting appropriation orients desire towards the inevitability of lack – this allows for the possibility of true enjoyment in the face of incomplete identity.

**Hickman 16** – Steven Craig Hickman -- Resistance Blogger & Philosopher, Social Ecologies, “The New Fantastic: The Carnival of the World”, https://socialecologies.wordpress.com/2016/07/30/the-new-fantastic-the-wound-in-the-real/, 30 July 2016, Agastya

The problem with the reality of what we see—extraordinary things that are perhaps hallucinations projected by our minds, or common things that perhaps hide a second, disturbing nature, mysterious and terrible, beneath the most banal appearances—is the essence of fantastic literature, whose best effects reside in an oscillation between irreconcilable levels of reality.2

But in our time the humanist discourse of yesteryear falls flat, so that the fantastic is moving away from the human and into the nonhuman world that no longer suffers the powers of humanistic discourse or language, math or science to be transformed or mastered but is beginning to reveal its inhuman face and the order of the Real. Rather than turning inward toward the so called human condition we’ve begun to explore the nonhuman condition so that rather than ‘transform the world’ we’ve begun to transform our perception of the world that is already there without us. The fantastic, in becoming nonhuman, approaches the continuity that underlies the impure inessentialism of the world not as it is ‘for us,’ but rather as it is for itself. Like the Gnostics of old we are learning to deprogram our symbolic blinkers, destroy the cultural filters, habits, customs, mores, and normative barriers of discourse and imagination that have blinded us to the world as it is without us. The fantastic is no longer a task for writers, artists, or any utilitarian exploration, but rather the very truth of our becoming fantastic within the nonhuman continuum. The wound in the side of the Real is opening in our time, and the official reality patrols of the global order are seeking ways to fill that ancient gap in the symbolic order they’ve created to imprison us in their illusory world of Neoliberalism. It’s up to us to enter the bloody gap of the Real, traverse the fantasy of the impossible, and discover for ourselves the possibility of a new world, a new earth in the ruins of the present order.

Fantasmatic Politics

For thousands of years our Masters have set up taboos and prohibitions against the Real, suggesting that if one goes beyond the limits one will go mad or insane, and if not mad then commit sacrilege against society. Those who have broken free of the Law of reality imposed by the cultural ideology of symbolic order of the age have been ostracized or dismissed from the world of acceptable discourse, silenced or obliterated from the Book of the Law of Society’s memory. We’ve seen throughout the last two thousand years those who transgressed the Book of the Law of Western Civilization labeled heretics of one form or another, both religious and secular. All have been hunted to extinction by the Inquisitorial powers of the enforcers of this symbolic order. In one form or another the heterological opening into the Real has led to expulsion, exclusion, and exit from the official realms of the communal vision. Those who opened such gaps in the Real were either burned at the stake, tortured, or imprisoned; else, labeled as irrational, insane, monstrous and cast under the Law of legitimated systems of psychoanalysis or medical treatment and facilities. Those who survived in the no man’s land of the arts where such disturbances could be attested were brought back into the economic, political, and social fold there escape routes closed off and encased in the arena of justified art, and as members of the tribe of fantasists the cultural tribes of critics and philosophers labeled these beings as not to be believed but rather enjoyed as specimens of this new madness and thereby controlled by the strict regulation of the Reality Patrol.

What if ours was the End Times, not in the Biblical sense of Jesus or God returning to judge the wicked and the dead, but rather of the Climatological catastrophe on the horizon that seems inevitably to be collapsing upon our present, or the coming of the Singularity that so many conspirators of the posthuman or transhuman visionary seem to portend, or even some natural catastrophe – an Asteroid, or supervolcano, or rise of the seas due to the melting of North and South poles, etc.? What of all these and any number of other natural or unnatural events on the horizon? We see the political fantasies being portrayed by both globalists and anti-globalists, capitalists and anti-capitalists in an antinomian oscillation between ambiguous and competing strategies. How should we deal with these? If you take one side or the other of this narrative you become a part of the problem rather than the solution, you suddenly enter a cultural narrative that locks you into a controlled vision of the future that suddenly closes off all other possibilities. What if the future is none of this? What then?

I’ve seen friends and family argue for hours over the notion of Climatological change and the degradation of the environment, Global Warming and the myriad of portending facets of civilizational decay and fall into a new barbarism that it might bring about, etc. While the one side argues this is all fantasy, that there is no such thing as Global Warming or climate change, and that even if we are seeing changes these are all part of earth cycles that have happened before, not man-made or done by human intervention, etc. In other words both sides have their clichéd narrative, their fantasy of the future around which they each gather supposed scientific fact and facticity to support their side of the debate. Usually at the end they will either accept a truce realizing neither side will accept the other’s argument or standpoint, or they begin to punch the shit out of each other till someone outside intervenes on their irreconcilable violence. Either way nothing is accomplished, both go away, go back to heir work-a-day-lives satisfied that they alone know the truth, that they are the defenders of the future against the idiocy of all those others. Nothing changes, nothing is accomplished. Sounds like most efforts in parliament or Congress/Senate debates these days. So that whether in private or public life the contradictions remain, the antinomian stance unresolved, no one wins…

Have you ever noticed how people in a conversation that already know they do not agree, implicitly talk past each other rather than with each other; by this, I mean the notion that they already know that this is not going to be a conversation, but rather a moment for a monologue in which the interlocutor can address not the Other but rather herself in the Other. So that it becomes a mere mirror world of Narcissistic self-satisfaction. A self-promoting moment of legitimating one’s thoughts at the expense of the Other.

Are we after all victims of our own Narcissistic self-loss in the Other, promoters of our own delusions and deliriums projected or introjected to/from the Other’s wound? Is the wound in the Real none other than our inability to accept the wound in our Narcissitic Prometheanism, our desire to surpass all others on the registry of success, of being right – of our blind faith in our own superfluous fantasy, collective or personal? Have we constructed out of our fears and terrors of the Real the very prisons of our affective and intellectual lives, given ourselves over to the rational mythologies of our age believing them to be both scientific and real? Haven’t we deluded ourselves into believing that we alone, we ‘humans’ are the exception to the rule, beyond hubris; that our place in the universe is at once the justified and sustained by our own delirious mythologies, rational or irrational, discursive or imagistic?

What if as Zizek would have it – following Lacan, that ‘traversing the fantasy’ is not to escape into some alternate realm of possibility and impossibility, but rather as he suggests to push into the immersive fantasy of our official reality matrix, fully identify ourselves with the reality fantasy that disturbs us, terrorizes our worst nightmares and fears; and, in so doing we will as Richard Boothy remarks: “Traversing  the phantasy” thus does not mean that the  subject  somehow abandons its  involvement with fanciful  caprices and  accommodates itself to a pragmatic“reality,”  but precisely  the  opposite:  the  subject is  submitted to that  effect  of the  
symbolic lack that reveals the limit of everyday reality. To  traverse  the  phantasy in  
the Lacanian  sense  is  to  be more  profoundly  claimed by the  phantasy  than  ever, in the  sense of being brought  into an ever more intimate  relation with that real core  of  
the phantasy that transcends imaging. 3 (238)

This new relation to the Real, both through pacification and by way of shock – a shock that awakens of to a new sense of reality, one not proscribed by the official order of society and its Reality Police.

Zizek will ask: What  if­ as  I  endeavor  to  demonstrate  in  my extensive  and  repeated  analyses-the  final Hegelian  reversal  is rather  a  redoubling  of the  antinomic  gap, its displacement  into the  “thing  itself’? He’ll go on to analyze (I quote at length):

What  lurks  in  the  background  here  is  the  old  problem  of  the passage  from  Kant  (the  philosopher  of  antinomies)  to  Hegel  (the  philosopher  of dialectical  contradictions) ;  grosso modo,  there  are  two versions of  this  passage:  ( 1 )  Kant asserts  the irreducible gap of finitude,  the negative  access  to  the Noumenal  (via Sublime)  as  the  only  possible  for  us,  while  Hegel ‘ s   absolute  idealism  closes  the Kantian  gap  and  returns  us  to  pre-critical  metaphysics;  (2)  it is Kant  who  goes  only half the  way  in  his destruction of metaphysics,  still maintaining the reference  to  the Thing-in-itself as  an  external  inaccessible  entity,  and  Hegel is  merely  a  radicalised Kant  who  accomplishes  the  step  from  negative  access  to  the  Absolute  to  Absolute itself  as  negativity.  Or,  to  put  it  in  the  terms  of  the  Hegelian  shift  from epistemological  obstacle  to positive  ontological  condition  (our  incomplete knowledge  of the  thing turns  into  a  positive  feature  of  the  thing which  is  in  itself incomplete,  inconsistent):  it  is  not  that Hegel  “ontologises”  Kant;  on the  contrary,  it is Kant who, insofar as  he conceives the  gap  as merely epistemological, continues to presuppose a fully constituted noumenal realm existing out there,  and  it is Hegel who “deontologises” Kant, introducing a gap into the very texture of reality. (Boucher, 248)

Here we discover that Kant introjects the gap or cut in the world internally within the Subject producing a purely epistemological dualism between phenomenal/noumenon; while for Hegel the gap of cut is not within the Subject or Mind, but actually part of the “very texture of reality”: the wound of the world is open, contradictory, and antinomic. Those who perceive one pole or the other, a purely transcendent real or an immanent real divided against itself are both wrong, instead as Zizek would have it: The  tension between immanence and transcendence is thus also secondary  with regard  to  the gap  within immanence  itself:  “transcendence”  is  a  kind  of  perspective illusion,  the  way  we (mis)perceive the  gap/discord that inheres to immanence itself. (Boucher, 249)

One could say that Bataille was right all along, that instead of a return to the officially sanctioned real of religious sublimity of the Church and the Sacred Order, we instead choose the left-hand path, downward bent into the morbid, obscene lairs of our fears and terrors, identifying with all that is most monstrous in our existence, our racist, bigoted, misogynistic and outlandish misanthropic delusions and technogothic nightmares. That only through our identification with what is so ridiculous and obscene, with the grotesque and macabre can we begin to laugh again, communicate again, rejoin each other in the carnival of existence, open ourselves to the Carnival of the World.

…this  brings  us  back  to  our  beginning:  perhaps,  one  should assert  this  attitude  of passive  aggressivity  as  a  proper  radical  political  gesture,  in contrast  to  aggressive  passivity,  the standard  “interpassive”  mode  of  our participation in socio-ideological life in which we are active all  the time in order to make  it  sure  that  nothing  will  happen,  that  nothing  will   really  change. In  such  a constellation,  the first  truly  critical  (“aggressive,”  violent)  step  is  to wthdraw into passivity,  to  refuse  to  participate-Bartleby’ s   “I  would  prefer  not  to”  is  the necessary first step  which  as it  were clears the ground for a true activity,  for  an act that will  effectively change the coordinates of the constellation. (Boucher, 258)

Todorov in his classic work on the Fantastic would suggest that the ‘Fantastic narrative is presented as a transcription of the imaginary experience of the limits of reason. It links the intellectual falseness of its premises to a hypothesis of the unnatural or supernatural’, gradually arriving at a position in which these hypotheses are untenable so that the fantastic introduces ‘that which cannot be, either in a natural or supernatural economy’ (Jackson, 24). From the late nineteenth century onward fantastic fantasy became the vehicle for interrogating the antinomic, the ambiguous zones of the symbolic order, the came to bet a critical project as being one of dissolution, disrepair, disintegration, derangement, dilapidation, sliding away, emptying. The very notion of realism which had emerged as dominant by the mid-nineteenth century is subjected to scrutiny and interrogation. (Jackson, 25)

Politically the fantastic would give voice to the oppressed, the excluded, the marginal – to all those who were deemed outside the sublime world of economic security, the illusory world of the powerful, the rich, the visible. The poor and outcast of society had become invisible and it was the power of the fantasist to make visible what was now invisible in the social body, what had been rejected and left to fend for itself in the darkness of societies morbid, and obscene slums and decaying systems of crime and punishment. One can see this in many of the stories of Dostoevsky, Gogol, Kafka, Lovecraft, Machen, and on through those such as Borges, Bioyes, and later authors too numerous to name here. Against the realism of society one will discover in the fantastic terms such as the impossible, the unreal, the nameless, formless, shapeless, unknown, invisible. As H.P. Lovecraft famously noted, “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown.”

As Eugene Thacker will suggest in his three volume work on the horror of philosophy Lovecraft implicitly makes the argument that not only is there no distinction between the natural and supernatural, but that what we sloppily call “supernatural” is simply another kind of nature, but one that lies beyond human comprehension – not in a relative but in an absolute sense. Herein lies the basis of what Lovecraft called “cosmic horror” – the paradoxical realization of the world’s hiddenness as an absolute hiddenness. He’ll go on to say:

It is a sentiment frequently expressed in Lovecraft’s many letters: “Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests are emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form – and the local human passions and conditions and standards – are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all…but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown – the shadow-haunted Outside – we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold.”4

This sense that what is reflected in the fantastic is not some extra-ordinary world, some Platonic other realm but rather our own universe seen with new eyes, with eyes that are no longer folded in the cage of a symbolic order that excludes the noumenal and binds us to a realm of utilitarian values and the logics of oppression of capitalism and its imposed economic dictatorship of Neoliberal globalism and austerity. It is this negative relationality to the symbolic order of our Globalist Society and its economic systems which constitutes the meaning of the modern fantastic.

Living In-Between: The Emancipatory Fantastic

Fantastic narratives confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic. They assert that what they are telling is real – relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so – and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what – within those terms – is manifestly unreal. They pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world into something more strange, into a world whose improbabilities are closer to the realm normally associated with the marvellous. The narrator is no clearer than the protagonist about what is going on, nor about interpretation; the status of what is being seen and recorded as ‘real’ is constantly in question. This instability of narrative is at the centre of the fantastic as a mode. (Jackson, 34)

In our times the notion of a secular fantastic or as I’m calling it political fantastic is becoming more and more pertinent. In an essay on transgression in the work of Georges Bataille, Foucault compares the kind of transgressive literature found in secularized fantasy to religion in previous ages. He claims for them both the same ontological func tion: an exploration of the limits of being. Foucault suggests that a literature of transgression occupies the ‘place where the sacred used to play, for transgression takes limit to the edge of its being, to the point where it virtually disappears, in a movement of pure violence’. He’d go on to say:

Perhaps the emergence of sexuality in our culture is an event which has several levels of meaning: it is linked to the death of God and to that ontological void which that death left at the limits of our thought: it is also linked to something which is still obscure and tentative – a form of thinking in which an interrogation of limits replaces a search for totality and in which a movement of transgression replaces a movement of contradictions. It is linked, finally, to a questioning of language by itself, in a circularity which the ‘outrageous’ violence of erotic literature, far from breaking, manifests from its earliest entrance into language. (Foucault, ‘Préface à la transgression’, p.767) (Jackson, 78-79)

Zizek again will return to Lacan and Freud telling us the Freudian answer is the drive toward transgressive gestures: what Freud calls the “drive” is not, as it may appear, the craving that enslaves us to the world of illusions or Maya (Buddhist). The drive, on the contrary, goes on even when the subject has “traversed the fantasy” and broken out of its illusory craving for the (lost) object of desire.5 Ultimately the goal of traversing the fantasy is to open up the space for the emergence of the pure drive beyond fantasy.

They evidence the radicality of the fantastic, its ability to suspend the apparent impossibility that things could be otherwise, to provide a space in which the impossible can be renegotiated. The fantastic impulse is bound up with a self-altering praxis. The weird alienates and estranges, ruptures what is. Nick Land’s notion of ‘hyperstitional’ relations between writing and the real comes to mind in which ‘fiction is not opposed to the real. Rather, it argues that reality is composed of fictions – consistent semiotic terrains that condition perceptual,  affective and behavioral responses’ (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit [Ccru], 2004: 275).

Today the fantasist enters into the everyday fantastic, her life becomes a part of the fantastic reality she is participating in as she struggles to disturb the worlds of the present symbolic order of a corrupt Globalist systems that seeks to plug up the gaps in its imaginary. Our struggle is not against imaginary powers, but rather against the very real powers in high places within an ruinous order of the corrupt Oligarchic and State powers who seek dominion over every fact of our physical and mental existence. In this sense the fantastic is our lives in this inescapable world of economic and political sorcery,  and we fight not as external agents in some fantasy world or alternate reality MMO but rather in the very real world of our everyday lives seeking a way to awaken those others around us from the spell of black magic they are entrapped in. Unlike the movie The Matrix, there are no big bad robotic systems out there somewhere controlling us, instead there is a very real world of economic, political, social, and cultural agents of fear and terrors who have enclosed us in a horror show of austerity and ruinous life.

Our escape from it is not to dream of escape into false fantasies, but rather to traverse the fantasy of this very real symbolic order we’re trapped in, become the heroes and heroines of a new order warring against the dark powers that entrap men, women, and children in a false world of mirrors, an utilitarian vision of endless work and slavery. Ours is a visionary fantastic of transformation and metamorphosis as we begin to reshape both our epistemic view onto this realm, as well as redefine and shape our lives toward other goals.

#### Embracing our constitutive lack severs proximate affective investments that breed passivity – our orientation is necessary to bridge the gap between discursive regimes and the material world.

Berlant 11 – Lauren, George M. Pullman Professor, Department of English, University of Chicago, *Cruel Optimism*, Routledge: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 33-6, Agastya

When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. This cluster of promises could be embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea - whatever. To phrase 'the object of desire' as a cluster of promises is to allow us to encounter what's incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments, not as confirmation of our irrationality but as an explanation for our sense of our endurance in the object, insofar as proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises, some of which may be clear to us while others not so much. In other words, all attachments are optimistic**.** That does not mean that they all feel optimistic: one might dread, for example, returning to a scene of hunger or longing or the slapstick reiteration of a lover or parent's typical misrecognition. But the surrender to the return to the scene where the object hovers in its potentialities is the operation of optimism as an affective form. In optimism, the subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with their object.' 'Cruel optimism' names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realisation is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic. What's cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have x in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the content of the attachment is, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world. This phrase points to a condition different than that of melancholia, which is enacted in the subject's desire to temporise an experience of the loss of an object/scene with which she has identified her ego continuity. Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object. One more thing: the cruelty of an optimistic attachment is, I think, usually something an analyst observes about someone's or some group's attachment to x, since usually that attachment exists without being an event, or even better, seems to lighten the load for someone/some group.^ But if the cruelty of an attachment is experienced by someone/some group, even in disavowed fashion, the fear is that the loss of the object/scene of promising itself will defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything. Often this fear of loss of a scene of optimism as such is unstated and only experienced in a sudden incapacity to manage startling situations, as we will see below. One might point out that all objects/scenes of desire are problematic, in that investments in them and projections onto them are less about them than about what cluster of desires and affects we can manage to keep magnetised to them. I have indeed wondered whether all optimism is cruel, because the experience of loss of the conditions of its reproduction can be so breathtakingly bad, just as the threat of the loss of x in the scope of one's attachment drives can feel like a threat to living on itself. But some scenes of optimism are clearly crueller than others: where cruel optimism operates, the very vitalising or animating potency of an object/ scene of desire contributes to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place. This might point to something as banal as a scouring love, but it also opens out to obsessive appetites, working for a living, patriotism, all kinds of things. One makes affective bargains about the costliness of one's attachments, usually unconscious ones, most of which keep one in proximity to the scene of desire/attrition. This means that a poetics of attachment always involves some splitting off of the story I can tell about wanting to be near x (as though x has autonomous qualities) from the activity of the emotional habitus I have constructed by having x in my life in order to be able to project out my endurance as proximity to the complex of what x seems to offer and proffer. To understand cruel optimism, therefore, one must embark on an analysis of rhetorical indirection, as a way of thinking about the strange temporalities of projection into an enabling object that is also disabling. I learned how to do this from reading Barbara Johnson's work on apostrophe and free indirect discourse. In her poetics of indirection, each of these rhetorical modes is shaped by the ways a writing subjectivity conjures other ones so that, in a performance of fantasmatic intersubjectivity, the writer gains superhuman observational authority, enabling a performance of being made possible by the proximity of the object. Because this object is something like what I am describing in the optimism of attachment, I'll describe a bit the shape of my transference with her thought. In 'Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion,' which will be my key referent bere, Johnson tracks the political consequences of apostrophe for what has become foetal personhood: a silent, affectively present but physically displaced interlocutor (a lover, a foetus) is animated in speech as distant enough for a conversation but close enough to be imaginable by the speaker in whose head the entire scene is happening.' But **the condition of projected possibility**, of a hearing that cannot take place in the terms of its enunciation ('you' are not here, 'you' are eternally belated to the conversation with you that I am imagining) **creates a** fake present moment of intersubjectivity **in which, nonetheless, a performance of address can take place. The present moment is made possible by the fantasy** of you, laden with the x qualities I can project onto you, given your convenient absence. Apostrophe therefore appears to be a reaching out to a you, a direct movement from place x to y, but it is actually a turning back, an animating of a receiver on behalf of the desire to make something happen now that realises something in the speaker, makes the speaker more or differently possible, because she has admitted, in a sense, the importance of speaking for, as, and to, two: but only under the condition, and illusion, that the two is really (in) one. Apostrophe is thus an indirect, unstable, physically impossible but phenomenologically vitalising movement of rhetorical animation that permits subjects to suspend themselves in the optimism of a potential occupation of the same psychic space of others, the objects of desire who make you possible (by having some promising qualities, but also by not being there).'' Later work, such as on 'Muteness Envy,' elaborates Johnson's description of the gendered rhetorical politics of this projection of voluble intersubjectivity.'^ The paradox remains that the conditions of the lush submerging of one consciousness into another require a double negation: of the speaker's boundaries, so s/he can grow bigger in rhetorical proximity to the object of desire; and of the spoken of, who is more or less a powerful mute placeholder providing an opportunity for the speaker's imagination of her/his/their flourishing. Of course psychoanalytically speaking all intersubjectivity is impossible. It is a wish, a desire, and a demand for an enduring sense of being with and in x, and is related to that big knot that marks the indeterminate relation between a feeling of recognition and misrecognition - recognition is the misrecognition you can bear, **a transaction that affirms you** without, again, necessarily feeling good or accurate (it might idealise, **it might affirm your monstrosity**, it might mirror your desire to be nothing enough to live under the radar, it might feel just right, and so on).'' Johnson's work on projection shows that scenes of impossible identity, rhetorically rendered, open up meaning and knowledge by mining the negative - projective, boundary dissolving - spaces of attachment to the object of address who must be absent in order for the desiring subject of intersubjectivity to get some traction, to stabilise her proximity to the object/scene of promise. In free indirect discourse, a cognate kind of suspension, the circulation of this kind of merged and submerged observational subjectivity, has less pernicious outcomes, at least when Johnson reads Zora Neale Hurston's practice of it.' In a narrator's part-merging with a character's consciousness, say, free indirect discourse performs the impossibility of locating an observational intelligence in one or any body, and therefore forces the reader to transact a different, more open relation of unfolding to what she is reading, judging, being, and thinking she understands. In Jobnson's work such a transformative transaction through reading/speaking 'unfolds' the subject in a good way, despite whatever desires they may have not to become significantly different." In short, **Johnson's work on projection is about the optimism of attachment**, and is often itself optimistic about the negations and extensions of personhood that forms of suspended intersubjectivity demand from the reader. What follows is not so buoyant: this is an essay politicising Freud's observation that 'people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them'.^ It comes from a longer project about the politics, aesthetics, and projections of political depression. Political depression **persists in affective judgments of the world's intractability** - evidenced in affectlessness, apathy, coolness, cynicism, and so on - **modes of what might be called detachment that are really not detached at all but** constitute ongoing relations of sociality**.'" The politically depressed position is manifested in the problem of** the difficulty of detaching from life-building modalities that can no longer be said to be doing their work, andwhich indeed make obstacles to the desires that animate them; my archive tracks practices of self-interruption, self-suspension, and self-abeyance that indicate people's struggles to change, but not traumatically, the terms of value in which their life-making activity has been cast." Cruel optimism is, then, like all phases, a deictic, a phrase that points to a proximate location: as an analytic lever it is an incitement to inhabit and to track the affective attachment to what we call 'the good life,' which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it. My assumption is that the conditions of ordinary life in the contemporary world even of relative wealth, as in the US, are conditions of the attrition or the wearing out of the subject, and that the irony - that the labour of reproducing life in the contemporary world is also the activity of being worn out by it - has specific implications for thinking about the ordinariness of suffering, the violence of normativity, and the 'technologies of patience' or lag that enable a concept of the later to suspend questions of the cruelty of the now.'^ Cruel optimism is in this sense a concept pointing toward a mode of lived imminence, one that grows from a perception about the reasons people are not Bartlehy, do not prefer to interfere with varieties of immiseration, but choose to ride the wave of the system of attachment that they are used to, to syncopate with it, or to be held in a relation of reciprocity, reconciliation, or resignation that does not mean defeat by it. Or perhaps they move to normative form to get numb with the consensual promise, and to misrecognise that promise as an achievement. This essay traverses three episodes of suspension - from John Ashhery, Charles Johnson, and Ceoff Ryman - of the reproduction of habituated or normative life. These suspensions open up revelations about the promises that had clustered as people's objects of desire, stage moments of exuberance in the impasse near the normal, and provide tools for suggesting why these exuberant attachments keep ticking not like the time bomb they might be but like a white noise machine that provides assurance that what seems like static really is, after all, a rhythm people can enter into while they're dithering, tottering, bargaining, testing, or otherwise being worn out by the promises that they have attached to in this world.

#### The role of the judge is to expose the fantasy:

#### 1 – Pedagogy – Our method breaks free from educational projects that create psychic numbness and smooth governmentality.

Taubman 17 – Peter Taubman (Department of Secondary Education @ Brooklyn College, CUNY), 2017, “DEATH BY NUMBERS: A RESPONSE TO BACKER, SARIGIANIDES, AND STILLWAGGON,” Educational Theory, 67(1), 97–106, doi:10.1111/edth.12230, Agastya

By connecting the viciously punitive aspects of melancholia to what increasingly appears as our ferocious drive toward death, I hope to widen the discussion of melancholia in education to include current social and political conditions in education that sustain melancholia and intensify the death drive. These conditions destroy our sense of self-worth, deaden our psyches, and put each of us at risk. These conditions, not unlike those that Backer, Sarigianides, and Stillwaggon describe, stifle dialogue, ignore the losses education demands, and intensify racial melancholia. My aim here is to build on their work. My response essay assumes that all of us, teachers and students alike, suffer inexpressible losses that we cannot publicly grieve, that melancholy is not foreign to any of us. However, it seems that the depression or melancholia I and many of my colleagues, both teachers and teacher educators, are experiencing today is related to something more insidious than the inability to express a real or imagined loss. It seems related to an increasing drive to turn ourselves and others into numbers, even into machines — that is, into inert matter. Or, to put it differently, I can’t help wonder if we are driving ourselves and our students to death. The Death Drive Freud’s speculations about a death drive began with his consternation over the pleasure principle, which he tended to define in terms of the release of built-up tension or excitation and the avoidance of unpleasure. If, as he seemed to argue in most of his early work, we pursue pleasure — even our dreams, for example, fulfill a disguised wish — how then, he asked, can we account for our own sabotaging of such pleasure? Why do we return to traumatic events in our dreams? Why do we repeat painful behaviors or experiences? Why do we resist perspectives that might interrupt these dangerous or damaging repetitive patterns? And what, he struggled to understand, could account for the atrocities humans inflict on one another? These questions prompted Freud’s speculations in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.”There he wrote that based upon his observations of behavior in the transference and upon the life histories of men and women, he was forced to conclude that “there really does exist in the mind a compulsion to repeat painful experiences which overrides the pleasure principle.”8 This compulsion to repeat, he wrote, “gives the appearance of some daemonic force at work.”9 Freud labeled this “daemonic force” the “death drive.” Freud speculated that this “daemonic force” emerges in, is revealed by, and offers an explanation for our compulsion to repeat painful experiences. It is also, as Freud suggested in his later writings, responsible for the destructive forces that threaten our “civilization.” I want to focus on three claims Freud makes in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” and that he elaborates in later work. These are (1) the claim that the death drive compels us to return to an inanimate or inert state; (2) the claim that the death drive is “historically determined”; and (3) the claim that Eros opposes the death drive and is “the preserver of life.”10 I want to explore the first two claims together, in that I will consider how particular corporate-driven education reforms provoke and shape the death drive, a drive that calls on and intensifies the aggression that is so much a part of melancholia. First and Second Claims: The Death Drive Compels Us to Return to an Inanimate State, and It Is Historically Determined Freud’s initial claim was that the death drive compels us to return to an inanimate or inert state.11 What if we were to read the death drive not in the literal sense but rather in the figurative sense, as a drive to put an end to memory, and history, and therefore to feelings? What if the death drive kills that which, in fact, makes us human? What if we have within us as individuals or groups a drive that, provoked and shaped by particular constellations of social and historical forces or by particular conditions, impels us to create psychic dead zones, to render ourselves and others less than human? As Michael Eigen said, “When one is dead, one fears being alive.”12 The Death of History If repetition results from not remembering or is a form of remembering without working through, if it is a way, as Adam Phillips suggests, of “making memory impossible,” of “determinedly wishing not to know” or creating “states of mind in which there is nothing left to remember,”13 then can we not read the death drive in terms of a force that destroys history and memory? Might not the compulsion to repeat, in which Freud initially located the death drive, be seen in the repetition compulsion of education, returning again and again to the same purported panaceas as a way to avoid the trauma of its inherent impossibility? “To be locked in the past,” James Baldwin wrote, “means that one has no past, since one can never assess it, or use it, and if one cannot use the past, one has no present.”14 One is, as Baldwin warns, stuck in a perpetual youth, a corrupt innocence. Can we not see such corrupt innocence in education reform’s insistence on its newness, its certainty, and its “nowness”? Anyone who opposes ed reform is cast as living in a dead past. Can we not see this blind innocence in the failure to work through histories and dreams of and dependence on, for example, white supremacy or misogyny? Certainly in the United States, the inability to face the trauma of race and the resistance to looking at the role of white supremacy in the formation of identities, fortunes, and education policies create not only racial melancholia but psychic dead zones and reveal the workings of a death drive. Sarigianides suggests as much in her reading of American Born Chinese. 15 As Ta-Nehisi Coates writes, the “tenacious dream of white, straight, male exceptionalism that thrives on generalization, limiting questions, and privileging immediate answers” numbs memory and erases history.16 This drive to forget, to not remember, is evident, too, in the contention by education reformers in the United States that the history of education is irrelevant to becoming a teacher and in the denigration of foundation courses in teacher education. If history is offered, it is as what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno referred to as a fixed order of time, not something living but transformed into the “material to be used for the ideology of progress.”17 When education reformers offer medicine, engineering, and architecture as analogies for teaching, or when they base their views of teaching in the learning sciences, they effectively remove teaching from the world of history. The Death of Feelings But if memory and history disappear, what happens to feelings? Let us follow Brian Massumi and take feelings to be both personal and biographical. They are, he writes, body-based sensations, checked against remembered experiences that emerge in language.18 What will happen to feelings if memory and history vanish and the language in which feelings take form diminishes? If the language of education reform increasingly constricts the symbolic — I imagine many of us have had the experience of feeling suffocated or flattened by that language at meetings — and if it makes relationships suspect — I imagine, too, we have all felt interpersonal exchanges rushed, diminished, or mistrusted under the glare of audit — might we not also venture that such language diminishes the world of feelings? Certainly we know that education reform culls its language from the worlds of finance and business, which reduce all behavior to the bottom line; from the learning sciences, which render knowledge and wisdom as information and insist on predictability and replicability; from the military, with its focus on command and control; and from the world of sports, which knows only winners and losers. The language of these worlds evacuates our subjectivity, except insofar as it demands that we endlessly monitor, control, and improve ourselves and others. This demand for constant improvement, a kind of superego of education reform, lacerates us with the harsh and narrow language of failure, substituting imperious judgment for conversation and, as Adam Phillips suggests in Unforbidden Pleasures, submitting our lives to one, often cruel, “correct” interpretation.19 The self-denigration with which Freud distinguished melancholia from mourning appears in the impoverished language of the superego that harbors the drive to turn us into objects. The language of the superego, Phillips further suggests, is filled with petty and cruel demands and vicious charges that we are never enough.20 There is no dialogue, no poetry, no interpretive flexibility. There is only the one right answer, and we are reduced to an object whipped and rendered inert, left with only depression or, turned outward, rage, and a lingering affect provoked by the constrictions of deadened identities and numbed and numbered selves. The superego — that stuck record that endlessly reiterates its scathing criticism in its impoverished vocabulary — first turns us into an object by telling us who we are before it unleashes its scorn on us. As Phillips writes, “[T]he superego treats the ego like an object not a person.”21 Can we not see the work of the death drive in the way teachers and students are articulated as bundles of skills, lists of rules and procedures, and scripts written, designed, and packaged somewhere else? It’s no wonder that education reformers talk so much of “building” a better teacher. Through various vocabularies and practices of quantification, we are rendered and render ourselves as machines: efficient, predictable, and easily programmed, machines that elicit and process numerical data. The impoverishment of language results not only from the barrage of terms culled from the worlds of business, the learning sciences, the military, and sports, but also from ed reform’s fascination with and promotion of technology. Sherry Turkle, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has perhaps written most persuasively about the role of technology in the transformation of our feeling life. She is particularly worried about the decline in empathy among young people and the blurring of boundaries between machines and humans, as robots come to be programmed to give the appearance of feeling.22 If feelings disappear or emerge only in terms of spatial descriptions — I feel high, low, flat, as Fredric Jameson so many years ago claimed was happening in our postmodern state23 — what happens to thought? Deprived of feeling, does not thought itself dry up? Bound by rules of statistical evidence, empirical verifiability, experimental design, and linear sequential logic, rendered always in terms of cognitive operations or in terms of Bloom’s taxonomy, thinking hardens. The rigor demanded by education reformers becomes rigor mortis.

#### 2 – Performativity – Debate is a libidinal activity that asks us to evaluate possible worlds and advocacies through language which cannot encompass the Real – means every argument concedes to the authority of the lack.

#### 3 – Circularity – Answers to the standard concede to the lack since we recognize achieving an absolute correct interpretation is impossible – the aff is a never-ending project.

#### 4 – Serial Policy Failure – status-quo reforms fail absent intervention at the level of fantasy – otherwise policies are coopted towards counter-productive ends.

**Fotaki** – Fotaki, Marianna. Organization Studies Group @ Manchester Business School). “Why do public policies fail so often? Exploring health policy-making as an imaginary and symbolic construction.” June 15, 2010. Sage, 713-716, Agastya

Towards an alternative conception of public policy-making So far, I have suggested that health **policies often fail because the fantasmatic foundations of the policy-making process are not acknowledged** as such. Using the example of patient choice, I have also suggested thatthe reasons for its re-introduction into the UK health care system and throughout Europe, despite limited success in the past, might be better understood through applying the psychoanalytic conception of subjective fantasy. In exploring the limits and possibilities of one particular policy, my aim was to demonstrate how powerful social fantasies are created and how their splitting from organizational reality enables the idealization of the health task. Lacanian and Kleinian psychoanalysis were drawn upon to put forward the article’s key arguments and to further the understanding of the less tangible processes present in public policy making. I have brought together the mental processes that Klein has described and which were then used extensively to explain organizational phenomena, with my central argument about the (unrecognized) role of the imaginary aspects of the policy-making process. Both theories in their own unique ways highlighted the role of fantasy as a necessary stimulant for policy development but also as an impediment to its realization. I have combined the idea of fragmented subjectivity taken from Lacan’s work and socially sanctioned defences from object relations theory, to offer an alternative conception of public policy formation and to explore the reasons behind frequent policy failures. The Lacanian ontology of the subject was used to highlight the role of fantasy as an enabler of social projects. Having its roots in unconscious mental life, fantasy becomes the stimulant driving forward public policies such as patient choice, even though many of these policies are bound to fail as is the case for all imaginary projects. But failure is not necessarily seen as an adverse outcome, but rather as an opportunity to rethink the ideas of purposefulness and teleology in the context of organizations and social endeavours more generally. The Lacanian perspective introduces the productive element held in the recognition of the inevitability of failure, by unveiling the imaginary nature of striving for idealistic policies and the liberating potential of accepting loss. His conception of loss is so much more radical than in object relations theory, where mourning can bring some sort of reparation and make up for it. In Lacan’s work loss originates in the longings of the individual psyche for completeness, which is unattainable, and yet this is what sustains us as desiring subjects. If we lacked loss there would be nothing to desire. Human desire, for Lacan, is a constitutive aspect of human subjectivity and is not driven by rational considerations, as economists would like us to believe. **If anything the subject is enmeshed in its imaginary constructs in order to deflect the reality of the human condition.** Nor is it a desire for the promised outcome only, but rather (or also) for the symbol that the outcome stands for. Put differently, **the incessant search in the subject is for the signified meaning and not for the signifier itself**. I have suggested that **many public policies are intrinsically idealistic as they are instigated by way of setting desire in motion.** So in the case of individual choice in health, the underlying fantasy that drives this policy is the fantasy of freedom (of choice), and by extension the fantasy of control over the uncontrollable. While its stated aim is to achieve diverse (and potentially conflicting) public policy objectives, the policy reflects the contradictions of human subjectivity on a societal level as well. In other words, the patient choice paradox is that it overtly ignores the unconscious motivations implicit in the everyday reality of patient–doctor encounter (for example, by assuming that rationality over-rides patients’ fears and vulnerabilities), and yet takes (unwittingly) account of the fantasy, which is illusory but is also an indispensable aspect of our existence. The analysis moved then towards the thesis that policy tends to be idealistic because it is not meant to withstand an immediate reality test but to express mythical, imaginary and arguably unrealizable societal aspirations and longings. In this sense the discrepancies and discontinuities present in patient choice policy are but an expression of the contradictions that sustain the lack, fragmentation and splitting of the subject, and so are the unspoken, conflicting and often impossible societal tasks performed by public institutions. I have also argued that by distancing itself from operational reality, public policy making expresses societal strife and desire on a fantasy level, whilst health organizations are left in the position of a dependent subject, having passively to reflect it without being able to implement unworkable policies. For this reason, the stated objectives that choice policy is expected to achieve (such as equity and efficiency for example), may be used to deflect attention away from the need to admit the deeper defensive role of health care policy (see also Fotaki, 2006). Yet because the tacit and unspoken functions of health policy related to death anxiety and inexorable facts of life are relegated to the unconscious, they give rise to all kinds of defensive policy rhetoric by policy makers who identify with the ideals they proclaim and then feel obliged to justify them. While policy makers express societal fantasies projected onto them by their constituencies, various professional groups or patient advocates are in their own ways involved in the construction of unattainable ideals, as they too pursue and legitimize their specific projects. The role of fantasy in relation to patient choice seems obvious, but can this be generalized across all policy making processes in relation to health or other areas of public policy making? The answer is an unequivocal yes. The fantasmatic structuration of public policy making is revealed in the difficulty of accepting the limitations that are intrinsic to human predicament and ‘to give up the dream of being all, of living forever, of narcissistic omnipotence and of living in the world that never frustrates our desires’ (Moi, 2004: 869). Health and social care is about dealing with the finitude of our physical bodies. Yet these concerns are no less relevant to the education system, for example, which is unconsciously preoccupied with ensuring the survival of future generations (see Obholzer, 1994) or economic development and the idea of ‘progress’ more generally, all of which enact omnipotent fantasies of the limitless possibilities in their own distinct ways. Being a part of the symbolic order, which is structured in lack and loss, these imaginary pursuits cannot be easily (if at all) translated into workable policy objectives. But where does this all leave policy makers and how can they purposefully integrate Lacanian and Kleinian insights by bringing them to bear on policy formation and implementation? A legitimate question is: if policies are about societal fantasies that cannot be fulfilled, would this not mean that all policies are bound to fail? More fundamentally, aren’t policies meant to address real issues rather than fantasmatic pursuits that cannot be realized? These are important questions as public policies are first and foremost about addressing issues that most of us care about, and a great deal of effort goes into their design and articulation. Therefore, I would not wish to suggest that policies are not about engaging with real problems. In contrast, my proposition is that socially constructed objects of fantasy are stirred up successfully only when policies concern issues that matter. Such is the case of patient choice for example. Yet if policy-making is not to remain locked in searching for unattainable fantasms (of choice for all), originating in the imaginary reflections of the illusory self, we would have to recognize them for what they are. **If**, on the other hand, **we carry on mis-taking them for reality, they will continue to mirror the misrecognized vision of ourselves and our society.** The unique strength of psychoanalytic thought is that it demonstrates the injustice towards the other and alienation of the subject whenever we cling to impossible fantasies originating in the imaginary (Leeb, 2008). The emancipatory potential of psychoanalysis on the other hand, lies in its power to highlight (and dispel) the imaginary nature of the subjective drive for unity, certainty and stability which underpins various societal projects. But psychoanalysis does not only warn us about the consequences of mistaking the infinite desires of the psyche with the finitude of human bodies. More crucially it acknowledges the productive role of fantasy, and of its failure, in the social arena. In so doing, psychoanalysis presents us with a way of bridging fantasy with reality in our social and political endeavors. The incorporation of psychoanalytic insights, I have suggested, as a necessary means for rethinking health policy making, is not meant to supplant economic and political explanations of social and organizational life. Instead it is offered to elucidate the co-existence and subtle interplay between psychic mechanisms and calculating rationality that policy makers, politicians, professionals and users of services rely on to make their decisions. Both theories of Lacanian and Kleinian psychoanlaysis drawn upon in this article imply the **necessity of recognizing underlying imaginary dynamics as a starting point in the journey towards realistic policy-making. To do so we need firstly to accept the imaginary structuration of the desire to attain the unattainable. This recognition will lead to an** acknowledgement and **acceptance of the intrinsic instability and conflicting nature of the policy-making process**, overcoming the splits between policy design and implementation. In addition to political and financial constraints, policies are simultaneously driven (and limited) by the ambiguity and non-unified subjectivity of those who design them and the users/beneficiaries who are themselves split, enigmatic and multi-dimensional subjects. Such a policy, which is reflective of its context and of itself, would not easily be drawn into seeking simplistic ‘solutions’ reflecting the fantasies of the ego. It would also not become the mirror showing our deepest socially sanctioned desires/fantasies, that we are then encouraged to enact mindlessly.As I have shown, the rhetorical pronouncements of ‘Choice for All’ for example, stand for an injunction to exercise and enjoy (choice) even if it involves the experience of being ill or cared for. The call for the recognition of the fantasmatic structuration of the policy process does not however suggest a blank slate authorization of policies designed without thought as to how they can (not) be implemented in a complex multi-organization such as the National Health Service. As I have argued, **when policies are conceived at ‘a distance’ from** organizational **reality, they** cannot relate to patient requirements and **cannot be translated into** organizational **realities**. This brings me to my second and more important point, about the necessity of re-considering policy-making processes, as an inclusive process involving those who are concerned with policy implementation: health professionals, and users of services. By engaging users and providers in decision-making and the co-production of services as self-aware subjects rather than as constituencies whose fantasies can be manipulated, there might be a possibility to break through the cycle of policy repetition and blame apportioning. More importantly, reconciling failure as an opportunity that keeps desire alive rather than an outcome to be avoided might create an opening for more realistic policy formation. This in itself is a depressing process as one must also give up the idealized objects, accepting the impossibility of ever attaining them. Yet only by accepting the necessity of Samuel Beckett’s injunction to: **‘Try again. Fail again. Fail better’** (Beckett, 1983: 7) may the process of un-encumbering oneself from the ideals that bind our ego begin.A participative policy making process that bridges fantasy and reality is a first step in such a direction. It would foster an engagement of self-aware subjects accepting the burden of their subjectivity and taking responsibility for their ontological predicament without surrendering to it, rather than a responsibilization of individual users of services or professionals. By re-considering the very idea of policy as grounded in an imaginary projection of a soon to be perfect world, we would have to learn to stop demanding such perfection of our politicians, and they would have to stop believing that they could deliver it. The comprehensive interpretation of policy-making at a societal level and through the lens of organizational defences suggested in this article might contribute to a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of developing patients’ autonomy, beyond normalizing the ‘management of expectations’. It will alsochallenge a linear model of policy-making and policy analysis, which separates design from its implementation, showing it to be inadequate. But for this to happen, the unconscious motivations that create and undo policies will have to be appreciated**. Taking into account the inevitability of fantasy in policy-making and the inevitability of its failure, may not free us once and for all from the tyranny of imaginary pursuits. It might, however, enable a journey towards the discovery of new ways of desiring, engaging and being in organizations and society.**

#### 5 – Indeterminacy – there is nothing inherent in a rule that mandates following a specific interpretation. They are always subject to interpretation by the observer, which means an absolute moral rule would get interpreted differently by different agents. The AC solves – we recognize that signified rules cannot encompass their true essence because of the gap between the Symbolic and the Real.

#### 6 – Verifiability – Robust neuro-studies prove our theory.

Dall’Aglio 19 – John Dall’Aglio, Department of Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences, Brown University. Developmental Psychosomatics Laboratory, New York State Psychiatric Institute/Columbia University Medical Center.] “Of brains and Borromean knots: A Lacanian meta-neuropsychology” Neuropsychoanalysis, Vol. 21, 2019 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/15294145.2019.1619091>)

Affective consciousness and the real

Recall the concept of the real as a negativity (non-representational insistence) which is present from the beginning. Das Ding emerges simultaneously with understanding yet is outside of it (Freud, 1895). Reason (or cognition, understood as a symbolic-imaginary function) cannot represent, and thereby cannot comprehend, the real. In this way, the limit of reason is within reason (Copjec, 2012; Laplanche, 2011).

Therefore, neural areas corresponding to the real should be constitutive of, but not identical with, cognitive functions. As non-representational, they should insist their presence through affect and the compulsive repetition of the drive. At the core of the subject, the real is also at the core of cognition, while simultaneously the limit of that cognition.

The drive (iteration, source/pressure) refers to the real (Johnston, 2013). Freud (1915a) defined drive as:

a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body. (Freud, 1915a, pp. 121–122)

Drive, thereby, refers to the demand upon the mind concerning bodily needs. In the brain, the brainstem and diencephalon contain “need-detectors.” Each has a homeostatic set-point – for example, the ideal amount of salt to have in the blood. The hypothalamus and related systems closely monitor and modulate the internal body (see, for example, Waterson & Horvath, 2015; Williams, Harrold & Cutler, 2000; Woods, Seely, Prote, & Schwartz, 1993). These areas can be dynamically localized as important points of proximity between the body and the mind, and the locus of the pressure of the drive (Solms, 2013).

These diencephalic and upper brainstem systems are fundamentally affective (Panksepp, 1998; Solms, 2013). Deviations from set-points produce unpleasure, whereas moving towards the set-point generates pleasure. One major structure is the periaqueductal gray (PAG), which receives projections from these brainstem areas. Stimulation of the ventral columns of the PAG induces feelings of extreme pleasure, whereas stimulation of the dorsal columns corresponds to feelings of excruciating pain. Here, one finds the pleasure principle as a key dynamic in the process of maintaining homeostasis (Solms & Turnbull, 2002).

Importantly, this affective system is fundamental to consciousness, the feeling state of being. Disturbances to upper areas of the brain disrupt cognitive and emotional functions, but the subject retains affective being (Penfield & Jasper, 1954). For example, hydranencephalic patients are born with little-to-no cortex but intact subcortical affective circuits (Merker, 2007; Shewmon, Holmes, & Byrne, 1999). These patients are still conscious in the affective sense and respond to the environment through these circuits. Summarizing these various lines of evidence, Solms (2013) argues that consciousness can exist without cortex.

However, damage to these affective circuits significantly impairs consciousness (along with cognition). In fact, a lesion to the PAG completely wipes out consciousness, extinguishing affective being. This supports the critical role of the upper brainstem in the generation of consciousness (Moruzzi & Magoun, 1949), which leads Solms (2013) to conclude that affective consciousness is the bedrock of consciousness. Later cognitive functions of the cortex depend upon and are shaped by the affective circuits which function prior to them (Panksepp, 1998; Solms & Turnbull, 2002).

With its (extimate) relationship with the internal body via homeostasis and drives, the upper brainstem and associated structures correspond functionally to Freud’s id. In contrast, the cortical focus on exteroception corresponds to Freud’s ego. Since the upper brainstem is intrinsically conscious (i.e. its activity generates the affective bedrock of consciousness) and the cortex is dependent on the brainstem for consciousness, Solms (2013) argues that the id is fundamentally conscious. Rather than the nucleus of the unconscious, the id is the font of consciousness.

More specifically, the id (upper brainstem and associated structures) is affectively conscious. It generates being as a feeling state without representation. Through a Lacanian lens, this affective consciousness corresponds to the insistence of the real. It is non-representational, a primary affect (Lacan, 1997). It is beyond (indeed, prior to) cognition – constituting a limit, an impasse. Furthermore, as the bedrock of consciousness, it is constitutive of cognition. This fits well within Lacan’s conception of the real and the drive (Johnston, 2013a).

Affective instincts

Additionally, affective consciousness extends into the limbic system. Panksepp (1998) identifies seven affective systems: SEEKING, RAGE, PANIC, PLAY, CARE, LUST, and FEAR.7 Across mammals, they exhibit the same circuitry, neurotransmitters, and stereotyped motor functions (see Panksepp, 1998 for neuroanatomical details). A combination of lesion, pharmacological, and deep brain stimulation studies supports the dynamic localization of their functions.

SEEKING closely resembles the Freudian libidinal drive (Solms, 2012a). It is an objectless, volitional system that carries its own subjective quality of excitatory pleasure (as opposed to a reduction of tension). The rest of the circuits are more specialized. For example, RAGE characterizes the aggressive impulse to destroy that which frustrates the subject’s goals. PANIC activates in response to separation from a loved object, connoting separation-anxiety. Generally speaking, all seven systems generate a distinct response to an experience of the external world.

Furthermore, these experiences also concern socio-emotional needs, such as attachment needs in the PANIC system (Solms, 2012b). These limbic circuits qualitatively elaborate upper brainstem affective consciousness through distinct socio-emotional needs. These affective instincts prepare the organism to interact with the world and meet its needs, albeit in a rough-and-ready way (Solms & Turnbull, 2002).

Insofar as these affective instincts are prepared for certain types of experiences, I would suggest that they are not the real proper and are better localized at the intersection of the real and the imaginary. Nevertheless, they also have built in “holes” – the potential to acquire new objects. For example, the FEAR system has certain built-in objects (such as a fear of falling). However, it also has the potential to learn new objects, such as electrical outlets. This potential is never exhausted, for these areas are subject to neuroplasticity (Ansermet & Magistretti, 2007; Solms & Turnbull, 2002). I suggest that these seven affective instincts might be considered “highways” from the real to the symbolic-imaginary. Similarly, Verhaeghe (2004) highlights Panksepp’s (1998) instincts as potential neurobiological underpinnings in the child’s turn to the Other (symbolic-imaginary registers) to answer the pressure of the drive (the real).

These instincts contrast with the upper brainstem homeostatic drives. Each instinct represents a socio-emotional need. In the perspective of drive as representative of bodily need (i.e. located in brainstem and diencephalon “need-detectors”), there is not much flexibility in terms of what objects might satisfy the drive. Only water can satisfy the demand made upon the mind when dehydrated, for example. However, affective instincts are more flexible – emotional needs may find any number of objects.

Therefore, the flexibility attributed to the psychoanalytic drive (i.e. alteration, the aim and object) corresponds with the plasticity and potentiality of these affective instincts. In contrast, the brainstem, corresponds to the real of the drive (i.e. iteration, the source and pressure). Indeed, drive itself is split – here, neuro-structurally and evolutionarily, for the affective instincts are more evolutionarily recent than the upper brainstem (Solms & Turnbull, 2002). For Lacan, the tension of the drive is never eliminated. SEEKING corresponds best to this notion of excitatory pleasure in the drive, for it is innately objectless (Solms, 2012a). However, this inexhaustibility may be attributed to all seven affective instincts.