## 1

#### Interpretation: Debaters must specify how they enforce the unconditional right of workers to strike.

#### Violation: you didn’t’

#### 1] Topic lit – enforcement is the core question of the topic and there's no consensus on normal means so you must spec- also proves this specific interp isn’t infinitely regressive bc it is grounded in topic lit Weiss

Marley S. Weiss [Professor of Law, University of Maryland School of Law], 2000, “The Right To Strike In Essential Services Under United States Labor Law”, https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2189&context=fac\_pubs

2. Strikes, Lockouts, and Other Lawful Primary Weapons under the NLRA The parties, both labor and management, are under a duty to bargain in good faith with each other, “but such obligation does not compel either party to agree to a proposal or require the making of a concession”. The essential idea here is that both sides must genuinely try to reach mutual agreement. However, this simple concept is extremely difficult to enforce, and employers too often resort to bad faith bargaining, bargaining on the surface with no real intention of concluding an agreement, as part of a strategy to eliminate union representation from the workplace. In addition, the duty to bargain is limited to matters falling within the Section 8(d) statutory phrase, “wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment”, and the right to strike is similarly limited to issues falling within the scope of mandatory bargaining as defined by that phrase. Although the phrase has been broadly construed in many respects, as to certain issues, the contrary has been the case. Capital redeployment, that is, relocation of operations, disinvestment in unionized plants, subcontracting, and plant closure decisions, provide employers with a potent set of weapons against unions. While bargaining over the effects of such decisions is plainly mandatory, the extent to which bargaining is required over the decisions themselves have been hotly contested.

#### This acts as a resolvability standard. Debate has to make sense and be comparable for the judge to make a decision which means it's an independent voter and outweighs.

#### 2] Stable advocacy – 1AR clarification delinks neg positions that prove why enforcement in a certain instance is bad by saying it isn't their method of enforcement – wrecks neg ballot access and kills in depth clash – CX doesn't check since it kills 1NC construction pre-round since I don't know advocacy till in round, and judges do not flow cross ex so its not verifiable.

#### 3] Prep skew – I don't know what they will be willing to clarify until CX which means I could go 6 minutes planning to read a disad and then get screwed over in CX when they spec something else.

#### Fairness is a voter because a) gateway issue- the judge needs to evaluate the better debater b) controls internal link to other voters

#### Drop the debater to deter future abuse, dta is incoherent

#### No RVIs 1) its illogical you don’t win by proving that you’re fair – logic is a litmus test for args 2) encourages theory baiting where good theory debaters bait the RVI to win 3) creates a chilling effect – aff is uniquely dangerous on theory because they get to read a long counterinterp in the 1ar and then get the 2ar collapse: negs would always be disincentives from reading theory which leads to infinite abuse

#### Use competing interps it creates a race to the top where we set the best norms

## 2

#### **A] Interp: If the neg reads both truth testing and theory arguments, they must specify which comes first in a delineated text in the 1AC doc.**

#### **B] Violation: they didn’t**

#### **C] Standards:**

#### **[1] strat skew: they can use either layer to take out the other which kills 1nc time allocation and means I can’t form a coherent strategy – 1NC strat outweighs on cyclicality since it determines the direction of both collapses. Saying I can weigh is nonsense since I will always lose to a spammy 1ar or an ethosy 2ar where they can collapse and win the weighing debate since they have2-1 speech advantage. Also controls the internal link to being able to engage in both layers because I don’t know how to, which means this shell comes prior. Using either off to take out 1nc theory just proves the abuse since I couldn’t have predicted either collapse. CX uniquely can’t solve for this shell- I’d have lost 6 min prepping and speccing in doc better because we tie them to it as opposed to a cx exchange that isn’t memorized.**

#### **Meta theory first – it indicts your ability to read the offs in the first place, which means it necessarily operates on a higher layer – anything else justifies infinite abuse.**

## 3

#### **Strikes are another means for the drive of recognition and power- these drives also give explanatory power for the material needs of the strike in the first place- only voting negative solves the root cause.**

Morris 59 Morris, Joel *The Psychoanalysis of Labor Strikes,* 10 LAB. L.J. 833 (1959)

This is an unusual treatment of strikes. It does not deal with wages, hours or working conditions but, rather, with the psychoanalytic interpretations of strikes, based upon the theories of Freud and Adler. Mr. Morris says that a strike is analogous to Freud's description of the rebellion of a son against the father figure; and, in line with Adler's teaching, he traces the cause of strikes to an overcompensation mechanism in which labor strives for power and recognition, which in turn foment difficulties for the individual in his work situation. DO ECONOMIC FACTORS cause strikes? Some psychoanalysts believe that economics (wages and hours) may trip off a strike, but that there are other underlying psychological factors that can pre-dispose labor to strike. These factors may include latent hostility toward parents, who can be represented by management and the capitalist. The strike may also reflect a reaction against cultural coercions of natural impulses, a reduction in group tension by displacement of group aggression, or labor's economic weapon to compensate for its social and economic inferiority. The strike can also be viewed as a means by which labor strives for power and recognition, identifies with the employer's managerial powers and shares in his wealth. The popular consensus is that labor strikes are called for economic reasons—that they reflect demands for higher wages, increased job security, job safety, fringe benefits and reduced hours. These may be valid reasons, but only represent economic causes for strikes. The psychoanalyst, whether or not he believes that economics causes strikes, is predisposed to view group behavior from a different orientation. ~~He~~[they] attempts to understand the group's personality and its underlying psychological motivations. The reason for group behavior may be apparent or hidden. Realizing that what meets the eye is not always reality, the psychoanalyst can view the economics of the situation as a symptom rather than a cause of strikes. The apparent economic cause thus becomes an overt manifestation of deeper, under-lying psychological motivations.

#### Ethics projects the desire of the subject onto the other and requires the other to conform to our ideal understanding of it for any possibility of universalism – that destroys their notion of the subject and creates violence on the level of symbolic representations.

Zevnik 16 Andreja Zevnik, University of Manchester, “KANT AVEC SADE: Ethics entrapped in perversions of law and politics,” from “Jacques Lacan: Between Psychoanalysis and Politics,” Edited by Samo Tomšič and Andreja Zevnik, 2016, Routledge, sjbe, rehighlighted LHP MS

From this introductory discussion one can extrapolate that the discourse of morality and ethics relies on illusions: that is the illusion of objective good actually existing and the illusion of it being a factor leading to a better more ethical life. If a subject acts as a moral subject towards its ‘neighbour’, that is a person who is at the receiving end of ‘ethical actions’, a life of a community can be considered as better and more ethical. As Alenka Zupancˇicˇ points out in her piece ‘The Subject of the Law’, the psychoanalytic intervention into the realm of ethics addresses this illusion of good as a factor of a better life.1 Psychoanalysis, so Zupancˇicˇ argues (1998) speaks of two disillusionments: the first is Freud’s and the second Lacan’s. However, the Lacanian one is of greater importance, as it reveals the truth about the Freud’s critique, as well as of Kant’s theory of ethics.2 Thus in terms of psychoanalysis we can speak of first a Freudian and then a Lacanian blow. The Freudian blow is directed at Kant and targets the idea that moral imperative is freed of pathological origins. Zupancˇicˇ (1998: 41) summarizes Freud’s objection in the following way: What philosophy calls the moral law and, more precisely, what Kant calls the categorical imperative is in fact nothing other but the superego. […] This judgement provokes an ‘effect of disenchantment’ that calls into doubt any endeavour to base ethics on foundations other than ‘pathological’. […] ethics is thus nothing more than a convenient tool for any ideology that tries to pass off its own commandments as authentic, spontaneous and honourable inclinations of the subject. The second Lacanian blow is aimed first at Freud and secondly at Kant. Lacan in his critique does not challenge Freud’s ideological or superegoical interpretations of ethics but focuses on what Freud (and Kant) considered as the cornerstone of ethical attitude.3 ‘Thy shall love your neighbour as thyself’ is commonly considered an ethical axiom par excellence. Yet Lacan is of a different opinion and sets out to critique it. First, Lacan in The Ethics of Psychoanalysis sees the above statement as a representation of traditional ethics, which is in ‘service of good’ and the sharing of good, but points out that the act of ‘sharing’ is different from ethics. The sharing of good comes ‘naturally’ or rather ‘it is in the nature of the good to be altruistic’, as he states (Lacan 1992: 186). And further, the good that is shared or acknowledged as an asset of a good life in a community is of a particular kind. It is, as Lacan (1992: 187) continues: ‘the good of others provided that it remains in the image of my own’. Thus the above statement paints a very closed picture of an ethical community. Love that is one to share with the neighbours is a type of love one considers as good, which in turn creates an ‘ethical act’ in an image of one’s good. Such a community is altruistic rather than ethical, and the good guiding it is not universal but that which the subject considers it as such. In turn it means that the other is a recipient of one’s good only for as long as it ascribes to the same value of good. Lacan thus highlighted that traditional ethics operates with highly individualized accounts of good. This realization bears great political significance. If good is always made in the image of the subject recognizing it then the good that is shared is likewise a reflection of the subject’s desires. Or to put it differently, the neighbour receives what the subject recognizes as in need. This point is very straightforward and easily translated in modern political discourse: think of human rights discourse in relation to postcolonial, ‘third-world’, or feminist struggles. The observations of the Western subjects (or international organizations) concerning the struggles for emancipation or human rights breaches taking place in so-called ‘underdeveloped’ countries follow that logic. We ‘judge’ others’ situation according to our expectations and knowledge. What it means to live a humane life and whether others live life worthy of a human being, whether others’ rights are violated, are all questions judged on our image of humanity, good life, or rights. This game between the desire and the image in which we judge what surrounds us is at the heart of the liberal conception of rights, duties, and morality. However, this play of desire reveals something else. Lacan said that one’s desire is always the desire of the Other (Lacan 1998). Thus the moment of tension occurs when the two desires are met in contradiction. That is when the Other does not correspond with the image we have of it. Who then is the Other we can tolerate? Zupancˇicˇ (1998) gives a modern example of the aforementioned moral imperative. Instead of asking to love your neighbour as yourself, the modern imperative, she states, calls for the recognition of the Other. No longer is there the need to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’, the modern age mantra is that the Other has the right to be different. ‘Admittedly’, as Zupancˇicˇ (1998: 43) writes: [T]his commandment does not require that we love this other, it is enough that we tolerate him/her. [… But] what happens if this other is really the Other, if his/her difference is not only ‘cultural’, ‘folkloric’ but a fundamental difference. Are we still to respect him/her, to love him/her? The answer to this question is rather obvious. The Other whom we should love and respect is the Other we are comfortable with, one, who is not too different and we can respect. The Other earns our respect, as Alain Badiou (2001: 24) writes, only when and if he is respecting the differences. ‘Just as there can be no freedom for the enemies of freedom, so there can be no respect for those whose difference consists precisely in not respecting differences’ (ibid.). This encounter with radical difference – or intolerance – is precisely the point at which ethics should be thought. That is, unlike the liberal discourse of ethics, which would have stopped when met with the impasse of intolerance, the psychoanalytic ethics advocated by Lacan begins precisely at the moment of intolerance or radical difference. Lacan would see this encounter as an encounter concerning our jouissance. By definition jouissance is in itself strange, other, and dissimilar; thus it is not the Other who makes it disruptive. But, as Zupancˇicˇ (1998: 43–44) puts it: ‘it is not simply the jouissance of the neighbour […] that is strange to me. The kernel of the problem is that I experience my own jouissance as strange, dissimilar, other and hostile’. In other words, it is my experience of something within me that I find hostile and that in turn I externalize and recognize it in the image of the Other (my neighbour). Hence psychoanalysis intervenes in the field of politics and ethics at the level of jouissance or the level which was more traditionally ascribed to evil. The psychoanalytic accounts thus consider ethical that which addresses the subject’s repressed material, and deals with moments in which it comes to the surface.

#### Language is fundamentally incomplete- there is always a gap in understanding and communicating needs. Subjectivity exists in the symbolic and is constituted by the existence within language and the immovable existence of the Lack, the inability to communicate needs due to the gap between signifiers and the signified. The Lack generates drives toward desires that we can never reach. Thus, the ROTB is to traverse the fantasy – that means exposing drives. Ruti 1

Ruti, Mari. “The Fall of Fantasies: A Lacanian Reading of Lack.” Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, vol. 56, no. 2, June 2008, pp. 483–508, doi:10.1177/0003065108319687. OL

One of Lacan’s greatest innovations was to connect the subject’s con- stitutive negativity to language—to collective structures of signification and meaning production—in ways that provide a pioneering hypothesis of why and how lack comes to motivate the subject’s behavior in the world. Lacan explains that the subject’s sense of lack results from the processes of language acquisition that socialize the human infant into cultural systems of meaning—what Lacan calls the symbolic order (or “the Other”). Lacan proposes that prior to language acquisition, the child is not yet fully capable of differentiating between herself and the people and objects that surround her. She consequently possesses neither an inner life nor a social awareness. For these to emerge—for the child to enter a fully human existence—she needs to undergo a course of separa- tion that teaches her to recognize herself as distinct from the world. Freud theorized this course of separation in terms of the oedipus complex as a mechanism that severs the child’s dependence on her surroundings by forcing her to confront the painful fact that certain objects—most notably the mother or the father—remain erotically forbidden. Lacan in turn emphasizes that it is by internalizing the significatory codes of the sociosymbolic world that the child becomes aware of cultural interdic- tions and comes to regard herself as a discrete entity. In Lacanian terms, the process of internalizing the codes of language brings the child’s psychic life into being, making her capable of produc- ing meaning. The same way as the oedipus complex transforms the child from a creature ruled by primordial drives to one who enacts desire in culturally intelligible ways, language acquisition inserts the child into the world of collective rules and regulations (the world of the symbolic Other). This process is necessary not only because it teaches the child to conduct herself as a social and intersubjective entity, but also because it gives rise to more complex and advanced levels of internal organization. But it can also be coercive in the sense that it initiates the child into nor- mative—and frequently quite unequal and repressive—collective struc- tures, punishing all attempts to deviate from what the cultural order deems right and proper. In other words, it carries the force of prohibition, giving the child her first bitter taste of wanting what she cannot have. As a consequence, it generates lack—the relentless sense of incompleteness that characterizes human existence—as the melancholy underside of social subjectivity. Although most psychoanalytic approaches recognize the child’s sep- aration from her caretakers and the surrounding world as a pivotal moment of subject formation, they do not necessarily see lack as an inevitable corollary of this moment. For many of them, the child emerges from the process of individuation feeling wounded or insecure only if something about this process goes awry—as, for instance, when the parents for one reason or another fail to fully facilitate the child’s transi- tion to social subjectivity. What makes Lacan distinctive—and what makes his theory disagreeable to some—is that he believes the child’s awareness of lack and longing to be inescapable; it is, in a sense, the price the child pays for being able to enter the social realm of meanings and values. The signifier, insofar as it carries cultural prohibition, forces the child to realize that she is not invincible, that she operates within a social world that is much more powerful than she could ever be, and that there are parts of that world that she does not have access to. In this fashion, the signifier dispels the child’s primordial impression of being at one with the world, causing an irreparable inner rift or division; the very develop- mental course that empowers the child to materialize as a psychically autonomous entity is also what makes her feel lacking and self-alienated. That is, while language initiates an indispensable process of character formation, it also causes a kind of symbolic castration. What is lost in this process—what drains into the void of being—is the subject’s fantasy of self-sufficiency. This unfortunate event, Lacan suggests, is what the subject spends the rest of her life working through.4 Language generates lack. Lack in turn generates desire. While it is common to assume that desire is what is most “natural” about our lives, Lacan reveals the exact opposite, namely, that desire is a product of cul- ture—a function of the ways in which the signifiers of the social order cut into the child’s biological constitution. Indeed, a great deal has been made of the fact that, in Lacanian terms, desire emerges through the mortification and subordination of the body and of its unmediated enjoyment. The signi- fier violates—mutilates and dismembers—the body as a “thing,” as a spon- taneous nexus of drives that struggles for viability and fullness of being beyond the symbolic system into which it is inserted. As Slavoj Zˇizˇek (1992) explains: “Word is murder of a thing, not only in the elementary sense of implying its absence—by naming a thing, we treat it as absent, as dead, although it is still present—but above all in the sense of its radical *dissection:* the word ‘quarters’ the thing . . .” (p. 51).5 The signifier thus carves out the body in specific ways in order to give rise to a particular form of subjectivity and desire. It is in this sense that the subject is vulner- able to what Lacan calls the “agency of the signifier.” The course of indi- viduation initiated by the signifier may be necessary for the subject’s ability to orient herself in the world, but it simultaneously colonizes the presym- bolic body in ways that evacuate the body of its enjoyment. Lacan hence underscores that it is only when the body’s immediate enjoyment is sacrificed to the signifier that subjectivity as a site of social energy and desire comes into being. This privileging of the “passion of the signifier” (Lacan 1966b, p. 578) over the passion of the body is undoubtedly problematic in light of the denigration of the body—and particularly of fem- ininity as what always carries the indelible trace of the body—that has char- acterized Western thought at least since Plato and Aristotle.6 Yet Lacan also presents a poignant insight into the nature of subjectivity when he suggests that it is insofar as the signifier causes the subject to desire that she is com- pelled to turn outward—that she is persuaded to care about the contours and unfolding of the surrounding world.7 After all, without desire, the subject would have little curiosity regarding the things, objects, and beings that inhabit and make up the world. In this sense, it is precisely the subject’s per- sistent awareness of being less than fully realized that allows her to approach the world as a space of possibility. That is, it is only insofar as the subject experiences herself as needing something from the world that she has a con- ception of the world as a place that can potentially meet her yearnings and that might accordingly have something valuable to offer. In this manner, lack gives rise to a self that is open to—and ravenous for—the world. Because the world is filled with marvelous objects that entice the subject’s desire—because the world, though certainly full of limitations and deprivations, is also brimming with possibilities—the subject is compelled to reach beyond her solipsistic universe; she is given the gift of attentiveness. This turning outward is, moreover, not limited to an encounter with already existing objects, but entails the strong aspiration to bring new objects into being. Precisely because the subject can never attain a state of wholeness, she is driven to look for substitutes that might compen- sate for her sense of lack; she is motivated to invent objects and figures of meaning that can, momentarily at least, ease and contain the discomfort of alienation. In this paradoxical sense, rather than robbing the subject of inner richness and vitality, lack is the underpinning of everything that is potentially innovative about human life. Indeed, it is possible to envision the intricate productions and fabrications of the human psyche as vehicles through which the foundational lack of existence assumes a positive and tangible form. This in turn suggests that the subject’s ability to dwell within lack without seek- ing to close it—her ability to tarry with the negative, to express the matter in Zˇ izˇ ekian/Hegelian terms—is indispensable for her psychic aliveness. As a matter of fact, such tarrying with the negative could be argued to be the great- est of human achievements, for it transforms the terrors and midnights of the spirit into symbolic formations, imaginative undertakings, and sites of deli- cate beauty that make the world the absorbing and spellbinding place that it—in its most auspicious moments, at least—can be. The subject’s repeated attempts to fill the void within her being thus give rise to a whole host of creative endeavors. Or in more Lacanian terms, because the subject can never repossess the blissful state of pleni- tude that she imagines having lost, because the subject cannot attain what Lacan calls the Thing—the primordial object that promises unmediated enjoyment—she is driven to look for surrogates that might compensate for her lack. As Lacan observes in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959– 1960), the Thing—which inevitably remains obscure and unattainable— can be brought to life only through a series of substitutes. “If the Thing were not fundamentally veiled,” Lacan explains, “we wouldn’t be in the kind of relationship to it that obliges us, as the whole of psychic life is obliged, to encircle it or bypass it in order to conceive it” (p. 118). Precisely because the Thing is irrevocably lost, because it cannot be res- urrected in any immediate form, the subject scurries from signifier to sig- nifier to embody it obliquely. Like a potter who creates a vase around emptiness, “creates it, just like the mythical creator, *ex nihilo*, starting with a hole” (p. 121), the subject fashions a signifier, or an elaborate string or sequence of signifiers, from the void of her being.8 Lacan emphasizes that emptiness and fullness—the void of the vase and the possibility of filling it—are introduced to the world simultaneously (p. 120). In short, it is because we lack that we are prompted to create, and it is through our creative activity that we manage, in an always nec- essarily precarious manner, to withstand our lack. On this view, the sig- nifier is not merely what mortifies the body, but also what empowers the subject to move to an existential space beyond mortification by granting her the gift of creativity. In this context, it is important to specify that the translation of lack into creativity is not a matter of dialectical redemption in the sense of giv- ing the subject the ability to turn negativity into a definitive form of posi- tivity. The subject’s attempts to name her lack are transient at best, giving her access to no permanent meaning, no solid identity, no unitary narra- tive of self-actualization. Any fleeting state of fullness or positivity that the subject may be able to attain must always in the end dissolve back into negativity; any endeavor to erase lack only gives rise to new instances of lack. This implies that the process of filling lack must of necessity be con- tinually renewed. It cannot be brought to an end for the simple reason that the subject can never forge an object or a representation that would once and for all seal this lack. However, far from being a hindrance to existen- tial vitality, this intrinsic impossibility—the fact that every attempt to redeem lack unavoidably falls short of its mark—is what allows us, over and again, to take up the endless process of signifying beauty. As Kaja Silverman (2000) advances, “Our capacity to signify beauty has no limits. It is born of a loss which can never be adequately named, and whose con- sequence is, quite simply, the human imperative to engage in a ceaseless signification. It is finally this never-ending symbolization that the world wants from us” (p. 146). Lacan’s rendering of the subject’s relationship to the signifier is there- fore complex in the sense that although he consistently accentuates the subject’s relative helplessness vis-à-vis the larger systems of signification that envelop her, he at the same time suggests that it is only by virtue of her membership in the symbolic order that the subject possesses the capacity to make meaning in the first place. The symbolic, in other words, is not merely (or even primarily) a hegemonic structure that coerces the subject into its law, but also—as I have endeavored to illustrate—the foundation of her creative potentialities.9 Lacan in fact insists that though the subject can never master the signifier—let alone the signified—she enjoys a certain degree of imaginative leeway with respect to it. He describes this imaginative leeway as the subject’s capacity to make use of the “poetic function” of language (1966b, p. 264)—the fact that language by definition perpetuates the radical slipperiness, multiplicity, and poly- valence of meaning. The same way that Heidegger (1971) connects cre- ativity to the individual’s ability to dwell in the world in poetic rather than merely instrumental ways, Lacan envisions creativity in terms of the subject’s capacity to take a poetic approach to the world—an approach that is content to play with meaning without attempting to arrest it in unequivocal or transparent definitions.

#### This causes a psychic repression of the subject. They destroy the possibility for politics, ethics, and the value of life and cause things like alienation – controls the internal link to all other impacts.

Ruti ‘14 [mari, English, Toronto, Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society (2014) 19, 297–314)]

On the other hand, Lacan – again like Marcuse – recognizes that the symbolic order is repressive beyond the demands of subject formation, that it includes forms of violence that exceed the ubiquitous violence of the signifier. Indeed, even the violence of the signifier is not equally distributed, so that some of us are much more vulnerable to its injurious effects than others (consider, for instance, hate speech). Lacan does not necessarily talk about the unequal distribution of resources in the manner Marcuse does, but there is no doubt that his analysis of symbolic law as the Law of the Father elucidates a historically specific, deeply heteropatriarchal and hierarchical organization of social life. In point of fact, one reason I have taken a detour through Marcuse is to illustrate the obvious ways in which Lacan’s portraiture of the symbolic mirrors that of Marcuse’s explicitly historical account: what Marcuse calls “the performance principle,” Lacan calls the “service of goods.” Both thinkers identify the underpinnings of a social order dominated by the ideal of productivity – an ideal that is, moreover, placed in direct opposition to the pleasure principle. Both emphasize that the dominant morality of this symbolic – what Lacan calls “the morality of the master” – measures the merit of lives based on largely pragmatic criteria. And both acknowledge that the model citizen of this symbolic is a subject who shows up at work reliably every morning, performs its duties with a degree of diligence, does not let its desires get the better of its productivity, and seeks satisfaction (“enjoys”) in moderate, socially sanctioned ways. “Part of the world has resolutely turned in the directions of the service of goods,” Lacan writes, “thereby rejecting everything that has to do with the relationship of man to desire” (318). This, he adds, “is what is known as the postrevolutionary perspective” (318). In other words, the service of goods reflects the mindset of the levelheaded utilitarian subject who has deemed revolutionary change to be unrealistic. Lacan is here referring to the kind of depoliticization that is arguably the hallmark of Western subjectivity under capitalism. Lacan’s point is by no means, as critics such as Butler have suggested, that a different kind of symbolic is intrinsically impossible but rather that the configuration of subjectivity that Western modernity has produced – a subjectivity that has been subjected to a particular form of surplus-repression (the performance principle, the service of goods) – makes it virtually impossible for us to entertain the idea that the symbolic could be organized differently, that it could be centered around a different version of the reality principle. As Marcuse remarks, one reason the performance principle is so powerful is that it has managed to convince us that all alternatives to it are either utopian or otherwise unpalatable. Yet, for Marcuse, the fact that this principle has been so successful also points to the possibility of transcending it. As he states, “The very progress of civilization under the performance principle has attained a level of productivity at which the social demands upon instinctual energy to be spent in alienated labor could be considerably reduced. Consequently, the continued repressive organization of the instincts seems to be necessitated less by the ‘struggle for existence’ than by the interest in prolonging this struggle – by the interest in domination” (pp. 129–130). This is to say that there is really nothing besides social power that keeps us invested in the notion that our welfare demands relentless toil. The performance principle has outlived its usefulness in the sense that our collective productivity these days surpasses what is necessary for the provision of food, clothing, housing, and other basic amenities. The fact that these amenities have not yet reached all corners of the world, or even all corners of our own society (the homeless, innercity dwellers, etc.), is a function of domination (the unequal distribution of resources) rather than of any deficiencies of productivity. As a result, in Marcuse’s view, all we would need to do to bring about a more “non-repressive civilization” (p. 134) would be to refuse the parameters of the current symbolic; even something as simple as reducing the length of the working day would immediately realign our priorities, perhaps even impacting the very organization of our psychic lives. Our standard of living might drop somewhat, but we might also learn to assess the value of our lives according to other, less performance-oriented, measurements. Psychoanalysis, particularly Lacanian analysis, does not have a normative goal; it does not seek to tell us how we should desire but merely to explore the idiosyncratic contours of our desire. But this does not change the fact that Lacan, at least as a theorist, was exasperated by people’s inability to make their way out of the maze of the master’s morality, including its performance principle; he was frustrated by individuals who were so out of touch with the truth of their desire that they were willing to sacrifice this desire for the sake of social conformity and that they were, furthermore, willing to do so to the point of self-betrayal. As he explains, “What I call ‘giving ground relative to one’s desire’ is always accompanied in the destiny of the subject by some betrayal – you will observe it in every case and should note its importance. Either the subject betrays his own way, betrays himself, and the result is significant for him, or, more simply, he tolerates the fact that someone with whom he has more or less vowed to do something betrays his hope and doesn’t do for him what their pact entailed” (p. 321). Such a betrayal invariably results in the reassertion of the status quo, sending the subject back to the service of goods, what Lacan in this context calls “the common path” (p. 321). And given that desire, for Lacan, is “the metonymy of our being” (p. 321), betraying it in this way leads to the kind of psychic death that extinguishes the subject’s sense of agency. To use Lacan’s wording, “Doing things in the name of the good, and even more in the name of the good of the other, is something that is far from protecting us not only from guilt but also from all kinds of inner catastrophes” (p. 319). It is precisely such inner catastrophes that Lacanian clinical practice was designed to counter, though it may be Julia Kristeva – rather than Lacan himself – who has most clearly developed this interpretation of analytic work. Kristeva depicts psychoanalysis as a means of restoring the subject’s psychic aliveness, as an explicit revolt against the numbing impact of what she calls “the society of the spectacle” (2002, p. 4). This society of the spectacle – of technology, image, and speed – shares many parallels with Adorno’s “culture industry”: a flattened surface of the life world, a constriction of psychic space, a death of critical thought, the worship of efficiency over intellectual curiosity, and the incapacity to revolt. Against this backdrop, psychoanalysis – along with art, writing, and some forms of religious experience – offers, for Kristeva, a gateway to revolt, a way of resurrecting “the life of the mind” (a phrase Kristeva borrows from Hannah Arendt) through ongoing questioning, interrogation, and psychic recreation. “Freud founded psychoanalysis as an invitation to anamnesis in the goal of a rebirth, that is, a psychical restructuring,” Kristeva writes: “Through a narrative of free association and in the regenerative revolt against the old law (familial taboos, superego, ideals, oedipal or narcissistic limits, etc.) comes the singular autonomy of each, as well as a renewed link with the other” (2002, p. 8). In the context of my overall argument in this essay, it is worth stressing that it is “the desire of the subject” that, in Kristeva’s view, reserves a place “for initiative, autonomy” (2002, p. 11). This is in part because the “Freudian journey into the night of desire was followed by attention to the capacity to think: never one without the other” (2010, p. 41). In other words, the exploration of desire, in psychoanalysis, is akin to the critical (or at least curious) movement of thought – the very movement that Arendt also saw as vital to the life of the mind. This is why psychoanalysis has, Kristeva asserts, “the (unique?) privilege today of accompanying the emergence of new capacities of thinking/representing/thinking, beyond the frequent and increasingly noticeable disasters of psychosomatic space – capacities that are so many new bodies and new lives” (2010, pp. 41–42). Kristeva therefore draws the same link between desire and autonomy (in this instance, the capacity for critical thought) as Lacan does. Furthermore, to translate Kristeva’s point into Marcuse’s terminology, one might say that psychoanalysis, at least the kind of analysis that refuses to uphold social adaptation as a therapeutic goal, presents the possibility of sidestepping, or at the very least diminishing, the effects of surplus-repression. This, in turn, creates space for the truth of the subject’s desire in the Lacanian sense. This does not mean that repression as such is defeated. Quite the contrary, as we will see shortly, the truth of the subject’s desire is inextricable from the primary (constitutive) repression that accompanies subject formation. But as I have already suggested, the lifting of surplus-repression renders the imprint of primary repression more clearly discernable, for when surplus-repression is removed, what remains are the always highly singular outlines of primary repression. And if Lacan – like Marcuse – sought to remove surplus-repression, it was because he understood that it was on the level of primary repression (fundamental fantasies) that one could find the most basic building blocks of the subject’s psychic destiny; primary repression was the layer of psychic life that expressed something essential about the distinctive ways in which the pleasure principle, in the subject’s life, had become bound up with the repetition compulsion. This is why Lacan states, “If analysis has a meaning, desire is nothing other than that which supports an unconscious theme, the very articulation of that which roots us in a particular destiny, and that destiny demands insistently that the debt be paid, and desire keeps coming back, keeps returning, and situates us once again in a given track, the track of something that is specifically our business” (p. 319).According to Lacan, analysis aims to enable us to understand something about the eccentric specificity (or truth) of our most fundamental desire as well as about the track of destiny that this desire carves out for us (and that is therefore “specifically our business”). If it is indeed the case, as I have conceded, that most of us tend to be alienated from our desire, Lacanian analysis strives to undo this alienation by familiarizing us with the truth of this desire. This process entails, among other things, recognizing that the destiny we owe to this desire can never be definitively overcome, that the debt of desire can never be fully redeemed (for how are we to compensate the signifier for having brought us into being as subjects of desire?). Our destiny – which might initially coincide quite seamlessly with our repetition compulsion – consists of recurring efforts to pay off this debt, which is why it keeps ushering us to the same track of desire, the same nexus of psychic conundrums, our unconscious hope being that if we wear out the track of our desire by incessant reiteration, one day we might be able to absolve ourselves of our debt. But since we cannot, the only thing to be done is to “own” our destiny even as we might seek to mitigate its more painful dimensions. That is, the only way to arrive at the kind of psychic rebirth Kristeva is talking about is to take full responsibility for our (unconsciously generated) destiny. In the ethical act, our impulse is to embrace this destiny wholesale regardless of consequences (this is one way to understand what it means to plunge into the jouissance of the real). In analysis, the exploration of our destiny is more gradual, more self-reflexive. But in both cases, the point is not to obliterate our foundational destiny (or fundamental fantasies) but merely to elaborate it in more satisfying directions, away from the incapacitating effects of the repetition compulsion and toward the rewards of subjective autonomy. And, if we are to achieve this goal, nothing is more important than staying faithful to the truth of desire that, on the most elementary level, determines our destiny.

#### The alternative is to embrace the Lack. Instead of lying and painting fantasies of creating a whole subject, we must accept our status as in a state of perpetual lacking. Acknowledge its existence in order to understand how it affects our actions is a prerequisite to action. All perms are incoherent because it’s a sequencing question, since if we don’t first embrace the lack, all attempt to fill the lack fail. Ruti 2

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Let us consider Lacan first.1 As we know, Lacan’s theory of subject formation is premised on the notion of foundational lack or alienation. The transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic—from preoedipal drives to the collective social space of signification and meaning production—is, for Lacan, a process of primordial wounding in the sense that the subject is gradually brought face to face with its own lack. While the internalization of the signifier brings the subject into existence as a creature of desire (thereby giving it access to a fully “human” existence), it simultaneously reveals that the surrounding world is much larger and more powerful than any individual subject could ever be—that the self is always merely a minor participant in a system of signification that operates quite independently of its “private” passions and preoccupations. In this manner, the signifier shatters the fantasies of omnipotence and wholeness that characterize the emerging ego of the mirror stage. One could, then, say that, in the Lacanian scenario, we purchase our social subjectivity at the price of narcissistic injury in the sense that we become culturally intelligible beings only insofar as we learn to love ourselves a bit less. It is worth noting right away that one of the things that drives a wedge between Lacan and Winnicott is that while Winnicott regards the ego as what allows the subject to enter into an increasingly complex relationship to the world, Lacan associates it primarily with narcissistic and overconfident fan- tasies that lend an illusory consistency to the subject’s psychic life. Lacan explains that the subject’s realization that it is not synonymous with the world, but rather a frail and faltering creature that needs continuously to negotiate its position in the world, introduces an apprehensive state of want and restless- ness that it finds difficult to tolerate and that it consequently endeavors to cover over by fantasy formations. In other words, because lack is devastating to admit to—because the subject experiences it as a debilitating wound—it is disposed to seek solace in fantasies that allow it to mask and ignore the reality of this lack. Such fantasies alleviate anxiety and fend off the threat of fragmentation because they enable the subject to consider itself as more unified and complete than it actually is; by concealing the traumatic split, tear, or rift within the subject’s psychic life, they render its identity (seemingly) reli- able and immediately readable. As a result, they all too easily lead the subject to believe that it can come to know itself in a definitive fashion, thereby preventing it from recognizing that “knowing” one version of itself may well function as a defense against other, perhaps less reassuring, versions. One consequence of the subject’s dependence on such ego- gratifying fantasies is that they mislead it to seek self-fulfillment through the famous *objet petit a*—the object cause of desire that the subject believes will return to it the precious sense of whole- ness that it imagines having lost.2 In this scenario, the subject searches for meaning outside of itself, in an object of desire that seems to contain the enigmatic *objet a*. Lacan’s goal, in this context, is to enable the subject to perceive that this fantasmatic quest for secure foundations is a waste of its psychic energies. His aim is to convince the subject that the *objet a* will never give it the meaning of its existence, but will, instead, lead it down an ever-widening spiral of existential deadends. How, then, does the Lacanian subject find meaning in its life? Lacan’s answer is that it is only by accepting lack as a precondition of its existence—by welcoming and embracing the primordial wound inflicted by the signifier—that the subject can begin to weave the threads of its life into an existentially evocative tapestry. It is, in other words, only by exchanging its ego for language, its narcissistic fantasies for the meaning mak- ing capacities of the signifier, that the subject can begin to ask constructive questions about its life.3 For Lacan, there are of course no definitive answers to these questions. But this does not lessen the value of being able to ask them. The fact that there is no stable truth of being does not prevent the subject from actively and imaginatively participating in the production of meaning. Lacan implies that it is precisely because the subject can never attain the truth of its being—because it can never achieve a state of transparent wholeness—that it is driven to look for substitutes that might compensate for its sense of lack; it is motivated to invent figures of meaning that can, momentarily at least, ease and contain the discomfort of alienation. In this paradoxical sense, rather than robbing the subject of its in- ner richness, lack is the underpinning of everything that is potentially innovative about human life.4 Indeed, it is possible to envision the intricate productions and fabrications of the human psyche as vehicles through which the foundational lack of existence assumes a positive and tangible form. This in turn suggests that the subject’s ability to dwell within lack without seeking to close it is indispensable for its psychic vitality. As a matter of fact, such dwelling within lack could be argued to be the greatest of human achievements, for it transforms the terrors and midnights of the spirit into symbolic formations, imaginative undertakings, and sites of delicate beauty that make the world the absorbing and spellbinding place that it—in its most auspicious moments at least—can be. It is thus because the subject lacks that it is prompted to create, and it is through its creative activity that it manages, in an always necessarily precarious manner, to withstand its lack. In this context, it is important to specify that the translation of lack into creativity is not a matter of dialectical redemption in the sense of giving the subject the ability to turn negativity into a definitive form of positivity. The subject’s attempts to name its lack are transient at best, giving it access to no permanent meaning, no solid identity, no unitary narrative of subjective constitution. Any fleeting state of fullness or positivity that the subject may be able to attain must always in the end dissolve back into negativity; any endeavor to erase lack only gives rise to new instances of lack. This implies that the process of filling lack must by necessity be continually renewed. It cannot be brought to an end for the simple reason that the subject can never forge an object or a representation that would once and for all seal this lack. However, far from being a hindrance to existential vitality, this intrinsic impossibility—the fact that every attempt to redeem lack unavoidably falls short of its mark—is what allows us, over and again, to take up the endless process of signification. From this point of view, lack serves as a fertile kind of emptiness that keeps our subjectivities mobile. Lacan’s rendering of the subject’s relation to the signifier is therefore complex in the sense that although he consistently accentuates the subject’s relative helplessness vis-à-vis the larger systems of signification that envelop it, he at the same time sug- gests that it is only by virtue of its membership in the Symbolic order that the subject possesses the capacity to make meaning in the first place. The Symbolic, in other words, is not merely (or even primarily) a hegemonic structure that coerces the subject into its law, but also—as I have endeavored to illustrate—the foundation of its creative potentialities. *Lacan in fact insists that though the subject can never master the signifier—let alone the signified—it enjoys a certain degree of imaginative leeway with respect to the signifier. He describes this imagina- tive leeway as the subject’s capacity to make use of the “poetic function” of language (1953, 264)—the fact that language by definition perpetuates the radical slipperiness, multiplicity, and polyvalence of meaning*. In the same way that Heidegger (1971) connects creativity to the individual’s ability to dwell in the world in poetic rather than merely instrumental ways, Lacan envisions creativity in terms of the subject’s capacity to take a poetic approach to the world—an approach that is content to play with meaning without attempting to arrest it in unequivocal or transparent definitions. The fact that (the early) Lacan views the subject’s main existential task to be to come to terms with its lack explains in part why he tends to be so brutally dismissive of ego psychol- ogy. If Lacan criticizes the attempts of ego psychologists to shore up the subject’s ego, it is because he believes that they have gotten things entirely backwards: instead of helping the subject accept lack as constitutive of subjectivity, they intensify its existential confusion by reinforcing its narcissistic fanta- sies. Lacan contends that such an approach is fundamentally flawed in the sense that it hastens to close prematurely the void within the subject’s being rather than to foster the psychic and creative possibilities that arise from its capacity to experience this void. It promises the end of alienation instead of teach- ing the subject to live resourcefully with this alienation. Such a promise, Lacan suggests, is always deceptive and hollow, in the final analysis leaving the subject worse off than before. The “solution” that ego psychology offers to the subject’s sense of lack is therefore, for Lacan, merely the highest manifestation of the problem. It impedes, rather than advances, the subject’s potential for creative living.