

Other Others: further remarks on transferential materialism

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1. A question concerning transference

I would like to begin with a concrete example which might help to introduce us to a rather unexplored domain of psychoanalytic theory and to Robert Pfaller's important contribution to its development.

The Testimony Clinic – "Clínica do Testemunho" – is a clinical apparatus created in Brazil, under guidance of the Amnesty Commission, with the aim of providing psychic aid to victims of State violence¹. Originally developed as a recourse to deal with the subjective effects of the civil-military dictatorship which lasted for 21 years, it was later expanded to also address the problem of State violence as it perpetuates itself within the democratic regime, especially through the State's interventions – and lack thereof – in the slums and peripheries of the country².

Three interconnected aspects of this project are worth mentioning here. First of all, the Testimony Clinic, as its name already attests to, seeks to explore the possible clinical responses to situations of *socio-historic catastrophe*. The qualifier is warranted, because the very notion

of "testimony" has been introduced into theoretical consideration in the last fifty years as a way to describe the predicament of those who underwent a particular sort of traumatic experience: traumas which pierce through not only the fabric of the individual's symbolic universe, but of the social space out of which that particular symbolic texture is woven. In other words, what is at stake in these situations is not only the difficulty of finding and constructing the signifiers which might symbolically allow for the subject to speak of what has taken place, but also the difficulty of having these signifiers recognized as "significant"³ to begin with.

The question of the witnessing of war atrocities and police brutality is not only the question of the elaboration of the trauma by the subject, but above all the question of the paradoxical condition through which the very possibility of speaking about what has taken place contradicts and empties out the legitimacy of what is being stated - one has witnessed something which is deemed impossible to exist, therefore if there is a witness, nothing has been witnessed⁴. This paradox, however, is not the same as the intrinsic contradiction between the position of enunciation and of the enunciated, central to psychoanalytic theory: it is not a matter of recognizing that "the fact of saying disappears under what is heard in what is said", to paraphrase Lacan, but rather that *the fact of saying is all that is heard from what is said*. One might work through a traumatic experience, find a way to transmit it to others – and yet, nothing gets passed on, as the very process of transmission which makes it commensurable with other signifiers also makes it incommensurable with what is being signified. One can only *testify* to it, to make oneself a witness, but not signify, making oneself a subject, of what took place.

Even though most discussions around this clinical apparatus seem to revolve around the category of the subject – with Lacanian psychoanalysts questioning with suspicion the elaboration of a setting which defines beforehand a determinate region of experience as the site for clinical intervention - the essential impasse of the Testimony Clinic seems to lie elsewhere, in the figure of the Other. As I briefly mentioned, the paradox of the testimony is somewhat distinct from the contradictory

nature of signification: it concerns a suffering that is not caused by one's indelible estrangement from what is said – I say or do something, but it means something other than what I thought it did – it is not a matter of the dialectics in which speech, once deposited or inscribed in the Other, becomes other to me, but rather a suffering connected to the impossibility of inscribing speech into this shared symbolic space without this very act preventing - rather than promoting - the implication of the subject's position in the autonomy of what is said. A witness is someone who cannot become other to themselves through speech, they are rather other *to* their speech. This is why the debate about the subject, albeit relevant, misses the crucial point: without a previous inscription in the Other of *the possibility of certain impossible experiences*, there might be no symbolic space for such a trauma to possibly inscribe itself, not even as the signifier of an impossible signification. What is at stake in the public affirmation that the Testimony Clinic deals with State violence is therefore not a countertransferential strategy which imbues speech with meanings extracted from the analyst's own desire, but rather the process of *shaping the Other* to render it commensurate or homogeneous to the particular quality of social traumas.

But this raises an interesting and quite unexplored question: what is then the effect of funding this project through the State? That is, what are the effects for the transferential setting of analysts presenting themselves before patients as representatives of the State? This enquiry is relevant not only in the case of the Testimony Clinic, but also of other sites of psychoanalytic intervention in Brazil, as most of the popular access to analysis or analytic-inspired treatments in the country is subsidized by the government. But in this particular case, the question is quite central to the very idea of the project, as the presence of the State as a backdrop to the clinical setting participates in the institutional recognition of the existence of this form of suffering. Still, if it contributes to *inform* the otherness of the clinical setting – connecting the "small other" of the analyst to a "big Other" who knows that the dictatorship did include the (not so) secret horrors of torture, kidnaps and missing persons - it also adds a new sort of dynamic to that space: for example, could one trust an analyst who has been paid by the State to listen to the

crimes of that same State? It is not a matter of settling this question, but of realizing that it makes the subject's relation to an otherwise abstract and intangible agency concrete and *interpretable*.

But what does this mean for the concept of the Other? How can there be different symbolic spaces in which speech and experience are made significant in different ways? This is a question which neither Freud nor Lacan directly addressed, and we will return to it later on. For now, it is worth noting that once we realize that the border between the insignificant and the significant can be shifted not only by a change in the subject's position, but also by the institutional context of the clinical space, we can then return to the classical, private clinical setting and inquire about its own institutional contribution to the settling of this border. What might be relegated to insignificance not due to vacillations in the desire of the analyst, but by the logistical and institutional commitments required for a private clinic to exist? After all, many people who seek the Testimony Clinic had their own private analysts before and during this parallel treatment, but some of them only go through the process of working through the experience of the dictatorship when their speech within the clinical setting organized by the latter⁶.

Similar experiences – albeit with significant differences worth exploring in their own right – can be found in various clinical projects in which the listening of suffering is informed by a previous commitment to the existence of some dimension of social and private life which defines a common symbolic inscription. To mention a few, all of them happening in Brazil: the *Refugees of Belo Monte* project, which sought to provide psychic aid to the families which lost their homes in the Mariana disaster – here, in fact, the population did not recognize the legitimacy of the project while they did not sever their ties with State funding – the *Oficina Acadêmica*, which focuses on the effects on the youth of having been granted increasing formal access to the university without the material basis to allow for the same academic experience as other students - a project which struggles to remain a para-academic address, as it focuses on the experience of those who do not fully "belong" in academia - and the *Circle of Studies of Idea and Ideology*, which offers a

place for militants who are mourning the end of the previous sequence of Leftist politics in Brazil – and which constantly struggles with defining its place, neither outside nor itself political practice. In all of these cases, there is not so much a singling out of *who* should access or make use of these spaces, but rather the effort of constituting an Other commensurate with the impossible experiences of social catastrophes, failed social expectations and political utopias.

We will return later on to the political import of this investigation, but what this preamble already helps us to pinpoint is a certain relation between the structure of the otherness at stake in different traumas and fantasies and the structure of otherness which, shaping the clinic, can - as per Lacan's famous definition of transference - make actual the reality of the unconscious⁷.

2. The theory of formal otherness

I have previously tried to address this formal articulation between impossible objects and the transferential setting in a text called *Transferential Materialism* (Hamza & Ruda, 2015), which explored the ontological commitments of Freud's theory of transference, showing that the materialism at stake not in the Freudian theory, but the analytic technique, answers through artificial means to the principle that "something that is formally other-to-thought can only be thought by another of a certain form" (2015: 145). This was a first attempt to theoretically highlight a principle of "ontological homogeneity" which conditions which sort of social relation might serve as a effective model for some phantasmatic scene: traumas which concern the subject as an object of desire for her father, as in the case of Dora, have the "shape" of a dual setting in which the personhood of the analyst is enough for it to be transitive with the otherness of this impossible love encounter - even though Dora cannot think the object she is for the Other without ceasing to be that object, through the otherness of the analyst this thought can be "dramatized" and indirectly enjoyed *in situ*. One cannot intervene upon someone's libidinal attachments *in effigie*.

Lacan famously developed the concept of the "subject supposed to know" to account for the inner-structure of transference in the analytic clinic, the process through which there comes to be a "knowledge that only delivers itself to the mistaking of the subject" (Lacan, 2001: 335). The concept of the subject supposed to know helps us to grasp the dynamics of transference and the role of the analyst in the production of knowledge without the need to assume that the analyst knows anything about what is "truly" going on with the analysand – that is, it highlights the purely *formal* role of his position in the circuit of speech in analysis.

Even though this was not Lacan's own approach to the matter, the clearest way to locate the function of the subject supposed to know in analysis is to consider it as a consequence of the paradoxical status of psychoanalysis' "golden rule", the rule of free association. What does it mean to speak under the rule that one should say "whatever comes to mind"? On the one hand, this rule seeks to suspend any extrinsic normative commitments: there is no one topic, situation or crazy thought which is by default excluded from pertinence. On the other, the rule to follow no extrinsic rules in the choice of what to say creates an impossible situation: whatever regularities appear in speech now can no longer be explained away by an explicit pact to keep to that topic, or to preserve some level of politeness or morality – one is implicated in the rules that end up being followed in analysis: even the strategy of doing "exactly" what the free association rule asks us to do, to speak about anything, attaches itself to the speaker as something which implicates her in what it said. In other words, the rule of free association suspends extrinsic constraints in order to make intrinsic constraints legible, that is, it makes speech *interpretable*. If the patient speaks in an almost aleatory form, or speaks about past traumas, or avoids saying certain things or repeats a certain expression in vastly different contexts – all of this becomes *significant*, that is, it all points to the subject of enunciation that disappears under the implicit normativity guiding what is being said.

The concept of the subject supposed to know makes intelligible the role of the analyst in all of this - this is the concept which accounts for

how the inherent otherness of these constraints in speech can appear to the speaker by taking the form of a constraint that is *other to* the speaker. To use a simplified example, when faced with the impossible rule to freely associate, one might suppose that, underneath that vague injunction, the analyst *really* wants to hear about our sexual history, and therefore start describing our sexual encounters or preferences. The supposition of what the analyst knows - that some hidden meaning is locked in the sphere of sexuality - becomes the means through which the normativity we are following for no extrinsic reason can make itself legible. The very mistaking of the subject - which many times appears as an attempt to avoid "duping" the analyst, to speak what is "truly" important - is what effectively produces the knowledge which can then be returned to the subject in an inverted form: the only sovereign of this rule is the subject herself, no one asked of her to speak of sex - and, more importantly, to speak of it in the way she did. The subject supposed to know, as the instance mobilized by the speaker as a mediator between speech and the intrinsic rules of speech, participates in the dialectics that produces some information about the speaker - not about the external referents of what has been said, but about the constraints which shaped this signification process: knowledge not about what speech refers to as having taken place, but about what is taking place while we speak in the clinic. In this way, Lacan can simultaneously demonstrate the necessity of the analyst in the clinical setting - a position without which this mistaking would never take place - without this implying that the analyst should try to read into what is being said by the analysand: the mistaking *is* the source of the knowledge about the subject of that speech, a knowledge that is constituted *by* speaking, rather than communicated through it.

The concept of the subject supposed to know therefore highlights the empty but necessary role of the analyst in mediating the passage from an otherness within speech to an Other to the speaker. It does so by highlighting the way the analyst helps to shape the space of free association, adding a sort of "ideal point" into this space, a point of obscurity regarding what is being heard, which turns any trajectory of signification into an attempt to signify the desire of one's interlocutor. This

is why analytic interpretation is a second-order intervention: the effort of making sense of an impossibility actually falls upon the analysand - everything said in analysis acquires this hermeneutic quality due to the free association rule - and the analyst rather intervenes to display the intrinsic constraints of this signification process, to question the "meaning of meaning" in the analysand's speech.

What is usually not mentioned here, though, is that Lacan's formal treatment of the subject supposed to know allows us to see how transference comes to acquire the same form as that of love. In Freud's *The Dynamic of Transference* (1912), the reason why transference in analysis has the structure of an idealized love relationship - where one seeks to find out what sort of object of desire one is for the Other - is explained genetically: transference takes this form of suppositions and love attachments to the analyst because our libidinal history is only composed of such relationships and therefore this is what emerges back when we suspend other constraints. But with Lacan's formal treatment of the structure of transference no metapsychological commitment to the general form of fantasy is needed: if transference is conditioned by the formal structure of the setting, then we can accept the thesis that analysis is capable of intervening upon the phantasmatic suppositions which emerge under these conditions without supposing that every fantasy can acquire actuality through this clinical setting. A dual setting, in which the private person of the analyst "absorbs" the obscure effects of the rule of free association by making oneself its guarantor, is commensurate with a circuit that expresses "love type relations", because otherness in love splits the loved one in this same way - between their private being and their intimate, unfathomable kernel. To render the otherness of love thinkable, we require an other that could be loved.

Slavoj Žižek's theory of the "subject supposed to believe" was a crucial contribution to the development of this implicit consequence of Lacan's theory of transference. The concept was introduced by Žižek in the context of understanding the underlying transferential operation at stake in commodity fetishism:

Beneath the apparently humanist-ideological opposition of "human beings" and "things", there lurks another, much more productive notion, which is that of the mystery of substitution and/or displacement: how is it ontologically possible that the innermost "relations between people" can be displaced onto (or replaced by) "relations between things"? In other words, is it not a basic feature of the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism that "things believe instead of us, in place of us"? The point worth repeating again and again is that, in Marx's notion of fetishism, the fetishist inversion lies not in what people think they are doing, but in their social activity itself⁸

The crucial strategy here is that Žižek recognizes that commodity fetishism brings into play the same "mystery of substitution" that psychoanalytic transference does, but without assuming an ontology which only allows - like in the case of the analytic setting - for "relations between people" to be displaced onto new relations between people. The enigma of how relations between people can be displaced onto relations between *things* therefore invites analytic consideration, but rejects the ontological limitations imposed by the form of transference theorized by Freud and Lacan. On the one hand, Žižek maintains that this displacement, like in the case of transference, is not the posterior displacement onto others of something we previously knew or directly assumed - like in transference, the mistaking participates in the constitution of the phenomena under consideration, as "there is no immediate, self-present living subjectivity to whom the belief embodied in "social things" can be attributed and who is then dispossessed of it".

However, if commodity fetishism does make use of a supposition onto others that is not merely derivative, but constitutive, Žižek nonetheless affirms that this process is essentially distinct from that of clinical transference:

The two notions, that of the subject supposed to believe and that of the subject supposed to know, are not symmetrical because

belief and knowledge themselves are not symmetrical. At its most radical, the status of the (Lacanian) big Other qua symbolic institution is that of belief (trust), not that of knowledge, since belief is symbolic and knowledge is real (the big Other involves, and relies on a fundamental "trust").³ Belief is always minimally "reflective", a "belief in the belief of the other" ("I still believe in Communism" is the equivalent of saying "I believe there are still people who believe in Communism"), while knowledge is precisely not knowledge about the fact that there is another who knows. For this reason, I can BELIEVE through the other, but I cannot KNOW through the other. That is to say, owing to the inherent reflectivity of belief, when another believes in my place, I myself believe through him, but knowledge is not reflective in the same way: when the other is supposed to know, I do not know through him.⁹

Žižek makes two crucial distinctions here. The first concerns the difference in terms of reflexivity: when we suppose someone else holds a belief, this displacement still carries some transitive value - something of the displaced belief remains operative for us, even though we only "believe the other believes", as supposing and believing are ultimately the same activity - while the same is not true for knowledge, as supposing the other knows does not entail that we have any access to that knowledge: it does not constitute a knowledge about the other's knowledge. This difference is of capital importance if we keep in mind the discussion concerning the commensurability between, for example, love attachments and the form of otherness in analytic transference. We suggested that the fantasies which are actualized in the clinical space have the form of an interrogation of the Other's desire not because this is the structure of *a//*fantasies, but because this is the "shape" of the Other in the private clinical space - that is, the intransitive structure of knowledge, where supposing a knowledge is not knowing it ourselves, participates in the process of turning the otherness of desire, this unknowable, into the supposition of another's knowledge and then, through interpretation, into a knowledge about the lack of knowledge. The structure of belief, on the other hand, informs a different space of displacements: the fact that a belief supposed in the other *does not need*

to be ever directly assumed in order to become what it is allows the substitution process to involve *passive* others - for example, by displacing beliefs onto objects - as well as to involve positions which are incommensurate not only with our individual identifications, as in the case of the libidinal unconscious, but incommensurate with individuality *as such*.

Such is, in fact, the precise status of the belief displaced onto commodity fetishism: the social contract between commodities, through which all commodities abdicate the right to function as the "relative form" of value in the name of one single representative, the money-form, is objectively more vast in scope than any social contract binding a given community, as money circulates across the boundaries of different symbolic spaces, languages and value-systems¹⁰. No individual can vouch for this sovereign pact, not because we pretend like we do not, but because this belief in the sovereign status of the money-form is *indifferent* to the scale of individual decisions. It is a belief that would not be the belief that it is were it to be directly assumed - the exchange of money for commodities is not guaranteed by the fact that the actors involved in the exchange believe in money as a general equivalent, but on our belief that *others, no matter in which shared system of value, take it to function as such*. To displace the relation between (millions of) people to the relation between (two) things is thus formally commensurate with the otherness of the belief: there is an underlying homogeneity which makes use of the transitive status of the structure of belief so that, in believing others believe in the social contract binding the "equivalent" and "relative" sides of the form of value, *I am closer to the actual belief I have than if I were to directly assume it*.

This leads us to the second important distinction between the subject supposed to know and the subject supposed to believe, the fact that Žižek takes the phantasmatic structure of displaced beliefs to be the general case, while the supposition of knowledge is the special one. For Žižek, the operator of a subject supposed to know is "not the standard, but the exception, and that it gains its value in contrast to the subject supposed to believe as the standard feature of the symbolic order". In

fact, when we accept the previous hypothesis that clinical transference renders actual only the fantasies commensurate with the private relation between analysand and analyst, it is not hard to see that this form is essentially commensurate with personal and familial relations, which, in our contemporary social world form a subclass of the social relations we are actually engaged in. The reason why other unconscious relations are not expressed in the analytic clinic - except "in effigie", that is, as *signifieds* - is because the clinic is structured in such a way as to only render actual those relations in which otherness is "informed" by the impersonal dimension of personality itself.

3. Pfaller, a transferential materialist

Robert Pfaller is not only an important contributor in the development of Žižek's theory of the subject supposed to believe, but has himself taken this theory much further by systematizing the class of phenomena he calls the "illusions without owners" and the general structure of "interpassivity" which underlies our relation to them. In this section, I would like to reconstruct some of the central claims of his brilliant book *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions without Owners* (2014), which both consolidates and extends the reach of some of the insights discussed thus far.

Pfaller defines the object of his enquiry by its particular properties: "we are dealing with illusions that (1) seem to have no bearer; (2) are not dismissed by knowing better, but instead seem to be strengthened by it; (3) exert themselves in the form of a compulsion, albeit foreign and kept at a distance through knowledge; (4) often remain unnoticed; and (5) appear to be without content" (2014: 5). He is quick to highlight that these properties "are based on a difference in the forms of illusion rather than a difference in their content: it is a distinction based on the relationship between subject and illusion, on the different ways in which people refer to these illusions" (1). As Pfaller remarks, while there are illusions which participate in the economy of the subject's identity and enjoyment - illusions which are proudly and directly assumed as if they were true, like a belief in God or in self-regulating markets, etc - there are also illusions

which only appear at a distance from the subject, which have practical but no subjective inscription in our lives. We would never say "I know it's silly, but I believe in free markets" - such a belief requires, in our society, to be assumed in first person, under the guise of some ethical or moral stance - but this is precisely the way we express our relationship with other equally illusory instances: we "know better", we "know it's stupid" but still we believe in the horoscope, scream at malfunctioning machines, feel a sense of accomplished duty just by downloading digital copies of books, etc. We also "know better" than to think a piece of paper is in itself a form of wealth, but it is still money that we put under our mattresses when we fear for our savings in a time of crisis. What is remarkable in these cases is that this distance introduced by knowledge does not lead us, for example, to stop talking to a car that doesn't start, but rather guarantees the efficacy of this underlying belief - it prevents us from ever finding a situation which could unsettle this belief, as it was unsettled and de-legitimized from the very beginning.

Pfaller, like Žižek, is well-aware that this theory of the form of illusions keeps a paradoxical relation with psychoanalysis: referencing Lacan's "mirror stage theory", Pfaller remarks that the existence of these intransitive illusions, illusions which cannot be directly assumed, "is even more surprising in that illusions, as psychoanalytical theory has recognized, work to form the subject". After all, for both Freud and Lacan, it is out of certain fantasies that a subject carves its own consistency, as certain illusions come to structure and mediate the subject's inclusion in the world. But this is precisely what seems to be missing from the illusions that interest Pfaller here: "Although it may indeed be true that without illusions there are no subjects, it nonetheless seems that there are, at least, illusions without subjects." (2014: 33). These are illusions which - to return to Žižek's analysis of commodity fetishism - do not support a subject's self-transparent permanence in face of the contingency of her real conditions of existence, but rather structure those real conditions themselves. There is a profound *formal* difference between the belief that possessing this or that commodity changes or improves who I am - an illusion with a subject - and the belief at stake in the act of exchanging that commodity for some money, that is for the

future possibility of the seller exchanging that money for something else. This second belief is operative regardless - and in fact because of - our "better knowledge" that money is "just paper", just a promissory note. As we said, it is rather a belief about the belief of others - it "goes on", functioning without us, while subjectively we can construct for ourselves an identificatory circuit that only includes our desire and the commodity we just purchased.

In *The Structure of World History* (2014), Kojin Karatani distinguishes the social pact at stake in the logic of state sovereignty, by which citizens collectively abdicate of their autonomy and invest it onto one person, which then gives expression, through his personhood, to the state as a whole, from the logic of the "social pact between commodities". For Karatani, the passage between simple, total and money-form in the first volume of Marx's *Capital* is isomorphic to the logic of sovereignty, in that all commodities come to abdicate their role as formal equivalents of the value of other commodities so that this function falls upon one sole commodity, the general equivalent. However, the difference between these two processes is clear enough: while the social contract concerns the *proprietors* of commodities - who in the interest of their security and wealth abide to a common law - the "social contract between commodities" is not performed *by us*: it is a pact between things themselves, so much so that a world-economy requires world-money to circulate between different states and lawful spaces, and therefore cross frontiers beyond which we simply would not recognize any communion with others. While we could call "interactivity" the positive reinforcement cycle between, in Rousseau's terms, the particular and the general will, between the citizen as subject and as sovereign, as rule-follower and rule-creator - in short, the logic of political *participation* - Robert Pfaller calls "interpassivity" (Pfaller, 2017) the negative or inverse cycle through which our subjective disengagement with a certain social process is precisely what constitutes its efficacy: the less everyone believes in a capitalist free economy the more it is an efficacious form of social synthesis *between different subjectivized belief systems*.

Still developing this interlocution between Pfaller, Žižek and Marx, we can also see how the theory of the subject supposed to believe, with its corresponding interpassive subject, is equally connected to a theory of "delegated enjoyment" (2014: 18). If Žižek had already suggested that the class of fantasies which are structured by the other's beliefs is more general than of those structured by the other's knowledge, Pfaller proposes that "the delegation of conviction and feelings creates special cases of the general principle of delegated enjoyment" (ibid: 19). The delegation of *consumption* is, for him, logically prior to the delegation of a certain belief onto the other.

And, in fact, this finds an interesting counterpart in Marx's own theory of value. In the very first section of *Capital*, Marx reminds us that even though a commodity must have use value, "a thing can be useful and the product of human labor without being a commodity" - that is, to become a commodity it is not enough to be a product of labor or to have use-value *for oneself*: the product must have "use value *for others*". To which he quickly adds: "not only for others (...) to become a commodity, a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as use value by means of an exchange" (1992:124). And as Marx makes increasingly clear - especially in the chapter dealing with the "metamorphoses" of the commodity in the exchange process (ibid: 198) - the reference to use-value inherent to the commodity structure can be infinitely postponed: in fact, this is what allows it to become capital, the very fact that I can buy or produce it in order to sell it, that is, in order *for another* to consume it. The paradox is, thus, that even though nothing can be produced as a commodity if it is not produced for another's consumption, when we do become the consumers of a certain product we are only *accidentally* occupying the place of this other - structurally it could be further postponed, for example, if we decide to buy this product in order to re-sell it for a higher price somewhere else. In this sense, the formal reference to another's enjoyment precedes and underlies the social pact between commodities, and, therefore, the delegated belief that mediates their interactions.

Two features allow Pfaller to develop this line of investigation further than Žižek had taken it. First of all, rather than focus on the functioning of ideological fantasies in our contemporary political predicament, he departs from an analysis of different phenomena of delegated consumption in art works. This leads him to explore cases - at stake for example in the case of "service art" - of "consumers who want to be replaced by something that consumes in their place" (Pfaler, 2014: 20; 2017: 10). But, at the same time, Pfaller is also able to redirect Žižek's research by not focusing only on the strategies through which one seeks to *consume the impossible* - that is, what psychoanalysis calls "enjoyment" - but extending his investigation to deal with the delegation of pleasures which *could* be directly had as well. For him "interpassivity is not just a method of 'extended', indirect consumption that increases one's (necessarily limited) direct consumerist capacities" - instead, Pfaller claims that "interpassive subjects are actually feeling from their enjoyment. They even avoid it in those situations where personally experiencing it would be easy. Owners of recording devices, for example, watch less television once they have the recorder than they did when they owned only the television set. And travellers, who are certainly capable of viewing scenic attractions themselves, hold a camera to their eyes as if by reflex" (2014: 20).

This more general approach to the problem places new questions before us: why create an indirect structure for consumption when we could directly enjoy something? Or: how could these substitute actions - such as praying through praying wheels, recording television shows, etc - be placed in equivalence with the direct experience of consumption? Even further: how can all of this even take place without this very strategy being itself assumed by these interpassive subjects? After all, no one who records television shows, never to watch them, or makes hundreds of photocopies, never to read them, would claim "the recorder is watching in my place". This is how delegated enjoyment meets the Žižekian theory of displaced beliefs: only are certain substitutive actions displacing the consumption of religious comfort, tv series and literature onto things and other people, but they also displace the belief in this very strategy. Pfaller concludes:

There are always two levels of delegation - namely the delegation of enjoyment and the delegation of belief (in the enacted performance of enjoyment). Interpassivity is always carried out simultaneously on both of these levels: on the one hand, consumption is delegated to a consumption medium - for example, reading to a photocopier; on the other hand, the belief in the equivalence between consumer and their vicarious consumption media must also be delegated. The interpassive subject does not personally believe that he or she has read via the copy machine; this belief is transferred to the scene's virtual audience. Delegated enjoyment this always entails feigning enjoyment for an observing agency with the help of a consumption medium, and simultaneously surrendering belief in this feigned fiction to the observing agency. (2014: 30).

But what is the status of this "observing agency"? One of the great contributions of Pfaller's theory of interpassivity is the idea of the "naive observer" (2014: 233) - the "virtual audience" which believes, in our place, in the equivalence between photocopying and reading, or between spinning a praying wheel and praying. We surely "know better" than to equate these two sets of actions, but it is actually our *ignorance* that we displace onto this observing agency - while we remain perfectly aware that these substitutive acts are silly and inconsequential, for some other instance the substituted and the enacted behaviours are the same. The theory of the naive observer allows us to conceptualize beliefs that remain fully operative even in a society where everyone "knows better" than to believe in them.

Pfaller's attention to the full spectrum of interpassive phenomena, beyond those instances where this strategy allows us to vicariously enjoy impossible objects, leads him to question the status of pleasure in general: "might all forms of pleasure that culture is able to produce be associated with objective illusions?" (2014: 33). That is, if delegation of consumption is at play even in situations in which we could otherwise directly reach its object, so that, economically, the pleasure arrived at by

means of delegation is greater than the direct experience of the pleasurable object, could we then define pleasure as such in terms of such anti-participatory structure? Rather than focusing on the dramatic forms of indirect enjoyment at stake in the "beyond the pleasure principle" – those impossible experiences which we repeat in order to (fail to) master, making them commensurable with us in their very virtual insistence – Pfaller explores the inverse path, infusing pleasure itself with an indirect character. Beyond the interesting theoretical consequences of such an investigation, his enterprise has the additional benefit of dismantling a certain ideology which attaches subjective authenticity to a transgression of limits or to sacrifice – an ideology Lacan did not escape, for example in his apology of heroism in his seventh seminar - proposing instead a new vision in which the capacity to experience pleasure in culture is linked to culture's capacity to sustain certain autonomous social structures.

Another ideological trope that is challenged by Pfaller's theory - equally found in psychoanalysis – is the explicit precedence of totemism over animism as "grammars" for the subject's relation to the law and desire. In Freud (Freud, 1913) this is particularly clear, as he makes certain correspondences between the passage from animism to totemism, the passage from magic to religion and the sexual development of children into neurotic adulthood. Equating animisms' extension of the "I-thou" relation to inanimate things, the corresponding belief in magic as a technique for affecting things via representations, and the childish overvaluation of one own's ego, Freud concludes that "magical thinking" is a primitive mode of libidinal economy, one in which we cannot yet separate our thoughts about things from things themselves - to wish is to at least partially obtain what is wished for. This animistic circuit between ego and object-libido would be increasingly curbed by "reality testing" – as we constitute ourselves as lacking subjects – and this would lead to the totemic grammar of neurosis: the displacement onto an exceptional figure, the father, who is supposed to enjoy what we do not have. The introduction of lack into this economy, separating ego and object, transposing satisfaction onto an exceptional other, would also correspond to the passage from a magical to a

religious economy - hence the institution of the superego as an omnipotent *other*. It is not hard to see that totemism, as the *subjectivized* delegation of enjoyment by the many to a phantasmatic exception, is very much akin to the structure of the social pact between proprietors - in Freud's case, the proprietors of women - who must abdicate their freedom and displace their sovereign powers onto an exception. Animism, on the other hand, has a striking resemblance to the structure of commodity fetishism, insofar as animism implies the extension to things of the relations of "I-thou" that people establish amongst themselves (Karatani, 2014) – its grammar approaches far more closely the sort of social pact *between things* at stake in the money-form.

What Pfaller's theory allows us to do is to show that the "discrete magic of the civilized" is perfectly effective in our enlightened society: even though psychoanalysis concerns itself almost exclusively with fantasies which are structured in accordance to the totemic form of displacement, whereby we *know* that someone else enjoys in our place, this cannot be generalized to mean that all phantasmatic formations in our culture are formed as the consequence of the "reality principle" making us painfully aware of our limitations to enjoy. Instead, Pfaller denounces the conviction of Freud and others that animistic cultures immediately believed in their illusions (Pfaller, 2014: 70), while magic, superstition and the animistic worldview are in fact perfectly compatible with the interpassive structure of belief.

This polemical claim has two crucial consequences. First of all, it separates the basic structure of animism from the theory of infantile sexuality, by distinguishing between the *infantile* belief in the power of our own thoughts to realise our desires from the indirect belief in a *naive* other who would then equate our ideas about things and these things themselves. As Pfaller puts it a propos of magic shows:

magic is not horrible because it disappoints fantasies of omnipotence. It is not the fact that the presented omnipotence does not exist that is horrid, but rather the reverse: the awful thing is that the omnipotence does exist, yet not as the omnipotence of one's own thoughts, but instead as the omnipotence of a foreign,

naive observer who fulfils every depicted wish. (...) The characteristic attitude of magic thus consists in knowing perfectly well that one cannot help reality through the use of signs, but nonetheless fearing that someone else who does not know that will make the meaning of signs come true. (...) Plenty of people who emphatically claim not to believe in voodoo would nonetheless still refuse to gouge out an eye in a picture of their own mother. All such everyday magicians are, in this sense, 'sorcerer's apprentices', as depicted by Goethe: they conjure up more than they want" (2014: 260-261).

This essential distinction between the omnipotence of the ego and of the other – and therefore the infantile beliefs of children and of gods - becomes the cornerstone for a whole series of further differentiations in the psychoanalytic theory of obsessive neurotic rituals, perversion and superego which Pfaller develops throughout the book.

The second crucial consequence of the critique of "perspective-based illusion" (2014: 70) which leads faith-based cultures to assume that all other cultures immediately subjectivize their beliefs is that it becomes possible to investigate the hypothesis that "the initially universal belief-form of organization of social illusions was later covered over by the faith-form in some societies" (ibid: 70). Not only does this hypothesis allow Pfaller to account for the emergence of the *delegated belief that faith-based societies assign to belief-based ones*, but it also leads him to an excavation of belief-based illusions within our own culture, an investigation which focuses especially on the role of the "naive observer" in the activity of play (ibid: 79-82) and politeness (ibid: 117-118) to the corresponding theory of a cultural pleasure attainable only through the mediation of such naive observers (ibid: 193).

The ramifications of the research on interpassivity and delegated enjoyment are therefore far reaching. For our purpose, however, it suffices to realize that Žižek and Pfaller's subsequent extensions of Lacan's theory of the "subject supposed to" remain consistent with its fundamental properties. First, beliefs that are delegated are not defined

by their content - as if some beliefs "must" be displaced while others can be directly assumed - but by the *form* of the illusion (Pfaller, 2014: 1), that is, the form in which the belief is organized is responsible for its *effectivity* as an illusion, not for its illusory status. The same property can be found in Lacan's theory of the subject supposed to know: the knowledge that emerges through this displacement is produced within the analytical setting, but it was not a secret knowledge, a "truer knowledge" of the analyst, to be distinguished from the immediate knowledge of the analysand. Furthermore, just like the theory of the subject supposed to know - which was based on the division of the analyst between *material medium* for the circuit of free association and *virtual Other* who is supposed to know the meaning of deviations in speech - the theory of interpassivity also features a set of substitutive practices which function as a material medium for the delegation and a virtual observer which is supposed to equate the substituted and the substitutive actions. With the essential distinction that while the analyst functions as *a medium which the analysand enjoys* - hence the actualization of unconscious love relations in the clinic - in the case of interpassivity the *medium itself is responsible for enjoying in our place*. Accordingly, while we deposit in the subject supposed to know an explanation as to why we enjoy the way we do, we assign to the subject supposed to believe some ignorance which justifies the equivalence between the delegated enjoyment and our actual pleasure.

The logic of delegated enjoyment is thus compatible with the Lacanian approach to the transference dynamic, but, as Žižek had shown us already, the asymmetry between knowledge and belief requires us to pay attention to a "hidden variable" in the analytic theory, challenging the supposition that every delegation to the other is *intransitive* - so that I do not know what I suppose the other knows, like a process of property alienation - and that it will therefore serve as means to inscribe the subject's lack into speech - turning the unknowable dimension of my desire into something *I don't know, but the other might*. But how could we ever transform beliefs which have no place for us?

4. Interventions *in absentia*

I began this essay with an example taken from the fringes of contemporary psychoanalysis. The Testimony Clinic, like many other of the projects I briefly mentioned in the introduction, is in fact not considered strictly psychoanalytic, and the application and relevance of analytic ideas in the treatment of traumas associated with State violence remains a point of contention both between therapists of different theoretical orientations and amongst psychoanalysts themselves. What should be clear now, however, is that this is not so much a conflict between different ways to approach the object of intervention, but a problem internal to this object itself.

To introduce the specificity of dealing with the effects of social catastrophes, I proposed the definition of social traumas as "personal effects with impersonal causes". This is a very tentative definition in that, for Lacanians, traumas always imply this underlying incommensurability between causes and effects. The intervention of the sexual is already a sort of indelible indetermination, more akin to a suspension in a causal chain than the imposition of a cause of greater intensity. Furthermore, symptoms are also defined as "effects without causes" – as ciphered messages about a past that did not take place, or better, which seeks to interpret the gap inscribed by the sexual – hence the classical Freudian theme of the "proton pseudos" and the retroactive construction of a traumatic narrative. In other words, the mismatch between causes and effects was always part of the psychoanalytic definition of trauma - so why would this define a distinct class of traumatic experiences?

Using our revision of Žižek and Pfaller's theories of delegated belief and interpassivity, we can now extend this definition. We have seen that the belief at stake in the money-form is formally "other" to the subject in the sense that it is a belief about the belief of the receiver of our money - about his trust that a third party will accept this paper as payment for another commodity. What is delegated to the other here is not only a belief that is not effective when assumed in the first person, it is also a belief about the consistency of the other's social relation *to others*. In

other words, this belief does not participate in the consistency of myself as an individual, but in the consistency of commodity exchange itself - the very possibility of there being an infinite enchainment of use and exchange-values in a symbolic system. To suspend this belief is not to expose the inconsistency of the Other *for a subject* - that is, it is not a matter of revealing that the big Other does not exist as a guarantor for the meaning of our desires - it is rather to threaten the consistency of the Other *for the other*. We always knew magic is not real, but we believe the terrible performance of a magic trick could affect a *child's* sense of wonder, that is, the other's capacity to respond to the world - we always knew money is not real, but we believe an economic crisis might affect the level of trust in the value of our credit system amongst others. In both cases the trauma does not tear a hole in knowledge, leaving us without means to speak of what has happened to us, it rather rips the social fabric itself, the way it appears *to itself*, and not to us. The effects of such critical points can therefore be perfectly "ego-syntonic", in that they do not lead to an increase in our subjective experience of suffering. In fact, these situations tend to lead to an *overcompensation* at the level of our private fantasies, as they imply that we cannot count on the stability of our "real conditions of existence" to support our "imaginary relationship" to the world, usually leading us to invest even more in the capacity of our own immediate libidinal attachments to guarantee our individual identities.

In cases where psychic suffering is connected to economic crisis, such as the financial crisis of 2008, natural catastrophes, such as the Mariana disaster in Brazil, or a State war against the poor in the slums, we therefore face the additional challenge of listening not only to the speaker's singular relation to what has happened to them - the way these events challenged their identifications and interrupted reality by the more-than-real - but also to the implications these events carry for the delegated beliefs underlying the efficacy of social institutions. Could a project which relies on the "naive observer" that believes on the regular functioning of the State of law serve as the address of cases of State violence? We do not ask this question in the moral sense, but in the sense of its very clinical *effectivity*.

Consider, for example, the case of a mother who lost her son. A small-time drug dealer, he was executed without any due processing by the police after being caught in a police raid in a Brazilian favela, and his body disappeared, as the police needed to cover their tracks. The woman seeks help to deal with the pain of this loss – she struggles to speak out about what happened, as the stigma of her son's occupation seems, to many, to justify the police's behavior, and the abundance of similar cases further silences the scandalous nature of his murder. It is not speech alone which falters before the tragedy, but the other who lacks the resources to "absorb" the incommensurate cesura between cause and effects - after all, the very belief in state bureaucracy depends on the belief on a "naive other" who only rationally executes the law, without concern for social class and living condition of the state's citizens. In order to have some effectivity here, the Testimony Clinic must then carve for itself a place outside of the ideological common sense in order to reconstitute the very *significance* of what this woman can and cannot say. That is, it must organize itself without the help of this "naive observer" for whom different citizens are all equal before the law - by maintaining that the State *is capable* of such things, the project is in position to not to "make sense" what took place, but to mediate the senselessness of this traumatic event.. After individual and group sessions, which bring together families going through similar circumstances, the mourning mother is capable of separating the criminal activities of her son from the phantasmatic belief that his behavior should somehow justify his violent murder, a distinction which allows her to work through her libidinal ties to him and to undergo the mourning process.

What this brief vignette helps us to see is that the logistical conditions of the clinical space – the infrastructure of delegated beliefs it relies on in its very constitution as an "other space" – plays an important part in its capacity to serve as an address for psychic suffering that is traversed by traumas *to the other*. Perhaps this new field of problems could help us shed a light as to why it is that the efficiency of the private clinical setting - which remains the only setting capable of forming new

psychoanalysts, and therefore a class filter to both analytical theory and practice - is somewhat compromised in contexts of great socio-economic instability. What other form of legibility – other than as a "phallic signifier" or as part of the "dynamics of surplus-enjoyment" - could financial problems take in a clinical setting that itself depends on the belief (without which the analyst would not get paid) that the market will always take care of itself?

In Lacan's famous *Seminar on the Purloined Letter* (Lacan, 2006), he paints the image of the analyst as the "emissaries of all the purloined letters" - unaware of the meaning of these missives, we nonetheless accept them, keeping them "en souffrance with us in the transference", like the great detective Dupin, who is able to spot the significance of the purloined item without ever knowing what was written on it, simply by focusing on the circuit of exchanges it underwent in front of him. But Lacan does not stop there, and continues to ask if "it is not the responsibility their transference entails that we neutralize by equating it with the signifier that most thoroughly annihilates every signification -- namely, money?" (2006: 27). In other words, it is because we are *paid* that our *desire as analysts* is not at stake in transference, the responsibility of being addressees of these letters is neutralized insofar as the purity of the signifier-without-signified is guaranteed by the "purity" of the general equivalent – "the signifier that most thoroughly annihilates every signification". Usually this passage has been interpreted as a reduction of economic logic to the logic of the signifier: money is a special signifier, one which can "mean" any desire to consume, as it has no "particular" use-value – no one needs to ask "what do you want from this?" when there is a monetary exchange taking place. But another interpretation is possible now: the fact that the very efficacy of transference - insofar as the formal circuit that binds these significant normative deviations with a subject supposed to know their meaning - might depend on the delegated belief on the money-form. The fetishism of commodities grounding the fetishism of the signifier - a constitutive ignorance concerning the necessary social conditions for speech to acquire the *form* of a signifier in the clinical setting to begin with.

¹ The project is currently in its second edition and is composed of several centers of psychological care - two in São Paulo, one in Rio, one in Florianópolis and one in Porto Alegre - and has three different complementary orientations: to provide psychological assistance to those affected by State violence during the dictatorship, to promote training for public servants who work in the mental health department and to produce directions for the development of public policies. See: <http://www.justica.gov.br/seus-direitos/anistia/clinicas-do-testemunho-1> and <http://www.justica.gov.br/central-de-conteudo/anistia/anexos/livro-clinicas-do-testemunho.pdf>

² It is important to note that both its clinical orientation - psychoanalysis or psychology? - and its assessment of the relation between the dictatorship and democratic sequences - continuation or distinction? - are current points of contention within the project.

³ By "significant" I mean that which can be isolated in speech by interpretation. Tom Eyers calls this the "signifier-in-isolation" (Eyers, 2012) and Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, in a forgotten but masterful early work, called "significance" of the signifier, in opposition to "signification" (Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992)

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, in his famous study *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (2002), has provided us with the paradigmatic treatment of this paradox: "In the relation between what is said and its taking place, it was as possible to bracket the subject of enunciation, since speech had already taken place. But the relation between language and its existence, between language and the archive, demands subjectivity as that which, in its very possibility of speech, bears witness to an impossibility of speech. This is why subjectivity appears as witness; this is why it can speak for those who cannot speak. Testimony is a potentiality that becomes actual through an impotentiality of speech; it is, moreover, an impossibility that gives itself existence through a possibility of speaking. These two movements cannot be identified either with a subject or with a consciousness; yet they cannot be divided into two incommunicable substances. Their inseparable intimacy is testimony" (2002, 145)

⁵ I use the expression "inform" in the sense of "giving form" - Lacan makes an interesting reference to this in his 16th Seminar: "What is indicated here as effect in the field of the imaginary is nothing other than the fact that this field of the Other is, as I might say, in the form of a. This *in-forming* is inscribed in a topology that, to image, (...) presents itself as holding it" (class of 7th of May 1969)

⁶ Most of these comparisons have not yet received any formal or theoretical exposition, I rely here on reports from friends and colleagues, both practitioners and users of the project.

⁷ Lacan, 1998

⁸ Žižek, S. *The interpassive subject* - available at: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-Žižek/articles/the-interpassive-subject/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Karatani

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