Proteus Unbound – In Search of the Event

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When a CNN reporter asked the billionaire Warren Buffet whether he thought that his proposal for increasing taxes on the super-rich was being used as basis on which to wage class warfare, she received an unexpected answer:

 ‘There’s been class warfare going on for the last twenty years, and my class has won. We’re the ones that have gotten our tax rates reduced dramatically’ (Warren Buffet, 2011).

Because of this systemic bias, Buffet argues that it is the responsibility of the wealthy class not only to participate in the process of sacrifice and austerity but to practice a more altruistic type of ethics: ‘if you’re in the luckiest 1% of humanity you owe it to the rest of humanity to think about the other 99%’ (Warren Buffet). It is in this vein that the idea of philanthrocapitalism is being promoted as a new kind of ethical model for capitalist development. Philanthrocapitalism represents both an acknowledgement of social exclusion and also a belief in the transformative power of charity – ‘how giving can change the world’, as the website motto of *philanthrocapitalism.net* puts it.

Philanthrocapitalism remains stuck in a kind of Kantian problematic where it takes normative injunctions like ‘help the poor’ and (ostensibly) seeks to universalize it. But as Hegel points out, pushed to its limit, helping the poor in general would mean either that there will be no poor left (in which case the injunction collapses) or that – in following the injunction and redistributing all wealth – there is nothing but the poor (in which case there is no-one left to help the poor). The very process of universalizing something particular would result ultimately in self-annihilation. This applies to Kant’s idea of ‘perpetual peace’. The very pursuit of universal peace through the imposition of world government (a ‘new-world-order’) would end up with more radical forms of exclusion that would result in its opposite: war and conflict on a global scale (see Žižek). In the very attempt to realize ‘peace and security for all’, nobody would feel secure. Indeed, we already see this type of logic being played out against a background of increasing securitization (securocracy) military interventions – typically justified in the name of ‘universal human rights’ and/or ‘regional stability’ – and the inevitable backlashes that are resulting from this (e.g. the Islamic State mobilization sweeping across Northern Africa).

So it is only ‘if the specific thing which is to be superseded (i.e. poverty) remains (that) the possibility of help remains’ (Hegel, 1975: 80). And, as Hegel argues, this help can only function therefore as *potential* help and not as something fully realizable – indeed, the hidden clause here is that it should *not* be fully realized. This exemplifies the very logic of ideology where there is a publicly stated objective but which simultaneously relies upon the very opposite of the objective – a kind of preservation through (public) negation.

The central organizing myth of our time: that capitalism is a neutral structure in which things like poverty can be reduced to a technical (not a power) issue that will eventually be solved through technocratic means – see also Thomas Pikety (Capital in the 21st Century). In other words, what they continue to obfuscate is the Hegelian oppositional determination where the particular is presented as the universal; where the specific configuration of capitalist power relations serving private interests is distorted into a naturalistic horizon of reality. This myth underpins the very spectrum of today’s left-right politics. From neo-liberalism and anarcho-capitalism to ‘third way’ politics and even econ-capitalism and ‘radical democracy’ (Laclau and Mouffe, Hadt and Negri and so on) there is the same kind of idea that capitalism embodies a basic autonomy that has to be worked with – politics at most can be regulatory, but it must always be pragmatic with regard to global realities etc.

A clear symptom of this is the fact that today’s politics tends to be in a complete state of denial with regard to class struggle. Ironically it is establishment figures, like Warren Buffet, who are more likely to speak about class struggle (largely because the contemporary reality of class struggle is non-threatening). By contrast, left-leaning political parties (especially in Europe) are too concerned about ‘genuine popular appeal’ to even acknowledge their own class-based history; or, if they do, it is to underline the extent to which they have modernized and moved on from the anachronism of class politics.

In his book, *Risk Society* (1992), Ulrich Beck affirms the need for a new era of conscious reflexivity (a ‘second Enlightenment’). For Beck, modernity is confronted by major risks that are the result of modernity itself. In order to address these risks, Beck proposes a collective ‘new modernity’ that is capable of reflexively dealing with the inherent problems of modernity (e.g. a science that addresses the impact/problems of science of technology and so on). But isn’t the real problem today *not* that there is too little reflexivity but precisely that there is too much? That is to say, there is too much ‘reflection’ on social problems as if they were merely technical challenges that can eventually be solved by our ‘new modernity’. For every social and environmental issue there appears to be a devoted corporate trust or foundation. All the major corporations – from Goldman Sachs to Wal-Mart, IKEA, Ford, McDonald’s, Google and so on – have built-in charities that are concerned with ‘worthy causes’. Through this excess of reflexivity, universal ethics is reduced to a paradigmatic philanthropization of socio-environmental problems.

This reflects the well-known phenomenon in psychoanalysis of obsessive neurosis where the analysand fills up the time and space with reflexive chatter precisely in order to prevent anything Real from happening. Similarly, through incessant reflexive philanthropic activity, the systemic logic of capitalist accumulation is enabled to continue in an essentially undisturbed way. It is not Weberian thrift that sustains capitalism but precisely giving. The very negation of private interests (philanthropy) works to sustain the system of private interests as such. In popular culture, the typical bad guys in contemporary Hollywood ‘social message’ movies are corporations/corporate executives whose excesses are heroically confronted by the vulnerable (e.g. *Erin Brockovich*, *Avatar* and, more recently, *Elysium* (Matt Damon) and the *Hunger Games* series). *Poldark* (the people before profit idea – happy smiling peasants toiling in the copper mine) – Downton is another example. So again, the dialectical twist is that contemporary capitalism reproduces itself through its own ‘anti-capitalist’ messages and subversion.

The cycle of capital is supplemented by the cycle of global philanthropy (giving a new twist to the aphorism ‘the more you give the more you receive’). On this basis we might say that global philanthropy functions at the level of Hegel’s cunning of reason. That is to say, the capitalist system continues to refine its ecology, or spirit, as a politico-economic and ethical totality not despite the intentions of individuals and/or the apparent counter-capitalist tendencies of international agencies but precisely because of them. Oscar Wilde makes this (Hegelian) point in regard to slavery. That is to say, the people who do most harm are precisely those who try to be good (the slave-owners that are kind to their slaves etc.).

Philanthropy can only continue to be practiced as long as there remains in place a wealthy philanthropist class and a class of beneficiaries. Philanthropy, in this sense, relies on its opposite; something which is generated as a kind of fatalistic misanthropy or objective social exclusion (the poor as unfortunate, graceless etc.). For Hegel, this has the formal structure of tragedy. That is to say, in ethical tragedy social negativity is presented as something external, a fate, that can only be countered through righteous struggle as a form of good (philanthropy) versus evil (contingent external circumstances). In this way, global philanthropy is ‘reconciled with the Divine being as the unity of both’ (Hegel, 1975: 105), and becomes effectively the religious hope of the world replete with its good news prophets (Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, George Soros) and festivals of giving - the various ‘aid’ spectacles and so on). So when Warren Buffett stated that class warfare has been going on for years, he forgot to add that institutionalized philanthropy functions as one of the principal (soft power) weapons of that warfare.

It is in the continued obscuring of how this logic operates throughout the world (embodied in philanthropy) that the tragedy of our times subsists. And it is in this context that we can give a contemporary interpretation of faith, hope and charity: faith in the system; hope of special favour; charity as the existing order sustained in and through philanthropy. In this regard, they may be said to correspond to the three well-known monkeys that hear, speak and see no evil. The development of a more radical ethics – one that is capable of confronting institutionalized philanthropy - will depend crucially on a resurrection of evil – radical evil (disorder). To be more precise, the development of a radical ethico-political struggle is something that in the first instance will depend on the recognition of the systemic distortion that is the class struggle.

Class Struggle

Alain Badiou takes issue with Hardt and Negri’s analysis of the current situation (immanentism). Far from preparing the ground for a new communist prospect, Badiou argues that, if anything, late capitalism is becoming more and more authoritarian and repressive. This is reflected in the increasing concentration of capital, the global socio-political power of corporate elites (more powerful than nation-states), the violent appropriation of raw materials and energy resources, the enforced selling of land (generally in the South) to agricultural corporations to meet future food demand, the creation of more and more low-skilled workers (especially in China), and the expansion of highly securitized deregulated free enterprise zones throughout the world. It is not without justification that Badiou maintains that our situation today is far closer to the archaic and brutal capitalism of the mid 19th century than to the promised immaterial (friction-free) era of postmodern capitalism (Badiou, 2010).

Laclau similarly rejects Hardt and Negri’s perspective on the grounds of its immanentism (Laclau, 2001)). Political subjectivity is not decided in advance, so we cannot know what the orientation of a multitude will be or whether indeed it can cohere into any kind of identity. For this reason, Laclau also rejects the Marxist notion of class struggle. The problem for Laclau is that if the worker is reduced to the economic category of ‘seller of labour-power’, there is nothing in this category that leads logically to a notion of resistance (Laclau, 2007: 149). But the question that arises here is whether class struggle itself should be reduced simply to a notion of *resistance*? Steven Lukes (1970s), pointed out that power (in its third aspect) is at its most efficient when there is no conflict or resistance, when the political consciousness is already so constrained that alternatives cannot even be imagined.

The notion of class struggle in the Marxist canon is actually a complex one. Notwithstanding certain ambiguities, Marx also identified the class struggle as ultimately a *political* struggle. At various points in his work, Marx gives emphasis to the fluidity of class identities and shows how they are also subject to the drive of the capital itself; for example, where capital takes on its modern social (associative) form and thereby transforms the functioning capitalist into a ‘mere manager’ and the capital owner into ‘a mere money capitalist’ (Marx, 1981: 567). Within the terms of this new form, Marx further identifies the emergence of phenomena such as the co-operative enterprise where ‘the workers in association become their own capitalist’ and where the ‘the opposition between capital and labour is abolished’ (Marx, 1981: 571) – and yet, as Marx points out, the result of this is simply to reproduce ‘all the defects of the existing system’ within the co-operative framework itself (Marx, 1981: 571). In a similar vein, the influential Austro-Marxist Rudolf Hilferding states in *Finance Capital*:

 ‘Thus the ideology of imperialism arises on the ruin of the old liberal ideals, whose naïvety it derides…But imperialism only dissolves the faded ideals of the bourgeoisie in order to put in their place a new and greater illusion…The subordination of individual interests to a higher general interest, which is a prerequisite for every vital social ideology, is thus achieved; and the state alien to its people is bound together with the nation in unity, while the national idea becomes the driving force of politics. *Class antagonisms have disappeared and been transcended in the service of the collectivity The common action of the nation, united by a common goal of national greatness, has taken the place of the class struggle, so dangerous and fruitless for the possessing classes* (my emphasis).’ (Hilferding, 2006: 336).

In Hegelian-Marxist terms, this is the negation of the class struggle within the class struggle itself. It is the class struggle as played out through its apparent disappearance and displacement into nationalist struggle in concert with the drive of capital.

We should not reduce class struggle to its ‘empirical’ instances of visible resistance. Class struggle should be viewed rather in terms of its articulation with, overdetermination by, the development of capital as a dynamic totality and its relentless drive to overcome its own crises and limitations. Class struggle is the traumatic remainder of the political ‘cut’ of the oppositional determination where the genus of capitalism both encounters, and constantly seeks to avoid, itself as one of its own species; where its universality is shown to be a (pathological) particularity. In ideological terms, class struggle manifests itself in the multifarious points of discursive tension between the naturalization and de-naturalization of capitalism.

Does this mean that class struggle loses all specificity? The problem here is that we are necessarily dealing with a structural excess that transcends any particular instance. Put in other terms, we are involved in a parallax shift. Does a trade union strike imply class struggle? Evidently not, because workers/activists who are concerned only to advance particular demands within the terms of the capitalist system are, by that fact, confirming the latter as a naturalistic horizon – i.e. as a big Other to whom demands can be referred on the assumption that, at some level, they can be met. Class struggle proper only comes into being when, at some level, the horizonal/big Other status of the capitalist system itself is challenged. So it is virtually the opposite of Laclau’s view. Class struggle – in the Marxist sense of becoming a struggle for itself - does not arise when workers make their demands against particular instances of surplus value extraction (insufficient pay rises etc.), but rather when workers *cease* making such demands and seek instead the abolition of the system and the terms it sets out for making demands. In this sense, class struggle may be said to refer to the resistance of resistance – a *rejection* of the existing/expected terms of resistance.

This is not to imply that a particular strike/confrontation cannot develop into a wider political project and/or challenge to the system - there is always the potential for this to happen (despite Gorz’s view that workers are overly institutionalized). The point is rather that class struggle functions as an excess that is inherent to every particular but which cannot be reduced to it. This is essentially what Rosa Luxemburg meant by her notion of spontaneism, which involves precisely this parallax (or perspectival) twist where workers in a social confrontation no longer continue to make demands *qua* workers but engage in struggle that *rejects their very status as workers*; in short, the point where workers are transformed into the proletariat as self-authorizing subjects of emancipation.

Class struggle is fully operative even where there appears to be no resistance or antagonism in play. In other words, it functions as the very principle distortion that routinizes socio-political practices (see Žižek, 2009: 294-95). Along the lines of Hilferding, this is precisely the negation of class struggle within the very mode of class struggle: i.e. the way in which the constitutive distortion of capitalism is reproduced as a working totality.

For Laclau, class struggle is merely one type of identity politics and one that is becoming less relevant in the contemporary world (Laclau in Butler *et al*, 2000: 203) and that we should consequently embrace the challenge of postmodern multiple identity politics. The point which Laclau overlooks, however, is that not only is the class struggle a principle of distortion but also that it is a principle *to which the class struggle itself is subject*. Put somewhat crudely, if under Hilferding’s ‘organized capitalism’ class struggle is absorbed and re-directed through nationalist discourse, under today’s postmodern (Western) capitalism class struggle is similarly absorbed and re-directed through postmodern multiculturalist discourse. Both types of discourse represent the working through of the primordial and irresolvable character of the class struggle itself. Multiculturalism and identity politics reflect the negation of the class struggle (its absorption) within the class struggle itself. Indeed multiculturalism may be said to function as perhaps the highest politico-cultural expression of today’s depoliticization of the economy (Frederic Jameson). In the proliferation of antagonisms around gender, sexuality, culture, religion and so on the economy is barely visible as a political realm of contestation. In the vast majority of our institutions (including universities) political debate and passion is almost exclusively limited to questions of how best to accommodate differences and how to provide ways to deal with social problems through business and enterprise (the idea that the latter might actually be part of the problem does not even arise). Even where social struggles appear to be economic in character – say, in opposition to capitalist property development in a particular area – this is typically addressed through a multiculturalist agenda: ensuring respect for local traditions and cultural sensitivities, providing opportunities for local people (jobs, affordability etc.), observing environmental standards of sustainability and so on.

There is, in other words, no political economy; no challenge to the principles of private property ownership itself. What Marx called the social form of capital extends to an ongoing engagement with socio-cultural differences in ways that modify, yet preserve, the pursuit of profit – aufhebung. Along these lines, capitalism reproduces itself through its own negation so that every politicisation becomes a way of further refining and deepening the depoliticization of the economy. The class struggle should thus not be thought of as a specific antagonism, but rather as the very logic through which antagonisms tend to emerge and to be addressed in the reflexive (auto-negatory) development of capitalism as a dialectical and dynamic totality. It is precisely in the gaps and exclusions that are inscribed into the (distorted/incomplete) constitution of capitalist relations that class struggle continues to function as the backdrop (or perhaps gravity) of contemporary society and its socio-political activities. Class struggle is the distorted medium through which capitalism appears as neutral – the forest that conceals the wood.

The Political and the Economic

What tends to be overlooked in Laclau’s theory of hegemony, and which is arguably its most radical aspect, is the extent to which hegemonic processes are themselves subject to hegemonization: i.e. that hegemonic logics/practices reflect the very (hegemonic) distortion that *is* society. The American political scientist, Charles Lindblom, almost stumbles across this aspect in his book *Politics and Markets*. This book, which explores the influence of business over the policy environment, caused such a controversy at the time because it effectively shattered the whole myth of ‘polyarchy’. Indeed the Mobil Corporation took the very unusual step of authorizing a full-page advert in the *New York Times* (1978) in order to denounce the argument and findings of Lindblom’s book. Lindblom argued that, unlike other socio-political actors, business has a unique capacity to exercise its power in two ways: first, through the usual channels of democratic representation (lobbying/interest group activity etc.); but second, and more importantly, through its structural presence in the economy and its consequent ability to silently shape the policy environment as such. Business is both a particular actor and a central structuring principle for the entire field of politico-economic interaction. As Marx pointed out, despite all their competition and infighting ‘capitalists…are nevertheless united by a real freemasonry vis-à-vis the working class as a whole’ (Marx, vol. 3: 300).

What Lindblom hits upon is the way in which what appears as neutral and universal - the democratic frame of polyarchy – is already determined by the particularity of business (or system of capital). More generally, this reflects Hegel’s point that form and content should not be regarded as independent of each other. Content is not formless (it has to show itself through some form of appearance) and form is not without content (a content that defines its consistency – genres etc.). The relationship between form and content, moreover, is a dynamic one. Form and content – although capable of being distinguished – are fundamentally intertwined. In contrast to Kant, Hegel sees the gap between form and content as something that is reflected into content itself. There is no primary content (or substance) – hence Hegel’s maxim that substance is also subject – and consequently the absolute, in its essence, is incompletion, unrest and distortion.

This again is the Kantian error of philanthrocapitalism: that is to say, it relies implicitly on a clear distinction between form and content. This Kantian error is at the root of today’s technocratic paradigm that tries to address social problems through the various ‘seed investment’ schemes, ‘microfinance’, ‘social enterprise’ and so on. A typical example of this is the recent book, *The Business Solution to Poverty*, which is summed up by its publicity: ‘By learning to serve them (the poor) ethically and effectively business can earn handsome profits while helping to solve one of the world’s most intractable problems’ (Polak & Warwick, 2013). The problem that is consistently overlooked (or denied) in this type of literature is that capitalism is a basic distortion in *both* its form and content. That is to say, it is not simply a question of tweaking the content within an otherwise neutral form. Getting capitalism ‘right’ means accepting the very principles of its distortion: the drive for profit, the naturalization (or ideologization) of social inequality and marginalization on a global scale. This means that the predominant ethical response tends to be framed in terms of delivering more and better capitalism in order to live up to its form.

Laclau is right but he draws the wrong conclusions. That is to say, political *does* have a primary structuring role, but this does not mean that the political is always operative in the manner he seems to suggest. In the first instance, the primary structuring role of the political is precisely the *depoliticization* of certain basic principles of social constitution (important). In this sense, Laclau does not go far enough. The political foundation of any society takes place through an originary contingent violence (the seizure of land, conquest, the imposition of a state etc.) whose traces are subsequently covered over (but never fully eliminated) through myth, governance, a widening system of law and so on that legitimizes the new social order: in short, the construction of a basic working matrix that seeks to naturalise its organizing principles and its (socio-political) exclusions.

What Laclau tends to overlooks is what we might characterize as *the dialectical power of the political itself to negate itself in the (over-) determination of the social space*. It is here that the dangers of Laclau’s implicit politicism become most visible. Politicism and economism are two sides of the same coin. The exclusive emphasis on the vicissitudes of political subjectivity can become a way of continuing *not* to address the structuring reality of economic power. In a dialectical twist, politicism is transformed into its opposite and becomes an insidious form of *de facto* economism.

Event

In this context, there appears no real space in the Laclau-Mouffe perspective for a conception of the event. Indeed, Laclau is explicit in distancing himself from Badiou’s conception of the event:

 ‘”Events” in Badiou’s sense are moments in which the state of a situation is *radically* put into question; but it is wrong to think that we have purely situational periods interrupted by purely evental interventions…the meaning of the unrepresentable in which the event consists involves reference to an unrepresented within a situation, and can only proceed through the displacement of elements already present in that situation. This is what I have called the mutual contamination between situation and event. Without it any winning over by the event of elements of the situation would be impossible, except through a totally irrational act of conversion’ (Laclau, 2014: 201-02).

The event certainly relates to a situation. Badiou elaborates four main typologies of how the event relates to a situation or ‘site’ (Badiou, 2009: 363-96): (i) modification – no real change, only a sequential re-ordering; (ii) fact – change has occurred but it has not generated a site of any real intensity; (iiI) weak singularity – change has occurred, a site of intensity has been generated but the frontiers of impossibility remain in place; (iv) strong singularity – change has occurred, a site of intensity has been generated and the frontiers of impossibility have been re-drawn (this is the event that gives rise to the inexistent) (Badiou, 2009: 391-396).

And yet is there not a fifth aspect to be added here; one that concerns what might be called the mode of change or the horizon of eventality? This alludes to the paradoxical condition wherein events do happen (the inexistent is produced) but without affecting the overall pattern of social reproduction or mode of change. Such a condition becomes effectively visible with Marx’s analysis of capitalism. What Marx shows is how how capitalism is ontologically distinguished from all previous orders in that it functions as its own excess, its own continuous revolution that relentlessly dissolves all traces of organicism in the name of the new. If, as Badiou argues, the capitalist universe has become worldless, it is surely because excess no longer appears as a threatening externality but as something interior and functional to the reproduction of capitalism as a totality. The mode of change of capitalism is such that it continuously offsets itself through the logic of the event (through the tireless pursuit of the inexistent). In this sense, we might say that the possibility of the event is something that has become increasingly obscured/deferred by capitalism’s own *eventalism*. This mode of eventalism is the one that we appear to be stuck in now: where constant innovation functions as a way of repressing the emergence of the new. With this eventalism, we are always ‘moving forward’ (it is virtually impossible to have a conversation with a professional/middle manager without hearing this phrase). What is reflected here is a construction of time without the temporal: i.e. where time, and the sense of future, is reduced to a spatialized continuum (an end of history); movement without the dimension of cut.

So back to Laclau - he comes closest to a characterization of the event in the very possibility that he dismisses: i.e. the act as ‘a totally irrational act of conversion’ (see above). That is to say, while the event certainly relates to a situation what Laclau overlooks is precisely that which escapes the structure of contamination as such: that is the irreducible x-ness, the un-phenomenalizable excess (or Real), of the event that transforms both the situation *and* the situation-ness. What the event bears witness to is the very madness within reason itself (the unreason of reason) and which thereby enables a reconfiguration of the form and content of reason. This is what authenticates the event as a real (or Real) break. It is not so much a case of ‘winning over’ in an event. The event is more radical than this: it is effectively a (re-) distortion of the fabric of reality such that the very rules of the ‘game’ are changed and in such a way that the very idea of what constitutes ‘winning’ and ‘losing’ is also transformed - this is what Žižek means by the event as something that is self-authorizing. If there is contamination, this concerns not so much symbolic content but rather the Real-excess (i.e. that which courses through the symbolic but which is simultaneously beyond it).

For these reasons, I cannot go along with Laclau’s view of the evental subject as having already made a ‘choice and evaluation’ and who simply proceeds with ‘the symbolic resources of the situation itself’ (Laclau, 2014: 201). The event is also something that effectively happens *to* the subject (as, for example, in the event of love) in which there is a fundamental disruption of existing symbolic resources and an uprooting of the subject from their place in the symbolic order. Far from being a subject of reason, the evental subject is a subject of madness (of excess, drive, evil – call it what you will). The evental subject is the one who is prepared to sacrifice everything, despite all reason, in the name of something Other (e.g. the signifier ‘freedom’) that is without representation or evaluation. This is the subject not of place or finitude but the subject of void and the infinite. In Hegelian terms, the event is precisely that which bears witness to the dimension of the subject within substance. And in this sense, the event cannot be simply chosen or evaluated in advance; rather it is something that has to be repeatedly advanced and affirmed. Taking liberties with Oscar Wilde, the event can only succeed through excess.

Far from being a mere transitional process, this always involves a traumatic break. This is reflected in the figure of Peter who famously denied knowing Jesus three times before the cock crowed. Peter is addressed by the big Other as being guilty of association, but he assumes a stance of ignorance in order to try and break the interpellative deadlock and to escape any consequences. The sound of the cock crowing is the ‘voice’ of the Real – an unbearable manifestation of his guilt. This is indicative of how the subject is never fully at the level of the event (or the Lacanian act). That is to say, in an event a subject encounters a certain excess that it cannot account for or spatialize. The excess effects a fundamental break in, and reconfiguration of, the subject; a traumatic shedding (or ceding) of subjectivity so that a new form of subjectivity can be born. It is not so much a question of will (as if attempting to break through a barrier); it is more a question of coming to terms with the Real of an unaccountable (excessive) change. The event is something that exacts a retroactive re-constitution. Peter is resurrected into the event, and the event is resurrected in Peter, through ‘reconciliation’ with excess: not an overcoming of excess (as in a return to harmony/stability) but rather *an acceptance of the excess itself*. What is signalled in the movement from Peter-in-denial to Peter-as-founder of the church is precisely this dimension of cut and traumatic impossibility. And in this very movement, Peter comes to embody the Hegelian twist in the event. That is to say, the event is something that can only be saved through its embodiment, through institutionalization and the concrete re-formation of social relations. The (political) truth of the event is not derived simply from fidelity to something external; rather it is forged in the post-evental work of enactment and resurrection.

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