Psychoanalysis and Scenes of Night in Narratives on Culture

Sang-Hwan Kim
Seoul National University, Korea

Abstract

My first issue lies in the metaphor of night constantly appearing in the narratives on culture, as for example in Heidegger’s remarks on the *Weltnacht*. Scenes of night appear not only in apocalyptic discourses, but also in common discourses on culture. In first part of this paper, I will try to explain briefly the reason of the frequent appearance of nocturnal scene, in commenting on two simple poetic texts from a structuralist point of view.

The second part is concerned with the position in which psychoanalysis can deal with the scene of night. If psychoanalysis is a “nocturnal” science that investigates the dark world of the unconscious, what would be its critical effect on the metaphysical thinking as a helio-centrism? I will bring up the deconstructive aspect of psychoanalysis in terms of “dramatology,” a word that makes visible the overlap of psychoanalysis and Derridian grammatology.

The third problem lies in the possibility of psychoanalysis to intervene in the historical passage into the *Weltnacht* in the Heideggerian sense. How can Lacanian psychoanalysis translate this unprecedented historical scene, in which the difference between the Orient and the Occident seems to disappear? In the last part, I will attempt to give an answer to this question, in commenting on Žižek’s thesis concerning Hegel with Lacan and Lacan with Hegel.

Keywords
culture, narrative, mise en scène, psychoanalysis, scenes of night, structuralism, theatricality, Freud, Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan, Žižek
This paper comprises three parts. The first part aims to highlight the metaphor of night, which constantly appears in narratives on culture. To take an example from philosophical text, one can cite a passage from Heidegger’s *Holzwege*, where he describes the present day as an era of passage into the world’s night (*Weltnacht*): “Will this land of evening overwhelm Occident and Orient alike, transcending whatever is merely European to become the location of a new, more primordially fated history? Are we men of today already ‘Western’ in a sense that first crystallizes in the course of our passage into the world’s night?” (Heidegger 7).¹ This citation, reminding us of Hegel’s remark in his preface to the *Lectures on Philosophy of History*,² which compares the whole course of world history to “the great Day’s work of Spirit (*große Tageswerk des Geistes*),” implies that the present day is a great transition period. Yet the scene of night not only appears in apocalyptic discourses, but also in common discourses on culture. I will try to illuminate briefly the reason for the frequent appearance of the scene of night by commenting on two simple poetic texts and by appealing to a structuralist point of view.

The second part is concerned with the position in which psychoanalysis can deal with the scene of night recursively appearing in narratives on culture. It is said that psychoanalysis first arrived at its theoretical self-confidence by interpreting dreams, which represent the life of night. Furthermore, owing to the mood of darkness that the unconscious gives us, night is often chosen as a rhetorical flourish of psychoanalysis itself. For example, an editor of a book addressing the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema gave it the title “Endless Night,” which was taken from a line spoken in Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man*: “Some are born to sweet delight, some are born to endless night” (Bergstrom no.1).³ World history in the Hegelian sense is likened to one day’s labor of the sun (i.e., the Spirit), which rises from the morning-land (*Morgen-land*) and sets at the evening-land (*Aben-land*). Relying on this Hegelian scene of history, one could make a distinction between two types of science: diurnal science “born to sweet delight” and nocturnal science “born to endless night.” If psychoanalysis, which investigates the dark world of the unconscious, is a nocturnal science, what are the characteristics of this

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¹ Cf. the beginning part of Heidegger’s “What are Poets For?” 89.  
² Hegel. *The Philosophy of History* 103.  
³ It is taken originally from a poem by William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence”: “Every night and every morn / Some to misery are born / Every morn and every night / Some are born to sweet delight.”
Derrida has deconstructed the history of metaphysical thinking in terms of its heliocentrism, that is, how it is governed by the metaphors of sun and light. From the perspective of this Derridian formula, one cannot avoid asking about the possibility of the deconstructive effect that psychoanalysis as nocturnal science would have on metaphysical thinking. I will emphasize the deconstructive characteristic of psychoanalysis and use a newly coined word, dramatology, to make visible the essential overlapping aspects of psychoanalysis and Derridian grammatology. But the last and most important problem in the dramatological exposition of psychoanalysis lies in the possibility of psychoanalysis to intervene in the historical passage into the Weltmacht in the Heideggerian sense. How can psychoanalysis—Lacanian psychoanalysis in particular—translate this unprecedented historical scene in which the difference between the Orient and the Occident disappears? In the last part of this paper, I will attempt to give an answer to this question by commenting on Žižek’s thesis concerning Hegel with Lacan and Lacan with Hegel.

I. Scenes of Night in Narratives on Culture

On nights when the owl hoots hoot,
Hoot hooting 'cause it’s cold,
We all gather together,
Sitting by Granny,
And listen to old stories.

Nowadays, I often sing this children’s song, which I used to sing in my childhood, to my newborn baby. I have transcribed the lyrics here because this brief song well known among Korean people seems to include an elementary concept of culture. From a structuralist perspective, this song, which could be a scene of alienation in the Lacanian sense, systematically reveals several binary oppositions. To be more specific, first, there is the opposition between what is inside home and what is outside it. It is followed by binary oppositions such as cold and warm, animal cry and human speech, solitude and society, and adults and children. This system of binary oppositions is the framework of our concept of culture. Let us ruminate as to why this should be so by examining each binary opposition.

The semantic structure of this children’s song is built on the central and spatial
opposition between the outside (where the owl is), and the inside (where the children are). This holds true also for an understanding of culture. No matter how it is determined, the conceptual meaning of culture is always based on this topological opposition. Indeed, culture has acquired the self-evidentiality of its significance within the oppositional relationships that it maintains with wilderness, nature, and barbarity. Constitutive meanings such as artificiality, training, and cultivation, which are included in the concept of culture, are sediments within these differential relationships. The opposition between what is inside home and what is outside it, however, is one that precedes all such differences.

To do this, let us first reexamine the etymology of the word “culture,” in Korean: “munhwâ” (文化). The Chinese character “mun” (文) was originally a pictograph representing a set of uniform patterns or markings. Any human community is bound to have a set of regular patterns or ways of life, which we call “culture.” If culture is a vessel that forms and preserves the order of life, such formation and preservation have been understood in terms of the metaphor of home. Indeed, the construction of houses and architecture are primary symbols of culture. This becomes even clearer when we examine the etymology of the words in many Western languages for “culture,” which is “culta,” originally signifying cultivation or reclamation. In that it expands the order of human life to nature, culture can be likened to a farmer’s development of a wasteland. However, farming occurs within the strategy for human habitation and settlement on land, which in turn starts with the construction of houses. In this respect, farming is but an extension of the act of building houses. If all human activities for sustenance can be called “economy,” the etymology of the words in Western languages for this denotes the order and norms (nomos) of the home (oikos). Human life and humane life are life inside the home.

Countless philosophers since Plato have likened philosophical acts to the construction of houses. In addition, conceptual architecture, which is realized through the construction of philosophical systems, has been seen as more fundamental and important than secular architecture. Philosophy and poetic creation (poiesis), the origin of the arts, stem from the instinctive will at the root of human thought to build structures and architecture. Ordinary architecture, which builds houses and cities on land, is therefore but an example of the expression of this a priori instinct. In this respect, culture is the sum of all acts of construction,

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4 This compound of two Chinese characters, “文化,” has the same meaning in the mutually unrelated languages of Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese as well, despite differences in the pronunciation—“wenhua,” “vanka,” and “bunka,” respectively.
including the building of houses as well as that wisdom itself.  

Speaking in terms of Heideggerian inspiration, what humanity ultimately builds and shapes are familiarity and comfort. Cultural spaces in opposition to nature are familiar and comfortable spaces designed to agree with human instincts. Of course, this is not so much a factual proposition as an ideal one. In the children’s song above, such familiarity is depicted as warmth. While the owl outside the house hoots because it is cold, the home, where the children are, is warm. This warmth would come from the brazier, the hearth that is taken care of by Granny.

In mythology, fire, a source of warmth, has been a metaphor for culture as much as for home and farming. Prometheus, the Titan in Greek mythology, is punished for having stolen fire from the gods. Here, fire implies the first condition for the formation of human beings’ cultural space. Lévi-Strauss, the structuralist anthropologist, discovered that the difference between raw food and cooked food reflected the opposition between nature and culture. Here, culture is a system of transforming the raw, or a mechanism that assimilates the natural to human nature. Fire symbolizes the transformative power that makes possible such cultural assimilation and the expanded reproduction of this sameness.

The symbolic meaning of fire encompasses not only the power of cultural transformation but also brightness and warmth, the warmth and brightness that we associate with home and hometowns. This is why in French the word “foyer (hearth)” is used to mean “home” or “house.” Just as the concept of the triangle includes the number three, the concepts of the home and the hometown connote

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5 In the classical history of philosophy, it was Kant who has insisted on the architectonic instinct of human reason. Cf. Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1996), 495(B. 502-503): “Human reason is by its nature architectonic. I.e., it regards all cognitions as belonging to a possible system. . . . Hence reason’s architectonic interest (which demands not empirical but pure a priori rational unity) carries with it a natural commendation for the assertions of the thesis.” Cf. also 755(B. 860) ff. where Kant explains in detail “the architectonic of pure reason.”

6 Among so many discussions of Heidegger on Wohnen, Denken/Bauen/Dichten, Heimat, Entfernen, Nähe etc., I cite here only two passages. Being and Time, trans. by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), sect. 23, 139: “De-severing (Entfernen) amounts to making the farness vanish—that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close (Näherung). Dasein is essentially de-servant: it lets any entity be encountered close by as the entity which it is. . . . De-severance is an existentiale”: Letter on Humanism, in Martin Heidegger Basic Writings, ed. by D. F. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), pp. 259-260: “Thinking builds upon the house of Being, the house in which the jointure of Being fatefully enjoins the essence of man to dwell in the truth of Being. This dwelling is the essence of ‘being-in-the-world.’ The talk about the house of Being is no transfer of the image ‘house’ to Being. But one day we will. . . . ”
warmth. Even the Inuit are likely to represent the cold North Pole as a bright and warm place when they think of home. Here, brightness and warmth signify, as metaphors, familiarity and comfort.

In the children’s song above, the warmth inside the house would come from the fireplace or the brazier. However, the story that Granny tells seems to be what transmits that warmth to the children’s hearts. Her story is in binary opposition to the owl’s hoots. Although they may be capable of inchoate sounds or isolated signals, animals, which belong to nature, cannot create stories in the way that humans do. Human beings create new fires, new temperatures, in the process of creating stories. In this respect, the grandmother who tells stories is like a cook who creates edible food out of raw provisions. (Granny in the poem may tell her stories as she roasts potatoes or chestnuts on the brazier.) Through her stories, Granny transforms the fire in nature to the fire in our hearts and presents it to the children. Herein may lie the very origin of culture. It may be that human beings have come to build bright and warm spaces on land, familiar and comfortable houses, only through language. The true fire of culture is language, and humans gather around it, within its warmth.

At times, animals live in herds as well. Objects, too, can be together. However, it is possible to be distant despite physical proximity and lonesome despite physical togetherness. On the contrary, it is also possible to be close even when far apart; not lonesome even when alone. Human beings exist and gather in such a paradox. Metaphysics, religions, and the arts may have stemmed, invariably, from this paradox that dominates human instincts. The origin of culture, then, would seem to conceal a paradox.

It is most likely because of language that humanity is dominated by such a paradox. Through language, human beings experience contact and proximity that are not physical. If the owl is cold and lonesome, alone outside the home, it is because it lacks warmth in its heart. Such deficiency essentially stems from the lack of a linguistic ability. On the contrary, it is in the story told by Granny that the children “all gather together.” Here, it becomes clear as to why the idea that human beings are social animals and that they are linguistic animals are one and the same. This is because humans cannot gather physically or mechanically, but can do so in the house of language, which creates closeness.

Any human community consists of adults and children. In the children’s song, the children sit by Granny’s side. Here, “side” does not simply denote physical proximity. It is the closeness created by Granny’s story as well. Such intimacy does not disappear with physical separation or the passage of time. This shortness of
distance is the link of social life and the condition of cultural transmission and instruction. Children gather and grow in the stories told by Granny—in other words, they become adults.

In an East Asian context, an adult is someone who can teach and train others. Such ability is called “virtue” (德). Interpreted in terms of the modern era, this virtue is exemplarity. Culture can be a historical space because it has transmissible examples, examples as objects of imaginary and symbolic identification in the Lacanian sense. The more examples it has, the more dynamic and rich a culture is. Although any human community will accumulate particular modes and patterns of life, not all ways of life are culturally respected. Cultural value is granted only to exemplary forms of life that transmit that life within their relationships to posterity; for the history of culture is the continuation, discontinuation, or mutation of examples.

Returning to the children’s song, adults are people who tell stories and children are people who listen to stories. In other words, grown-ups are those who possess stories. This is expressed more concretely in a poem by Gim So-wol (金素月 1902-1934), “Parents”:

When withered leaves
Rustle down,
On long winter nights,
Sit together with Mother
And listen to old stories.

How have I
Come to be,
So that I am listening to this story?

Do not even ask,
Tomorrow, in the day,
I shall be a parent myself
And find out.

This poem, titled as “Parents,” establishes its semantic structure through a binary opposition identical to that of the children’s song, especially through the central opposition between the inside and the outside and between natural sounds and human stories. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between two texts.
This difference lies in the disparate attitudes toward adult stories that the speakers in the two songs exhibit. Unlike the “we” in the children’s song, the “I” in Gim’s poem does not stop at merely listening to stories. This speaker goes one step further by asking the origin of the situation in which he or she happens to be listening to stories. Moreover, amidst such inquiry, he or she is leaving Mother’s side. This speaker seeks to stand alone. To speak in psychoanalytic terms, it is the moment of separation.

Here, standing on one’s own feet, separation amounts to possessing one’s own story and narrative methods. This is what it means to be a grown-up in Gim’s poem. It is the limitation of children to remain contented with orally transmitted stories. To speak in Lacanian terms, the children remain alienated in the Other. On the other hand, grown-ups are people who stand at the origin of stories and, from that originary point, independently build and create stories that can be told to others. (In other words, adults are people who can build houses.) The speaker of Gim’s poem, then, is not quite an adult but an adolescent who is just beginning to realize the meaning and condition of being a grown-up.

This enlightenment occurs on a winter night. In the children’s song, it is also on winter nights that children listen to Granny’s stories. Is such agreement, then, merely coincidental? Not quite. Winter nights have characteristics (coldness, darkness) that are opposed to the warmth and brightness of home (stories, culture). They refer to what is outside culture, or the space of construction, i.e., the time of nature, which is in binary opposition to culture. The fact that, temporally, both the song and the poem are set on winter nights is an inevitable agreement stemming from the two works’ possession of an identical semantic structure.

In terms of such inevitability, the temporal settings of all discourses on culture may be metaphorical winter nights, because an understanding of culture always parallels yet opposes an understanding of nature. However, there are times when the expression “winter nights” must be represented within historical temporality itself, which transcends any narrow structuralist perspective. Hardly any critical intellectual has failed to see his or her own era as one of crisis. In fact, etymologically speaking, the word “criticism” (批判) refers to a decision or a choice made at the crossroads of crisis. The temporal setting of criticism, should not it be a winter night, winter being a season of destitution and endurance that awaits the plenitude of spring? Is night not a time in which dark despair is accumulated for the hope of the early morning? As a metaphor, the winter night is the apocalyptic time when one who is placed in the crisis that mushrooms in a corner of his or her era and has awakened to the necessity for a transition there keeps vigil all night.
At this moment, the international community is faced with a great transitional period. It is not only a chronological transition to a new century and a new millennium but also an era in which a 2,000-year-old storytelling method is threatened as never before. Awareness is spreading that the ideology of modern culture, which has pervaded the world since at least the 19th century, must be revised. Regardless of whether or not we acknowledge this, postmodernism has been epoch-making in 20th century cultural history in that it (like the speaker of Gim’s poem) has stimulated us to return to the origin of modern grand narratives, which were previously transmitted intact and without ado, and has presented us with the task of creating new stories from that originary point. The advent of postmodernism reveals that this era is a cold winter night.

With the passing of the 20th century, human history has come to accelerate, seemingly beyond control. Now, we are living in an era where it is impossible to predict the next decade. This is the origin of cultural anxiety, which has befallen us since the last years of the 20th century. However, anxiety may always lie hidden in the heart of culture. If the origin of culture stems from the human will to build structures, Derrida proved, in terms of metaphysical architecture, the same thing that Gödel did. The construction of all ideational systems includes a self-deconstructing contradiction as a residue, and this residue is the spectral return of what has been repressed and excluded for the construction of the systems. This signifies that the possible and impossible conditions of culture overlap. The inside and the outside of civilization do not constitute the two mutually exclusive loci that structuralism seeks to place.

II. Dramatological Understanding of Psychoanalysis

This is exactly the same logic that Freud strongly suggests when he finds the origin of culture in the repression of drives: the repressed may return at any time, in any form. The post-structuralist and post-metaphysical aspects of Freud are to be marked out in particular when he regards the uncanny (Unheimlich) as a return of the canny (Heimlich), which has to remain in the darkness of the unconscious by force of repression. One could say that the subversive character of psychoanalysis comes from the fact that it refers to the relation between the canny and the uncanny (the internal and the external, or the bright and the dark) as that of repetitive

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8 S. Freud, “the Uncanny” 241, 245.
mediation, in which the two related terms lose their topological difference to cohabit in a common place.

Freud’s earlier work *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* seems to be more significant—at least in its title—than any of his other works, for example, his masterpiece *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which was written at the same time. This title is remarkable in that it joins together two spheres susceptible to being regarded as exclusive from one another: everyday normal life and extraordinary pathological life—this opposition reflecting in psychoanalysis that of the conscious and the unconscious. It would not impossible for us to give a bit of change to the original title in translating it into *The Psychopathology in Everyday Life*: of to be changed to *in*. This little distortion would be more faithful to Freudian spirit and also more in conformance with Lacanian cause than the literal translation. Why? It is because, evaluated in particular from the philosophical point of view, the fundamental contribution of psychoanalysis to the history of Western thought consists exactly in its deconstructive effects on metaphysical binary opposition, and the alternative translation would be much more effective in making manifest this subversive aspect of psychoanalysis. Putting emphasis on this aspect, one can paraphrase the radical ideas implied in the title as follows:

(1) The unconscious does not appear in itself. It has for its necessary condition of possible manifestation certain mediation with the conscious. Lacan says the unconscious is an effect of language now that the unconscious is structured as language. However, language is not only the condition of genesis of the unconscious, but also an important medium of its appearance. Without any conscious element, the unconscious cannot phenomenize itself. When Lacan declared that “the Freudian field was possible only a certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject,” (in other words Freudian subject is “the subject of Cartesian origin”), we should understand the relationship of two subjects from this logic.

(2) This mediation is a process of conflict and compromise, a process of becoming trace and cipher resistant to interpretation. A presentation (*Darstellung*) or representation (*Vorstellung*) of the unconscious is always a distortion (*Entstellung*) or disguise (*Verkleidung*). Mediated with the conscious, the unconscious cannot but suffer a deformation or transformation through

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9 Lacan, 47.
condensation and displacement. However, in his interpretation of dreams, Freud stresses that, within this process of distortion and disguise, one can always observe a birth of (hi)story. A dream is a kind of theatrical staging (*mise en scène*), in which the illusive actors are the doubles of the unconscious desire as well as its messengers.  

(3) If there is not an unconscious phenomenon separated from the conscious, there is not likewise a conscious phenomenon immune to unconscious desire. All over, the field of the conscious is already invaded and contaminated by the unconscious. This is a fact intimately related to the derivative status of the conscious; it is not after the conscious has arrived at a certain level that the unconscious is generated, but it is from the unconscious that the conscious comes into being. The unconscious is not the second sphere into which the ideas incompatible with the conscious are exiled. On the contrary, the conscious comes after the unconscious to delay and postpone or to realize it in a rational way so as to conform to reality. And this would be the reason why Freud had to introduce the hypothesis of primal repression (*Urverdrängung*).

One can read a similar reversion in Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy,* where he asks why the Greeks had to build the Olympus temple. For what purpose was such a bright and cheerful place constructed? According to Nietzsche, it was for the sake of survival; the Greeks were obliged to erect the world of Apollonian brilliancy, so that they could endure the original absurdity of being, experienced within the tragic wisdom of Dionysus. That was a place of refuge where they could tolerate the gruesome contradiction of this world, and the vomiting caused by it. That was an artificial place designed for the conservation of life.

It is not difficult to find an anti-Apollonian genealogy in Freud’s “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (sec. 4), where he talks about the origin of Kantian transcendental forms of perception, starting from the hypothesis of an undifferentiated vesicle, “which is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies” (27). To sustain its life, the vesicle has to maintain a certain relationship with external energies; but in direct relation those

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10 In *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by T. Murray, we can find good examples of studying the intimate relation between psychoanalysis and the theatre. See in particular A. Green, “The Psycho-analytic Reading of Tragedy”; J.-F. Lyotard, “The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scene”; Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, “Theatrum Anayticum.”

energies would give very violent shocks that could destroy it. So it must be provided with a “shield” that gives it a protection against stimuli from the external world as well as the selective reception of stimuli in a way conformable to its conservation of life. Relying on the embryological hypothesis that the central nervous system originates from the ectoderm, and the grey matter of the cortex from the primitive superficial layer of the organism, Freud proposed that the Kantian forms of perception are an evolved type of the shield with two functions of which “protection against stimuli is an almost more important function than reception of stimuli.” If the so-called transcendental forms and the system of the conscious have their place at the outer limits of the organism, their reception of external stimuli is already defensive. Perception is not pure reception, but a selective and distorting reception that postpones direct inflow of external violence.

Much like in Nietzsche’s genealogy of the Apollonian world, it is always the fear of death that gives rise to creative potential. In Freud’s genealogy of the Kantian transcendental forms, what is given as transcendental is not naturally given, but created in the fear of death, and this creation is nothing but self-defensive artificial operation against the possibility of being killed. The transcendental is a historical result of the creative powers that derive from the fear of death; it is death that gives what is given in the established culture as well as in nature. But what is the fear of death but death in life or life in death? The fear of death that lies at the origin of biological and cultural evolution is an intervention of death in life or an intervention of life in death: differential economy between life and death in a Derridian sense.

It is the Hegelian dialectic of master-slave relation that has been invented to historicize the Kantian transcendental cogito in a genealogical perspective, which one can read in Phenomenology of Spirit. The slave who appears in this dialectic incarnates the creative operation that the fear of death induces. The slave, the figure of consciousness who remains under the duty of labor for the master, is the author of historical poiesis. Subject to the fear of death as his only inner master, the working slave becomes ultimately the master of the cultural world. This dialectical genealogy is remarkable in that it presupposes an intersubjective relation as a necessary condition of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is a relation of self to self, but always mediated by another consciousness; I can have consciousness of myself only in so far as another self recognizes my relation to my self. The self-

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12 Ibid.
13 Hegel ch. 4.
relation is always dominated by the desire to be recognized by other.

It is well known that Lacan’s notion of desire (the desire is the desire of the Other) has for the background this Hegelian notion of desire for recognition. Kojève, who planted this idea in Lacanian psychoanalysis, has insisted upon the difference between animal desire and human desire. The difference is that human desire does not have for its object something physical, but symbolic; the desire for recognition which induces the struggle to death expresses an appetite for symbolic value, and it marks the abyss that separates the symbolic world of culture and the biological world of nature; the struggle for recognition to death is the first scene of the history of human culture. \(^{14}\) It is exactly this difference of the biological and the symbolic that inspired Lacan, not only in his conception of desire as desire of the Other, but more widely in his linguistic turn in general: the unconscious is an effect of symbolic exchange, and psychoanalysis is not separable from linguistic analysis.

However, besides the ideas of desire and creative intervention of death in life, there is a more fundamental aspect that Lacan inherits from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. That is to be found in the theatrical element which characterizes not only Hegelian phenomenology of spirit but also Lacanian “phenomenology of transference.” As already indicated above, the theatrical or story-making character is enumerated as a constitutive element of the unconscious phenomena in the Freudian “science of dreams” (the title of the first French translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams* was “La science de rêves”): the way that the unconscious phenomenalizes itself always takes the form of theatrical representation in the scenes in which it explicates itself in a (hi)story-making work.

In this respect, the Freudian theory of dreams could be regarded as a kind of dramaturge or dramatology. It is remarkable that the word *Darstellung* plays an important role in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The French translator of Hegel’s book, J. Hyppolite, who has also influenced Lacan in his reception of Hegel, translates it as *entrée en scène* or *mise en scène*. \(^{15}\) This translation seems to be more faithful to the spirit of Hegelian phenomenology than any others, like presentation or representation, because Hegelian phenomenology is a dramatology in which the description proceeds like a staging and the explication gets accomplished in a construction of dramatizing plot, as we can see not only in the master-slave dialectic but also in each chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Should not we translate still more the Freudian

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\(^{15}\) Cf. Hegel, *La Phénoménologie de l’esprit* 68.
Darstellung in the same way because it is Freud himself that strongly implied it by endowing the word with complex meanings quasi equivalent to those of Entstellung (distortion, displacement, disguise, concealment, delay, substitution, representation, etc.)? Don’t we have to interpret the Freudian psychoanalysis of dreams as a dramatology just like Hegelian phenomenology?

I use here the newly coined word dramatology rather than the word dramaturge or another. It is in order to highlight more explicitly the intimate relation that psychoanalysis seems to have with Derridian grammatology as well as Hegelian phenomenology. It would not be necessary to bring into relief a Hegelian aspect of Derridian deconstruction, which appears most distinct when it denounces every kind of “heterology” (thinking of pure difference such as that of Levinas, Foucault, Artaud, Bataille, etc.) in the name of Hegelian dialectical difference as self-relating (therefore self-contaminating, self-destructive, and self-transforming) difference (die sich auf sich beziehende Differenz). Derridian grammatology is also a dramatology in the sense that it tries to go back to the immemorial sin (self-contradiction) of metaphysical thinking, to the first story that opens and determines its whole history at the level of language. In this dramatology, the gramma (archi-writing, archi-trace, différance) is nothing but the archi-drama of the linguistic articulation that takes place at the limits between its inside and outside, the first scene in which metaphysical thinking at once denies and affirms its reliance on the outside.

One can have an impression that this dramatological element is weakened in Lacanian psychoanalysis, where story and history are substituted with formal mathèmes (algebraic and topological formulas). But on the contrary, these formal elements, which were invented to evade an imaginary intuition of psychoanalytic concepts, can be referred to as mythèmes (in a Lévi-Straussian sense), which permit a production of deconstructive drama. They double the dramatological potential of psychoanalysis, and formally crystallize the theatrical elements of the unconscious in liberating them from bondage of imagination.

For an example to illustrate this point, one can bring up the Lacanian theory of four discourses, which, as a typology of all theoretical discourses including

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17 This is most clearly visible in Derrida’s comments on Artaud. Cf. ibid., p. 368 in particular. In this concluding part, Derrida says that representation is “fatal,” that is, one cannot overcome, pass beyond representation.
philosophy, set into stage the basic pose and fundamental logic that a discourse has
to take in order to come into being and to develop itself within a consistent form of
desire. The Lacanian classification of discourses into the master, the university, the
hysteric, and the analyst is in a position to translate and substitute the Kantian or
Wittgensteinian classification of philosophical discourses into the dogmatic, the
skeptic, the critical, and the therapist. 18 Rearranging in a logical order the
dramaturgic components that all kind of philosophical discourses should presuppose
in common, this theory clearly expresses not only the primitive scenario that each
type of discourse takes to coordinate desire, but also its structural characteristic in
differential relation to the others. In this respect, the Lacanian theory of four
discourses could be called a mathematically rewritten phenomenology of spirit. It
could also be called a dramatology of desire, in that it shows the archi-dramas into
which desire has to fall to embody itself at the level of discourse.

Another good example to explain the dramatological power of Lacanian
psychoanalysis lies in its “phenomenology of transference.” 19 The first intriguing
motif of this phenomenology comes from its most important component: the fantasy.
Through fantasy the subject relates herself in a paradoxical way to the Real, which
invades into the symbolic order when the Other discloses its own lack, its desire,
and this desire taking the form of a question: “Che vuoi?” The fantasy is at the same
time a positive answer to the question and a negative defense to the death drive
residing in that question. Just like in Hegelian phenomenology, it is exactly the
defensive motif against the death drive that gives rise to the creative supplement in
Lacanian phenomenology; and the creative supplement in question is nothing but an
imaginary scenario constitutive of the fantasy itself. 20 It is an evolved form of the
protective surface comparable to “the shield” of the vesicle, which Freud has
supposed is at the origin of the Kantian transcendental forms of perception.

Similar to the Kantian transcendental scheme, the Lacanian fantasy is the
necessary condition of the possible object of desire in that it can only mediate an
empirical object (a signifier) and the death drive invading from the Real. 21 This
mediation proceeds with a production of the objet a, the object-cause of the desire,
which enables the subject to sustain itself in a consistent form of enjoyment beyond
the pleasure principle, while protecting the subject against the annihilating power of
the death drive. The Lacanian fantasy is a “screen” with which the subject becomes

20 Cf. ibid., 185.
able to “coordinate” his desire in a coherent way, but through which the direct relation with the Real is reserved and distorted in an economic way, so that the subject does not lose the possibility of appropriating a constantly new impulsion from the death drive. It is a theatrical stage, where two opposing terms like life and death, the real and the illusive or the canny and the uncanny come to overlap and affect one another in cohabitation.

However, the fantasy becomes a more intricate and tragic scenario when the subject (the analysand) falls into transference in relation to the Other (the analyst). In transference, the Other is supposed to know everything (the subject supposed to know). To maintain this supposition, which gives ground to the fantasy, the subject yields into deceptive love for the Other. When the Other exposes its lack in this love, the subject takes a pose to sacrifice herself so as to be an object of desire for the Other—an object which can fill up the lack of the Other.

The reason why the traversing of the fantasy is so important in the phenomenology of transference is to be found here. Without a separation of the subject from the Other who is supposed to know, “the dark God” who gives rise to radical fantasy, the psychoanalytic treatment cannot arrive at its conclusion. If the fantasy is the dramatic procedure of deceiving the Other with lack (barred Other) to make it the Other without lack (non-barred Other), the traversing of the fantasy is the procedure of restoring the artificially-created illusive, prefect Other to the primary imperfect Other with lack and desire.

III. Lacanian Approach to Heideggerian Weltnacht

When Žižek reads Lacan as Hegelian, and Hegel as Lacanian, this notion takes a central role. He regards the Lacanian traversing of fantasy and the Hegelian passage into Absolute Knowledge as equal and exchangeable with one another in their essential messages: Hegelian passage is not a passage into “the fantasy of a full discourse, without fault or discord, the fantasy of an Identity inclusive of all divisions,” but the liberation from such a fantasy, the last stage of the de-illusion and de-alienation, the most sublime passage of the hysteric. This means that the Hegelian move from Substance to Subject (Becoming-Subject of Substance) is not a

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24 Ibid., 275.
25 Žižek, Interrogating the real 50. Cf. also 31.
move from the barred S to the non-barred S, but from the non-barred to the barred.\textsuperscript{26}

Žižek’s reading seems to deserve attention in that it brings to light the most radical and original aspect of Hegelian thinking. But it is also true that his reading does not show us a systematic reconstruction of Hegel’s text. Far from being an immanent interpretation, his comment gives an impression of fragmentary allusion without touching the fundamental logic of Hegel. Furthermore, as Žižek himself indicates, if the Hegelian passage into Absolute Knowledge is a move beyond the fantasy of complete harmony, the Lacanian traversing is not at all a simple end of fantasy. Far from transcending fantasy, it is a move into a new mode of fantasy,\textsuperscript{27} into a sinthome, which, transcending all symbolic meaning, enables the subject to organize her own enjoyment by binding like a mystical string the triad of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary in a new way. So how can one say that Absolute Knowledge in the Hegelian sense corresponds to the phase of identification with the sinthome in the Lacanian sense as a kernel of enjoyment irreducible to the signifying structure? How can one explain that Absolute Knowledge is not the other side of all fantasy, but a transformation of fantasy, a transformation of symptom into sinthome?

All seems to depend on the position which one can take in relation to the final question that Hegel leaves to the following generations. The final question left by Hegelian thinking, which accomplishes itself in reminiscence (Erinnerung) of the whole history of Western metaphysics, is the question of a new beginning. Once arriving at its status of accomplishment as metaphysical thinking, where and how can philosophy recommence? If history began in the morning-land (Morgen-land) and was completed in the evening-land (Abend-land), where and how is it possible to reach a starting point of new history? This is in effect the primary problematic that determines post-Hegelian history of Western philosophy.

The privileged place that not only Nietzsche and Marx but also Freud occupies in the history of ideas is to be measured in the perspective of this problematic. The reason Heidegger’s and Derrida’s writings should be considered as great achievements of contemporary philosophy is to be cited here. With Nietzsche, they have made the historical closure of metaphysics more clearly visible in its paradoxical character; they have made the question of new beginning more sharply reformulated. The Deleuzian philosophy of non-organic life under the emblem of “Body without Organs” (BwO) would be misunderstood unless it was

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 349.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 273.
approached as an alternative answer to the same question. They are all in competition for the primitive scene of a new beginning that is expected after the Hegelian picture of an historical sunset. If the history of Western metaphysics begins with Plato’s fable of the cave, as Heidegger says, in which fable will the opening of a new millennium be marked in the future history of ideas? Will it be marked in trans-valuation of all values by the Dionysian Will to Power; in poetical or grammatological transformation of language; in hantological return of other; or in experiment of $BwO$?

As far as Žižek places the Lacanian traversing of fantasy at the same level with Hegelian Absolute Knowledge, one should locate the Lacanian notion in the context of this problematic of new beginnings in order to measure its deconstructive effect for past ideas and its opening power for future thinking in differential relation with other contemporary theories. However, to return to the previous problem, is it possible to pass directly from Hegelian Absolute Knowledge to Lacanian traversing of fantasy without ambiguity? Is it possible to interpret the Hegelian passage as a move to identification with sinthome in the Lacanian sense? It is not so easy to find a decisive ground for this in Hegel’s text on Absolute Knowledge itself; and it is here that Žižek’s Lacanian interpretation of Hegel leaves some room for controversy. A Korean proverb says: “The interpretation of a dream is better than the dream itself.” Short of sufficient philological justification, Žižek’s original thesis is susceptible to give a similar impression. So, following the way that Žižek has opened, I want to present three textual examples to complement his argument on *Hegel with Lacan and Lacan with Hegel*.

(1) The first is the notion of self-relating negation (*die sich auf sich beziehende Negativität*), which plays the central role in *Science of Logic* as well as in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is a name for the essence of things, for the life of every physical and spiritual thing.

Understood in the context of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this notion emerges in annihilating the ontological status of the thing as substance. That the essence of thing consists in self-relating negation means that thing is nothing but a knot of the differential relations which it has with others; thing as self-identical substance is an illusion. b) Understood in the context of *Science of Logic*, the notion signifies the

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28 Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 76 (par. 126). Cf. also 100 (par. 162).
impossibility of distinction and the topological identity between essence and
illusion. If the essence of thing consists in self-relating negation, the essence of
essence lies in the movement of appearing (Er-scheinung). Essence can appear only
in so far as it does not cease to become an illusive show (Schein) - an illusive show
which is obliged to disappear in order to give its place to another illusion after
having occupied the place of essence. Essence as ground (Grund) does not exist in a
place separated from that of illusion, but in the movement of disappearing (Zu-
grunde-gehen) of the illusion, in the retrospective representation (mourning) of the
disappeared (Ge-wesen). c) Regarded in the context of the contemporary philosophy
of difference, such as Derrida, the notion of self-relating negation implies the
impossibility of pure presence. It changes the identity of thing into a differential
and the difference into an identical; by its repetitive movement of negating itself,
the identity and the difference are mediated one with another and converted into
opposing terms. What is, is in différance in a Derridian sense.

Without understanding this notion of self-relating negation, one could not
comprehend clearly why Žižek is right when he says vaguely that “Hegelian
Absolute Substance/Subject is not constipated – ever retaining the devoured content.
But what about the counter-movement—Hegelian shitting, defecation?” The
Hegelian defecation, thus follows the rhythm of self-relating negation, by which
substance (content) acquires gradually a formal order. This is exactly the becoming-
subject of substance in the Hegelian sense. If Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is “a
thoroughly emptied subject, a subject reduced to the role of pure observer of the
self-movement of content itself,” this is because the self-movement of content
consists of self-relating negation, and what Hegel calls subject corresponds to the
pure formal aspect which becomes more and more visible in the rhythm of that self-
reflexive negation. Absolute Knowledge is the last phase where the formal logic of
the self-movement of nature, culture or history, emerges in a universal validity, in a
completely verified certitude, at the level of totality.

Hegelian totality, as far as it is constituted by such a self-subversive rhythm,
cannot avoid a lack. As Žižek says, it cannot avoid being “a barred S.” Its substance
or content remains always in a movement of Zu-grunde-gehen of the accidental
shows, in which the Grund, the self-relating negation appears and takes a
progressively more generalized form. The passage into Absolute Knowledge is a

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30 Derrida, Écriture et Différence 227-8, n. 1. Derrida opposes here the self-relating difference
of Hegel to the pure difference of Levinas.
31 Žižek, Interrogating the real 348.
32 Ibid.
sublime moment of enlightenment in which one realizes that a closed totality, a “non-barred Other without symptoms” is an illusion: the totality is “a barred Other with desire” invaded by an inexorable movement of self-relating negation. To speak in Lacanian terms, is it not a moment of discovering the ultimate source of desire? Does not desire of Spirit, desire of Hegelian Other come from this self-repeating and self-reflexive negation? With regard to this self-reflexive negation, is it not the very impulse that, at the level of Spirit, corresponds to the death drive in the Lacanian sense?

(2) The second supplementary textual example is a passage that one can find in the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “The True is the Whole”\(^{[33]}\); “the true is thus the Bacchanalian revel, in which no member is not drunken; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose.”\(^{[34]}\) Hegelian Spirit has two faces. It is an Apollonian totality so far as it remains sober at the level of wholeness; but it is a Dionysian totality so far as its constitutive (but evanescent) elements are drunken. If one can say about a Dionysian Spirit, it is because the German word *Geist* has a meaning of alcohol, which one can see in examples like *Kapergeist* (spirit of camper) and *Weingeist* (spirit of alcohol).\(^{[35]}\) Due to such a meaning, Hegel’s description of Spirit as Bacchanalian frenzy gets more rhetorical coherence. Furthermore, far from being a void rhetoric, this is an adequate expression for self-relating negation, the Hegelian death drive which puts the partial elements into chaotic movement. As mentioned above, the Apollonian brightness of the Temple of Olympus is a result of protective gestures against the danger of Dionysian world experience in the eyes of Nietzsche. In the eyes of Freud, the Kantian transcendental forms of perception derive from “the shield” of the vesicle against the violent external energies. Is it not also just from the defensive labor against the fatal drive of the self-relating negation that each figure of consciousness originates in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*?\(^{[36]}\) Is not the Apollonian aspect of Hegelian Spirit a protective illusion, a derivative double against its Dionysian aspect?

The primary metaphor which represents the Apollonian aspect of Hegelian Spirit is the metaphor of sun. That emerges in the preface to the *Lectures on

\(^{[33]}\) G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 11.

\(^{[34]}\) Ibid., 27


\(^{[36]}\) G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 19: “But the life of Spirit is . . . the life that endures death and maintains itself in it . . . . This tarrying with the negative . . . this power is identical with what we earlier called Subject” (19).
Philosophy of History where the historical course of Spirit is compared to one day’s itinerary of the sun. Yet one needs here to pay attention to the fact that the binary opposition of day and night is intimately related with that of the actual (Wirklich) and the possible/virtual (Möglich) in Hegel. One can see it in the decisive formulas concerning Spirit and Science (Wissenschaft) in Phenomenology of Spirit, such as in: “That the True is actual only as system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit. . . . The spiritual alone is the actual.” Self-development of Hegelian Spirit consists of a double movement, becoming-subject of substance and becoming-substance of subject, which is dominated by self-relating negation. The important point is that this double movement is always a movement from the possible/virtual to the actual. The pure drive of self-relating negation actualizes itself by actualizing the virtual subject (form) and substance (content) into actuality. Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is the very moment in which the drive of self-repeating negation is experienced in its pure actuality on the surface of the completely actualized Spirit, completely realized identity of Subject and Substance.

But as soon as actualized in its purity, the great Identity would begin to be gradually broken into pieces by a direct impact from the violent drive of self-returning negation. By losing more and more daylight so as to fall into total darkness, Spirit has to enter into a new big cycle of history. This would be exactly the moment of sunset described in the preface to the Lectures on Philosophy of History, the moment of historical accomplishment of Spirit, in which a totally new type of Spirit with unexpected content and form will be impregnated. Yet this would be an impregnation made by the effort that the historically accomplished Spirit has to make, an impregnation made not in another place but in the old Spirit itself. Such effort would be needed for Spirit to protect herself, to make a shield or refuge against the pure drive of self-returning negativity. This moment is a dark night of virtuality, a night of transition, in which a totally different big Other, totally different language is under formation behind ancient ones. Is it not exactly what Heidegger called the world’s night (Weltacht)?

(3) One of the key terminologies that Lacan invented in his later years is

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37 Ibid., 14. Cf. also 15: “So long as Science lacks this actual dimension, it is only the content as the in-itself . . . not yet Spirit, but only spiritual Substance.”

38 In the writings of young Hegel, we can find a similar expression, “world of night(Nacht der Welt).” Cf. Hegel, Jenaer Realphilosophie 180-81. But that means here a world of phantasmagorical images and representations, a world of drives and jouissance. Cf. Žižek’s discussion about it, The Ticklish Subject, The Absent Center of Political Ontology 29-30.
sinthome. This word was coined in his comment on James Joyce.39 In this comment, the great novelist is described as a subject who, in failing to have “the Name of the Father,” has created a totally new language in order to protect himself against the danger of psychosis which comes from the absence of the Name of the Father. In Joycean destruction and rebuilding of old normal language into new but abnormal language, Lacan sees not simply a symptom but a sinthome which, in place of the Name of the Father, ties up as supplementary knot the triad of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary.

If the Name of the Father is the final binding string of three orders and the sinthome is a supplementary knot capable to replace that main string, it is remarkable that the metaphor of knot plays also an important role in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* where each figure of consciousness is represented as a knot which binds antecedent figures in itself.40 Understood in this metaphor, Hegelian Spirit is the final binding string that ties up all constitutive elements of culture; and the self-relating negativity which we have described above as equal to the death drive in the Lacanian sense is nothing but the fatal movement of tying and untying the string of Spirit. One should say that, at the moment of Absolute Knowledge, this double aspect of binding and unbinding drive is completely known in its sovereignty over every historical form and content, over every phenomenal subject and substance so as to become a separated object of the *Science of Logic*.41

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40 As an example of paying attention to the metaphors of knot and bind in Hegel, cf. Luis Mariano de la Maza, *Knoten und Bund: Zum Verhältnis von Logik, Geschichte und Religion in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*.
41 It is exactly from this point of view that we can evaluate Žižek’s seductive interpretation of the Hegelian self-relating negation. His interpretation is remarkable in four points.

1) Žižek explains the Hegelian “negation of negation” as “the logic of the passage from In-itself to For-itself,” as “the logic of repetition.” *The Ticklish Subject*: “when a thing becomes ‘for itself,’ nothing actually changes in it; it just repeatedly asserts (‘re-marks’) what it already was in itself” (74). The second negation is thus a radicalizing repetition of the first one, this first one being a pathological self-deception of the subject in relation to the substance. We can say with Žižek that this repetitive passage is the passage from the perspective of understanding to the perspective of reason.

2) Žižek regards however the Hegelian logic of double negation as the logic of double death. *Ibid.*: “the first, immediate ‘negation’ of A negates the position of A while remaining within its symbolic confines, so it must be followed by another negation, which then negates the very symbolic space common to A and its immediate negation. . . . Here the gap that separates the negated system’s ‘real’ death from its ‘symbolic’ death is crucial: the system has to die twice” (72). In Žižek’s reading, it is not thus the Hegelian self-relating negation itself that corresponds to the Lacanian death drive; the death drive breaks out between two deaths, between “symbolic” death...
Translated in Lacanian terms, the Hegelian passage into Absolute Knowledge that corresponds to the historical scene of sunset would form an era of transition, in which the Name of the Father is weakened in its function of structuring cultural history. In such an era, the sinthome would play a role of the supplementary copula in the absence of the Name of the Father. In the Heideggerian perspective on history, the traversing of the metaphysical fantasy is a status of going through the oblivion of the ontological difference between Being and beings, and the world’s night (Weltmacht) is a name for the unprecedented era in which the difference of the Orient and the Occident disappears. Estimated in the light of globalization, which is being accelerated at the present time by a self-universalizing tendency of capital and technology, this naming seems to be prophetic. Yet it is still more evident that, despite of the close adhesion that takes place between the Orient and the Occident in globalization through capital and technology, one cannot anticipate any other symbol (besides capital and technology) which could function as the Name of the Father or as the World’s Spirit (Weltgeist), any other symbol which could gather and tie together both sides. This is an era in which are expected more examples of a sinthome, more examples of a synth-homme as subject of creative “artificial” synthesis, more examples of a saint-homme “who is able to invent a new way of

(Culture) and “real” death (Nature). Cf. ibid., 81-83.

3) In another place, Žižek distributes each of two negations constitutive of the Hegelian “negation of negation” respectively to the subject and to the substance. Ibid.: “the first negation consists in the subject’s move against the social Substance . . . and the subsequent ‘negation of negation’ is nothing but the revenge of the Substance . . . ‘Negation of negation’ presupposes no magic reversal: it simply signals the unavoidable displacement or thwartedness of the subject’s teleological activity . . . ‘negation of negation’ is the very logical matrix of the necessary failure of the subject’s project” (76-7). But is such a distribution always justifiable? The Hegelian self-relating negation, does it not operate in the subject as well as in the substance? Is it not the ontological rhythm common to the subject and the substance, to the form and the content?

4) Žižek’s interpretation of the Hegelian self-relating negation seems to be intimately related with his original conception of the Hegelian subject. His fundamental strategy consists in reading the Hegelian subject as (or with) the Lacanian and vice versa. In this way, he could explain explicitly “Hegel’s break with Kantian idealism.” Ibid.: “while he admitted [with Kant] that there is no reality without the subject, Hegel insisted that subjectivity is inherently ‘pathological’ . . . . Hegel’s achievement was thus to combine . . . the ontologically constitutive character of the subject’s activity with the subject’s irreducible pathological bias. . . . when these two features are thought together . . . we obtain the notion of a pathological bias constitutive of ‘reality’ itself” (78). But does this successful way of interpreting the Hegelian subject always justify Žižek’s reading of the Hegelian logic?
using language to organize enjoyment.”\textsuperscript{42} Is it simply a rhetorical exaggeration to say that we are passing through a \textit{Finnegan's Wake} which awaits a new historical break of day, a new historical sunrise?

\textbf{Works Cited}


\textsuperscript{42} This formulation is borrowed from Dylan Evans, \textit{An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis} 189.

We can compare this psychoanalytic conception of the “new way of using language to organize enjoyment” with the Heideggerian conception of “the transformation of language at another beginning,” another beginning in the History of Being. Cf. R. Bernasconi, \textit{The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being} ch. 6; Heidegger in \textit{Question: the Art of Existing} ch. 11.

**About the Author**
Sang-Hwan Kim is Professor of Philosophy at the Seoul National University, and Director of SNU Institute of Philosophy (2007-2010). He is the author of *Philosophy in the Age of Deconstruction* (Moonji: Seoul, 1996), *Philosophy since Nietzsche, Freud and Marx* (Changbi: Seoul, 2002) as well as another books on French philosophy and aesthetics. He is also the translator of G. Deleuze (*Différence et répétition*) and of J.
Hyppolite (Genese et structure de la phénoménologie de l’esprit de Hegel, co-translation).
Email: kimsh@snu.ac.kr

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