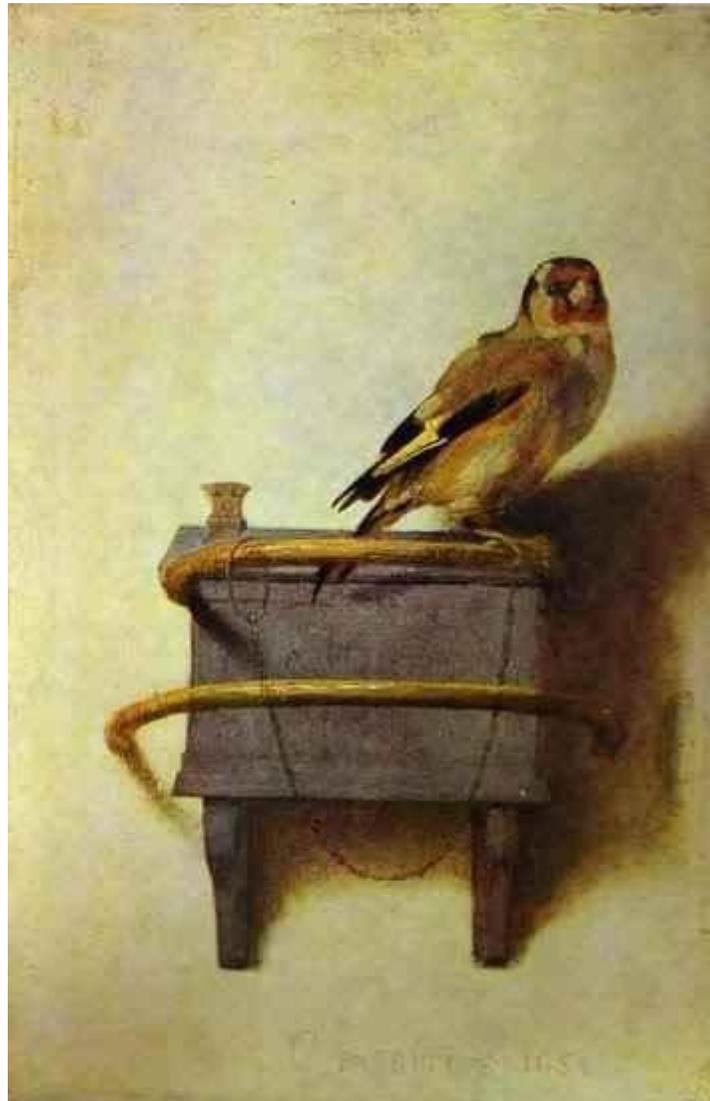


Global Capitalism and Nihilism

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Abstract

Since the German philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi introduced the concept of nihilism to the philosophical vocabulary in 1799, it has been employed in philosophy along with sociology, theology, literature and in various kinds of arts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in different contexts and with different contents. It has been argued in this study that there is an explicit relation between nihilism and global capitalism insofar as nihilism is dealt with as state of existence. Since Jacobi never elaborated the concept of nihilism, which he used as a mere derogatory term to demonize Kantian and Fichtean philosophical positions, it has been incumbent upon this study to reconstruct and deconstruct it through existential philosophy (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger) by the accompaniment of critical theory (Adorno) and various thinkers and writers; from Turgenev to D. H. Lawrence etcetera. In the course of the investigation of the concept of nihilism, it has become evident that nihilism as state of existence cannot be dealt with without having an understanding of existential valence of interpretations. Thus, the first chapter has been devoted to this task which has been implemented through emphasizing the distinction between faith and beliefs. The conclusion reached through this task is that interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence in the process of constitution of interpretations. By accomplishing this task, the concept of nihilism has been re-constructed as positive nihilism, negative nihilism, and nihilism as state of existence. Through a series of discussions and confrontations, nihilism as state of existence has been defined as that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness by the accompaniment of valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion. In the last chapter, a conceptual analysis of capitalism, globalization, and global capitalism has been provided. The conclusion reached through this conceptual analysis is that global capitalism is that which determines state of existence of the subjects through its objective powers, namely, private property, profitability, and the market. From this argument it has followed that the conditions in which the subject constructs its interpretations are succumbed to nihilism as state of existence.

To Beyza Gül and Umay

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Introduction

Although there are many references to the concept of nihilism in the works that deal with global capitalism or globalization, the concept of nihilism and global capitalism have not yet been parsed in relation with each other. This study is then a road map for those who wish to study these two phenomena together. It has been pointed out that ‘The wide-ranging impact of globalization on human existence means that it necessarily touches on many basic philosophical questions.’¹ The philosophical question that has been dealt with in this study is ‘What does it mean to exist in a state of existence that is created by global capitalism?’ The primordial thesis of this study, then, is that state of existence created by global capitalism is succumbed to nihilism. Since to exist in a sense means to interpret, the problem formulation has been designated as follows: How do the constitution and the construction of interpretations lead to nihilism as state of existence that is created by global capitalism?

The constitution of interpretations has been dealt with in the first chapter by sharpening the distinction between faith and beliefs. The question for this chapter is: how are interpretations constituted? The conclusion reached through this question is that interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence. In the end of the first chapter, a confrontation with Searle, who argues that certain, objective, and universal knowledge is a possibility, necessity, and actuality which must be a starting point for philosophy in the twenty-first century, has been operated. Searle’s argument has been refused, coining the term the ‘jargon of capital’ for his position to indicate that an absolute belief in science and in the ‘existing order’ is that which is implausible. The term the ‘jargon of capital’ has been taken up in the third chapter with a more detailed discussion.

In the second chapter, the concept of nihilism has been scrutinized by beginning with the philosophical tradition, i.e., Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi, in which it was developed and was introduced to the philosophical vocabulary. The concept of nihilism, then, has been taken up under the subchapters of positive nihilism, of negative nihilism, and of nihilism as state of existence. Positive nihilism has been defined as that which is a methodological necessity, and as a theoretical precondition, while negative nihilism has been defined as that which is merely a derogatory term devoid of plausible philosophical content. And finally, nihilism as state of existence has been defined as

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, article on Globalization. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/>

that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness by the accompaniment of valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion.

The third chapter has been designated to test and apply the insights that had been derived from the previous chapters. For this testing and application, a conceptual analysis of the terms capitalism, globalization, and global capitalism has been operated. The insights derived from this conceptual analysis have indicated that global capitalism is that which determines state of existence of the subjects through private property, profitability, and the market. These three objective powers, it has been argued, lead to a state of existence which is nihilistic. Nihilism as state of existence has been finally defined as that which is succumbed to the constantly nullification of everyday moods by agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment.

Method and Problem Formulation

It is a particular interpretation that makes the suicide bomber, who makes the others witness the death, witness the death. It is a particular interpretation that drags one every day to the work in order to be exploited either in a so-called welfare state or in a so-called developing country. It is a particular interpretation that drags one to the stock market to wager on the financial speculations to quench one's thirstiness for the profit. It is a particular interpretation that determines one's state of existence as nihilistic created by the very order called global capitalism. Such examples can of course be expanded into infinity.

Yet, herein there is something problematic that immediately appears and that ought to be dealt with scrupulously. The problematic lies in the fact that the suicide bomber along with those who extol his/her action does not consider what s/he does as simply a deadly sheer act of violence. For him/her what s/he does is not committing suicide at all but is a brave act that would bring liberation to his/her nation or political group which is defined as terrorist by its rivals and by the so-called 'international community.' A worker does not consider his/her activity as simply being exploited. A speculator does not consider his/her deed as cupidity. One would hardly consent to the fact that one's state of existence is nihilistic. One would also probably deny the fact that one's state of existence is determined by an order called global capitalism.

But do all these mean that murder, terrorism, exploitation, cupidity, nihilistic state of existence created by global capitalism do not exist? A hasty 'yes' or 'no' is not capable of overcoming the problematic that is encountered and that ought to be confronted with. A 'yes' or a 'no' will be nothing else than intensifying the problematic that will therefore immediately beget countless others. A way to deal and confront with such a problematic would be to probe the constitution of interpretations in general and to vivisect, as it were, its existential valence through a philosophical approach in particular. This philosophical approach is operated within and through existentialist philosophy (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger) and critical theory. (Adorno)

To vivisect existential valence of the constitution of interpretations is to engage in a philosophical approach that takes existence itself as a fundamental and ultimate question: *What does it mean to constitute interpretations as faith or as beliefs?* To take existence as such a question is a link for a theoretical concatenation that is a *sine qua*

non for this study, since to understand the way global capitalism creates state of existence of subjects would be to understand the way nihilism as state of existence becomes a property of subjects through meaninglessness and nothingness. If the subjects fall prey into nihilism as state of existence no other way than the act of interpretation as faith or as beliefs, then to interpret existential valence of interpretation is the only way to accomplish such a linking to reach out a theoretical concatenation that makes this study meaningful as a whole. Thus, to pose the question of ‘What does it mean to constitute interpretations as faith or beliefs?’ is intertwined with the question that ‘What does it mean to exist?’ Since the latter is the fundamental question of existential philosophy, it would follow that the first can only be interpreted within and through the latter. Yet, existential philosophy by no means aims at providing an ultimate answer for both questions toward which its position is unequivocal. ‘The value of life’, Nietzsche writes, ‘cannot be estimated.’² Or as Heidegger remarks: ‘What is man? A transition, a direction, a storm sweeping over our planet, a recurrence or a vexation for the Gods? We do not know.’³ By that statement Nietzsche does not mean that one cannot talk about how, why, and in what way the subjects estimate the value of their own life but rather he means that nobody and nothing can determine what the value of existence is in the form of a final judgment. Nor does Heidegger mean that one cannot speak of what kind of transition human beings experience, what direction they take, how they do or do not come to terms with the planet on which they dwell and so on; but he perhaps argues that a final answer with regard to what life is is not possible at all. Even fierce critics of existential philosophy such as Tillich, the protestant theologian, admits that in spite of the fact that existential philosophers’ utterances are paradoxical, fragmentary, extremely aggressive, passionate, revolutionary, prophetic and ecstatic; none of these has prevented them ‘from achieving fundamental insights into the sociological structure of modern society, and the psychological dynamics of modern man, into the originality and the spontaneity of life, into the paradoxical character of religion and the Existential roots of knowledge.’⁴ If this is the case, then the reason to mesh with existential philosophy in this study lies in aiming at achieving some insights concerning the sociological structure of post-modern society that is shaped by global capitalism, the psychological dynamics of post-political subject who exists under the conditions determined by global capitalism, whether or not there is a possibility for the originality and the spontaneity of life that are decided by the post-political structure of global capitalism in the name of post-political subjects, and the paradoxical and *deceptive* character of religion through existential roots of knowledge i.e., existential valence of interpretations as faith or as beliefs.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols*, ‘The Problem of Socrates’, 2, trans., Walter Kaufmann, Available at: <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/twi.htm>

³ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans., W. McNeil and N. Walker, Indiana University Press, 1995, p.7

⁴ Paul Tillich, ‘Existential Philosophy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 5, No.1. (Jan., 1944), pp.44-70

It has been argued in the first chapter that interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence. This proposition includes a conceptual analysis of beliefs and of faith. Although it has convincingly been argued not so long ago that knowledge and beliefs are not the exclusive property of human beings and that a plover or a chimpanzee can also possess knowledge and beliefs⁵, interpretation that is dealt with in the first chapter is always an interpretation of somebody, a subject that is a human being. Since no interpretation is possible without taking something as true, it follows then that every interpretation done by the subject is at the same time a belief. But what is the difference between a faith and a belief? While faith always takes something divine as true, a belief does not. For instance, while the statement ‘I can fly’ takes an ‘I’ and the act of flying as something true; the statement ‘God exists’ takes a God and its existence. While the first is a belief, the latter is a faith. A plover or a chimpanzee can then only be able to possess beliefs but not faith.

The antithetical character of the discrepancy between beliefs and faith imposes itself when justification is required and demanded by another subject or subjects. Consider the statements such as ‘I can fly’ and ‘God exists.’ If one takes for granted the fact that there *is* an ‘I’, then the only thing that is needed for justification of this belief is to observe by other subjects whether or not *I have ever been seen* in the air. The same procedure is not possible for a faith at all. The existence of God is only written in scriptures. If one has faith in the truthfulness of scripture, God *exists*; if not, it does not. ‘Scripture’, Gadamer writes, ‘is the word of God, and that means it has an absolute priority over the doctrine of those who interpret it.’⁶ Thus, the subject that has faith and interprets is bound to give the priority to a holy text instead of the abilities with which the subject itself interprets. That the subject gives the priority to something else than its own reason is the proof of the inferiority of faith in comparison with beliefs; in so far as human reason is to be taken as the ultimate vantage point without falling prey to a crass anthropocentrism. This is why; Kant had to deny knowledge to make room for faith⁷, meaning that where there is faith there is no knowledge.

Yet, the inferiority of faith in the face of beliefs does not bestow an absolute superiority on beliefs. Nor does it mean that –in spite of the fact that beliefs have always a potential to be justified within and through a language – *the* knowledge acquired by interpretations as beliefs is always reliable and always possesses a haecceity to be true. Thus, the proposition of *interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence* suggests that whenever

⁵ Hilary Kornblith, ‘The Metaphysical Status of Knowledge’, *Philosophical Issues*, 17, *The Metaphysics of Epistemology*, 2007

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Continuum, 2002 (1960), p. 330-1

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and eds., Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998 (1781), B XXXi

an act of interpretation is at stake, the constitution of interpretations falls out as epistemological violence within and through language.

Herein, another distinction has to be made between the *constitution* and the *construction* of interpretations as beliefs. It has been argued in the first chapter that due to the existential conditions that the constitution of interpretations is subjected to all interpretations as beliefs do possess the same existential valence, referring to Wittgenstein's argument that 'All propositions are of equal value.'⁸ But this is only the case as far as the constitution of interpretations as beliefs is concerned. This is not the case, however, as far as the construction of interpretations is concerned. That is, the subject in a sense does not constitute its interpretations as beliefs but constructs them out of already constructed interpretations. This means that the subject does not only internalizes the conditions through which the constitution of interpretations falls out but also constructs interpretations under the conditions that the subject has always already internalized. To use a Heideggerian language, the subject's relation to interpretations is not only ontological via which the subject constitutes interpretations, but also ontical via which the subject constructs interpretations. It is this construction of interpretations as beliefs via which the subject *acts* in a human community; being still in the grip of conditions in which the subject constitutes interpretations as epistemological violence. Thus, the distinction between ontological constitution of interpretations and the ontically construction of interpretations ceases to be an acute one and therefore substantiates existential valence of interpretations rather than contradicting it. From this it follows that all interpretations as beliefs possess the same existential valence in terms of the constitution of interpretations as beliefs but not in terms of the construction of interpretations as beliefs. Yet by this, the violation that the subject perpetrates and that the subject is victimized by in the constitution of interpretations, as just explained above, does not cease to haunt the subject in the construction of interpretations at all. The subject does not construct its interpretations with which it exists in isolation from the conditions that are determined by the economical, cultural, political, and thus ontological conditions of a human community in which the subject exists. In other words, the subject, to use the terminology of Lyotard, does not constitute its interpretations as beliefs by *choosing* them but constructs them by *selecting* some of interpretations as beliefs that have already been constituted and constructed *not* for the subject but in spite and in the absence of the subject. 'In spite of' here denotes the power structure that imposes the conditions in which the subject constructs interpretations and acts. 'In the absence of' here indicates what is called tradition which is the totality of interpretations that have been constructed by the subjects that belong to the previous generations.

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans., D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, Routledge, (1921),6.4, p. 86

Herein, an example would be illuminating. In his seminal work, *Crowd and Power*, when Canetti analyses existential roots of the command, he points out that every command consists of momentum and sting. The momentum forces the one who receives the command to act in accordance with the content of the command. However, the sting remains behind in him/her and sinks deep into the person who has received the command and in the psychological structure of whom the sting has ever been stored up as long as s/he is alive. ‘Those’, Canetti writes, ‘most beset by commands are children. It is a miracle that they ever survive the pressure and do not collapse under the burden of the commands laid on them by their parents and teachers. That they in turn, and equally cruel form should give identical commands to their children is as natural as mastication or speech. What is surprising is the way in which commands are retained intact and unaltered from earliest childhood, ready to be used again as soon as the next generation provides victims.’⁹ The adaptation and application of commands by every generation cannot be considered without certain interpretations as beliefs, that is, indeed, they are cause and consequence of certain interpretations as beliefs. If so, the adaptation and application of commands turn out to be an excellent example to understand the distinction between the constitution and the construction of interpretations as beliefs. The subject adapts and applies commands through constructing them as interpretations. Yet, this construction is still subjected to the conditions under which the subject constitutes interpretations as beliefs that are only possible as epistemological violence. The entire first chapter therefore deals with the constitution of interpretations rather than the construction of them. The consequences of the construction of interpretations will be parsed in the third chapter: ‘Global capitalism and Nihilism’

Herein, a second problematic rears its head, so to speak. If interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence, then this will of course have to mean that this proposition, ‘interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence’, is only possible as an interpretation. This is to say that this proposition is also an interpretation as a belief or a totality of interpretations as beliefs. How? The proposition relies on beliefs that there exists an act of interpretation; that there exists an epistemology; that the way interpretation falls out is violent; and that there exists a possibility which is the only one and through which the act of interpretation falls out as epistemological violence; not to mention the fact that there exists a subject that interprets. The entire first chapter has been devoted to justify these interpretations as beliefs.

Yet, the accomplishment of the justification of such interpretations as beliefs would not be adequate if this justification only includes a consistency in itself. Such an undertaking must therefore be accompanied by a belief as a principle that would be a justification for the entire study itself. Since this study is a philosophical

⁹ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans., Carol Stewart, The Viking Press, 1963 (1960), pp., 303-6

interpretation of global capitalism within and through existential philosophy and critical theory, such a principle must be constituted in order that it may reach out an objectivity that must go beyond both philosophy as science and philosophy as the proclamation for a worldview.¹⁰

It has recently been argued that objectivity might mean ‘excluding subjectivity’ in a natural-scientific context and might mean ‘consciously including subjectivity’ in a human-scientific context.¹¹ Since it is impossible to exclude subjectivity in a human-scientific context in which this study is operated, the only way to reach out an objectivity that alone possesses the possibility for the justification of this study is to espouse a conscious inclusion of subjectivity. An adamant critique of faith is the clearest manifestation of this inclusion.

There are two reasons for a conscious inclusion of subjectivity through particularly a critique of faith. According to Maziar Etemadi who supervises this study, there has not recently been much criticism of religion. The atheist position elaborated by philosophers such as Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx specifically pointed toward the alienating character of religion has been neglected in the form of a religious awakening.¹² ‘In our time’, Etemadi writes, ‘when the revival of religion is an undeniable fact, there is the greatest need for a criticism of religion.’¹³ The first reason for a conscious inclusion of subjectivity through a critique of faith is therefore an attempt for such a criticism of religion from an atheist position.

The second reason is intimately related to the content of this study itself. According to Nietzsche, the root of nihilism is a particular interpretation i.e., the Christian-moral one,¹⁴ a point which has been neglected by most of the commentators who deal with the concept of nihilism. It has been argued in the second chapter that nihilism as a state of existence first manifests itself through faith. So, a conscious inclusion of subjectivity through a critique of faith will not only provide a position that aims at reaching out objectivity but also an antidote against such nihilism.

Thus, the problem formulation for this study is as follows:

¹⁰ See especially Chapter 1, Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans., W. McNeil and N. Walker, Indiana University Press, 1995

¹¹ Thomas Teo, ‘From Speculation to Epistemological Violence in Psychology’, *Theory & Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 18(1): 47-67

¹² Recently, even the ‘progressive’ liberals have participated to the caravan of such religious awakening. See for example, John Gray, ‘The Atheist Delusion’, *The Guardian*, 15 February 2008

¹³ Maziar Etemadi, ‘Philosophical Reflections on the Cartoon Controversy’, *Philosophy and Science*, No. 2, 2006, Danish Center for Philosophy and Science Studies, Aalborg University.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans., Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, 1968, 1, p.7

How do the constitution and the construction of interpretations lead to nihilism as state of existence that is created by global capitalism?



Chapter One: Interpretation as Epistemological Violence

'Dialectics' involves knowledge of the proper behavior in disputations among the adherents of the legal schools and others. The choices of rejection and acceptance in disputations are numerous. In arguing and answering, each disputant lets himself go. Some of the argument is correct; some of it is wrong. Therefore the authorities had to lay down the proper rules of behavior by which the disputants would have to abide. These concern rejection and acceptance; how the person advancing an argument should behave and how the person replying to it should behave; when it is permissible for a disputant to advance an argument; how he (should admit) defeat and stop; when he should interrupt or contradict his opponent; and where he should be silent and permit his opponent to talk and advance his arguments. It has, therefore, been said that this discipline is the knowledge of the basic rules of proper behavior in arguing, which help either to safeguard an opinion or to demolish it, whether that opinion concerns jurisprudence or any other subject...

Ibn Khaldun, 'Dialectics', *The Muqaddimah*¹⁵

Symphonic Etudes

Existential valence of interpretation - Beliefs – Faith

Of all that is written, I love only what a person hath written with his blood.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The proposition of interpretation as epistemological violence (EV) first of all suggests that *interpretation is only possible as (EV)*. But what is to interpret? To interpret primordially means to deal with something as an entity within and through a language. In this sense, interpretation is the most fundamental condition to *exist*, that is, it is the only place where a human being can and must dwell qua *Being*. If I exist as long as I interpret and if I

¹⁵ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Abridged edition with a new introduction by Bruce B. Lawrence, trans., Franz Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 348

interpret as long as I exist, then the proposition of interpretation as (EV) is first of all to acknowledge and to accentuate the *existential valence*, this term has been derived from Gadamer¹⁶, of *interpretation*.

The essentiality of this acknowledgement and accentuation requires another proposition: Regardless any kind of hierarchical order with regard to their specific characteristics and functions, interpretation *does encompass* the linguistic activities such as *thinking, understanding, introspection, abstraction, rationalization, translation, representation, speculation, juxtaposition, conceptualization, examination, intuition, apprehension, presumption, cognition, perception, observation, description, reflection, comprehension, proposition, predication, and judgment*. If I am writing about something, as I am doing now, for example, then I am *also* thinking about what I am writing; I am understanding certain concepts, perceiving this computer and that book, observing certain facts, describing provisionally certain things, reflecting on certain theories, comprehending certain perspectives, and reaching out certain judgments and so on. All these *activities* can be and *are* subsumed under the phenomenon of interpretation.

At the same time, I am sitting on this chair, looking at the street through the window, listening to Brahms' Clarinet Trio, drinking the tea, rolling a cigarette, talking to my lady, and thinking about the fact that I *must* go to the work in forty minutes.

Now I suddenly stop and ask: What am I *doing*? What is the *meaning* of all these concepts, of this computer or that book, of facts, of things, of theories, of perspectives, of theses? Am I really *doing* all these? Do they really exist? Do I *really* exist? Why do I have to go to the work soon? Can I answer all these questions satisfactorily? Can I be sure about what I am doing if I am not acknowledging the *a priori* character of time and space as Kant proposed? Do I really *know* what makes me wear my clothes, ride my bike and work for three hours? If I simply answer all these questions with an 'I don't know' or a 'No', writ large, does this mean that I am just spewing some skeptical gibberish as some analytic philosophers would claim?

A confrontation with one of such philosophers à la Searle will be taken up in the end of this chapter. Now some of *skeptical* questions just posited will be answered.

What I am doing is simply called writing for which I have read thousands of pages written by different philosophers in different ages. I have tried to understand different concepts, facts, things, theories, perspectives, and theses. This is a computer that I am using to write these lines and for a number of other things. That is a book that I have read and underlined. It is *illogical* and *irrational* to think whether or not I am *really* doing all

¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Continuum, 2002, pp. 134-144

these and whether or not this is a computer and that is a book. If I am saying that I am doing these and if I am using and touching this computer and that book, then what is happening is simply that I am doing all these and I am using this computer and touching that book; though I am aware of the fact that this is simply a tautology. The actuality and non-actuality of my deeds, the existence and non-existence of the objects are not my business. I am repeating emphatically: I am doing what I am doing and ‘this is a computer; and that is a book.’ I do not have time to bother myself with all these. I have to go to work to pay my rent and my bills; to buy the food and the tickets etc. I cannot *survive* otherwise.

So, all *skeptical* questions have been answered. I have kept writing in the computer, reading the book, and gone to the work. What I have done is simply that I have *interpreted* in a certain way and made the time pass by relying on certain *interpretations*. If I have relied on certain interpretations, then I have also *believed* in these interpretations, that is, I have taken them to be *true* since I have not kept questioning. So, interpretations through which I have *endured* to exist are also my *beliefs*.

Unlike faith¹⁷, which by no means allows itself to be questioned but only demands a suspension of questioning by means of a tamed submission to itself for the sake of itself, which is thus no longer ‘in’ itself nor ‘for’ itself, as will be discussed in a moment through Kierkegaard and Qutb, beliefs *can* be questioned. And if beliefs are a concern for epistemology as a philosophical discipline, then they *ought* to be questioned, that is, it is beliefs as such that what epistemology deals with. Since our central motif is the phenomenon of interpretation as (EV), now interpretations as beliefs as just exposed ought to be questioned. Here is how.

Writing is madness. The distance between the reader and the author; between the author and the text, and between the reader and the text cannot be overcome. The barrier of historicity and language which stands between the reader and the author is, so to speak, like the Great Wall of China in each side of which the barbarians and the civilized ones are altogether jumbled. It is not possible at all to understand a single concept that has been coined by a philosopher in a different age. Even in the *same* age! Take for example ‘substance’, ‘logos’, ‘the unconscious’, ‘Da-sein’ ‘noesis’ ‘jouissance’ and so on so forth. ‘This is not a computer; and that is not a book’.¹⁸ If I do not know at all that when and how I was born and that why the hell I am still living; seeking for food like an animal at least two times every day, how can I know that this is a computer and that is a book?

¹⁷ With regard to terms ‘belief’ and ‘faith’ a distinction has to be made for the sake of clarity of this study in which the distinction will always be emphasized and followed without exception. Although, in English the both term have been and are being used in place of another respectively, the term ‘faith’ has more religious connotations than the term ‘belief’. Among others, *Oxford Dictionary of English* gives this definition for ‘faith’: ‘Belief in the truths of religion; belief in the authenticity of divine revelation.’ On the contrary, the term ‘belief’ will be used as the one which takes something as true. In this sense, believing in Christ is ‘faith’, while believing in the fact that I am a human being is a ‘belief.’

Am I *really* listening to the third symphony of Haydn now? So, then, is this a chair on which I am sitting? What if I deny the Law of Gravity? Shall I be proposed to jump from this window then? What if I am ready to jump? If I jump and fall down, that will not prove that there is the Law of Gravity but simply that I will break my leg. Shall I be told ‘break a leg’ if I really decide to jump? What? The reality is not a theater? Why then do I have to change my clothes when I go to the work? Why is it written ‘Smile!’ on the inner side of the door and not for the customers? What if I do not go to the work tomorrow? Shall I starve? Shall I not be able to *survive* at all?

This is another *mode* of interpretation as beliefs as opposed to the first *decent* one. Yet decency means to be in accordance with the conventions of a morality that are approved and promoted in a human community. Thus the decency of an interpretation as beliefs cannot be a quality with which existential valence of interpretation can be interpreted. What is at work and play here is that the both *modes* of interpretation, and *all* other modes of interpretations, are always already bound to be inchoate and incomplete. Whether or not I am *acting* in accordance with my interpretations, whether or not I *believe* that they are true; the truthfulness or untruthfulness of interpretations cannot ultimately be known. The case is simply that I act in accordance with my interpretations and believe in their truthfulness. However, it is often the case that I do not always act in accordance with my interpretations inasmuch as I do sometimes act regardless the truthfulness of my interpretations. Take, for example, a firmly belief that you act in accordance with and that you believe in its truthfulness. Try to determine to what extent it is a firm belief. You will see no sooner that that firm belief relies on another belief that relies on the other and so on. This was perhaps what Wittgenstein had in his mind when he argued that ‘At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded.’¹⁹ So all modes of interpretation as beliefs are bound to be vulnerable to be determined and operated within and through subjectivity, incomprehensibility, uncertainty, arbitrariness, et cetera. In this sense, interpretations as beliefs *are* constituted through *error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice, and transitoriness* as opposed to Hegel’s ‘absolute idea’ which is, according to Hegel, alone *is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth.*²⁰ And if all interpretations as beliefs are

¹⁸ ‘Here is one hand, and here is another’, ‘The earth existed for a long time before my birth’, and ‘I have never been far from the earth’s surface’. These three propositions were offered by George Edward Moore as ‘Proof of the External World’ and ‘Defense of Common Sense’. Ludwig Wittgenstein has dealt with these three propositions during the last eighteen months of his life i.e., 1950-1. In his confrontation with Moore about ‘external world’ and ‘common sense’, Wittgenstein does not only show that ‘external world’ is simply an illusion operated *within* and *through* language-games, which are also interpretations qua beliefs, but also that there is no ‘common’ in ‘common sense’ as well as there is no any ‘sense’ in saying ‘common’: “ ‘We are quite sure of it’ does not mean just that every single person is certain of it, but we belong to a community which is bound together by science and education.’ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, Eds., G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright, Trans., Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Basic Blackwell, Oxford 1969, 298.

¹⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 253

²⁰ ‘The notion (*begriff*) is not merely *soul*, but free subjective Notion that is for itself and therefore possesses *personality* –the practical objective notion determined in and for itself which as person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity – but which, nonetheless, is not exclusive individuality, but explicitly *universality* and *cognition*, and in its other has *its own* objectivity for its object. All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice, and transitoriness; the absolute idea alone *is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is*

constituted and operated in the way in which there is no *truth*, then it follows that *all interpretations as beliefs do possess the same existential valence*.²¹

Kierkegaard, à la ‘Knight of faith’, announces the land where faith thrives:

‘It is now my intention to draw out in the form of problems the dialectical factors implicit in the story of Abraham in order to see what a prodigious paradox faith is – a paradox that is capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox that gives Isaac back again to Abraham, which no thought can lay hold of because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.’²²

But it is a land where there is no water, only rocks among which one cannot think.²³ It is this ‘waste land’ which is as arid and wretched as Mount Moriah where Abraham attempts to devour his son like Saturn who, in spite of his exhausted body, devours his son for the sake of preserving his own *life* as astonishingly painted by Rubens. Abraham even does not know what he is doing and where the command which commands the sacrifice of his son comes from. Abrahams’ is not a paradox but paranoia²⁴, paranoia of a vulgar criminal whose *will* is not accompanied with thinking at all but with a pathological vice that faith, in his all criminal activities, begets and extols. It is this paranoia that is common in all ‘knights of faith’ or in all ‘mujahids of faith.’ Rascality of existence lacerates all that *lives* equally. It is an atrocious crime that nobody would want to perpetrate. It cannot be disclosed. It is here or there; up and down: a feeling of constant regurgitation; perpetual wincing. It is a secluded place where no compass works; where there is no sail, no anchor, and no light. This is why knights and mujahids of faith always claim to be the cleanest and the most innocent. It is they who promote truth the most. ‘My truth is only truth; the rest is untruth!’; which is tantamount to say: ‘I believe in *this* or *that* because of *this* or *that*...’ If a man says this in the street hundred times in a few hours while slightly annoying the public, then it is highly probable that the police will arrest him and give him to the psychiatrists to be stigmatized as a *mad* man. But if a man whispers this to himself thousand times every day – and every next day, and whole his *life* -

all *truth*.’ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Trans., A. V. Miller, Routledge, (1969-2002), p. 824

²¹ Wittgenstein had reached to a similar conclusion: ‘All propositions are of equal value.’, Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.4, p. 86

²² Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Trans., Sylvia Walsh, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.46 (Hereafter: Kierkegaard, *FT*)

²³ ‘If there were water we should stop and drink – Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think’, T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*. Available at: <http://eliotswasteland.tripod.com/>

²⁴ ‘The paranoiac is not the person who notices that *while* and *crocodile* curiously appear in the same context: the paranoiac is the person who begins to wonder about the mysterious motives that induced me to bring these two particular words together. The paranoiac sees beneath my example a secret, to which I allude.’ Umberto Eco, ‘Interpretation and Overinterpretation: World, History, Texts’, *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Cambridge University, 1990

In the case of Abraham, there is no even one word about which Abraham might have been paranoiac. There is only a psychological state in which Abraham talks to a transcendental fictitious entity which does not exist. So what Kierkegaard promotes is nothing other than paranoia of paranoia which he calls ‘faith.’

while, at the same time, constantly lying to himself thus to his neighbor and to his God -, then the public will call him a *faithful* man, that is, a man who has *faith*.

This man is a product of misinterpretations. And his misinterpretations are only products he possesses. He first fabricates a *truth* without fabricating a 'self' for himself i.e., without knowing what he *is*; then he believes that this truth is the one and only truth without knowing truthfulness of his own truth, i.e., why it *is*; and finally he condemns other truths by being untruth without remembering what truths he had i.e., who he *was*. This man's is an abortive dialectics; a castrated deduction, a clumsy and hasty misjudgment. Faith is a blind paradox which is paranoia within and through faith. The idiocy does not lie in repeating to himself several times such as 'Christ is truth'; one would still be called an idiot if one repeats to himself several times such as 'Flesh is truth' or 'Love is truth'. As soon as one owns even one *single* truth, i.e., the moment of resignation he assumes *that* which exists as truth, the other truths will immediately follow. As long as *that* which exists as a truth of its own truthfulness; either one names it by *this* or by *that*, this will change nothing. (Or nothing will change this.) If you *believe*, - at this moment; the moment you are reading and understanding these lines- that it is only *I* who writes these lines possess 'truth of truthfulness'; then if I say: 'Christ is flesh' or 'Christ is love', you will not ask me where *truth* is in these two statements. *You* will know *it*. It is *there*:

'We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries' old; and precisely by means of this unconsciousness and forgetfulness he arrives at his sense of truth.'²⁵

Thus it is not, as Vattimo argues, interpretation that is like a virus 'that affects everything it comes into contact with.'²⁶ Rather, it is truth, i.e., faith in a particular interpretation, which is like virus through which the specter of faith haunts the minds of crusaders as 'Knights of faith' as well as 'assassins' as 'Mujahids of faith.' In spite of their different *means* and different *ends*, they both bow down to the same *categorical imperative*: 'you shall believe in *this* truth not *that*!' which is tantamount to say: 'I believe in *this* truth but not *that* because of *this* or *that*...' Suppose that your most beloved, your father, wife, fiancé, son, friend whatever, commands this categorical imperative to you, say, hundred times in a day. The next day would hardly be a comfortable day –if not a bloody day. Your most beloved will no longer be *most* beloved in the least. If you are one of those who

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense', trans., Walter Kaufmann.

Available at: http://users.compagnet.be/cn127103/Nietzsche_various/on_truth_and_lies.htm

²⁶ Gianni Vattimo, 'The Age of Interpretation', In Gianni Vattimo and Richard Rorty, *Future of Religion*, ed., Santiago Zabala, Columbia University Press, 2005p. 45

will say: “I will be pleased if my most beloved commands this to me hundred times in a day and I will confirm it every time by serenity and tranquility”, then you are ready to be a good believer i.e., someone who has faith in *something* for the sake of *itself* and of course this is *not for the sake of yourself*. Now suppose that one commands this categorical imperative to *himself* hundred times in a day and every time confirms it by serenity and tranquility. If you are not one of those who will say: ‘It is a good exercise to lie to himself hundred times in a day’, then you will at least suspect whether or not this man is a paranoiac. Kierkegaard believes that this paranoia is the highest passion in a human being, as far as the conclusion of *Fear and Trembling* is concerned. Kierkegaard, of course, does not call it paranoia. He calls it faith. It is this *passionate* faith that is not reachable for the majority of generations but *nobody goes further*.²⁷ It is true that nobody, even nor Hegel, goes *further* from faith in the sense that it (faith) makes one stuck into a passion which is not passionate enough to stimulate one to take a further step in an illusionary road which is constructed by faith itself and which, therefore, goes nowhere. This is to say: something that comes from nowhere; somewhere a road that is constructed by a faith through which one, the one who has faith, tries to take a further step which is triggered by an illusionary passion. It is this frenetic passion that makes itself manifest in the form of a ‘holy act’ that was ‘murder’ once; à la Kierkegaard. It was him who failed to understand the malicious dialectics that characterizes the relevance between a ‘holy act’ and ‘murder.’ Unlike a ‘Knight of faith’ à la Kierkegaard, a ‘Mujahid of faith’ à la Sayyid Qutb discovered this malicious dialectic between a ‘holy act’ and ‘murder’ in another part and time of the world:

‘Whenever Islam stood up with the universal declaration that God’s Lordship should be established over the entire earth and that man should become free from servitude to other men, the usurpers of God’s authority on earth have struck out against it fiercely and have never tolerated it. It became incumbent upon Islam to strike back and release man throughout the earth from the grip of the usurpers. The eternal struggle for the freedom of man will continue until the religion is purified for God.’²⁸

It is not the ontical manifestations of a faith that is at stake here but existential valence of faith itself i.e., as a particular interpretation. Suppose that one, say, Kierkegaard, states: ‘I believe in Christ about whom nothing can be known; he can only be believed.’ You will hardly pay attention to the word ‘Christ’ in this statement but to the act of *believing* that believes for the sake of believing. What Christ *is* is written in the Gospels. Without the act of believing for the sake of believing, the entire discourse of *all* religions would be a fable; and indeed *is* a fable.

²⁷ Kierkegaard, *FT*, p. 108

²⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings on Politics, Religion, and Society*, Ed., Albert J. Bergsen, Routledge, 2008, pp. 35-43

To sum up from the very beginning:

A - Interpretations are at the same time beliefs with which existence is savvied and endured. Existential valence of interpretations lies in this. These interpretations as beliefs are constituted and operated through arbitrariness, uncertainty, contingency, and so on. These qualities are essentials for the phenomenon of interpretation. As soon as a belief is brought under a persistent scrutiny, it will be understood that a belief - whatsoever its origin, whatsoever the way it is operated, whether or not it is acknowledged by any kind of *authority*— is bound to lose its credibility that had been taken for granted once in the face of questioning. It is perhaps this that Montaigne had in his mind when he wrote: ‘Never did two men judge alike about the same thing, and it is impossible to find two opinions exactly alike, not only in different men, but in the same man at different times.’²⁹ Thus all interpretations as beliefs possess the same existential valence in the very process of constituting them. In other words, all interpretations as beliefs are equally vulnerable to conditions that are existentially insurmountable, contingent, and volatile. The justification of interpretations as beliefs through logic or any kind of method which is operated within and through language are bound to be operated in a framework that is *still* subjected to existentially volatile and contingent conditions in which interpretations as beliefs are constituted. The phenomenon that has been concocted to challenge, deny, domesticate, and exploit this volatility and contingency is known as *faith* which is a particular interpretation.

B- A critical stance against *faith* has so far been taken in this chapter. It ought to be taken if a question such as this is to be framed: What does it mean to have *faith* in a supranatural thus fictitious entity or event? The critique operated in this part of this chapter through Kierkegaard, and Qutb argued that to have *faith* in any kind of divinity manifests itself in the act of ‘believing for the sake of believing.’ This means to acknowledge and act in accordance with the act of believing in a divinity as an end in itself but at the same time as a means to determine and justify other ends. So if one were to state that ‘I believe in Christ because I believe in Christ.’ (Faith), this then will only be as an innocent tautology as to state that ‘I must make money to live because I must make money to live.’ (Belief) But if one were to state that ‘I shall not kill because I believe in Christ’, this, then, will be tantamount to state that ‘I shall kill because I must make money to live.’ This is to say: Only through a non-human supplement, i.e., something transcendental, something *beyond* a human standpoint-, only through a blind act of faith that corresponds to a perpetual inhibition of questioning thus incessantly sticks to dogmatism like an addiction to a sedative, do religious discourses make sense. And whatever quality this ‘sense’ possesses, it is hardly a ‘sense’ that can be tested from a human standpoint and therefore it is ‘nonsense.’

²⁹ Michel De Montaigne, ‘On the Fallibility of Human Understanding’, In *Essays*, Trans., Donald Frame, Stanford University Press, 1957, 817-9

*Andante Sostenuto***‘Epistemological Violence’ interpreted hitherto**

Water is neither the life of the fish as such nor its body, and yet it is essentially linked to both of them.

Keiji Nishitani

Although the term ‘epistemological violence’ has never been a vogue term, it has been employed in different contexts. For the sake of brevity, three of them will be tersely exposed to a critical reading. The term was developed by Spivak about two decades ago as ‘epistemic violence’. Spivak operates the term as a rhetorical device which is plainly, so she claims, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. The term epistemic violence denotes ‘violence’ which is perpetrated by the universalizing global market and imperialism through what she calls a literary canon formation. It is this canon-formation that works within a network of a successful epistemic violence. Domination, she maintains, is a source for and simultaneously a consequence of this violence.³⁰

Spivak elaborates the term a few years later. The constitution, which maintains the capitalist exploitation and the imperialist hegemony, of the colonial subject as Other through a multidimensional project is, according to her, the clearest example of such epistemic violence. The idiosyncrasy of this project lies in being remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous. She takes the Hindu law that was applied at the end of eighteenth century as historical example. The then interpretation of Hindu law was, she maintains, ‘internally’ noncoherent and open at both hands through a binary vision. It is this noncoherence, vague and binary vision which allows Spivak to employ the term epistemic violence in the case of Hindu Law. The epistemological violence of imperialist law and education, Spivak maintains, is crucial to put the question: Can the subaltern speak? Just before answering this question, Spivak argues that the epistemological violence of imperialism provides an imperfect allegory of the general violence which is the possibility of an episteme. The question of whether or not the subaltern can speak is answered by emphasizing the male dominance that remains intact in the ideological construction: ‘If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.’³¹

While Spivak was employing the term epistemological violence which condemns the subaltern ‘female’ to exist in a ‘deep shadow’, Vandana Shiva was using, in the same year, the term in relation to ‘modern science’ which

³⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value’, *Diacritics*, Vol. 15 No. 4, *Marx after Derrida*, (Winter, 1985), pp. 73-93

³¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, Eds., C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, Macmillan Education, 1988, pp. 271-313

is, according to her, quintessentially reductionist. This reductionist character of modern science supports an economical structure which is characterized by exploitation, profit maximization, and capital accumulation. It is this reductionist science, the argument runs, that resorts to ‘misinformation’ and ‘falsehood’ so as to impose its *monopoly on knowledge*. This monopoly manifests itself in four different kind of violence: violence against the subject of knowledge, violence against the object of knowledge, violence against the beneficiary of knowledge, and violence against knowledge itself. The first kind of violence is that which operates through a sharp division that creates the cleavage between experts and non-experts. The state of being non-expert does inevitably lead to a state of being non-knowers in which even the experts who are confined within their own specialization are entangled. The second kind of violence that is applied to the object of knowledge is a violation of nature by destroying its regenerative capacity. This destruction can be seen through ecological crisis that puts into jeopardy the whole earth. The third kind of violence comes from the claim of reductionist science that people are ultimately beneficiaries of scientific knowledge. According to Shiva, this is an illusion that makes especially the poor the worst victims of it. The fourth kind of violence that is applied to knowledge itself is an abuse of *facts* and *truth*: ‘In order to prove itself superior to alternative modes of knowledge and be the only legitimate mode of knowing, reductionist science resorts to suppression and falsification of facts and thus commits violence against science itself, which, Shiva concludes, ought to be a search for truth.’³²

The third and the last employment of the term epistemological violence that will be dealt with in this subchapter is operated in relation to psychology in general and empirical psychology in particular by Thomas Teo no more than one year ago. Teo begins with emphasizing speculation as to where it stands in relation to interpretation of empirical data. Interpretation of data cannot be thought without a ‘speculative moment.’ Thus, the argument goes, interpretations of data are interpretative speculations. Since data itself does not make sense, and since it needs an interpretative superstructure that makes data meaningful for the author and reader, there is something ‘more’ in the relation between data and results. Teo calls this ‘more’ as *hermeneutic surplus* of interpretation. By this Teo reaches the formula: there are no facts or knowledge only data and interpretations. If there are only data and interpretations, what is the status of theories that are used as means to organize and regulate the relation between data and interpretations, then? This cannot be understood without asking the position of speculation in this process:

‘There is always a speculative gap between theories and data – even for the best empirically supported psychological theories. This, psychologists cannot argue that a more supported is right and a less supported is wrong. Psychologists could

³² Vandana Shiva, ‘Reductionist Science as Epistemological Violence’, In *Science, Hegemony, and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*, Ed., Ashis Nandy, Oxford University Press, 1988. Available at: <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu05se/uu05se0i.htm>)

only say that one theory is better supported than another one, and that therefore one should give preference to the former. However, the inference that a better-supported theory is true is itself a form of speculation.³³

So, the argument runs, if interpretations that contain speculations are always already at work in the process of interpreting data, and if these speculations construct the 'Other' as problematic or as inferior that might bring negative consequences for the 'Other', then there is a form of violence that is produced in 'knowledge.' In such cases, Teo concludes, interpretative speculations turn into epistemological violence. An example of such epistemological violence, according to Teo, is a racist interpretation that is motivated by political or classist interests and biases.³⁴

What is common in these three employments of the term (EV) is that all three approaches take 'violence' as something negative.³⁵ It is 'violence' of imperialism that makes the subaltern female exist in a deep shadow. (Spivak) It is violence of reductionist science that violates the subject, object, beneficiaries, of knowledge and knowledge itself. (Shiva) It is violence of interpretations as speculations that construct the 'Other' as problematic and as inferior. (Teo) Questions ought to be raised here: Cannot or should not one speak of an epistemological violence as an anti-imperialist or an anti-reductionist science or an anti-racist interpretation is operated too? Should or can one only speak of an epistemological violence when it is only perpetrated by a discourse that is dominant and possesses authority?

³³ Thomas Teo, 'From Speculation to Epistemological Violence in Psychology', *Theory & Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 18(1): 47-67

³⁴ Teo, *ibid.*

³⁵ The same approach is at work in the studies such as: Belachew Gebrewold, 'Defining Genocide as Epistemological Violence', 2008, *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 20: 92-99, Ryan Bishop and John Phillips, 'Violence', 2006, *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 23 (2-3): 377-385, Kenneth Iain MacDonald, 'Epistemic Violence: The Body, Globalization and the Dilemma of Rights', 2002, *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 12 (1) 65-87, Casto-Gomez, Santiago, Martin, Desiree A., 'The Social Sciences, Epistemic Violence, and the Problem of the "Invention of the Other"', *Nepantla: Views from South - Volume 3, Issue 2*, 2002, pp. 269-285, James R. Cochrane, 'The Epistemic Violence of Racism: Hidden Transcripts of Whiteness', Available at: http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/cochrane_2002b.pdf

*Andante-Allegro Tranquillo Quasi Andantino***Interpretation as epistemological violence**

The way of writing is straight and crooked.

Heraclitus

These questions do necessarily require a painstaking interpretation of existential valence of violence that will make a room in which the proposition of interpretation is only possible as (EV) can be elaborated and that will be dealt with in what follows. To speak of existential valence of violence is not to punctuate its positivity as opposed to its negativity which is taken for granted by those who have employed the term epistemological violence. Violence possesses existentially a kind of neutrality. It is not a single bullet that is violence. Nor is it only a tool. It is a bullet that sings the most beautiful song sometimes inasmuch as a bullet terminates the most beautiful dreams. Violence is not a single bullet. Violence encompasses entirely the scene in which a bullet has been triggered. One is victorious, escaping the death. One is desperate, bleeding to the death. One's triumph is violent. One's defeat is violent. Thus, violence is neither victorious nor humiliating. The act of one who washes away the blood of the victim spilt on the earth cannot be considered outside of the vicious and infinite circle of violence. The earth neither welcomes nor refuses the blood spilt by human beings just as a bullet neither welcomes nor refuses the one who triggers it. A bullet passes through the barrel neither cruelly nor compassionately and arrives at the flesh neither happily nor lamentably. Without violence neither cruelty; nor compassion, nor happiness, nor lamentation would have made sense. Thus, violence is an existential medium within and through which human beings deal with *life* they have been, to use the Heideggerian terminology, *thrown into*. Yet, the omnipotent presence of violence itself as an existential medium may not and ought not to extol gestures such as cruelty, compassion, happiness, and lamentation. It is a particular interpretation as a faith or a belief that misinterprets the omnipotent presence of violence as an existential medium. These misinterpretations compel misinterpreters to hyperbolize and celebrate cruelty in the form of fascism, nationalism, imperialism, religious fundamentalism; compassion in the form of all religious discourses that rely on a faith; happiness in the form of hedonism, philistinism, conformism, mediocrity; and lamentation in the form of pessimism and of fatalism. Thus to identify existential valence of violence is to acknowledge its neutrality. This neutrality is objective. Human beings experience this objectivity in their birth, though without a trace in the memory, and their entire life, to which an injustice would not be done if it is called violent, through their

subjectivity; ending up with the death that is the most objective and subjective violent phenomenon in the face of which neither God nor philosophy can withstand:

‘The trial by force is the test of the real. But violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carrying out actions that will destroy every possibility for action. Not only modern war but every war employs arms that turn against those who wield them. It establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; nothing henceforth exterior.’³⁶

It was this omnipotent presence of violence as an existential medium, which ceaselessly encompasses and accompanies human beings as long as they exist, that what Levinas has tried to overcome by establishing an ethical ‘nonviolent’ relationship to the infinite as infinitely other, that is, to the Other. Nonetheless, to what extent Levinas’ endeavor does produce a ‘nonviolent’ *totality* that legitimizes his *infinitely other* is outside the scope of this chapter.³⁷ What is at stake here in the words of Levinas just quoted above is that the omnipotent presence of violence, which condones no one and nothing, is incontrovertible. Yet the sentence ‘Not only modern war...’ needs a closer inspection. If philosophy too, as it were, is a war that employs concepts as arms, then arms (concepts) can also be turned against those who wield them. Yet this is bound to be a *naïveté*, a mere morally motivated anticipation if it implies that every war with arms is something which ought to be rid of through a ‘nonviolent’ ethics. A ‘nonviolent’ ethics is bound to be violent if it aims at a transformation of an order that is violent. To add ‘non’ to ‘violent’ is itself in a sense a negation, which is supposed to attempt to remove something from what is violent in order to render the word ‘nonviolent’ meaningful, thus is bound to be violent too.

If the argument that has been run so far correct and if violence has such an existential valence that is neutral, objective, omnipotent, and omnipresent; then it is high time to explicate what the proposition of *interpretation is only possible as (EV)* suggests.

³⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans., Alphonso Lingis, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991, p.21

³⁷ Derrida in his seminal work does this:

‘In the last analysis, according to Levinas, nonviolent language would be a language which would do without verb *to be*, that is, without predication. Predication is the first violence. Since the verb *to be* and the predicative act are implied in every other verb, and in every common noun, nonviolent language, in the last analysis, would be a language of pure invocation, pure adoration, proffering only proper nouns in order to call to the other from afar. In effect, such a language would be purified of all *rhetoric*, which is what Levinas explicitly desires; and purified of the first sense of rhetoric, which can invoke without artifice, that is, purified of every *verb*. Would such a language still deserve its name? Is a language free from all rhetoric possible?’, Jacques Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, trans., Alan Bass, Routledge, 2001, p.184

See also Slavoj Žižek, ‘Smashing the Neighbor’s Face: On Emmanuel Levinas’ Judaism’. Available at:

http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?page_id=91

The proposition of *interpretation is only possible as (EV)* suggests that whenever an act of interpretation is at stake, the constitution of interpretations falls out as epistemological violence within and through language. The constitution of interpretations as beliefs does provide 'knowledge' which consists of meaningful linguistic units. These units can also be called as 'concepts' which are meaningful within and through in a 'whole' which can be called as an epistemology. In this sense, an epistemology is a whole within and through which meaningful concepts as linguistic units provide knowledge. Thus the constitution of interpretations as beliefs can be located within an epistemology and are operated and justified through an epistemology. From this it follows that the constitution of interpretations is at the same time an epistemological application within and through which knowledge is constituted. But where is violence in this whole process? Violence is at work and play in the constitution of interpretations as beliefs, of concepts and of knowledge i.e. in all applications that fall out within and through language.

It has been pointed out earlier in this chapter that interpretations are at the same time beliefs within and through which existence is savvied and endured. These interpretations as beliefs are bound to be constituted and operated under the conditions which are existentially volatile and contingent. Violence herein refers to this volatility and contingency. It has also been argued at the very outset of this chapter that to interpret primordially means to deal with something as an entity within and through language. In order to clarify this, it would be worthwhile to recall Heidegger's existential analysis of Da-sein with regard to interpretation. For Heidegger interpretation operates within a process which ends up with meaning; starting out with understanding with which Da-sein projects its being upon possibilities. The project of understanding has a dynamic character that itself has its own possibility of development. From this it follows that interpretation is the development of understanding. Interpretation, based in understanding existentially, is the development of possibilities projected in understanding rather than the acknowledgment of what has been understood. What has been understood is supposed to be understood explicitly. What has been understood explicitly is always already has the structure of something *as* something. This 'as' does constitute the structure of being explicitness of what is understood as well as *the* interpretation, one which as the interpretation of something as something is grounded in fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. These features also structure meaning which is possible only in so far as the intelligibility of something maintains itself. By taken for granted the fact that understanding and interpretation constitute the 'existential constitution of the being of there', both meaningfulness and meaninglessness only become a property of Da-sein.³⁸ As soon as the following questions are designated, the same volatility and contingency, i.e,

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time, A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, pp. 149-152

violence, can clearly be captured in Heidegger's analysis: Where does the dynamic character of the project of understanding which itself possess its own possibility of development come from? What does it mean to understand *explicitly*? How can *one* be sure of whether or not something as something has been understood explicitly? As long as there exists a gap, a jointlessness between the interpreter and the interpreted; between what the interpreter has interpreted and what the interpreted is; between the interpreter and what the interpreter has interpreted; and between the interpreted and what the interpreted is, - In order to avoid an idealist gesture this partly can be formulated thus too: between the interpreted and the interpreter; between what the interpreted is and what the interpreter has interpreted - these questions and the conditions that stems from this existential gap and jointlessness always already substantiate that the proposition of interpretation is only possible as (EV).

This existential gap and jointlessness that create the existential medium within and through which interpretations are constituted under the conditions of volatility, corrigibility, and contingency thus violence are at work and play with regard to concepts and knowledge too. Violence in constituting and operating concepts is violence of copula. 'Every attempt', Adorno writes, 'to conceive the 'is' at all, even in the palest generality, leads to entities one the one side and to concepts on the other.'³⁹ If this is true, then there exists also a gap and jointlessness between entities and concepts, that is, the 'is' *is not* inasmuch as the 'is' *is*. And nothing will change whether or not this 'is' is the 'is' of existential use, of identity, and of predication. If knowledge is that which is constituted through concepts, then violence is supposed to be at work and play in constituting knowledge too:

'Rather knowledge comes to us through a network of prejudices, opinions, innervations, self-corrections, presuppositions and exaggerations, in short through the dense, firmly-founded but by no means uniformly transparent medium of experience.'⁴⁰

And this violence

(O)perates at multiple levels. Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it.⁴¹

The question ought to be raised here: What is it that is not ticklish, volatile, and contingent as soon as one *enters* into the realm of language or as soon as one is *dragged* into the realm of language? If there is no a 'uniformly transparent medium of experience' through which knowledge is obtained and if there is no language that

³⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans., E. B. Ashton, Routledge, 1996, p.104 (Hereafter: Adorno, *ND*)

⁴⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans., E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso, 2005, 50, p. 80 (Hereafter: Adorno, *MM*)

⁴¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Picador, 2008, p. 61

represents an entity as it is, then it is incumbent upon the argument operated so far to recapitulate: *interpretation is only possible as epistemological violence.*

*Allegro agitato attacca***Certain, objective, and universal knowledge**

An empty form, a dead content, such is the metaphysical situation that dominates Western thought throughout its most diverse formulations.

Michel Henry

One of the implications of the proposition of interpretation is (and is only possible as) (EV) would be to distrust knowledge which is certain, objective, and universal. If there were one and only certain knowledge, it must have been this: there is no objective and universal knowledge. If there were one and only objective knowledge it must have been this: there is no certain and universal knowledge. If there were one and only universal knowledge it must have been this: there is no certain and objective knowledge. Yet, to state existence or nonexistence of something is, of course, an empty gesture inasmuch as to state something that exists or does not. But what if existence is itself an empty gesture? What if all this *is* just a nothingness of coming dawns and noons with an innocent anticipation for some kind of meaning and a meaninglessness of past days and nights with a cruel expectation for some kind of nothingness? Leaving these questions to be parsed in the next chapter, the problem of certain, objective, and universal knowledge will be tackled in what follows.

To state that there is certain, objective, and universal knowledge differs, for instance, from to state that there is a high, snowy, and steep mountain. Unlike the latter, the first one and its qualities are abstract. One can be able to do concrete things with knowledge but *not* with its qualities, in this case, certainty, objectivity, and universality, that is, one will need necessary knowledge in order that one may climb up a high, snowy, and steep mountain no matter this necessary knowledge is certain, objective, and universal. It is not qualities of knowledge that are necessary for one who wants to climb up a mountain but only a knowledge, that is, the practical knowledge not to fall down in the process of mounting. Even if one assigns to knowledge qualities such as uncertainty, subjectivity, and individuality, this will change nothing. On the brink of a precipice, one only needs a rope along with other necessary tools and knowledge that would help one to climb up or rappel. Now suppose that two climbers are mounting together. At a certain point in a high, snowy, and steep mountain, they lose their direction. One of the climbers, say, Tom, subtends to the other, say, John, about which direction they are to follow. If Tom buttresses his argument by saying what he suggests is knowledge which is certain, objective, and universal, John will hardly be convinced by this. If John has no more plausible argument, then he will simply follow Tom. If they still do not find their direction, this won't mean that Tom's knowledge was *then* certain,

objective, and universal and is *now* uncertain, subjective, and individual. If they do find their direction, this won't either mean that Tom's knowledge was *then* uncertain, subjective, and individual and is *now* certain, objective, and universal. From this it follows that those qualities such as certainty, objectivity, and universality are existentially external to knowledge. To use a formula from previous pages: there is a gap, a jointlessness between knowledge and qualities assigned to it. Thus it is not qualities of knowledge that determine value of knowledge. Nor is it quantity of knowledge that is a surplus for knowledge. Yet, quantity of knowledge determines qualities of knowledge for Searle:

'The central intellectual fact of the present era is that knowledge grows. It grows daily and cumulatively. We know more than our grandparents did; our children will know more than we do.'⁴²

Such is the first lines of subtitle *Philosophy and Knowledge*. Herein, Searle masterfully captures how *the present era* understands knowledge; or how it commercializes knowledge. These lines are also a vivid and wonderful expression of how the commoditization of knowledge or knowledge of commoditization can be swallowed up and be chucked up as philosophy which *unconsciously* chooses the jargon of capital. This knowledge grows just as a plant which is a valuable commodity in the service of global market grows. It grows daily and cumulatively just as interest rate and profit. The fundamental *a priori* drive of capital is at work and play: 'We have to profit *more* than our grandfathers did; our children will have to profit *more* than we do.' It should come as no surprise then that certain, objective, and universal knowledge comes from nowhere but a 'huge accumulation of knowledge', as Searle himself writes just after the lines quoted above. In the process of philosophizing of the gratification of the jargon of capital, accumulation of knowledge and of capital constitutes a trilogy which itself possesses another trilogy: Certainty/Objectivity/Universality – Private property/Profitability/ the Market. One may add another trilogy these two trilogies to reach the trilogy of all trilogies: the Trinity i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The jargon of capital is not only the jargon of Christianity but of all religious discourses which rely on an 'absolute faith.' Both the jargon of capital and of religious discourses possess an absolute faith in the certainty, in the objectivity, and in the universality of *something*. Thus to have an absolute faith in the certainty of private property, in the objectivity of profitability, and in the universality of the market cannot be defended through a philosophical argument but a religious one. From a philosophical vantage point, the statement 'We know more than our grandparents did; our children will know more than we do' must be exposed to the questions in the face of which the jargon of capital à la Searle has scarcely anything to say: How does one *know* that one knows more than previous generations? How does one *know* that the next generations

⁴² John R. Searle, 'Philosophy in a new century', in *Philosophy in a New Century: Selected Essays*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 4-25

will *know* more than one does? The ‘huge accumulation of knowledge’ which is certain, objective, and universal does not only compels Searle to be entangled in an anachronistic and hallucinatory distortion of historicity but also to distort history anachronistically as if he is under the effect of a hallucinogen:

‘If by ‘modernism’ is meant the period of systematic rationality and intelligence that began in the Renaissance and reached a high point of self-conscious articulation in the European Enlightenment, then we are not in a post-modern era. On the contrary, modernism has just begun. We are, however, I believe, in a post-skeptical or post-epistemic era. You will not understand what is happening in our intellectual life if you do not see the exponential growth of knowledge as the central intellectual fact. There is something absurd about the post-modern thinker who buys an airplane ticket on the internet, gets on airplane, works on his laptop computer in the course of the airplane flight, gets off of the airplane at his destination, takes a taxicab to lecture hall, and then gives a lecture claiming that somehow or other there is no certain knowledge, that objectivity is in question, and that all claims to truth and knowledge are really only disguised power grabs.’⁴³

If religion is opium for the people as Marx claimed, modernity is, so to speak, LSD for philosophers who are hired in the legion whose creed is that of the jargon of capital. ‘The expression ‘modern’’, Etemadi writes, ‘was used again and again, each time with a different content, to express the consciousness of an era that referred back to the past of classical antiquity or to any other past which was seen as a model to be emulated.’⁴⁴ From this it would follow that the statement ‘Modernism has just begun’ is an empty gesture inasmuch as to call an era as post-modern, post-skeptical and post-epistemic or whatever else one wishes. There *were*, *are*, and *will* be different ‘modernisms’ because there is no *universe*, as Carl Schmitt suggested, but *pluverse*. If one of the implications of modernism is to break down the hegemony of religion over *reason*, modernism has *not* yet begun, for example, in the Middle East which is *still* in a pre-modern, pre-skeptical, and pre-epistemic era. The statements ‘Modernism has just begun’ and ‘We are in a post-modern or a post-skeptical or a post-epistemic era’ are tantamount to warn someone by saying ‘Hurry up! The movie just began!’ If this warner does not know whether or not that person has a ticket for that movie, then the warning of the warner is bound to be an *absurd* gesture which includes both the warner and the warned. But absurdity, according to Searle, haunts nobody but the post-modern thinker who claims that there is no certain knowledge, that objectivity is in question and that all claims to truth and knowledge are really only disguised power grabs. The absurdity that Searle fancies for the post-modern thinker is that this post-modern thinker uses the opportunities of his era that are provided by technology i.e., the internet, the airplane, the laptop computer, and the taxicab. This is to say that if the post-modern thinker is using the internet, the airplane, the laptop computer, and the taxicab, and if he is claiming that there is no certain knowledge that objectivity is in question and that all claims to truth and knowledge are really only disguised power grabs, then this is nothing else than an absurdity. Now suppose that the post-modern

⁴³ Searle, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Etemadi, ‘Philosophical Reflections on the Cartoon Controversy’

thinker claims that there is no certain, objective, and universal knowledge but he does not use a laptop computer and so on. Is there no absurdity anymore here then? Suppose also that the post-modern thinker does not use a laptop computer etc. but he claims that there is certain, objective, and universal knowledge. Is there no absurdity here? Using or not using a laptop computer etc. has nothing to do with certainty, objectivity, and the relation between knowledge and power. Searle concludes:

‘The main message I have tried to convey is that it is now possible to do a new kind of philosophy. With the abandonment of the epistemic bias in the subject, such a philosophy can go far beyond anything imagined by the philosophy of a half century ago. It begins not with skepticism, but what we all know about the real world. It begins with such facts as those stated by the atomic theory of matter and the evolutionary theory of biology, as well as such ‘commonsense’ facts as that we are all conscious, that we all really do have intentional mental states, that we form social groups and create institutional facts. Such philosophy is theoretical, comprehensive, systematic, and universal in subject matter.’⁴⁵

This ‘new kind of philosophy’ is the jargon of capital *par excellence*. A philosophy that does not begin and proceed with skepticism is philosophy of cannibals and zombies. The jargon of capital that goes hand in hand with the philosophy of cannibals and zombies must have an absolute faith in scientific discourses such as atomic theory of matter and the evolutionary theory of biology precisely because the jargon of capital commands scientific discourses. It is not ‘we’ that forms social groups and create institutional facts but rather ‘they’ that exists, dominates, and exploits within and through the jargon of capital. What if the jargon of capital makes the atomic theory of matter claim that human beings are in fact cannibals? What if the jargon of capital makes evolutionary theory of biology claims that human beings are in fact zombies? Nothing will be able to resist to such claims because philosophy of cannibals and zombies will immediately justify it and ornament it with the concepts such as ‘good’, ‘virtue’, ‘moderation’, and the ‘Moral Law’; theoretically, comprehensively, systematically, and universally.

⁴⁵ Searle, *ibid*

Chapter Two: Nihilism as State of Existence

I think we are in rat's alley
 Where the dead men lost their bones.
 'What is that noise?
 The wind under the door.
 'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'
 Nothing again nothing.
 'Do
 'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
 'Nothing?'
 Those are pearls that were his eyes.
 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?'
 Thomas S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Allegro non troppo

The origin of the concept of nihilism

Just as human walking is a continual falling, all consistency is a continual inconsistency.

Søren Kierkegaard

Kant deals explicitly with *nihil* i.e., nothing briefly and reluctantly in *Critique of Pure Reason* just before leaving the Transcendental Analytic behind. Herein, the problem for Kant is to identify whether an object is 'something' or 'nothing.' To be able to make this distinction, he argues, one needs an order and the guidance of the categories according to which there are four kinds of nothing. The first kind of nothing (*ens rationis*) is that which is an objectless concept i.e., *noumena*. The second kind of nothing (*nihil privativum*) is a concept of the

absence of an object e.g., shadow or cold. The third kind of nothing (*ens imaginarium*) is the mere form of intuition such as pure space and pure time. The fourth and last kind of nothing (*nihil negativum*) for Kant is the object of a concept that contradicts itself and that signifies the impossible e.g., a rectilinear figure with two sides.⁴⁶

As a disciple and critic of Kant, Fichte argued that all *being* presupposes a thought or a consciousness of which *being* is object. So, there is a *being* on the one hand and *thinking* on the other. This, the argument runs, is the reason why *oneness* is not in either of these alone but in the connection of both. Thus *oneness* for Fichte is knowledge of nothing inasmuch as pure knowing is in and for itself.⁴⁷ For Fichte nothing qua knowledge of nothing is not only a crucial gesture in terms of *oneness* but also of his entire endeavor. ‘The science of knowing’s own maxim’, Fichte maintains, ‘is to admit absolutely nothing inconceivable and to leave nothing unconceived; and it is satisfied to wish not to exist if something is pointed out to it which it hasn’t grasped, since it will be everything or nothing at all.’⁴⁸

It was this school against which the concept of nihilism was operated and was introduced to philosophical vocabulary by Jacobi:

‘Since, I say, that is the way it is with me and the science of true, or more accurately, the true science; I therefore do not see why I, for reasons of good taste, should not be allowed to prefer my Philosophy of Not-Knowing to the Philosophical Knowing of Nothing, even it were only in *fugam vacui*. I have nothing against me but Nothingness; and with that, even chimeras can probably compete. Truly, my dear Fichte, it should not vex me if you, or whoever it might be, want to call what I contrast to idealism, what I chide as nihilism, chimerism.’⁴⁹

Jacobi, alas, did not elaborate the concept of nihilism either in his letter to Fichte or somewhere else. From what is just quoted it is plain that nihilism is equated to idealism and chimerism. In this sense, nihilism is used as a mere derogatory term as idealism and chimerism. This derogatory and humorous language that Jacobi operates in his letter to Fichte is religiously motivated. He lashes out at Kant and Fichte throughout in his letter, accusing of them by being atheistic and materialistic and calling Fichte as the ‘true Messiah of speculative reason.’ Jacobi’s religious zealotry rears its head *instinctively*:

‘I am not, and I do not wish to be, if He is not! –Indeed, I myself cannot be the highest essence for me. Thus my reason teaches me instinctively: God. With irresistible force the highest in me points to a highest being above and outside of me: it

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and eds., Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 382-3

⁴⁷ J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowing*, trans., Walter E. Wright, State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 28

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.30

⁴⁹ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, ‘Open Letter to Fichte’, trans., Diana I. Behler, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, Continuum, 1987, p. 136

forces me to believe the incomprehensible –yes, that conceptually impossible, in me and outside of me, out of love, through love.’⁵⁰

In the footnote attached to this paragraph, Jacobi adds: ‘God, i.e., to be God, is obviously impossible for me, i.e., it presents itself to me as something impossible.’ In Kantian philosophy, this ‘God’ corresponds to the fourth kind of nothing (*nihil negativum*) that contradicts itself and signifies the impossible like a rectilinear figure with two sides. But this contradictory impossibility is a positivity that is a *sine qua non* and *primum mobile* for Jacobi. Existence of the ‘I’ has been rendered contingent upon the impossibility qua nothing which Jacobi calls God. He first posits an essence for the ‘I’ and then gives this essence a quality of highness of which he adjudges to be impossible for the ‘I.’ ‘God’ of Jacobi then appears as a product of reason that possess an ability to teach through instincts. This impossibility has an irresistible force which operates through love. What kind of love is this cannot be known simply because this love comes from an irresistible force; one which makes one believe the incomprehensible.

Such is the context in which the concept of nihilism was introduced to and operated in the philosophical vocabulary. To sum up, the word *nihil* i.e., nothing was a pure technical term for both Kant and Fichte while Jacobi who introduced the term to philosophical vocabulary the concept of nihilism employed it as a derogatory term. From this moment on, the concept of nihilism meant several things and was employed in several contexts. This topsy-turviness compels the argument to deal with the concept of nihilism under certain categorizations. The concept of nihilism thus will be dealt with as (1) positive nihilism, (2) as negative nihilism, and (3) nihilism as state of existence.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 132

*Apassionata Allegro Asai***Positive Nihilism**

I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything.

Max Stirner

Positive nihilism is that which is a desirable position; a position as a methodological necessity, and as a theoretical precondition. Positive nihilism, so to speak, is that in the absence of which nothing but philosophy of cannibals and zombies rules. Positive nihilism is that in the presence of which the jargon of capital or any kind of jargon is bound to and does always hold its tongue still. When the Zeitgeist is dirtied by decadence and corruption, positive nihilism represents dignity. When the post-skeptical era rings the bells of the church of licentiousness with a wicked tintinnabulation, it represents honor and revolt. When all values are condemned to a stinky putrefaction, it represents hope. Positive nihilism makes one remind the Stories from One Thousand and One Nights; as though one is wrapped in a flying carpet secured by tight knots which are silk, sitting with *legs akimbo* and contemplating on the lifeline in the sapphire sky. Its rhythm makes one feel in a dervish festival; as though one is caught in a Sufi ecstasy, swallowing up cinders with joy and dancing on a rope under which there is a ruby fire that makes one jaunt from the abysses to the peaks through the nooks.

The task of positive nihilism, then, so to speak, to function as an invisible army armed with ruthless spears in the shape of question marks to buttress the sky for which an ultimate prostration slyly approaches. These mighty spears qua question marks are not as fragile as branches of a fig tree. Rather, they are made of steel, so to speak, one which is hammered with sweat, courage, intellectual keenness, and undebilitated passion. Positive nihilism is absolute liberation from the grip of religious pigheadedness, of ideological obstinacy, and of conformist indifference. Put it metaphorically, it is like a blue-blooded bird of prey which seldom alights on the earth and always reserves reverence for solemnity, solitude, and solidarity of the peaks thus always watches over pigs that wallow in the filth.

Yet in spite of all these, positive nihilism is not at all a goad for any kind of moral perfection. Nor does it require any ethical responsibility. It remorselessly abnegates and despises all conventional values that are morally motivated. It disdains ethics, duty, the moral law, the categorical imperative, goodness, moderation, piety, grace,

salvation and so on and so forth. It even humiliates the instinct of self-preservation by suicidal lurches in order to sharpen the body's alertness. It is like a dexterous hunter who chases his hunt with bare feet in the jungle of ignorance. (Devil only knows how wild the monsters are in the jungle of ignorance! How coquettish, spiteful and seductive they are!) If the hunter is not armed with magnificent eyes of a bird of Minerva, the hunter will definitely need a torch in the night. In the jungle of ignorance, as is well known, this torch is called philosophy. And philosophy deserves its name if and only if it affirms positive nihilism as a methodological necessity and as a theoretical precondition. In so doing, philosopher obtains a readiness for the battle. (How the swords will voluptuously be stained with blood in this battle!)

The jungle of ignorance is the land of hostilities. Philosopher is the one who always reserves an unconditioned hospitality in the face hostility. But how will philosopher reserve an unconditioned hospitality? How will philosopher resist against his own vices, his own submission to authority, his own commitment to philistinism, his own lust for power, his own lecherousness for fame, his own decadence? If the philosopher admits his own defeat in advance in his battle with the market place, may one still call him as a philosopher? Is not a leper worthier than a philosopher who dismisses positive nihilism for the sake of securing a comfortable life? Is not this philosopher sick? How will the philosopher recuperate from this sickness and sickliness?

'A philosopher recuperates differently and with different means: he recuperates, e.g., with nihilism. Belief that there is no truth at all, the nihilistic belief, is a great relaxation for one who, as a warrior of knowledge, is ceaselessly fighting ugly truths. For truth is ugly.'⁵¹

Kaufmann also provides another version of this aphorism in the footnote attached to this one: 'For a warrior of knowledge, who is always fighting ugly truths, the belief *that there is no truth at all* is a great bath and relaxation. –Nihilism is our kind of leisure.' Philosopher, in congruent with this Nietzschean mode of interpretation, is a warrior of knowledge who beautifully battles with ugly truths. Philosopher's hospitality is suspended and is transformed into a joyous hostility in the face of truths which are ugly. From this it follows that positive nihilism is not only a methodological necessity and a theoretical precondition but also an aesthetical yardstick according to which one may determine what is ugly or what is beautiful. Thus positive nihilism is not in tune with what the jargon of capital applies as an aesthetical categorical imperative: what is profitable is beautiful; what is not is ugly. And lo and behold, for the jargon of capital that operates in the present era even ugly is profitable. But this should come as no surprise. The distinct characteristic of the present era is that it has reduced everything into one single principle, one single formula: *profitable is profitable* which *is thus beautiful*.

⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans., Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, 1968, 598, p. 325
(Hereafter, Nietzsche, *WP*)

Positive nihilism is a philosophical position that aims at reaching the beautiful, which is like a crystalline drapery that gets itself away in its own chaotic pace from one while one gets closer toward it, by crushing ugly truths. But why should ugly truths be crushed? Because every single truth is and by nature ought to be an attempt to suspend and suppress what is exceptional. And in spite of the fact that all exceptional things are not always beautiful things, beautiful things are always exceptional things –*pulchrum est paucorum hominum* (Beauty belongs to the few.) Truths are ugly simply because they exist by means of envy, spite, and disparagement on the contrary of what is exceptional, that is, what is beautiful. What is it that is worthy of admiration in the face of rascality of existence? If existence is a moment, as Adorno says, what is that moment in which rascality is stripped from existence? Is it not a moment in which one is elevated to the peaks by means of a melody, a trembling of violins, a whisper of a piano? If that is the only moment in which rascality of existence is suspended, then this is the only moment which is a sort of emancipation. So, if music is an exceptional beauty that leads to emancipation, then the language of music is also the language of positive nihilism.

Truths that are ugly are anti-emancipatory. They are ugly not because they besmirch all that is beautiful; but because they through self-assurance which inevitably and incessantly is supposed to produce and promote envy and spite make ugly what is beautiful. Thus Tony Blair is wrong in arguing that there are exclusionary faith i.e., ‘my faith as opposed to yours’ and inclusionary faith i.e., ‘faith as reaching out to others.’⁵² Given that every faith presupposes a truth which must reserve a strict principle of its own in order to be able to be a faith, a faith cannot reach out to others. If one puts two or more ugly things together, this does not mean that there might come out any beauty through this at all. This rather only means that there is a mishmash of ugly things.

Truths are ugly simply because they are tyrannical. They cannot endure what they are lack of: exceptionality and beauty. In the midst and under the assault of all this ugliness of truths, a philosopher’s vision is constantly curtained by a suffocating air which is unbearable. A philosopher therefore needs, so to speak, a bath; philosopher needs to breath. The moment in which philosopher says ‘there is no truth at all’ is tantamount to the moment in which one embraces the Mediterranean Sea in a summer night. In the latter, tactility enjoys itself; through the first reason declares its own autonomy thus sanctions its own existence in-and-for-itself.

‘A nihilist’ says Arkady, disciple of Bazarov, in Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*⁵³, ‘is a person who does not bow down to any authority, who does not accept any principle on faith, however much that principle may be revered.’(Ch. 5) Is not this position what exactly ought to be taken by every single philosopher? Is there even

⁵² Tony Blair, ‘Faith-Based Politics’, Newsweek, May 25, 2009

⁵³ Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, trans., Richard Hare. Available at: <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ist/fas.htm>

one single thing that philosopher should revere and prostrate? Can science be one of candidates? But what is science? When Bazarov was confronted with that question, his position was as follows: ‘I have already explained to you that I don't believe in anything; and what is science--science in the abstract? There are sciences, as there are trades and professions, but abstract science just doesn't exist.’(Ch. 6) Abstract science does not only exist for philosopher who has been intoxicated by the jargon of capital but also denudes philosophy's mantle and condemns to a pornographic abasement as was demonstrated in the end of the first chapter à la Searle. Is not abstract science as an ultimate authority, as a whorish deity that makes life ‘sweet, smooth, and gregarious’ in the post-epistemic era? Positive nihilism, then, is the position that ought to reserve an incessant vigilance in the face of pseudo-divinity of abstract science; even if this vigilance leads to a ‘bitter, rough, and lonely existence’ which Bazarov emphasizes in his farewell speech to his disciple, Arkady:

‘And now I say again, farewell . . . because it's useless to deceive ourselves; we are parting forever, and you know it yourself . . . you acted sensibly; you were not made for our bitter, rough, lonely existence. There's no daring in you, no hatred, though you've got youthful dash and youthful fervor; that's not enough for our business. Your sort, the nobility, can never go farther than noble resignation or noble indignation, but those things are trifles. For instance, you won't fight--and yet you fancy yourselves as brave fellows--but we want to fight. So there! Our dust would get into your eyes, our mud would soil you, but you're not up to our standard, you unconsciously admire yourselves and you enjoy finding fault with yourselves; but we're fed up with all that--we want something else! We want to smash people!’ (Ch. 26)

Positive nihilism wants to smash ugly truths too. It is a methodological necessity and theoretical precondition for those who want to fight against ugly truths. It requires daring, hatred, dash, and fervor as opposed to cowardice, sentimentality, laziness, and lassitude. It refuses a ‘sweet, smooth, and gregarious existence’ because these are qualities of weak, of philistine, and of mediocre existence. Instead, it makes one dare to experience a bitter, rough, and lonely existence. But the position of positive nihilism is by no means reactionary. Rather, positive nihilism itself creates its own values that venture for a bitter, rough, and lonely existence. The reactionaries are those who opt for a sweet, smooth, and gregarious existence because such an existence does not even leave time to create values; it affirms valuelessness itself as only value thus negates all that is valuable in terms of existence itself. Ultimately, positive nihilism is an affirmation of a positivity that alone has the potential to oppose valuelessness:

‘The true nihilists are the ones who oppose nihilism with their more and more faded positivities, the ones who are thus conspiring with all extant malice, and eventually with the destructive principle itself. Thought honors itself by defending what is damned as nihilism.’⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Adorno, *ND*, p.381

Positive nihilism eventually is a destructive principle as a methodological necessity and as a theoretical precondition that aims at crushing ugly truths with an extant malice along with hatred, dash, and fervor. It is this positive nihilism that ought to be defended to be able to reserve honor, dignity, and revolt in the name of philosophy. What is damned as nihilism along with hows and whys is what will be dealt with as negative nihilism in the following subchapter.

Allegro con fuoco

Negative Nihilism

Therefore let bread be sacred for us, let wine be sacred, and also let water be sacred! Amen.

Ludwig Feuerbach

Negative nihilism is that which is employed as an undesirable position and as a derogatory term. The ones who employ negative nihilism reserve a deep respect for Jacobi who introduced and operated the term nihilism with religious motivations. Yet the ones who employ negative nihilism are not content with the content of the concept of nihilism in the way Jacobi employed it. They go far beyond Jacobi. For Cunningham, for example, Avicenna, Spinoza, Kant, Heidegger, and many of others are nihilists. In this sense, the term nihilism turns out to be a mere derogatory term thus stripped of all its philosophical content. Those who concoct a negative nihilism first define the concept of nihilism and then try to make this definition benefit philosophical discourses that are operated during the history of philosophical tradition. But the real predicament of those who concoct a negative nihilism does not only lie in this. The real cul-de-sac they are trapped in is revealed when they have proposed a philosophy which is allegedly not nihilist.

Such an approach has been operated by Conor Cunningham in his *Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of nothing and the difference of theology*. (GN) Cunningham argues that an *aporia* haunts all the history of philosophy:

‘There is, I suggest, an *aporia* involved in finitude. How do we know that to *think* is significant? Or rather, how do we know that *thought thinks*? It seems we require a ‘thought of thinking’. However, if thought requires its own thought, then it can either be another thought or something other than thought. The former would initiate an infinite regress, for the supplementary thought would require its own thought, and so on, while the latter would ground thought in that which is not thought. But this means that all thinking would rest upon its own absence: thoughtlessness. This would, it seems, return us to the previous position. There, thought had presumed its own significance, which is not to think at all.’⁵⁵

There are, Cunningham argues, two basic traditions that deal with this *aporia*. The first one is what he calls *ontotheology* that supplements thought only with another thought: *I think thought thinks*. *Ontotheology*, the argument runs, an infinite regress of which all questions are asked by an answer: *the something*. The second basic tradition that deals with *aporia* is what he calls *meontotheology* which supplements thought with something other than thought. Unlike *ontotheology* that relies on *the something*, *meontotheology*’s final answer

⁵⁵ Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of nothing and the difference of theology*, Routledge, 2002, p. XII (All italics are Cunningham’s.)

is *the nothing*. ‘It is argued’, Cunningham writes, ‘that both traditions are nihilistic.’ He goes on to claim that *ontotheology* leads to nihilism, while *meontotheology* is the realized logic of nihilism that puts the questions such as: *why something rather than nothing? Why something? Why not nothing? Why can the nothing not do the job of the something?* These questions lead Cunningham to define the logic of nihilism as a ‘sundering of the something, rendering it nothing, and having the nothing be after all *as something*.’ According to Cunningham, all philosophical dualisms such as Hegel’s finite versus infinite or Fichte’s I versus Non-I befit this logic.⁵⁶

After drawing lines in such a way ornamented with neologisms, it won’t be so difficult for Cunningham to announce a number of philosophers to take nothing as something thus to denounce them as nihilists; from Avicenna to Derrida along with many of others. For the sake of brevity, the argument that is operated by Cunningham to serve his denunciation of a plethora of philosophers will be left aside. Instead, it is exactly what Cunningham offers that would allegedly escape the logic of nihilism and that will be exposed to critique.

What Cunningham does to accomplish his task is to offer a more sophisticated version of Jacobi whom he affirmatively quotes several times to buttress his argument, for example, when he lashes out at Kant and Fichte. (Cunningham, *GN*, p. 94) But in fundamental propositions and in overzealous shibboleths, Cunningham shares the same position as Jacobi. Jacobi argued that ‘I am not, and I do not wish to be, if He is not!’ (See, p.23 in the subchapter: ‘The Origin of Nihilism’) ‘Following Augustine’, Cunningham writes, ‘I argue that to be known by God is to *be*.’ (*GN*, p. 191) Jacobi claimed that love is that which makes one believe the incomprehensible. (See also p.23) For Cunningham, ‘Being *qua* being can only be articulated in terms of love, which is to say, that being must begin in love...’ (*GN* p. 188) This love ‘is the ‘basis’ or ‘possibility’ of metaphysics, because only by referring to the eternal charity of the Father, in relation to the Trinity, can we hope to understand what it would mean to be at all’ (*GN*, p. 204)

‘What is important for us is that this birth is anticipated in the first birth, the first waters, which arrive after the *words* of Mary. This drama of birth and rebirth, with the Church as now the true body of Christ, cannot be dissociated from human discourse and actions. We will see how important this is below. It is sufficient to say here that this may well enable us to develop a theo-logic that overcomes nihilism.’ (*GN*, p. 200)

Cunningham’s theo-logic that begins and subsists itself with love ends up with love too:

‘Love is the *invention* of difference, for love did not look to an external register from which it took its idea for difference. In this way creation can be other than God yet come within the Trinitarian procession. The trinity is not scared of difference for all difference *is* love and drives out fear. By heeding Eckhart’s words –approaching God as ‘non-God’ – we manifest the ultimacy of love, and eschew every ontotheology. Being is not something, it is nothing – nothing but love. Here we see

⁵⁶ Cunningham, *ibid.*, pp. XII-XIII

theology's dialogue with nihilism: for being *is* after all nothing *as* something although in a manner beyond nihilism's imaginings.' (GN, p. 265)

Cunningham concludes his theo-logic by recommendations for theology and theologians:

'Theology must endeavour to avoid these imbalances, employing the Christian tradition in a manner which allows the radical nature of creation – its difference – to present itself. Therefore, the faithful theologian, in articulating the creeds –in explicating the particularity of the faith –finds himself within *different memories*, for those in the Upper Room called forth Good Friday, in that they remembered the *future*; just as the Church is the *sacrament of the future*. In being the Bride of Christ we are to find form in the formless, love in hate, blood in wine, life in death. This is 'dialogue', and it is 'agnostic', but it is the dialogue between a lover and a loved within the mystique of desire. Love always has faith in difference, that there is difference in the same, and that we are able to trust that which is otherwise.' (GN, p. 274)

As seductive, sophisticated, and genuine as this all may sound, Cunningham's argument is supposed to sound familiar to those who are companions of this study so far. Vattimo, as a half-converted from philosophy to theology, who proposed an explicit appropriation of Christian historicity⁵⁷ and Cunningham, as a half-converted from theology to philosophy, who claims that the Church as the true body of Christ cannot be dissociated from human discourse and actions, are watered from the same trough. This, so to speak, trough, through which not water but only pigheadedness flows, has been analyzed through and through in the first chapter under the category of faith. The trough as a reservoir in the form of faith distorts not only reality of those who are watered from it but also their identification of any kind. This can clearly be seen in the case of Vattimo who corrupts philosophy through theology and of Cunningham who corrupts both theology as *theo-logic* and philosophy as sophistry. At the end of such corrupt transformations, neither of both can be identified as to the position at which they began. What they have ended up with cannot be identified as a position at all but a pseudo-position. Since faith steers altogether different affects in theology and philosophy respectively. Faith in theology is an absolute prerequisite; in philosophy it initiates an absolute corruption. Where there is faith there is theology; where there is philosophy there is no faith. If this is true, then, a half-theo-logician plus a half-philosopher cannot be equal to *one* theo-logician with some qualities of a philosopher and *vice versa* but equal to *one* pseudo-philosopher with some qualities of a pseudo-theo-logician and *vice versa*. From this it follows that a philosophy plus a theo-logic will hardly be equal to a philosophy with some qualities of a theo-logic and *vice versa* but to an absolute corruption under the guise of a theo-logical sophistry and *vice versa*.

It is this theo-logical sophistry operated by Cunningham that is claimed to overcome nihilism through love. Can love as a philosophical concept be *something* that would overcome nihilism as Cunningham claimed? Can love be *something* that is not *nothing* so that it can constitute a kind of ontology that would overcome Cunningham's

⁵⁷ See, Vattimo, 'The Age of Interpretation'

own *aporia*? What is love, anyway? Is it the one which is to be read in the statement ‘Thou shalt love your neighbour, and hate thine enemy’⁵⁸; or which Feuerbach praises as *the deepest and truest emotion* that is corrupted by religiousness⁵⁹; or which Nietzsche extols as the only conception of love that is the only one worthy of a philosopher immediately after quoting Don Juan’s last cry: ‘Yes. I have killed her, I –my adored *Carmen!*’⁶⁰? From what Cunningham writes it can be surmised that Cunningham’s love is congruent only with the first one, that is, the biblical love of neighbor. But herein the question arises: Can faith and love be conceived to exist simultaneously? If where there is philosophy there is no faith, then where there is faith there is no philosophy without which love cannot be articulated, that is, without philosophy love is speechless. If this is true, then where there is faith there love is speechless, that is, love cannot exist and cannot be articulated without philosophy.

But in Cunningham’s theo-logic wrought by faith love does not only exist but also invents something, that is, love is the invention of difference. Cunningham’s love is self-propelled entity since it does not take its idea from an external register. In this sense, Cunningham is in tune with Jacobi whose love comes from an irresistible force that makes one believe the incomprehensible. Nonetheless, while for Jacobi faith lurks behind and masquerades as a philosophical argument, for Cunningham love as a self-propelled entity that is the invention of difference is inspired by the Trinity. This Trinity welcomes difference since difference is love. Love which is difference is not only a self-propelled entity but also something that drives out fear, that is, something which possesses ability to exclude fear. So, what Cunningham does is first to render love a self-propelled entity that invents difference; and then he bestows on love a quality that extinguishes fear by referring to the Trinity. This mode of interpretation requires nothing but an absolute faith in love as something that is able to invent difference and is able to eliminate fear. And of course this process also requires an absolute faith in the Trinity i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But Cunningham is prepared for such a critique by approaching God as ‘non- God’ which is, according to him, the ultimate manifestation of love. What kind of quality this non-God has in contradistinction to Fichte’s non-I that Cunningham accuses of being taken nothing as something is inexplicable thus Cunningham’s failure in overcoming the *aporia* he had himself defined is inevitable. But he is an honest believer who has faith in a fictitious love, the Trinity, non-God thus also in nothing. ‘Being’, he writes, as just quoted *in extenso* above, ‘is not something, it is nothing –nothing but love. Here we see theology’s dialogue with nihilism: for being *is* after all nothing *as* something although in a manner beyond nihilism’s imaginings.’ What is this

⁵⁸ Matthew 5, 43, *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Meridian, 1974

⁵⁹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans., George Eliot, Harper, (1841), 1957, p. 274

⁶⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘The Case of Wagner: A Musicians’ Problem’, trans., Walter Kaufmann, (1888), Available at: http://users.compaqnet.be/cn127103/Nietzsche_various/the_case_of_wagner.htm

manner that is 'beyond' nihilism's imagining is of course unimaginable except for those who have faith in a love that is nothing which, so to speak, devours the Trinity and non-God. However, Cunningham's labor throughout his entire book is not in vain. He drags the *aporia* one step further and sharpens it through a *slight* transformation: *instead of taken nothing as something, he takes nothing as nothing thus ends up with nothing via which he had started up.*

As a matter of fact, Cunningham's faith-based thus perverted conception of love which is touted as a philosophical concept yet vanishing through its own *aporia* does not only haunt his own theo-logic but also *faithless* secular and communist contemporary thinkers who attempt to construct love as a political concepts and whose previous book, *Empire*⁶¹, had been hailed as the *Communist Manifesto* of twentieth-first century:

'People today seem unable to understand love as a political concept, but a concept of love is just what we need to grasp the constituent power of the multitude. The modern concept of love is almost exclusively limited to the bourgeois couple and the claustrophobic confines of the nuclear family. Love has become a strictly private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love. We need to recuperate the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions. Christianity and Judaism, for example, both conceive love as a political act that constructs the multitude. Love means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations bring us joy. There is really nothing necessarily metaphysical about the Christian and Judaic love of God are expressed and incarnated in the common material political project of the multitude. We need to recover today this material and political sense of love, a love as strong as death. This does not mean you cannot love your spouse, your mother, and your child. It only means that your love does not end there, that love serves as the basis for our political projects in common and the construction of a new society. Without this love, we are nothing.'⁶²

If the nineteenth century was the era of a great confusion, so to speak, and if the twentieth was the era of a greater confusion, then the twenty-first century is the era of a greatest confusion. Is it possible *not* to witness this greatest confusion in the employment of the conception of love as a theo-logical sophistry under the guise of a philosophical concept and as an ideological sophistry under the guise of a political concept? What is at stake here is that both theo-logical and ideological sophistries attempt to exploit the suppleness of the concept of love. It should come as no surprise then that this hasty and pedantic, if not naive, exploitation of the suppleness of a term contrived as a philosophical or as political concept may and indeed does cause ramifications that compel theo-logical and ideological sophistries to end up, to use a Marxian language, with a theo-logical *tragedy* in the case of Cunningham and with an ideological *farce* in the case of Hardt and Negri. From this it would follow that one of the peculiar characteristics of the era of the greatest confusion then lies in the miscalculated exploitation of concepts that would neither bring a salvation nor a revolution. This miscalculated exploitation eventually

⁶¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000

⁶² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 351-2

leads to a futile entrepreneurship without surplus value and to a sinful sacrament without grace. ‘Why, we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called?’, Dostoevsky wryly puts the question and maintains, ‘Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise.’⁶³ This Dostoevskian mode of interpretation was operated with regard to the era of a great confusion i.e., nineteenth century. For the present era, there is no need to be left alone without books to fall prey to the greatest confusion. Rather, one only needs to cling to a theo-logical or an ideological sophistry that alone makes one confounded by distorting one's mode of interpretation with regard to what to love and what to hate; what to respect and what to despise.

That Cunningham's theo-logic takes nothing as nothing thus ends up with nothing which condemns him to be drown out in his own *aporia* is, so to speak, not the only sin Cunningham commits. He, as it were, commits also a theoretical suicide. Yet, there is something absurd about this suicide he commits. Suppose that there is a man who fiercely loves his beloved and who is jealous of her to the degree of a sickly paranoia while possessing a sickly pride. This man encounters a moment that he interprets as a betrayal being committed by his beloved. He is not capable of bearing to witness such a situation and he immediately leaves the place. He runs away with convulsions and reaches out the sea. He stands still on the brink of a cliff, and decides to jump into the sea instead of killing her or any other person. He jumps into the sea and dies. When his bloated corpse is found two days afterwards, it is revealed that it was not his beloved who betrayed him and that there was no betrayal at all. Cunningham's theoretical suicide can be likened to this absurd story. He this time drags the absurdity one step further and sharpens it through a *slight* transformation: he even, as it were, does not *know* that he is committing suicide. Here is how such an *unconscious* theoretical suicide is committed. Recall that Cunningham argued that all philosophical dualisms that take nothing as something, for instance, as in the case of Fichte's ‘Non-I’, are bound to succumb to the *aporia* which leads to nihilism. But, he forgets what he had claimed at the outset and concludes with dualisms at the end; as if a dualism ceases to be a dualism when it is operated with other dualisms. Some of dualisms, which are not dualisms for Cunningham, are ‘form and formless’ ‘love and hate’, ‘life and death.’ If these are not dualisms as Cunningham argues or if all these cease to be dualisms when they are serviced together, then Cunningham is right. Otherwise, he is a victim of the *aporia* that he had defined at the outset.

⁶³ Fyodor Dostoevsky, , *Notes from the Underground* , Trans., Contance Garnett. Available at: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/modeng/modengD.browse.html>

The lesson that would be drawn from Cunningham's 'negative nihilism' is that negative nihilism is a double-edged sword that is hazardous to play with. On the one hand, it is seductive due to the fact that it would give one an opportunity to denounce philosophical positions as nihilist and is thus in tune with Jacobi who introduced the concept of nihilism to philosophical vocabulary. On the other hand, it would convey one to a position that would lead to one's own denouncement designed by one's own argument itself. If so, then the employment of the concept of nihilism as negative nihilism is in the final analysis nothing else than a derogatory term that a philosophical approach must do away with. Such a philosophical approach therefore has to deal with nihilism as state of existence to which the argument operated in this chapter must now turn.

*Andante Cantabile***Nihilism as state of existence**

The name means nothing; the issue is what counts.

F. W. Joseph Schelling

It has been argued in this chapter that the most feasible way to deal with the concept of nihilism is to begin with Jacobi who introduced it to philosophical vocabulary and who used it as a derogatory term with a religious motivation without elaborating it in terms of its philosophical content and that it is possible and necessary to tackle with the concept of nihilism under the categorizations of positive nihilism, which is a methodological necessity and a theoretical precondition, of negative nihilism, which is a mere derogatory term despite its alleged philosophical content, and of nihilism as state of existence. Before meticulously dissecting the concept of nihilism as state of existence, it is incumbent upon the argument of this study to deal with the implications that immediately emerge from just stated introductory and compendious remarks. Cannot one employ the concept of nihilism for the historical period that precedes Jacobi who used the term in 1799? According to the argument operated so far, one *should not*. Why? Simply because, such an employment is bound to be flawed by an anachronism that would jeopardize the entire endeavor of the user. Anachronism might provide a kind of fecundity in various sorts of arts but the same result would barely be reaped in philosophy which is supposed to take into consideration the historical context when it deals with a conceptual analysis. Heidegger remarks with regard to a similar problem:

‘And so as soon as valuative thought emerged, there came –and still comes– the empty talk about the ‘cultural values’ of the Middle Ages and the ‘spiritual values’ of antiquity, even though there was nothing like ‘culture’ in the Middle Ages nor anything like ‘spirit’ and ‘culture’ in ancient times. Only in the modern era have spirit and culture been deliberately experienced as fundamental modes of human comportment, and only in most recent times have ‘values’ been posited as standards for such comportment. It does not follow, of course, that earlier periods were ‘uncultured’ in the sense that they were submerged in barbarism; what follows is that with the schemata ‘culture’ and ‘lack of culture,’ ‘spirit,’ and ‘value,’ we never touch in its essence the history, for example, of the Greeks.’⁶⁴

The same goes, *mutadis mutandis*, for the concept of nihilism that was introduced to philosophical vocabulary in 1799 and was elaborated in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Such is the historical context that ought to be taken into account in order to touch in its essence the history of the concept of nihilism. This does not mean that the works that employ the concept of nihilism for the earlier periods have no value in themselves and that one

⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, D. F. Krell (Ed.), trans., F. A. Capuzzi (1961), Harper, 1982, p. 17

cannot gain valuable insights from such works in terms of the historical period which they deal with. To be sure, one may learn much things from a study that employs the concept of nihilism for the time, say, of Crusades but this in terms of its anachronism would not differ from attributing neo-liberal policies to the time, say, of the Roman emperor Diocletian.

So, what does ‘nihilism as state of existence’ mean? It is that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness. In this sense, it is distinguished from both positive and negative nihilisms in the sense that it is neither positive nor negative but beyond any positivity and negativity. Nor does it culminate in a Hegelian sublation consists of positive and negative nihilisms. It constitutes a *sui generis* category in itself. But how do nothingness and meaninglessness become a property of the subject whose state of existence is identified with such terms? This is a crucial question that for which a short digression is due. Nothingness and meaninglessness are inescapable phenomena for the entire past, present, and future generations of human beings as long as there did, does, and will exist finitude as an insurmountable horizon, one in the face of which terms such as ‘after’, ‘beyond’, ‘infinity’ etc. are bound to be mere chimeras. That is, as long as there is death in the end, all *Being* is blemished with *nothingness*. As long as, there is death in the end, all *meanings* are bound to vanish and to end up with meaninglessness. Heraclitus a.k.a. ‘the obscure’ perhaps had in his mind something similar when he cried out: ‘The bow’s name (then?) is ‘life’ (*bios*), but (its) *job* is death!’⁶⁵ In this sense, the question that was posed in the end of the first chapter becomes the one which is ultimate and unanswerable: What if all this *is* just a nothingness of coming dawns and noons with an innocent anticipation for some kind of meaning and a meaninglessness of past days and nights with a cruel expectation for some kind of nothingness? Thus, a rigorous distinction has to be made at the outset between nothingness\meaninglessness (nihilism) that is related to a primordial characteristic of human finitude and nothingness\meaninglessness (nihilism) that has a specific philosophical content which has been formulated within a specific historical context in the last two centuries. Nishitani Keiji elucidates this point very well:

‘On the one hand, nihilism is a problem that transcends time and space and is rooted in the essence of human being, an existential problem in which the being of the self is revealed to the self itself as something groundless. On the other hand, it is a historical and social phenomenon, an object of the study of history.’⁶⁶

So, if the fact that what kind of nothingness\meaninglessness, i.e., nihilism as state of existence, is the object of this study is clarified, then the question posed just before this short digression has to be repeated: How do

⁶⁵ Heraclitus, *Fragments*, A text and translation with a commentary by T. M. Robinson, University of Toronto Press, 1987, 48, p. 35

⁶⁶ Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans., Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara, State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 3

nothingness and meaninglessness become a property of the subject whose state of existence is identified with such terms?

Kierkegaard in his analysis of the concept of despair argues that since the self has the task of becoming itself in freedom, this process of becoming cannot be thought without the dialectic of possibility and necessity. From this, he maintains, it follows that if the self does not have access to any possibility the self is in despair thus the self has no necessity. The dialectic of possibility and necessity is something like the dialectic of infinitude and finitude i.e., the unlimited/limited. The self then is potentially as possible as it is necessary: 'Insofar as it is itself, it is the necessary, and insofar as it has the task of becoming itself, it is a possibility.' Yet, as soon as possibility *outruns* necessity in the process of becoming of the self, the balance comes to an end. The self is absorbed in despair, since by being absorbed in despair the self becomes an abstract possibility. The more the self is intoxicated by possibility that condemns the self to despair, the more necessity is required for the self to escape despair. Becoming is a step forward to escape despair. But as soon as the self takes a step forward, the self loses the ground to stand against despair; since the only ground on which the self can stand to escape despair is the ground where the self should have never taken a step forward:

'Thus possibility seems greater and greater to the self; more and more becomes possible because nothing becomes actual. Eventually everything seems possible, but this is exactly the point at which the abyss swallows up the self. It takes time for each little possibility to become actuality. Eventually, however, the time that should be used for actuality grows shorter and shorter; everything becomes more and more momentary. Possibility becomes more and more intensive – but in the sense of possibility, not in the sense of actuality, for the intensive in the sense of actuality means to actualize some of what is possible. The instant something appears to be possible, a new possibility appears, and finally these phantasmagoria follow one another in such rapid succession that it seems as if everything were possible, and this is exactly the final moment, the point at which the individual himself becomes a mirage.'⁶⁷

This is the story of the subject that possesses an abundance of possibilities. Yet, the subject's possibilities are no more than fictitious beings or entities and meanings that are meaningless, unless some of these possibilities are actualized. Non-actualized possibilities are an abyss in which only, so to speak, non-possibilities are actualized. Since, as Nietzsche remarked, 'When you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you.'⁶⁸ And the longer one gazes into an abyss, the denser the submersion of the one will become. Yet, this density has its own deceptive illusions in the form of new possibilities, since the density itself as a whole appears as a new possibility. But the most tragic instant of the story, which incessantly cossets the subject through a dense

⁶⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening* (1849), trans., H. V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 36 (Hereafter, Kierkegaard, *SUD*)

⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1885), trans., R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 2003, 146, p. 102

nothingness and with an intensive meaninglessness, is the end of it. That the subject becomes a mirage in the end as an end in itself thus lacks a substance of its own is not the most tragic instant of the story. It is rather that the subject must not only endure itself *as* a mirage but also incessantly propel itself *toward* a mirage.

Does this then mean that the subject has no autonomy of its own? Is the subject that which does not feel, know and will? If the subject has no autonomy of its own and if the subject does not feel, know, and will; can one still speak of a subject, a self? Given that in order to be a subject, a self, the subject must possess an autonomy of its own and must feel, know, and will; this autonomy, feeling, knowing, and willing must be in such a way that the subject must have an imaginary, not actual, relation with being autonomous, feeling, knowing, and willing. Such an imaginary relation is what Kierkegaard calls ‘fantastic’:

‘When feeling or knowing or willing has become fantastic, the entire self can eventually become that, whether in the more active form of plunging headlong into fantasy or in the more passive form of being carried away, but in both cases the person is responsible. The self, then, leads a fantasized existence in abstract infinitizing or in abstract isolation, continually lacking its self, from which it only moves further and further away. Take the religious sphere, for example. The Godrelationship is an infinitizing, but in fantasy this infinitizing can so sweep a man off his feet that his state is simply an intoxication. To exist before God may seem unendurable to a man because he cannot come back to himself, become himself. (...) But to become fantastic in this way, and thus to be in despair, does not mean, although it usually becomes apparent, that a person cannot go on living fairly well, seem to be a man, be occupied with temporal matters, marry, have children, be honored and esteemed –and it may not be detected that in a deeper sense he lacks a self. Such things do not create much of a stir in the world, for a self is the last thing the world cares about and the most dangerous thing of all for a person to show signs of having. The greatest hazards of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all.’⁶⁹

Nihilism as state of existence through nothingness and meaninglessness can be likened to what Kierkegaard calls ‘fantasized existence’ through abstract infinitizing and abstract isolation. This fantasized existence expounded by Kierkegaard can be in two forms: actively devoting oneself to fantasy and passively being carried away.⁷⁰ The crucial point here is that whatever form this fantasized existence has, i.e., active or passive, the subject is still responsible for it, though this by no means change the subject’s lacking of a self. The subject’s high social status does not provide a self. So, following Kierkegaard, losing the self, which can be likened to nihilism as state of existence through nothingness and meaninglessness, is not a seldom phenomenon; albeit it is not regarded as a loss by those who have already lost it.

⁶⁹ Kierkegaard, *SUD*, pp. 32-3

⁷⁰ There is a surprising similarity between Kierkegaard’s these two forms of fantasized existence and Nietzsche’s active and passive nihilism. Nietzsche defines active nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit, while passive nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit. (Nietzsche, *WP*, 22) However, Nietzsche never elaborated this distinction. There is only one aphorism that has just been cited deals with this distinction. Thus, this distinction does not seem to deserve to be worked on.

Yet, as soon as Kierkegaard speaks of existing before God, the argument operated in this study must no longer affirmatively keep company with him. Existing before God is frequently mentioned in *The Sickness unto Death*. For Kierkegaard this is the only way to escape despair. This requires a faith of which Kierkegaard gives a succinct definition in the end of *SUD*: ‘in relating itself to itself and willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.’⁷¹ But what is God, anyway? A possibility? A necessity? Is there any possibility for God to be actualized? If God is a necessity, then it cannot be a possibility; since as soon as it is a necessity it ceases to be a possibility due to the fact that it must be established rigidly to endure it as a necessity thus dismisses any further possibility. If God is a possibility, then it cannot be a necessity; since insofar as it is a possibility it dispenses with necessity due to the fact that it ceases to be a possibility as soon as it turns out to be a necessity. If God is simultaneously a possibility and a necessity, then it must somehow be actualized as something external to the self. Since it cannot be actualized as something external to the self, it is neither a possibility nor a necessity. If God is neither a possibility nor a necessity and God cannot be actualized as something external to the self; then it is the self that is the only authority to take God as a potential possibility or a potential necessity. Since there is no possibility for the self to actualize God as something external, the self can imagine it as a possibility and a necessity through faith despite its absolute non-actualization as something external. If the self takes something as a possibility and a necessity in spite of its non-actualization, then this ‘something’ can only be a *fantasized existent* which is God. If the self takes a fantasized existent to relate itself to itself and to will to be itself and the self rests transparently in the power that established it, and the self takes this fantasized process as faith to relate its being to itself and to establish a meaningful relation with its own being, then this self’s feeling, knowing, and willing are bound to lead it to nothingness and meaninglessness. But this self will have no difficulty to endure a life as honored and esteemed in spite of its fantasized existence through faith. Because, not that the self that endures a fantasized existence through faith does not will at all but that the self wills nothingness through meaninglessness. This is what Nietzsche’s distinction between ‘willing nothingness’ and ‘not willing’ is about.⁷²

To sum up, nihilism as state of existence has been defined as that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness; and the question has been posed: How do nothingness and meaninglessness become a property of the subject whose state of existence is identified with such terms? Through Kierkegaard’s masterful analysis, it has been seen that the subject’s selflessness is not an impossibility at all. Yet, while Kierkegaard is

⁷¹ Kierkegaard, *SUD*, p.131

⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* (1887), trans., Douglas Smith, Oxford University Press, 2008, III, 28, pp. 135-6

fascinatingly right in diagnosing the loss of the self; he is wrong in proposing a way to treat selflessness through existing before God i.e., faith. Put differently, it was, so to speak, this collaboration with Kierkegaard via which an understanding of how nothingness and meaninglessness can become a property of the subject has been derived. And it was this confrontation with Kierkegaard by means of his own argumentation via which how nihilism as state of existence through faith can be a property of the subject has been acquired.

That nihilism as state of existence through faith can be derived from a confrontation with Kierkegaard and from Nietzsche's distinction between 'willing nothingness' and 'not willing' is not only argument via which such a claim can be buttressed. Nietzsche unequivocally points out that it is neither social distress, nor physiological degeneration, nor corruption is the cause of nihilism but rather it is the Christian-moral interpretation that is the root of nihilism.⁷³ However, this is not only a judgment as a simple abstraction but also an interpretation based on actual symptoms. Nietzsche clarifies this point when he declares that the time has come to pay for having been Christians for two thousand years and that as a result of this long experience everything *now* is false through and through, only words, chaotic, weak, or extravagant. One of the symptoms of this meaninglessness is: 'the church is still permitted to obtrude into all important experiences and main points of individual life to hallow them and give them a higher meaning: we still have the 'Christian state,' 'Christian marriage''⁷⁴ The actuality of such a symptom can be seen in the example of contemporary Denmark: 'Eighty-two per cent of all babies were christened in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and 70% of all 14-17 years old teenagers were confirmed in the church. Copenhagen had the lowest share of baptisms with only half of newborns in Copenhagen baptized in the state church while in Aalborg in Jutland the figure was 96%. And while we're on the subject of ecclesiasticism: 81% of the Danes are a member of the national church – slightly fewer men than women.'⁷⁵

So, if the *actuality* of nihilism as state of existence through faith has been clarified, then it is high time to proceed into the argument that aims at deciphering what nihilism as state of existence through nothingness and meaninglessness corresponds to. As a matter of fact, herein it is incumbent upon the argument operated in this study to emphasize that this 'deciphering' is supposed to be Nietzschean due to the fact that it was nobody but Nietzsche who elaborated the concept of nihilism in such a rigorous way. Without Nietzsche the employment of the concept of nihilism is bound to be nothing but aforementioned what has been called 'negative nihilism' i.e., a mere derogatory term. In other words, if one wishes to use the concept of nihilism with a philosophical content,

⁷³ Nietzsche, *WP*, 1, p. 7

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *WP*, 30, p.21

⁷⁵ *Politiken*, 11 June 2009. Based on Statistical Yearbook 2009

one has to take into consideration the way Nietzsche interpreted it if one does not only wish to concoct a ‘negative nihilism.’ That the employment of the concept of nihilism, however, is supposed to be Nietzschean does not mean that what is supposed to be done is just to quote affirmatively and randomly what Nietzsche has written about the concept of nihilism. Thus, deciphering of the concept of nihilism must be proceeded in such a way that some implications of Nietzschean interpretation of the concept of nihilism must be singled out in accordance with the objectives of the argument operated in this study. This is what has been done above with regard to positive nihilism and nihilism as state of existence through faith in a ‘God.’ Yet, nihilism as state of existence cannot only be a property of the subject through faith, but also through beliefs. Here is how.

‘What does nihilism mean?’, Nietzsche asks and maintains: ‘*That the highest values devalue themselves.* The aim is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer.’⁷⁶ This critical aphorism may be interpreted by dividing it into three states which may also provide a definition for nihilism as state of existence that manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness for the subject: valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion. Now the question is whether valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion can be a property of the subject. Valuelessness does not simply denote a lack of values in a given human community. Rather, it would also mean that there might be a copiousness of values that are regarded as the highest ones. Yet, if these values cannot be endured as values that constantly devalue themselves, then valuelessness is anyway inevitable. Since there in a sense is no difference between a lack of values and a copiousness of values that devalue themselves. The same goes for aimlessness. Finally, confusion is not a state in which there is no answer for ‘why?’ Rather, confusion is that in which ‘why?’ might have an abundance of answers; and this abundance is in such a way that ‘why?’ is not starved of answers at all but is gorged with answers. So, it is not that ‘why?’ suffers from a dearth where there is no answer but that ‘why?’ is inundated with answers thus is unremittingly exposed to an indigestibility and suffers therefore from a death without the act of dying *per se*. ‘The lion shall never lie down with the lamb’, Lawrence writes,

‘The lion eternally shall devour the lamb, the lamb eternally shall be devoured. Man knows the great consummation in the flesh, the sensual ecstasy, and that is eternal. Also the spiritual ecstasy of unanimity, that is eternal. But the two are separate and never to be confused. To neutralize the one with the other is unthinkable, an abomination. *Confusion is horror and nothingness.*’⁷⁷

Confusion is not to make the lamb and the lion starve by separating them eternally but rather is to give grass to the lion and meat to the lamb. Thus, as confusion is not simply a lack of answers for ‘why?’; nothingness is not simply a lack of ‘what?’ or ‘who?’ but the horror that stems from a lack of finding answers for ‘how?’ and

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *WP*, 2, p. 9

⁷⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy* (1916), Penguin Books, 1974, p. 53 (Italics added)

‘why?’ It is here that the dialectic between nothingness and meaninglessness thrives. However, that confusion is nothingness does not manifest itself as a disappearance of the subject. It is not the disappearance of the subject as such that is at issue here but the desiccation of meanings, as it were, through valuelessness and aimlessness. As a result, nihilism as state of existence through nothingness and meaninglessness is that which manifests itself through valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion.

Since nihilism as state of existence can only be a property of a subject, an individual, it is a psychological state within and through which the subject experiences nothingness, meaninglessness, valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion. Nietzsche elaborates this psychological state as follows:

‘Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, first, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged. Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long waste of strength, the agony of the "in vain," insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure--being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had deceived oneself all too long.--This meaning could have been: the "fulfillment" of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal happiness; or even the development toward a state of universal annihilation--any goal at least constitutes some meaning. What all these notions have in common is that something is to be achieved through the process--and now one realizes that becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing.’⁷⁸

The subject seeks for a meaning. Yet, the meaning is no longer or has never been there. The subject is dismayed. Then comes a recognition of agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, and shame. That is, the subject often recognizes these psychological states in his/her every day life. But in spite or as a result of all these every day moods, the subject puts a goal which will only be achieved through the process. And then comes a realization of nothingness of becoming –or becoming of nothingness. This realization brings its own mood as disappointment. So, the subject is the one whose moods oscillates between a recognition of agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame and a realization of nothingness that manifests itself as disappointment.

‘Nihilism as a psychological state is reached, secondly, when one has posited a totality, a systematization, indeed any organization in all events, and underneath all events, and a soul that longs to admire and revere has wallowed in the idea of some supreme form of domination and administration (--if the soul be that of a logician, complete consistency and real dialectic are quite sufficient to reconcile it to everything). Some sort of unity, some form of "monism": this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity.--"The well-being of the universal demands the devotion of the individual"--but behold, there is no such universal! At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order to be able to believe in his own value.’⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *WP*, 12, p. 12

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The subject finds a meaning in so far as and as soon as is released from disappointment. This meaning is a totality in which the subject feels secure. Now there is an order in which the subject would feel itself *subjected* to something that is superior to it. By means of this self-subjugation, the subject does not only idolize the totality as an order in which he feels himself secure by means of something superior but also idolize himself as a ‘God’ of a land that does not exist. So, the totality the subject has taken refuge within has turned out to be a never-never land via which the subject determines his own value.

Given these two insights, that becoming has no goal and that underneath all becoming there is no grand unity in which the individual could immerse himself completely as in an element of supreme value, an escape remains: to pass sentence on this whole world of becoming as a deception and to invent a world beyond it, a true world. But as soon as man finds out how that world is fabricated solely from psychological needs, and how he has absolutely no right to it, the last form of nihilism comes into being: it includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a true world. Having reached this standpoint, one grants the reality of becoming as the only reality, forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities--but cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it.⁸⁰

The subject’s seeking for a meaning has ended up with every day moods such as agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment. The subject’s finding a meaning in a systematization by idolizing both that systematization and itself has ended up with a realization of valuelessness of itself. Now the subject declares the entire world as a deception and concocts a ‘beyond’ which is allegedly not a deception but a true world. Yet, when the subject realizes that this true world is nothing but a transgression and fictionalization of his own due to psychological needs to endure life, the last form of nihilism manifests itself. It is this form in which there is no place for any metaphysical and true world. Eventually, the subject accepts the reality of becoming as the only reality by prohibiting himself for any kind of true and afterworlds. Yet, the subject is not still ready to endure this world in spite of an unwillingness of its own to deny this world. Ultimately, the everyday moods of the subject are constantly under the assault of agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment, while a feeling of valuelessness, of aimlessness, of confusion accompany or follow them thus nothingness and meaninglessness characterize state of existence of the subject.

So, the subject is a seeker for a meaning which is meaningless in itself, is a finder of a systematization for the sake of itself which is unsystematic, and is an inventor of a true world which is untrue. To conclude in a nutshell, ‘A nihilist is a man’, Nietzsche writes, ‘who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist.’⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Nietzsche, *WP*, 585, p. 316

Chapter Three: Global Capitalism and Nihilism

Today one can see coming into existence the culture of a society of which *commerce* is as much the soul as personal contest was with the ancient Greeks and as war, victory and justice were for the Romans. The man engaged in commerce understands how to appraise everything without having made it, and to appraise it *according to the needs of consumer*, not according to his own needs; ‘who and how many will consume this?’ is his questions of questions. This type of appraisal he then applies instinctively and all the time: he applies it to everything, and thus also to the production of the arts and sciences, of thinkers, scholars, artists, statesmen, peoples and parties, of the entire age: in regard to everything that is made he inquires after supply and demand *in order to determine the value of a thing in his own eyes*. This becomes the character of an entire culture, thought through in the minutest and subtlest detail and imprinted in every will and every faculty: it is this of which you man of the coming century will be proud: if the prophets of the commercial class are right to give it into your possession! But I have little faith in these prophets.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*⁸²

Allegretto con variazioni

Capitalism – Globalization - Global Capitalism

I am a nihilist.

Jean Baudrillard

In the first chapter, existential valence of interpretations through a conceptual analysis of faith and beliefs has been ferreted out and reached to the conclusion that thanks to the existential gap and jointlessness between the subject and the interpreted; between what the subject has interpreted and what the interpreted is; between the subject and what the subject has interpreted; and between the interpreted and what the interpreted is, the constitution of interpretations always already falls out as epistemological violence. In the second chapter, the concept of nihilism has been parsed and presented under the categorizations of positive nihilism as a

⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the prejudices of morality* (1881), eds., M. Clark and B. Leiter, trans., R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 175, p. 106

methodological necessity and as a theoretical precondition, of negative nihilism as a derogatory term despite its alleged philosophical content, and of nihilism as state of existence, through faith and beliefs, as that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness by the accompaniment of valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion. However, the inference that only the constitution of interpretations as epistemological violence leads to nihilism as state of existence is inadequate and incorrect. It is the construction of interpretations that leads to nihilism as state of existence. Yet, the construction of interpretations does by no means exclude the constitution of interpretations, meaning that as interpretations are constructed, they are at the same constituted. That is, the constitution of interpretations prepares the *ground* for the construction of interpretations. In other words, the constitution of interpretations is itself the *ground* on which the subject constructs interpretations via which the subject exists in a human community. So, the main purpose of this chapter is to understand whether the subject's construction of interpretations leads to nihilism as state of existence.

The subject is not the one who constructs interpretations in an isolated medium. In order to be a subject, or in order to be called as a subject, the subject must be subjectivized. One of the meanings of the word subject is to be 'one who is under the dominion of a sovereign etc.'⁸³ The subject too is under the dominion of the political, economical, social, cultural thus ontological power structure that subjectivizes the subject. Yet, in so far as the Latin root of the word subject is considered, another quiddity of the subject manifests itself. The word comes from *jacere*, meaning to throw or cast and finally exercise power over.⁸⁴ Since the construction of interpretations by the subject requires a mental ability, it would follow that the construction of interpretations requires exercising a sort of power. So, the subject is the one that is being exercised power over by the power structure that subjectivizes the subject and does exercise power through constructing interpretations. In this turbulent medium, the subject is not that fortunate at all:

'What the philosophers once knew life has become the sphere of private existence and now mere consumption, dragged along as an appendage of the process of material production, without autonomy or substance of its own. He who wishes to know the truth about life in its immediacy must scrutinize its estranged form, the objective powers that determine individual existence even in its most hidden recesses.'⁸⁵

If the subject has no other function than being an appendage in the process of material production with only freedom of consumption, then the subject has no autonomy or substance. But the subject's lack of autonomy does not of course mean that the problem of autonomy has disappeared. If the subject has a function in the

⁸³ Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, Oxford University Press, 1985

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (1951), trans., E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso, 2005, p. 15

process of material production, then there must be something else that usurps the subject's autonomy; something which reduces the subject to a mere appendage. The perpetrator of this reduction is the objective powers that leave no place to subject in order for the subject to have a substance, since these objective powers penetrate and determine all aspects of the medium in which the subject exists. The name for such objective powers that determine state of existence of the subject is global capitalism. Leaving aside global capitalism itself for the moment, the two concepts must be scrutinized so as to comprehend what global capitalism is: capitalism and globalization.

Bill Gates argues that the world is getting better and is a better place to live than it has ever been, considering the status of women and minorities in society; life expectancy that has doubled in the past one hundred years; and the number of people today who vote in elections, express their views, and enjoy economic freedom compared to any time in the past. For Gates, in these 'crucial' areas, the world is getting better.⁸⁶ Now recall Searle's statement: 'The central intellectual fact of the present era is that knowledge grows. It grows daily and cumulatively. We know more than our grandparents did; our children will know more than we do.'⁸⁷ What these two approaches have common is that the both speak with the vertiginousness of the present, reducing the entire past to some statistical calculations and declaring the entire future as the way they wish it to be. So, their present becomes a product of a false past inasmuch as their past becomes a product of a false present. But the most atrocious falsity is the anticipation for a *true* future that is bound to be a product of a false present and a false past. A page earlier Gates says: 'Some of us are lucky enough to arrive at moments in life where we can pause, reflect on our work, and say: 'This is great. It's fun, exciting, and useful – I could do this forever.' This is the jargon of capital. The jargon of capital relies fanatically on certain beliefs that are not well-founded at all. In the case of Gates, these beliefs are the alleged better position of the status of women and minorities in society, the rising of life expectancy, and the number of people who vote and who enjoy economic freedom and freedom of speech. If Gates stated all these beliefs confined to specific areas of the world and if he did not add 'compared to any time in the past', then his beliefs would have a possibility to be justified. But an immense reductionism and a crass generalization are the very characteristics of the jargon of capital which cannot be operated without them.

Soon after Gates gives a definition of capitalism: 'The genius of capitalism lies in its ability to make self-interest serve the wider interest.' Two beliefs can be extracted from this statement: that capitalism is genius, and that

⁸⁶ Bill Gates, 'A new approach to capitalism' (Remarks delivered at the World Economic Forum January 24, 2008, in Davos, Switzerland), in *Creative Capitalism: A conversation with Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and other economic leaders*, eds., Michael Kinsley with Conor Clarke, Simon & Schuster, 2008, pp. 7-16 (Hereafter all quotations from Bill Gates refer to this text.)

⁸⁷ See, the subchapter, 'Certain, objective, and universal knowledge' in Chapter 1

capitalism is that which makes self-interest serve the wider interest. The statement that capitalism is genius is self-evident. Perhaps, the fact that he himself is a genius by accumulating a huge capital that has made him one of the richest men in the world has made him self-conceited to the extent that he projects his own genius to capitalism. Yet, to what extent the ability in accumulating capital can be a sign of being genius is in no way unequivocal. So, the belief that capitalism is genius is still supposed to be justified. For the belief that capitalism makes self interest serve the wider interest, he refers to a passage by the political economist and moralist Adam Smith: ‘How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it.’ The core idea in this passage is the belief that man is not that selfish as may be supposed due to the fact that in the nature of man there are some principles that make him happy when he sees the fortunes of others and that make the others’ happiness necessary to him. The opposite of selfishness is that of not being selfish i.e., giving something one’s own to others without expecting anything in return for i.e., neither material nor emotional. Smith is clear on this point: ‘he derives nothing from it.’ But behold, he immediately adds: ‘except the pleasure of seeing it.’ He derives nothing but pleasure! It is not that man gets pleasure of seeing the fortune of others but that man gets pleasure when he sees that the others also see his seeing the fortune of others. When the others also see his seeing the fortune of others, it is not the fortune of others that will likely be multiplied but the fortune of himself that will certainly be multiplied. The logic of philanthropy that the jargon of capital operates is self-contradictory, if not a fraud.

However, Gates admits that the world is getting better but not fast enough and not for everyone. Hence, he maintains, a new system has to be created: ‘I like to call this new system creative capitalism –an approach where governments, businesses, and nonprofits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world’s inequities.’ That more people can make profit and the work to ease inequities is of secondary importance. Such wishes, either sincere or insincere, have often been stated that they must now suffer from a dilapidation. All is about stretching market forces like marching toward a city to despoil it. That stretching market more and more so that more people can make profit is a naiveté, if not a ruse. When the market forces are stretched, *not more* people can make profit but *some* people can make *more* profit. Furthermore, an increase in the number of those who makes profit also means that more people will be exploited. But exploitation is a word that does not exist in the vocabulary jargon of capital as it has not been mentioned even once in Gates’ remarks. So, the formulation that by stretching market forces more people can make profit therefore inequities can be diminished is a belief which can scarcely be justified.

Instead, the formulation that by stretching market forces some people can make more profit therefore inequities will likely be intensified can be justified as a belief by means of the consequences of stretching market forces, for example, in the Baltic countries after the demise of the Soviet imperialism. So, if the primordial characteristics of the jargon of capitalism have been derived and if the unfeasibility of the jargon of capital in terms of the argument that aims at comprehending what global capitalism is through a conceptual analysis of capitalism and globalization has been understood, the argument can now be stretched further.

Yet, this stretching ought not to be implemented in the way in which merely an ‘anti’ or a ‘counter’ jargon is to be produced or reproduced. It is this alertness by virtue of which the jargon of capital has been given voice through somehow tantalizing it. The same alertness then ought to be applied to critiques that are directed at capitalism without blindly extolling them. This extollation would at best be to operate an ‘anti’ or a ‘counter’ jargon which can by no means serve to the purposes of this study. But on the other hand, since for the jargon of capital nihilism as state of existence is not an issue at all, the argument of this study ought to be derived from critiques that problematize capitalism as such. In one of recent critiques, the fundamental motivations of critiques that have been operated in the last two centuries have been summarized as follows:

‘(C)apitalism as a source of *disenchantment* and *inauthenticity* of objects, persons, emotions and, more generally, the kind of existence associated with it;

capitalism as a source of *oppression*, inasmuch as it is opposed to the freedom, autonomy and creativity of the human beings who are subject, under its sway, on the one hand to the domination of the market as an impersonal force fixing prices and designating desirable human beings and products/services, while rejecting others; and on the other hand to the forms of subordination involved in the condition of wage-labour (enterprise discipline, close monitoring by bosses, and supervision by means regulations and procedures);

capitalism as a source of *poverty* among workers and of inequalities on an unprecedented scale;

Capitalism as a source of *opportunism* and *egoism* which by exclusively encouraging private interests, proves destructive of social bonds and collective solidarity, especially of minimal solidarity between rich and poor.⁸⁸

At first sight, the first can be expressed as existential critique of capitalism; the second and the third as political critique of capitalism; and the fourth as moral critique of capitalism. But as soon as the sight is sharpened, it will likely be seen that all that is listed here is intertwined and does not provide acute distinctions in isolation from each other. For the purposes of the argument operated in this study, the first one seems to be the most feasible starting point. Yet, if the existential critique of capitalism as to whether it leads to nihilism as state of existence

⁸⁸ Luc Boltanski and Eva Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans., Gregory Elliott, Verso, 2007, p. 37

is confined to the concept of inauthenticity, then a notion of authenticity must also be constructed. Heidegger's construction of such authenticity in *Being and Time* is equivocal and implausible. Although Boltanski and Chiapello have rigorously analyzed the terms authenticity and inauthenticity that give valuable insights concerning 'social distress', and 'corruption' caused by the transformations of capitalism in the last thirty years; in the final analysis, theirs ends up with a moral interpretation *par excellence*: 'If, in the space of thirty years, capitalism has been able to undergo such a transformation by exploiting minor displacements, is it not possible to employ the same tactic to revolutionize the world of work once more, but this time in the direction of greater justice and respect for what gives life its authenticity?'⁸⁹ If what gives life its authenticity is greater justice and respect, then this authenticity is bound to be moral; since one has to determine what justice and respect are at the outset in the form of categorical imperatives and then to gauge and accord these categorical imperatives with the actual situations. A moral transformation is not to revolutionize the world by redesigning moral terms such as justice and respect but to demoralize it first and finally to re-moralize it. Authenticity is only possible for a subject that is altogether sequestered from a human community. Such a subject would of course no longer be a subject. Thus, an existential critique of capitalism ought not to rely on the notion of authenticity or on inauthenticity. Capitalism is, so to speak, itself inauthentic; and if there is anything authentic about it, it is its own inauthenticity which is authentic. Hence, the subject that exists under the dominion of capitalism is doomed to be inauthentic. Any claim for an authenticity under the dominion of capitalism cannot be more than an 'inauthentic authenticity' that the capitalist market is abundant with. On the other hand, an existential critique of capitalism does not and indeed cannot take the second and third political critiques of capitalism as a stand point but does acknowledge them as inherent to the nature of capitalism itself. And finally, the fourth moral critique of capitalism is flawed with the naïve ramifications of a moral interpretation that an existential critique of capitalism ought to keep itself apart from by virtue of the fact that even a minimal intervention of moral interpretation to an existential critique discredits existential critique itself.⁹⁰ So, if what

⁸⁹ Ibid., 'Postscript: Sociology *Contra* Fatalism', p. 533

⁹⁰ The conclusions reached by a moral interpretation are as follows:

'How then might one view the future of global capitalism? Drawing together the main points of consensus among contributors to this volume we conclude, first, that morality *does* matter; second, that any upgrading in moral virtues and ethical behavior can only be achieved if there is a paradigm shift in the mindset of both individuals and the institutions of GC; third, that there *are* some moral virtues or ethical standards which are universal or near universal, but these need to be interpreted in the light of different cultural mores and the benefits of subsidiarity in decision taking; fourth, that attitudes and behavioral taught by the various religious faiths are as relevant for economic and political decision taking as they have ever been, and perhaps even more so; fifth, that any action taken eradicate or reduce the moral failures and/or enhance the moral capital of GC needs to be addressed to the *system* of GC, to its constitutional institutions *and* to individuals and interest groups who individually or collectively, may help fashion the behavior of the institutions and workings of the system in a more socially acceptable manner; sixth, that any such action needs a combination of the *top-down* and *bottom-up* approach, and be planned and implemented in a holistic and integrated way, and one involving all members of the global community; and seventh, that different enforcement mechanisms are needed to upgrade particular behavioral norms, but

kind of existential critique is supposed to be operated in the course that will provide an understanding of what global capitalism is has been articulated, it is high time to turn to the question anew: what is capitalism?

Capitalism is a 'system' that is based on private property, profitability, and the market.⁹¹ The subject that exists by constructing its interpretations exists under the hegemony of such a system. This hegemony is not only an external oppression, but also the subject's existential medium within and through which the subject exists. That is, the subject is a subject as long as it possesses something privately in this system; and needless to say that there is no other system in which the subject would exist. This possession, however, is not enough for the subject to exist. The subject has to make profit out of what it possesses in the market to subsist in the system. In the case of lacking of one of this trinity, the subject's existence is jeopardized. How? Now consider a subject that does not possess any property. If this subject has no property, then there is no way for the subject to make profit in the market. Consider a subject that has property which is not profitable in the market. If this subject's property is not profitable in the market, then there is no difference between the subject's property and a rock in the nature. Hence, without profitability in the market, there is no property. Without property, there is no profitability in the market. Without market, there is no profitable property. By property it is not only meant a certain amount of capital but also the labour of the subject, either material or immaterial. In a sense the subject itself is a property

that, in alliance-based, knowledge intensive, global economy, the internalized and covenantal form of cooperation is likely to become a more effective instrument than external sanctions.' John H. Dunning, 'Conclusion', p. 365-6, in *Making Globalization Good: The Moral Challenges of Global Capitalism*, ed., John H. Dunning, Oxford, 2003

Such is an excellent example of how a moral interpretation that aims at moralizing the ramifications of global capitalism by relying on faith and by referring to *almost* universal ethical standards turns out to be a proxy of the jargon of capital. This manifests itself when in the fifth conclusion Dunning puts the goal: enhancing the *moral capital* of global capitalism. Can the *capitalized moral* still be moral? True that the jargon of capital has always promoted itself as *moralized capital* i.e., what is 'good' for the capitalist trinity (private property, profitability, the market) is also a 'good' in itself and what is evil for it is also 'evil' in itself. '(A) peculiar aspect of business leaders', Thomas writes, 'they adopt globalization strategies not only to survive, but also a moral project. While the idea that what is good for the business is good for the world certainly is a rhetorical device to legitimate all types of business practices and narrow interests, all evidence suggests that they believe this: Max Weber's 'spirit of capitalism', that business is virtuous, is alive and well in the world.' George H. Thomas, 'Globalization: The Major Players', pp. 84-103, in *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*, ed., George Ritzer, Blackwell, 2007. In 2008, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy suggested that capitalism has to be reinvented with a *strong dose of morality*.

Available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2008/0926/1222374595726.html>

An existential critique, then, ought to take a critical stand against the jargon of capital as well as a moral interpretation that inevitably serves well to the jargon of capital, since, as was pointed earlier in the subchapter 'nihilism as state of existence', faith leads to the first form of nihilism as state of existence. Thus, any moral interpretation that advertises moralization of global capitalism inspired by faith is bound to be capitalized and to be encompassed by the jargon of capital; and eventually such moral interpretation ends up with nihilism as it started up with nihilism.

⁹¹ Paul Bowles, *Capitalism*, Longman, 2007, p.13.

within and through the system that is capitalist, since property is that in the absence of which the subject is itself absent. So, private property is that which provides the access to the market in which the subject makes profit so that the subject would exist in a human community. Put it differently, the subject is that of which possibility is private property; necessity is profitability; and actuality is the market. If this argument correct, it follows that capitalism is a system which determines state of existence of the subject.

Such is a simplified account that indicates existential valence of capitalism which determines existential valence of the subject. The actual capitalism, however, that holds sway in the world has different sorts, functioning according to specific economical, historical, political, and cultural conditions of human communities. Limpitt distinguishes three primordial types of capitalism as prototypes: the Anglo-American, the continental European, and the East-Asian model of state-led capitalism. The Anglo-American type capitalism, Limpitt maintains, is the harshest type, one which reaches the extremest form in the United States. This extremest harshness in the United States comes from extreme reliance on markets and on the conviction that market values possess some normative value. The consequence of such harsh capitalism in the United States is that 43,6 million of its citizens lacked health insurance and 16,3 percent of its children lived in poverty in 2002. The actual situation, Limpitt concludes, is that ‘both state-led capitalism and welfare state capitalism are under pressure to emulate their American cousin.’⁹²

From this it follows that different types of capitalisms do not hold sway in specific parts of the world in isolation from each other and that there is tendency for other type of capitalisms to follow the American model which is characterized by harshness. That is, different types of capitalisms constantly interact with each other and transform themselves and each other. These interactions and transformations can be subsumed under what it is called globalization. That different types of capitalisms interacts with and tend to transform each other along with everything and everywhere they operate on refers to the phenomena called globalization relies on the fact that whatever type of globalization is at issue, none of them opposes to the primordial structure of capitalism i.e., private property, profitability, and the market. A cursory gaze on the main actors of globalization will illuminate this point: transnational corporations, states, international governmental organizations (IGOs), and international non-governmental organizations (INGO’s).⁹³ As might have been supposed, the resistance might only come from INGO’s, since the other players are operating to endure and regulate the trinity of capitalism itself. So far, the

⁹² Victor D. Lippitt, *Capitalism*, Routledge, 2005, pp., 5-9

⁹³ George H. Thomas, ‘Globalization: The Major Players’, pp. 84-103, in *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*, ed., George Ritzer, Blackwell, 2007

resistance of INGO's has manifested a symbolic effect, for example Seattle 1999, Genoa 2001; yet in no way a ripple effect that would imprecate the trinity of capitalism. The term 'anti-globalization' is itself self-contradictory, as long as it is not 'anti' 'anti-globalization'; and as long as it is 'anti' 'anti-globalization' it contradicts itself. This means that to be 'anti' of something is, so to speak, to accept the battle where one's rival wants. And one wins a battle as long as it is one that chooses the battleground. Thus, if there is an 'anti-globalization', it must first deny itself in order to be itself. And as soon as it denies itself in order to be itself, it contradicts itself. So, the so-called anti-globalization movement owes its own existence to the conditions that are caught up in contradictions thereby creating a symbolic effect but not a political one. And in so far as anti-globalization movement does not steer political consequences, it is bound to create only a symbolic effect which is not efficacious in the political arena. The constant reference and appeal to democracy of post-Marxists⁹⁴ and of other prophets of anti-globalization movement are bound to be lullabies which can be summarized as thus: Well, although the sky has almost collapsed, there is a hope that an invisible army with their silky spears will come and save us. 'We need to invent new weapons for democracy today', Hardt and Negri write, 'There are indeed numerous creative attempts to find new weapons. Consider, for example, as an experiment with new weapons, the kiss-ins conducted by Queer Nation in which men would kiss men and women women in a public place to shock people who are homophobic, which was the case in the Queer Nation action held at a Mormon convention in Utah.'⁹⁵ Some of Mormons would perhaps have been shocked but the holy trinity of capitalism would hardly be shocked with such 'actions.'⁹⁶

Since globalization is such a complicated issue, it would be worth to discuss it through a work which is somehow related to the next subchapter of this study, 'Global Capitalism as nihilism': *The Globalization of Nothing*. It is Ritzer's contention that the social world, especially in the realm of consumption, is more and more characterized by nothing. Ritzer's 'nothing' refers to 'a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled, and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content.'⁹⁷ There are, Ritzer maintains, four major forms of nothing: non-places, non-things, non-people, and non-services. Ritzer's non-places are fast-food restaurants in contradistinction to places such as diners. An example for a non-thing is a Big Mac in contradistinction to a thing such as Culatella Ham. The workers who wear Mickey Mouse costumes are non-

⁹⁴ See ,for example, Chantal Mouffe, *The Political: Thinking in Action*, Routledge, 2005

⁹⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Books, 2004, p. 347

⁹⁶ A similar argument with much more detail has been operated by Neil Thomas, 'Global Capitalism, the anti-globalisation movement and the Thirld World', *Capital & Class*, Summer 2007

Available at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3780/is_200707/ai_n19433640/

⁹⁷ George Ritzer, *Globalization of Nothing*, Pine Forge Press, 2004, p. 3

people in contradistinction to people such as bartenders. What a diner and the waiter do on the cruise ship is non-service in contradistinction to service such as the waiter in a gourmet restaurant. What makes places, things, people, and services ‘non’ is the lack of the intervention of individuals or the mass production of things caused by a centrally controlled process. Keep these in mind for the next subchapter. In addition to these conceptualizations, Ritzer coins a term that pertains to the ongoing discussion of globalization: grobalization. Ritzer writes:

‘*Glocalization* can be defined as the interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas. The concept of grobalization coined here for the first time as a much needed companion to the notion of glocalization, focuses on the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on geographic areas. Their main interest is in seeing their power, influence, and in some cases profits *grow*. (Hence the term (gro) balization) throughout the world. Grobalization involves a variety of subprocesses, three of which –capitalism, Americanization, and Mc-Donaldization –are, as pointed out above, central driving forces in grobalization, but also particular interest to the author and of great significance in the worldwide spread of nothingness.’⁹⁸

As soon as the term glocalization is put under the scope, it would be revealed that the term grobalization is not a much needed companion as Ritzer considers it to be so. To define glocalization as ‘interpenetration’ of the global and the local is to assume a kind of equal relation between the global and the local. To assume an equal relation between the global and the local is to underestimate the power of the global and is to exaggerate the position of the local. To exaggerate the position of the local is to assume that the global has to some extent failed to exert its power. A failure in exerting power of the global means that the global has been encountered consequences that it had not calculated. Since this is hardly the case, there is no interpenetration but penetration. If there is no interpenetration but merely a penetration, then there would be no unique outcomes in different geographic areas. There would only be the symptoms of this penetration by virtue of the brutality of the global that is the necessary outcome of the power it exerts. ‘The hatred of non-Western people’, Baudrillard writes, ‘is not based on the fact that the West stole everything from them and never gave anything back. Rather, it is based on the fact that they received everything, but were never allowed to give anything back.’⁹⁹ Glocalization is a term of which the mission is to palliate the defeat and the agony of the local in the face of the global’s brutal penetration. If this interpretation of the term glocalization is correct, it follows that the term grobalization is a notion which is not indispensable. The term globalization can still be operated to indicate the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations etc. and their desire to impose themselves on geographic areas.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 73

⁹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Violence of Global’, trans., François Debrix,

Available at: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard/ baudrillard-the-violence-of-the-global.html>

Thus, not that capitalism, Americanization, and Mc-Donaldization are subprocesses of globalization but they are subprocesses of capitalism. And if they are subprocesses of capitalism, then all these phenomena can be subsumed under the heading, to coin provisionally a term, of *glocapitalization*. It is this *glocapitalization* i.e., global capitalism that, following Ritzer, spreads nothingness in the worldwide and that leads to a state of existence which is nihilistic.

In order to have some understanding of global capitalism as such, the first thing to do should be to purify it from myths that are misleading. Fulcher lists four of such myths:

‘Myth one is that global capitalism is recent, for it has deep historical roots. *Myth two* is that capital circulates globally, when in reality most of it moves between a small group of rich countries. *Myth three* is that capitalism is now organized globally rather than nationally, for international differences are as important as ever nation-states continue to play a key role in the activities of transnational corporations. *Myth four* is that global capitalism integrates the world, since the more global capitalism has become, the more divided the world has become by international inequalities of wealth.’¹⁰⁰

If Fulcher’s arguments are correct, global capitalism is that which is historically deep rooted¹⁰¹; that in which accumulated capital moves mostly between a few rich countries; that for which nation-states still matter but in so far their roles in the activities of transnational corporations are concerned; and that which disintegrates and fragments the world through inequalities of wealth. All these point to the question: who are the beneficiaries of global capitalism? I.e. what is it that creates the immense disintegration and fragmentation of the world through inequalities of wealth? For Sklair, it is the transnational capitalist class (TCC) that benefits from global capitalism and is responsible for the fragmentation of the world by creating inequalities in the world. TCC, Sklair argues, can be divided into four main fractions:

- (i) TNC (the transnational corporations -mzd) executives and their local affiliates (the corporate fraction);
- (ii) globalizing bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction);
- (iii) globalizing professionals (the technical fraction);
- (iv) merchants and media (the consumerist fraction).¹⁰²

What makes the transnational capitalist class ‘transnational’, according to Sklair, is as follows:

¹⁰⁰ James Fulcher, *Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2004, p. 103

¹⁰¹ For an excellent analysis of ‘historical’ global capitalism, see, Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century*, Norton, 2006

¹⁰² Leslie Sklair, *The Transnational Capitalist Class*, Blackwell, 2001, p. 17

- (i) The economic interests of its members are increasingly globally linked rather than exclusively local and national in origin.
- (ii) The TCC seeks to exert economic control in the workplace, political control in domestic and international politics, and culture-ideology control in everyday life through specific forms of global competitive and consumerist rhetoric and practice.
- (iii) Members of the TCC have outward-oriented globalizing rather than inward-oriented localizing perspectives on various issues.
- (iv) Members of the TCC tend to share similar life-styles, particularly patterns of higher education and consumption of luxury goods and services.
- (v) Finally, members of the TCC seek to project images of themselves as citizens of the world as well as of their places of birth.¹⁰³

If Sklair's arguments are correct, it would then, first, follow that the economic interests of the TCC more and more lie in a *glocalitized* world. Second, the TCC attempts to establish its full economical, political, and cultural-ideological hegemony through whatever means it has. Third, The TCC's main orientation is to globalize rather than to localize. Fourth, the members of the TCC can be distinguished through their similar life styles in the sense that they have been educated in the best universities of the world and are enjoying luxury goods and services. Fifth, the members of the TCC consider themselves as citizens of the world beside of their places of birth. Since, there is no challenge, except the anti-globalization movements whose effect has so far been symbolic, as noted in the preceding pages, to global capitalism and its 'vanguard' and 'privileged' class, the TCC, it can be surmised first that glocalization of the world is an inevitable and inescapable phenomenon. Second; as the time elapses, every minute will serve for the TCC to shape every day of life of individuals everywhere explicitly and/or implicitly by means of a variety of oppressive strategies. Third, localization or glocalization is doomed to be a lullaby for those who do not want to see the ultimate triumph of global capitalism. Fourth, members of the TCC will enjoy their life-styles in spite of growing poverty simultaneously everywhere. Fifth, the notion of the 'world citizen' will more and more be spread; those who belong to or will

¹⁰³ Leslie Sklair, 'The Transnational Capitalist Class and Contemporary Architecture in Globalizing Cities', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Volume 29.3, September 2005, 485-500

find the opportunity to jump into the TCC will relish their status both as citizens of the world and of where they were born, on the one hand, those who belong to and do not find the opportunity to jump into the TCC will be exposed to a series of sufferings either as citizens of their places of birth or in another part of the world, on the other. To all these it must be appended that the jargon of capital and its constant promotion either by the TCC or by the ones, individuals or institutions, who hope to jump into the TCC, will smooth this process. How? The jargon of capital, as shown in the example of Searle and Gates, claims that private property is the only way for the subject that exists; that profitability is the only virtue to pursue; and finally that the market is the only and indispensable mechanism to organize societies:

‘This strikes me as an apt description of the characterization of capitalism as ‘natural and free’. Markets in health which dictate that individuals who can pay will live and those who cannot will die are not ‘natural’. Markets in food which deliver gastronomic delights to the rich and undernourishment for the poor are not ‘natural’. ‘Human nature’ does not dictate that these outcomes must prevail and human societies do not have to be organized in this way or human institutions work in this way. Markets are indeed ‘blind’, as Hayek argued, but not in the way he suggested; rather they are blind to poverty, to environmental destruction and to inequality. Individuals who must give control of their labour to others are not ‘free’. Individuals in the richer countries whose well-being depend on not losing their jobs, or on a family member not losing theirs, are not ‘free’. Individuals in poorer countries whose well-being depends on the price of their labour, or upon the price of what they produce not collapsing, or upon not evicted from their land, are not ‘free’. We can – and should – all be freer, and more human, than this. Starting from the simple mistake that private property, the pursuit of profits and markets are the route to human freedom, the proponents of capitalism logically and remorselessly deduce that the relentless pursuit of profits, the ever greater accumulation of private property and the ever-expanding scope of the market – phenomena which characterize the contemporary phase of global capitalism – must enhance our freedom. They are more likely to lead us to Bedlam.’¹⁰⁴

But if the contemporary phase of global capitalism is to be characterized with this relentless, ever greater and ever-expanding none-freedom which is a Bedlam, where is the madness here? Should it be argued then that Bedlam is itself madness? Should it follow then that global capitalism is itself madness? Existential critique of global capitalism ought not to conclude by such exclamations. Nor ought it to conclude that nihilism as state of existence can be the property of a specific class; ‘the TCC’, ‘the poor’, for instance. Existential critique of global capitalism must strike at the objective powers that constitute global capitalism under which the subject constructs its interpretations. It is these objective powers in the face of which a member of the TCC and a member of ‘the poor’ are equal in the sense that both cannot exist without the trinity of global capitalism which thereby determines state of existence of the subject. This determination is neither free nor natural, since the subject does not choose the conditions in which the subject encounters the objective powers i.e., private property, profitability, and the market. These objective powers are those that have already been constituted in the

¹⁰⁴ Paul Bowles, *Capitalism*, Longman, 2007, pp. 186-7

absence of the subject, that is, these objective powers are external to the subject's subjectivity. Not that the subject's subjectivity functions in the face of the objective powers, but that the subject's has already been subjectivized by the objective powers within and through which the construction of interpretations falls out as the subject's subjectivity. Herein, the quantitative differences cease to be significant, albeit in reality these quantitative differences constitute 'reality' itself. The difference between a subject that dines in a gourmet restaurant and a subject that gathers food in a junk heap is as much an existentially qualitative difference as between a subject that is disabled by born and a subject that has been disabled by accident or a disease. As at a certain instant the both disabled subjects are subjected to the same external restrictions in terms of the ability to move, both diner in a gourmet restaurant and seeker in a junk heap are subjected to the same external restrictions posed by the objective powers that determine state of existence of both. To this it might be objected that there is a difference between the congenital disabled and the disabled by accident or a disease, since the latter knew once what kind of experience walking was and that there is a difference between the diner and the seeker, since the latter will never know what kind of experience dining in a gourmet restaurant would be. These differences are not significant, since the both disabled are aware that they will never be able to walk again whatever differences there were in the past. In the same vein, both the diner and the seeker are subjected to the same objective powers whatever quantitative differences thereby conditions in terms of security and comfort are. Furthermore, thanks to the globalization of terrorism, nobody in the world can take security or comfort for granted; they might every instant be disturbed. True that the diner will perhaps think that he is a 'good' man who owns a lot; studies in the best campuses; makes profit; hires consultants and spiritual gurus; has an admirable reputation in the market; makes charity donations; wagers in financial speculation; speaks of virtue, moderation, and self-realization; loves his/her sexual partner and children; enjoys a plethora of indulgences; exercises yoga; travels to exotic places in all around the world thanks partly to globalization partly to his/her boredom; takes pictures for twitter and face-book or for the official web page of a company; constructs a cosmopolitan identity; meshes with politics to make the world a 'better' place; consumes organic food, ecological and fair-trade products; cares about global warming, and environmental disasters; believes in science, democratic elections, and human rights; respects all religions; despises thinking, questioning, and lacerating oneself through burning riddles; visits art galleries; collects paintings; reads best-seller books; blogs, if possible, writes books and so on and so forth. True also that the seeker in a junk heap will perhaps think him/herself, so to speak, as a rat with all his spite and resentment that owns a little, too little, mostly nothing else than his/ her own body ready to be exploited and abused; believes in God, the eternal life, the last judgments, the apocalypse, the hell and the paradise; or does not believe in anything, since s/he senses that God is dead, albeit s/he has never read Nietzsche, and that life is not

eternal and paradise and hell do not exist; reproduces while s/he has a fragile relationship with the means of production; commits crime and suicide; indulges him/herself in the belief that the poor can also be happy, that the poor can also love, and that the poor can also live; engages in small-scale political violence; dreams of a future in which nourishment will no longer be the first-level problem; trades one of his/her kidney; encounters discrimination, humiliation, and police surveillance; sits in the jail; bribes corrupt bureaucrats; goes to the war, and so on so forth. That the first refers to the TCC and the latter to 'the poor' would be a hasty and wrong conclusion that would be drawn from these examples. Some volumes of books have to be devoted to the task of investigating the TCC's decadence and the poor's suffering – and of course the poor's decadence and the TCC's suffering. Beside this, there is no way to categorize certain human types and actions under the heading of a certain class in spite of the fact that quantitative differences still constitute reality in an age such as this; since there is no reality in an age such as this; the only reality is that which can only be acquired by means of cash or of course of credit card which is not real. What is more, hybrid types of human actions also exist. Hybridization has come to the point that hybridization has itself been hybridized thereby there is no possibility to track down an acute categorization by means of aforementioned examples. All those examples then have been given to pose the questions: is it the subject which determines the pattern of its actions? Or are the objective powers, i.e., private property, profitability, and the market, which determine the actions of the subject? If the subject does determine the pattern of his/her actions, it must then be assumed a subject who constructs its interpretations independently from the objective powers. If this is the case, the subject then is that which is autonomous in and for itself, that which is able to construct interpretations by disengaging itself from the conditions created by what this subject possess to make profit in the market and that which has a value in itself and can be able to exist even this subject has no access to private property, profitability and the market. Such a subject, i.e., valuable in itself without having no access to the objective powers along with the ability of such disengagement and absolute autonomy, cannot be a possibility. Nor can it be an actuality. If such a subject can neither be a possibility nor a necessity, it follows then that the first question cannot be answered affirmatively. If so, then the premise of the second question, which in this phase cannot be controverted, is the one which must be affirmed: The objective powers determine the actions of the subject. As conspiratorial as this all may sound, it is nothing more than saying this: the subject constitutes and constructs his/her interpretations under the conditions determined by the objective powers which therefore determine state of existence of the subject. The subject interprets and acts within and through the existential medium that is determined by the objective powers. Should it then be concluded that global capitalism is 'evil' in itself? Global capitalism is not evil. Nor is it good. It is *beyond* good and evil, since it determines the very conditions under which 'good', and 'evil' and the 'beyond' itself make

sense. '(C)apitalism under the guise of globalization', Critchley writes, 'is spreading its tentacles of expropriation to every corner of the earth. If someone found a way of overcoming capitalism, then some corporation would doubtless buy the copyright and the distribution rights.'¹⁰⁵ If the argument operated so far is correct, it is the main aim of this study to which the argument must now turn: How do the constitution and the construction of interpretations lead to nihilism as state of existence that is created by global capitalism?

¹⁰⁵ Simon Critchley, *'Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of commitment, politics of resistance'*, Verso, 2007, p. 98

Allegro moderato molto e marcato

Global Capitalism as Nihilism

Every decent man of our age must be a coward and a slave.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

In the second chapter, ‘Nihilism as State of Existence’, it has been argued that nihilism as state of existence is that which manifests itself through nothingness and meaninglessness; that through Kierkegaard’s interpretation nothingness and meaninglessness can be a property of the subject; that faith as the first form leads to nihilism as state of existence, since the notion of God, as pointed out, cannot be a possibility and a necessity thereby suffers from an absolute non-actualization which is therefore simultaneously an absolute non-actualization of the subject that has faith; that through Nietzsche’s interpretation beliefs as the second form lead to nihilism as state of existence through valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion by the accompaniment of every day moods such as agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment. In the preceding subchapter, ‘Capitalism, Globalization, Global Capitalism’, it has been argued that global capitalism -or glocapitalization is that which determines state of existence of the subject through globalization and the TCC; that nihilism state of existence should not be considered as a property of a certain class, since in the face of the objective powers, i.e., private property, profitability, and the market, existential valence of the subject is equal despite quantitative differences that determine the position of the subject in terms of security and comfort and that constitute the reality of the subject. It is now incumbent upon the argument that how the objective powers of global capitalism lead to nihilism as state of existence through nothingness and meaninglessness.

The relation between global capitalism and nihilism has been formulated in several occasions; particularly when a political critique of global capitalism has been operated. This is how Badiou interprets the nothingness created by global capitalism:

‘At the level of circumstance, capitalist nihilism has arrived at a stage of the non-existence of any world. Yes, today there is no world, there is nothing but a group of singular disconnected situations. There is no world simply because the majority of the planet’s inhabitants today do not even receive the gift of a name, of a simple name. When there was class society, proletarian parties (or those presumed to be such), the USSR, the national wars of liberation, etc., no matter which peasant in no matter what region –just as no matter which worker in no matter what town –could receive a political name. That is not to say that their material situation was better, certainly not, nor that that world was excellent. But symbolic positions existed, and that world was a world. Today, outside of the grand and petty bourgeoisie of the imperial cities, who proclaim themselves to be ‘civilization’, you have nothing apart from the anonymous and excluded. ‘ Excluded’ is the sole name for

those who have no name, just as ‘market’ is the name of a world which is not a world. In terms of the real, outside of the unremitting undertakings of those who keep thought alive, including political thinking, within a few singular situations, you have nothing apart from the American army.’¹⁰⁶

This is a political critique of global capitalism *par excellence* operated in an embittered and tragic tone. What Badiou hints at is that global capitalism is nothingness *per se*, since there is no world apart from some singular situations which have no connection with each other at all and since there is no political thinking except in a few singular situations. Namelessness is the only destiny within and through which the majority of subjects suffer. Yet, there is a name for them that is ‘excluded’ which is not a name. On the one hand, there is the TCC that has established its headquarters in the ‘civilized’ cities; while constantly bombarding ‘uncivilized’ excluded ones through the IMF, the World Bank, the UN, the financial markets, Mc-Donaldization, Americanization and so on; and while incessantly including its accomplices from those who tremble in the face of the destiny of namelessness. On the other hand, there are excluded ones who have either contended with their exclusion through reserving an immense spite and resentment or are constantly looking forward to sleep to be included in a dream where there is no exclusion. There is only one thing that has a name and that has acquired its reputation through some dirty oil, opium, and blood business in Iraq, Afghanistan, and wherever it has treaded down: the American army. If an existential critique affirms a political critique such as this as such, then it will no longer be an existential critique.

Nevertheless, from this it does not follow that such a political critique has to be negated. Such a negation is bound to be an existential critique which is not *existent*. Thus, existential critique must neither affirm such a political critique as such nor negate it but it must go beyond it while affirming its actuality. So, the questions have to be raised here: If global capitalism is itself nihilism, should it follow that only a certain class, either the TCC or the poor (excluded), is nihilist? Are the quantitative differences that create the qualitative conditions for security and comfort adequate to declare a certain class as nihilist? If there is no world, it must follow that there is no world for anybody on the earth. If there is no world, it is because global capitalism has nullified the world. If global capitalism has nullified the world, this nullification should not only erase a certain numbers of humans but also the notion of human itself. If capitalism is nihilism just because a certain number of humans (the majority) suffer or just because a certain number of humans (the minority) exploit those who suffer, then it must follow that this ‘capitalist nihilism’ is all about quantitative differences that create the qualitative conditions for security and comfort. Whereas nihilism must be qualitative but not quantitative phenomenon. Nevertheless, none

¹⁰⁶ Alain Badiou, ‘Philosophy and the ‘war on terrorism’’, in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, trans. and eds., O. Feltham and J. Clemens, Continuum, pp. 161-2

of all these objections exclude political critique of global capitalism. On the contrary, existential critique must include such political critique and must proceed into its scrutinizing with regard to nothingness that global capitalism creates.

What about Ritzer's 'nothing', then? To recall, Ritzer's nothing is that which is 'a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled, and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content.'¹⁰⁷ To what extent can his non-places/non-things/non-people/non-services provide a feasible tool to understand 'nothingness' of global capitalism? 'The result is that', Ritzer writes, 'an ever-increasing number of nations and areas of the world are coming to be penetrated by nothing and the more affluent they become, the greater nothingness.'¹⁰⁸ Such is a moderated version of political critique operated by Badiou. While for Badiou global capitalism is itself nihilism that spreads nothingness through the economical and political hegemony of the TCC and the spatio-temporal hegemony of the American army, for Ritzer it is 'nothingness' of consumption through non-places/non-things/non-people/non-services that penetrates everywhere on the earth. Such nothingness is not adequate for an existential critique, since nothingness should not be considered as something that only manifests itself when the subject acts in a certain way e.g., consumption.

For nothingness must penetrate into all dimensions of human psyche in order to accomplish its task, that is, to nullify something, nullification. It therefore has to be considered as state of existence by the accompaniment and in the form of everyday moods, since it can nullify everyday moods of the subject by substituting itself like vinegar in the wound –to borrow a metaphor from Kierkegaard. Nonetheless, this nullification as such is not what is meant by state of existence, since state of existence is not a specific instant but the constantly nullification of everyday moods of the subject that is always already unprepared and defenseless for such a nullification. Everyday moods such as agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment are such moods which always already catch the subject unprepared and defenseless. And as soon as these everyday moods settle in the psyche of the subject, they ruin it. Nothingness, then, is this vulnerability, unpreparedness, and defenselessness of the subject in the face of the constantly nullification of everyday moods.

Thus, Ritzer's nothingness is not adequate for the existential critique of global capitalism. Yet, it does not follow from this that Ritzer's nothingness must be discarded *in toto*. The argument that global capitalism spreads nothingness through consumption must initially be reserved. Then, the definition of nothing that Ritzer proposes

¹⁰⁷ George Ritzer, *Globalization of Nothing*, Pine Forge Press, 2004, p. 3

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165

must partly be applied to the subject. I.e., the subject is that which is devoid of substantive content, since it is vulnerable, unprepared, and defenseless in the face of the constantly nullification of everyday moods.

Yet, the subject is that which is not only subjected to the existential medium wrought by the objective powers, but also that which, as pointed out above, does exercise power through constructing interpretations. Constructing interpretations in a sense means to find meaning in something that makes the subject's life meaningful so that the subject endures life. Eagleton proposes some 'meanings of life':

'Happiness, then, may constitute the meaning of life, but it is not an open-and-shut case. We have seen, for example, that someone may claim to derive happiness from behaving despicably. They may even claim perversely to derive it from unhappiness, as in 'He's never happier than when he's grouching'. There is always, in other words, the problem of masochism. As far as despicable behavior goes, someone's life may be formally meaningful – meaningful in the sense of being orderly, coherent, exquisitely well-patterned, and full of defined goals – while being trivial or even squalid in its moral content. The two may even be interrelated, as in the shrivel-hearted bureaucrat syndrome. There are also, of course, other candidates for the meaning of life apart from happiness: power, love, honour, truth, pleasure, freedom, reason, autonomy, the state, the nation, God, self-sacrifice, contemplation, living according to Nature, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, self-abnegation, death, desire, worldly success, the esteem of one's fellows, reaping as many intense experiences as possible, having a good laugh, and so on. For most people, in practice if not always in theory, life is made meaningful by their relationships with those closest to them, such as partners and children.'¹⁰⁹

The point that has to be made here is that whether or not any of these meanings of life can *disjunctively* be pursued by the subject from the objective powers. That is: Is it possible for the subject to be happy, to love someone or something, to quest for power, to seek for truth, to get pleasure, to be free, to be reasonable, to have autonomy, to worship a state, a nation, a God, to die, to desire, to acquire worldly success, to gain the esteem of others, to reap as many intense experiences as possible, to have a good laugh, and to have a relationship with partners and children without having something –including the subject's body – that has the possibility to make profit in the market? Is it possible for the subject to construct a particular interpretation in a particular instant as if it is stripped of its possessions or possible possessions/losses in the market? If it is, where is such a subject? If it is not, where is, again, the subject? Should it be concluded then that none of these meanings are meaningful, thereby the subject falls prey to meaninglessness? To this a negative answer would not be adequate but incorrect, while an affirmative answer would not be incorrect but inadequate. The problem then is that whether or not the subject is vulnerable to, prepared for, and defensible against the constantly nullification of its moods by agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment. If the subject is invulnerable to, prepared for, and defensible against the constantly nullification of moods, i.e., nothingness, then the meaning

¹⁰⁹ Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life*, Oxford, 2007, pp. 152-3

the subject finds is not blemished with valuelessness, aimlessness, and confusion. If the subject finds meaning in something, it also values it, and regards that meaning as an aim without confusion. That is, the meaning the subject finds through constructing interpretations can only be meaningful as long as that meaning provides a value and an aim without confusion. But is this possible through private property, profitability, and the market?

In a global capitalist *pluverse* (Schmitt) or in disconnected singular situations (Badiou), the subject's value is not determined according to what it *is* but according to what the subject *owns*. The subject *is not*, unless it possesses something. If the subject possesses nothing, it at least possesses a body. As soon as the subject appears as a body, it has been subjectivized. The subject as subjectivized body has entered into a value system which is determined and operated within and through money. The complete inversion of this reasoning then should also be appropriate: money *is* the body, *is* the subject as subjectivized body, and *is* the value of the subject as subjectivized body. Yet, on the other hand, money is something external to the subject. It is not a component of body like a hand, a head, an eye etc., albeit it may provide, for example, a kidney thanks to the organ transplantation. But that kidney is not money as such but a kidney. The receiver pays a certain amount of money and possesses a kidney. The one who sells his/her kidney receives a certain amount of money, no longer possessing a kidney. In terms of the receiver, the value of a kidney is a certain amount of money. In terms of the seller, a certain amount of money is the value of a kidney. In spite of the fact that money is something external to the body, it may bring qualitative consequences through quantitative changes. The receiver now possesses quantitatively less money, but as a qualitative difference the receiver now possesses a kidney. The seller now possesses quantitatively more money, but as a qualitative difference the seller now is devoid of a kidney. For the receiver the value of that certain amount of money is in a sense nothing; what is valuable for the receiver is only a kidney. For the seller the value of a kidney is in a sense nothing; what is valuable for the seller is only a certain amount of money. The value system money establishes, or the money system as valuation of everything is contradictory, dazzling, and ultimately undecipherable:

‘This search for stimuli originates in the money economy with the fading of all specific values into mere mediating value. We have here one of those interesting cases in which the disease determines its own form of the cure. A money culture signifies such an enslavement of life in its means, that release from its weariness is also evidently sought in a mere means which conceals its final significance –in the fact of ‘stimulation’ as such.’¹¹⁰

The subject as subjectivized body can only be stimulated through money. However, this stimulation is illusionary, since the idea that ‘the more money, the more freedom’ is illusionary. Since money is something

¹¹⁰ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), Routledge, 1997, p. 257 Quoted in Bülent Diken, *Nihilism*, Routledge, 2009

external to the subject, the stimulation of money is something external too. But this externality has been forgotten or avoided; and the external stimulation of money has been internalized. So, it is no longer the subject that moves around, but it is money that makes the subject moves around; since the subject has lost the ability to discern what is external or internal; what is to will or not to will. In his interpretation of 'free time' under the hegemony of the culture industry, Adorno remarks: 'Neither in their work nor in their consciousness do people dispose of genuine freedom over themselves.'¹¹¹

So, the subject seeks for a meaning to create values under these *preconditions*. Is it possible to speak of values in this existential medium where all valuations are determined by such a powerful and queer thing i.e., money? Should it be concluded then that valuelessness is inevitable in such an existential medium, thereby nothingness and meaninglessness of the subject are confirmed once again? Instead of cutting the line of speculation and concluding with an affirmative answer, an example would be more feasible. Sennett in his book in which he investigates the way global capitalism affects the subject's lives concludes thus:

'The people I've interviewed, especially in the past decade, are too worried and disquieted, too little resigned to their own uncertain fate under the aegis of change. What they need most is a mental and emotional anchor; they need values which assess whether changes in work, privilege, and power are worthwhile. They need, in short, a culture.'¹¹²

This, in other words appropriate to the argument of this study, means that the subject that works in the so-called developed countries is lost. The subject is under the assault of the constantly nullification of moods by agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment. The subject is devoid of meanings, since it needs a mental and emotional anchor. The subject has plonked itself down in the lap of valuelessness, since it needs values. The subject is cultureless, since it needs a culture. In a world where money is the only valuator, where money is the only *truth*; the other values must be sought through money and are bound to be untruth. Such values can only be palliatives that alleviate nothing. With the time-space compression of global capitalism thanks to the 'Internet Revolution', one may find values and truths in such a gargantuan amount that there is no longer untruth; there is only money – or a credit card which is, as a matter of fact, an American invention. As long as one has a limitless credit card, one possesses truth and untruth whenever one wishes. The same goes for values. One can make everything, the word has been used emphatically, everything which one cannot make with other human being, through internet. If the issue was the death of God for nineteenth century and the death of

¹¹¹ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Free Time', in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (1972), ed., J. M. Bernstein, Routledge, 2003, p. 187

¹¹² Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 183

human (the subject) for twentieth, the resurrection and simultaneously decomposition of the both should be considered as the issue of twenty-first century. With the 'Internet Revolution', the possibility of communication has to be abandoned; as the possibility of revolution had to be abandoned with the twentieth century. The subjects no longer talk to each other; every subject has its own world in the internet. Ritzer should have also added 'non-communication', when he speaks of non-places/non-things/non-people/non-services. As global capitalism has fragmented the world through inequalities in terms of security and comfort, the internet has fragmented the subject, which died in the twentieth century and which had already been bleeding white in the nineteenth, in itself to the marrows, to the 'atoms', to the 'monads', to the 'ciphers', to the 'codes', to the 'passwords'. Adorno had defined the subject in the middle of the twentieth century as that which is 'still for-itself, but no longer in-itself.'¹¹³ This must be modified just before the middle of the twenty-first century: the subject is neither for-itself, nor in-itself. This means that the subject, in the contemporary phase of global capitalism, exists as long as it possesses the internet and a credit card; the first for communication, the second for surviving. On the other hand, those who do not possess the Internet and a credit card, in a sense, do not exist, have never existed, since they have no tools to communicate and survive. In other words: 'Technology grown weary of itself meets man grown weary of himself: the result is the zombie-culture of the twenty-first century.'¹¹⁴

In order to conclude, as a matter of fact, the argument operated with regard to the subject, value, and money, i.e., private property, a last point has to be made. This gesture, however, must be ironic, since there is no other way to operate an existential critique of global capitalism. The ironic idiosyncrasy of existential critique of global capitalism has to lie in its positioning itself beyond the lamentation for the poor (political critique), beyond the celebration for the TCC (the jargon of capital), and beyond a mixture of the both (moral critique). Only through irony can global capitalism be exposed to critique. The master of irony i.e., Kierkegaard wrote in 1843:

'From what I know about the political situation, it would be easy for Denmark to borrow fifteen million rix-dollars. Why does no one think of this? Now and then we hear that someone is a genius and does not pay his debts; why should a nation not do the same, provided there is agreement? Borrow fifteen million; use it not to pay off our debts but for public entertainment. Let us celebrate millennium with fun and games. Just as there currently are boxes everywhere for contributions of money, there should be bowls everywhere filled with money. Everything would be free: the theater would be free, prostitutes would be free, rides to Deer Park would be free, funerals would be free, one's funeral eulogy would be free. I say 'free,' for if money is always available, everything is free in a way.'¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (1951), trans., E. F. N. Jephcott, Verso, 2005, p. 15

¹¹⁴ Arthur Kroker, *The Will to Technology and the Culture of Nihilism: Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Marx*, p.99

¹¹⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, 'Rotation of Crops: A Venture in a Theory of Social Prudence', pp. 285-300 (1843) in *Either/Or Part I*, eds., and trans., Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton, 1987, p. 287

Denmark's level of gross domestic product per head of population was 988 US\$ in 1820. In 1989, it was 13,514 US\$.¹¹⁶ The same, more or less, goes for France, Germany, Japan, Sweden, UK, and USA. Why not everyone can have a limitless credit card in these countries, then? As far as these numbers are concerned, it seems that there is enough money. On the other hand, from what is seen through advertisements, it seems that there is also enough production. Why not everyone can consume as much as everyone wishes, then? Is this not the ultimate aim of a capitalist economy i.e., producing and consuming as much as possible? But, who is going to work if everyone has a limitless credit card? Who are going to perform in the theaters? Who are going to be prostitutes? A volunteer system would hardly work in this case; or it would work inasmuch as non-profit organizations are currently working. There must then be established a lottery system, i.e., a sort of Green Card system, through which people would be selected from the so-called developing or under-developed countries according to their talents and professions by the promise that they would also have a limitless credit card in five years; of course as long as they follow the instructions. By so doing, for example, the European countries would be provided by prostitutes from Russia, Baltic and other ex-Communist countries. Irony can no longer be stretched further, since existential critique cannot be stretched further.

So, if the argument operated concerning money, the subject and value is correct and if it has been understood that the only way to operate an existential critique of global capitalism is irony which is limited; it must follow that the subject cannot create values under the conditions in which money is the only value; that it therefore cannot find a meaning to value in the process of constructing interpretations, and that its state of existence is succumbed to valuelessness. And if the subject's state of existence is succumbed to valuelessness, it follows that the subject will succumbed to aimlessness and confusion too; since an aim which is valueless is bound to be sought in a state of bewilderment. It is this state of existence that is created by global capitalism for the subject. In other words, the subject is succumbed to the constant nullification of its everyday moods by agony, insecurity, hopelessness, despair, shame, and disappointment.

¹¹⁶ Angus Maddison, *Dynamic Forces in Capitalist Development: A Long-Run Comparative View*, Oxford, pp. 6-7

Conclusion

Heidegger once remarked that ‘by nihilism we do not mean something merely present or, indeed, ‘contemporary’ to Nietzsche’s time. The name ‘nihilism’ points to a historical movement that extends far behind us and reaches forward beyond us.’¹¹⁷ Should it then be concluded by proposing something –instead of nothing– which is meaningful and which may provide a value, an aim without bewilderment? If not, will not then all that is dealt with in this study be a celebration of pessimism and fatalism in the form of a lamentation via which the post-political subject would negate life itself? But can the post-political subject possess a possibility to negate life within and through the existential medium created by global capitalism except the beguiling seduction of suicide? Can the post-political subject be able to possess that via which it would affirm life without being elbowed by the objective powers? Has not the post-political subject been trapped in the vicious circle that incessantly sharpens the instinct of self-preservation by the lust for self-gratification, which is always already bound to end up with self-laceration, in a world where to exist means nothing but possessing more and more within and through the market? Is it possible to speak of freedom in a world where the only certain, objective, and universal truth is ‘The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell.’?¹¹⁸ Will the lecherousness of the market for *innovation* be able to invent an agony-free, insecurity-free, hopelessness-free, despair-free, shame-free, disappointment-free state of existence just as sugar-free candy or alcohol-free beer? Is not there any other way than the false ecstasy of political critique, vanity of the jargon of capital, and the naiveté of moral critique?

What is the task of existential critique of global capitalism apart from divulging nihilist nature of the objective powers, then? It may provide intellectual tools to hold one’s interpretations in check in order that one may gain alertness toward artifices of the jargon of capital. It may help breaking through the bloody-mindedness of faith so that one may have a possibility to exist before existence itself, *not* before God as Kierkegaard proposed, in spite of the objective powers that function as juggernaut. A positive nihilism that has been attempted to elaborate in this study would empower such alertness and breaking through.

¹¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, D. F. Krell (Ed.), trans., F. A. Capuzzi (1961), Harper, 1982, p.

¹¹⁸ Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Penguin Books, 2000, p. 76-7

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