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Imagination as Expansion  
of Repetance

T. Zittoun and F. Cerchia

Positioning Microanalysis:  
Studying the Self

Through the Exploration  
of Dialogical Processes

J. Salgado, C. Cunha and  
J. Bento

Agency on the Move:  
Revisiting the Route  
to Social Change

K.E. Frazier

Kierkegaard and Psychology  
as the Science of the  
"Multifarious Life"

S.H. Klempke

Concerning Interpretations  
of Activity Theory

I.A. Mironenko

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# Mirror for the Other: Problem of the Self in Continental Philosophy (from Hegel to Lacan)

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**Abstract** This essay intends to explore the genesis of one of the key concepts in continental philosophy of personalism—the concept of the ‘Other. It attempts to use most influential philosophical and psychological contexts to demonstrate how the Self is linked to the Other logically, notionally and conceptually. The present analysis employs two principal approaches to the problem—philosophical and psychological. From the stand point of the former, the key figure of the hereunder discourse is Hegel and his theory, while the later will be represented predominantly by Lacanian ideas. The present article will also discuss major influences of Hegel’s philosophical ideas on the Lacan’s theory.

**Keywords** The other · The self · The mirror stage · Desire · Personality · Subjectivity · Psychoanalysis · Hegel · Lacan

## Introduction

If we contemplate the question of how one knows about his Self, at first the issue will seem rather basic, but if we continue reflecting upon it somewhat longer, we will recognize the issue as being extremely complex. Initially, the difficulty of detection of the Self as something objective, essentially defined and truly identical to itself was demonstrated by David Hume (Hume 1978). Using surprisingly modern phenomenological approaches, he showed that no matter how much we try to catch our Self as an integrated whole, we will continuously acquire but some bits of impressions. For example, at times we might feel tired or refreshed, comfortable or in distress, we might envision various images, think of the future or past, but none of these experiences represent the sense of the integrated Self. It’s odd, but I cannot sense my Self, I can only account for its existence while I’m experiencing some impressions. ‘I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception’ (Hume 1978).

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While acquainting ourselves with the argumentation of Arthur Schopenhauer we see that it has even more in common with the ideas of continental philosophers of the later period. For a toddler all perceptions flow as one undivided stream. His awareness of his physical body is fused with the awareness of external objects; therefore, he cannot discern the boundaries separating his finite body and another object. ‘Consequently, just the awareness of our body does not render us the knowledge of the shape of our body...’ (Schopenhauer 1958). If we contemplate that our body is, in a strict sense, also an object, and if we treat it as an object, then how could one at the level of perception discern the awareness of his hand from the awareness of the surface it is touching? *The ability to distinguish the two is not the subject matter of sensory perception* as we cannot say that my awareness of my hand is somewhat different from the awareness of the smooth surface it lays on. But then, how could a toddler, unable to look at himself from outside, gain a perception of the boundaries of his body? How could he conclude that his physical body is not an extension of external entities and such entities are not mere extensions of his body?

The problem represents quite a nontrivial case suitable for study not only at the level of individual psychologists, but at the level of science of psychology as a whole because there are not so many psychology theories developed for practical application which would deal with this obscure metaphysical matter. Rather, this marginal issue pierces the realm of philosophy of psychology and constitutes an object of various theoretical speculations (Dean 1992). However, on closer examination, most of these speculations, provided they occur on the basis of continental philosophy, share the same metaphysical concept—the Self is not a primordial essence of a subject, but something that develops externally and is introduced to the subject later. In a strict sense, a subject cannot be viewed as a being until this ‘something’, developed outside, is inculcated in it. Rather, the subject itself is a result of external manipulations, emerging as a product of subjectivation, i.e., develops to the second stage of the human psyche, provided transplantation of the Self was successfully accomplished (Frie 1997). The same concept can be often encountered in the works of the group of continental philosophers: Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Albert Maurice Victor Bataille, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Nancy, Julia Kristeva, Bernhard Vandelweise, etc. (Taylor and Winquist 2001). However, psychologists are less enthusiastic about the problem precisely because of its speculative nature noted above. Out of the heterogeneous pool of scientists, who further advanced both philosophical and psychological aspects of the matter, Jacques Marie Émile Lacan stands out as the most authoritative figure, which pioneered transplantation of the matter from the realm of pure philosophy to the domain of psychology. It is due to his labors that the problem of emergence of a subject transformed from purely speculative to a problem which could not be any longer disregarded by majority of continental philosophers, at least by the group of psychoanalysts. It is through his efforts that this matter seized to be perceived as purely speculative and overly abstract and was recognized as the matter with some applied and empirical value; from that time on it has been deemed relevant to define the point of the process of development of the human psyche at which a subject comes to being. This process has been regarded as the period of development of a subject’s personality in the course of its individual growth and maturation ever since. Thus, Lacan caused for the matter, traditionally considered to fall into the

category of metaphysical reflections, to be perceived as an object of psychological research, which implied that it could be subjected to experimental validation and verification. However, although the matter has acquired some applied value, its essence remained profoundly philosophical (Chiesa 2007). Lack of knowledge of the philosophical background would impair comprehension of the core of the matter or the motivation for the development of that crafty design on the basis of which such psychological theory, postulating that one is not born a subject, but rather becomes it in a course of application of technology defined from outside, has been elaborated. To consider this background would mean, in a broad sense, to refer to the forefather and inspirer of the theory of external development of Self (the issue of the Self and the Other), F. Hegel, who has done so much for the advancement of this issue that his followers had only to clarify the details and define some provisions of the proposed scheme. However, as is well known, Hegel would have remained a profoundly alien author to the French wing of continental philosophers if it were not for Alexandre Kojève, the major advocate and scientific expositor of the Hegel's heritage, who introduced it to the French intellectual elite (Devlin 2004). It is through Kojève's efforts that Hegel's ideas gained enormous popularity among French intellectuals, but most importantly, Kojève encouraged interest in philosophical methodology among French intellectual elite, which had been greatly disregarded in the past. One of the consequences of such encouragement was popularization of the issue of the Self and the Other, which became practically the hottest topic of continental philosophy (Honneth 2004). It is important to note that Kojève did not simply assume the role of a medium, conveying Hegel's ideas, but rather a role of a scientist, who further evolved and supplemented Hegel's theory. Based on this notion, I will be actively referring to Kojève's works to provide explanations of various Hegel's concepts. Thus, Hegel, with the active involvement of Kojève, has laid the foundation for further development of the problem of the Self and the Other. Those ideas, defining the underlying logic of various interpretations of the problem of the Self and the Other in continental philosophy, were conceived by Hegel (Drury 1994). Therefore, Hegel is assigned the role of the key figure in the present research, while Lacan is ranked the second. I will be referring to the later to give examples of how a purely philosophical matter of realization of the Self through the image of the Other was transferred to the grounds of psychology. Having said that, I should note that Lacan's study of the matter is obviously not purely empirical; it is also based on a good deal of theoretical material and is rich in philosophical overtones, but his intention to support abstract philosophical ideas with empirical research is clearly defined. Lacan, if you will, attempted to verify Hegel's theory and succeeded in doing so. This is why I perceive Hegel's *philosophy of subject* as the key to understanding the ideas of Lacan. Below I will attempt to prove that and along the lines of our discourse, I will introduce you to some other philosophers, but the Hegel-Lacan vector will be our main guide, directing us in our endeavor just like a road map directs a traveler.

### **Thought Experiment: 'Self' and the 'Other'**

To get straight to the core of the problem that will be discussed in this essay, let's conduct a thought experiment. Imagine for a second that you are absolutely alone on

a distant unpopulated planet or an island. Let's also pretend that you *have never* socialized with other people in your life before. Let's also assume that there are no mirrors or similar reflective surfaces (e.g., surface of the water, solidified resin, etc.) on this hypothetical planet you could see your image in. Let's then, keeping in mind all the prerequisites of the experiment, speculate what conclusions one could deduce about himself as an autonomous entity that not only has clearly defined body boundaries, but also a specific perception of the *integrated image* of his body? How can one identify himself in the world? Our body, as we know, is not in our view in its entirety, rather we can observe only some parts of it at a time. We could assess ourselves as an autonomous body unit only if we view it *from outside*. To view oneself from outside, one should act as an external observer of himself, i.e., he can actually become a *subject* if he sees himself in a mirror, though in this case we would be dealing with a deficient and fragmentary self-image. A mirror would be just a medium helping one envision his image in its entirety. Perhaps the only way one could conduct full self-observation is by watching a recording of his unexpurgated image, given he acted in a natural way. Thus, to gain a perception of my entire Self, I have to objectify myself, treat myself as an object, just like I do with any other thing or a being in space. Therefore, the first preliminary conclusion to be drawn is that subjectification comprises the experience of objectification.

The second conclusion will be concerned with the fact that unpopulated planets lack beings that are able to assist one in envisioning (at least in imagination) his complete image. In other words, such places lack other human beings. If there were another person there, one would become aware of physical integrity of a human body by observing that person and could apply the derived knowledge to his own image. Then, one could tie the bundle of his perceptions in a sort of a knot, a holistic Gestalt, awareness of which he lacks. Supplementing Hume's theory, we could say that we indeed do not perceive our Self as a kind of substantivized integrity, but we can *imagine* it by recalling the image of the Other.

Thus, generally, the problem of the 'I' in philosophy concerns the challenge a subject faces in the process of self-identification as being such, based on the criteria of unity of sensory perception, consistency of thought, progression of successive states of being. In addition, one of the fundamental criteria of a subject's existence is its ability to differentiate his Self from the surrounding environment. As we see, this description draws a picture of a rather traditional image of a subject. In a way, continental philosophy preserves this image, but makes an important point—for a subject to come into being, it must undergo a series of external mediations. A subject does not come into this world at its own will. Rather, it comes to existence only if certain conditions are met. As this conditionality models the subject as such, it becomes its integral part and influences the subject's external traits, while defining its internal structure. What will this externality be like? Will it be an intervention of an outside subjectivity or intrusion of another entity? Once it invades, it would not depart and for me to remain a subject, I would have to cope with this Other. Even if its presence makes me uncomfortable, I owe it the acquisition of my Self, therefore, it is the most intimate thing I possess (Neely K). Experience of subjectivity is paradoxical, as it is determined by the concept of non-individualism. A subject must share its subjectivity with other entities. For an entity to become a subject, it has to allow the Other to enter its inner world, while this Other has evolved as a subject because it was

influenced by other subject. In other words, for an entity to develop to a subject, it has to ask someone to act upon it.

## Genesis and the Logic of the 'Self-Other' Model: Hegel

Let's see how this rather abstract discourse unfolds and what reasoning it rests on, that in the end allows to deduce the above stated conclusions.

Once again it should be noted outright that it was Hegel's theory (more precisely, the re-reading of Hegel's theory by Alexandre Kojève, who emphasized Hegel's ideas in a certain way) that coined the term 'the Other' as the core of the subjectivity concept. It was Hegel's prominent work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* where the Other was brought to light for the first time ever (Hegel 1977). Those were mostly Hegelian logical arguments, which the theorists of later continental philosophy adopted as the framework for their theories and just somewhat modified Hegel's ideas in accordance with the context chosen by certain author. Later, the topic of the Other would occupy the minds of many continental philosophers and would become a kind of a cult philosophical topic to them. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the notion of the 'Other' varies from approach to approach, yet all the notions have something in common, that is the Hegel's scheme of the development of the Self through the Other. Substantive content of the scheme might be different, but the backbone of it will barely change (Honneth 2010).

How does Hegel introduce the Other<sup>1</sup>? First, let's recall that real empirical subjects demonstrating "own" consciousness and self-consciousness, in Hegel's interpretation are nothing else but the mediums of self-cognition of the Absolute (Hegel 1977). A man in Being is just a locus of self-consciousness of the Absolute. This is the fundamental statement of dialectic. However, for an empirical subject to be such a locus, it must have self-consciousness. Then, we should ask a question: how each individual entity acquires the sense of Self and what self-consciousness is anyway? The answer proposed by Hegel, being radically different from any known concept of philosophy of that time, allows for introduction of the Other in continental philosophy. For the first time ever it would be pronounced that a subject requires assistance of other subjects for its coming to being, while, in turn, those other subjects need it or each other for their emergence. Therefore, Hegel introduced the phenomenon of intersubjectivity to the very essence of a subject (Frie 1997). Now we will learn how he managed to do that.

By asking a traditional question what stimulates a subject to be a subject, Hegel, contrary to the assumptions of classical philosophers, expressed an original idea, stating that it is not the reasoning power, but a *desire* that works as a stimulus (Hegel 1977). Why desire? Let's keep in mind that, according to Hegel's theory, a subject or an

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, of course, does not use this terminology, preferring such concepts as 'Individual' (sometimes 'Self')/'Universal', 'Private' and even 'Slave'/'Master'. At the same time, the terms 'Self'/the 'Other' were actively used by Kojève, who is considered the major popularizer of the Hegelian philosophy. And Kojève assures us that his terms accurately and adequately convey that notion, which was attached to these terms by Hegel himself. After all, it was Kojève who introduced Hegel to the continental tradition and, first of all, to the French wing of it (Devlin 2004). It should be noted that the French are actually familiar with, so to speak, 'Kojève's Hegel'. Therefore, it would be appropriate to use his (Kojève's) terminology for better understanding of a number of rather influential continental contexts.

individual is a being which is only able to actively negate given-being. Any objects, besides a human being, simply exist in the world, whereas only a human being is not satisfied with mere existence, but negates something that exists from the stand point of something that does not exist (Fessard 1947). Therefore, a subject is a condensate of negativity in a being. This means that he can negate the existing order of things as if he were transcending the world, while, at the same time, constituting its part (Johnston 2008). But why is it that desire constitutes a subject and not its mind? It all can be explained by intentions of the former and latter. Mind or reason always targets a being, some object or thing that objectively *exists*, is present and poses food for thought. Reason, therefore, is experience of recognition of material objects and phenomena. Desire, on the contrary, is always in search of something that is *absent*. We long for something that we don't have right at the moment, something we want to get because it is absent and because we crave for it. Thus, desire is when we experience lack of something. In fact, it emerges only as an active negation of something that is present. For example, if a feeling of being cold is real, then a desire of warmth would be equal to negation of cold, i.e., negation of something that authoritatively impregnates the entire space of Being, but a subject's desire overcomes this totality of Being and if it desires so, it can abstract itself from it. Mind, on the contrary, in a similar situation can only register that it is cold, but it will not generate the desire to change that. Therefore, an individual passively realizing that he is freezing, in a strict sense, cannot be considered a rational creature yet (Fessard 1947). As it appears, the definition of a human as being but a 'thinking reed', given in classical philosophy, is absolutely inadequate for Hegel. Desire is driven by negation, while mind can only register facts. In addition, desire, representing the incarnate negation, negates not only the given-being, but also the object of a desire. Once it acquires the object towards which it tends, it destroys it. Then, to fulfill the desire means to destruct the desirable object. For example, to satisfy hunger, one needs to consume food, i.e., destroy the object of desire and transform it. Though this concept was enthusiastically embraced, particularly in psychoanalysis,<sup>2</sup> and Kojève was also among its zealous supporters (Kojève 1969), it should not be perceived as universal because, for example, no possible destruction can be predicted if we talk about dressing a person in winter clothes to keep him warm. Most likely the pure negativity of a desire can be linked to another aspect, namely, inability to fully satisfy it. No object of the desire can quench the desire completely. Desire will continuously crave for something. That's how the economy of a desire works—it would have extinguished itself if it had not restored an object of the desire each time it had just achieved it (Heimonet 1988). And while a subject desires, it exists.<sup>3</sup> Desire is driven by total lack of something. Once an object of the desire has been acquired, that very moment we begin longing for something else. The motives for a desire have been thoroughly studied in continental philosophy

<sup>2</sup> The definition of the term "Desire" as something that destroys the object toward which it tends is a concept found not only in Lacan's theory, but also in Freudian psychoanalysis. In particular, one of the biologically determined needs, according to Freud, is the need to satisfy hunger, which is also regarded as a model for sexual drive, which, nonetheless, can be repressed by a mentally healthy individual. But if such instincts are subjected to perverse reactivation, they can lead to sadistic and masochistic inclinations, i.e., they can spark desire to destroy the object of desire (Freud 1922).

<sup>3</sup> As we see, the Hegelian-Kojève's interpretation of this issue is very close to the variety of definitions of subjectivity found in Eastern teachings. In particular, defining a subject through his Desire rather than through Reason is unusual for Western-European tradition, while it is fairly common for Eastern doctrines, namely Zen philosophy and the like (Suzuki 1976).

(first of all, in the theory of psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and in subsequent criticism of Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze).

Thus, desire is an indispensable human attribute of any human, but, though it is a required characteristic for someone to be categorized as a human, it is not the only one. For a man to be regarded as a unique entity, we should also define human desire because animals are also motivated by desire (this is what sets them apart from inanimate objects and things). The intended object of a desire, i.e., what it is he wants when he wants, is what differentiates human from animals (Fessard 1947). An animal wishes for something that exists in reality, an object of the material world. It will crave only for something that belongs to the field of its immediate perception. An animal's desire is directed toward the world of nature, i.e., the area of Identical, as we remember. In this sense negation expressed by an animal can be viewed as incomplete negation or not quite negation (Hegel 1977). Only human can generate pure absolute negation as he strives for something that is beyond the frontiers of reality. Actually, an object of an individual's desire can only be something that the individual lacks completely and never relatively. This is the reason why a man is capable of committing to metaphysical views and can experience religious feelings. Longing for God, a man denies the Being in its entirety and strives for transcendental, something that is beyond the scope of the given-being. A human being always transcends the order of things given to him as the final order. He transcends from something that exists to something that is nonexistent (Honneth 2004). Therefore, proper, i.e., meaningful, desire is the desire which is directed toward something that is nonexistent, rather than existent. If a desire is, as we have noted, pure negation, then for its negative property to be preserved, it should stay negative at all times, i.e., no worldly thing can be its object. Thus, the most likely candidate for this role would be *the desire itself*. Does it mean that desire should wish for itself? Absolutely not, as in this case it will turn to be an identity, while negativity is its (the identity's) opposite. Then, there is only one possibility left—desire has to crave some *other desire*. This is where, in the focal point of the Hegel's discourse, the figure of the Other ought to emerge. The Other appears for the first time when Hegel states that the real object of a true desire (and he was referring to desires of a human being) is *another person's desire* (Hegel 1977). This Hegel's idea was best expressed by J. Lacan: 'Desire is the desire of the Other' (Lacan 1966). An object of my desire is, therefore, the desire of another person. Kojève commented this idea as follows: 'For Self-consciousness to awake, a supernatural object of Desire is needed, something that transcends the being-given. But nothing else exists beyond the boundaries of being-given except for Desire itself. For what is Desire, if we perceive it as Desire, i.e., something that has to be satisfied, if not suddenly uncovered nothingness, dehiscence; Desire is absolutely not identical to the desired thing, not that it is 'something' existing as a real thing, something fixed and perpetually identical to itself. Thus, only that Desire whose object is another Desire, perceived as such, creates, through the action of negation and assimilation resulting in satisfaction, some sort of Self, different in its essence from the animalistic Self' (Kojève 1969).

Then, how should the following concept be understood: 'wish for the desire of the Other'? In general terms it means that I wish to seize the desire of the Other, i.e., I want the Other to wish for me. I long for a desire of the Other or, in other words, my entire desire is to be desired by the Other (Dean 1992). For the said not to sound as a love spell,

we should clarify this category. In particular, we need to clarify what exactly is the desire of the Other. First, it implies that I am recognized as having some value. My life and my selfhood must be unconditionally accepted by the Other as something self-valuable. The Other must, therefore, acknowledge me as a human being and a citizen, but, first of all, as a personality, i.e., a unique entity (Hegel 1977). Recognition of me based on the outlined criteria is the same as acknowledgement of me being a *free entity*. It is bizarre, but with this algorithm a human being, living in complete isolation outside of a social environment, is not yet free, as he can be free only in the society of the like creatures who have recognized him as such (Honneth 2010).

Hence, to wish for the desire of the Other implies to wish to be recognized as a free entity and equally so, to wish to be free means to desire to be acknowledged by the Other. Besides, the desire of the Other encircles the entire stratum of panhuman (supernatural and super vital) values that include not only freedom, but also fairness, oughtness, etc. So, strictly speaking, in my subjectivity, I should wish for the entire complex of social phenomena. To gain my Self, I should account for the Self of others and become a part of an intersubjective order (Frie 1997). A man wishes for the desire of the Other only if he is ready to give up his own life (to go to the limit of the natural, i.e., animal instinct) in the name of something that Kojeve calls 'prestige', that is the need for public approval (Kojeve 1969). Whereas for an animal the limit of its aspiration is self-preservation, i.e., sustentation and preservation of its life, and that, in a sense, being its utmost value. A man is willing to risk his life for the sake of honor and dignity, i.e., rather abstract values, because a man who lost his life in an act of heroism has no concerns with honor and respect expressed to him posthumously. This irrational and unfathomable willingness of a man to die for the sake of glory was reinforced in Christianity with a belief in a transcendental guarantor, namely—the prospects of eternal life, virtually, indefinite continuation of biological life. When we are lead by such reasoning, we are not far away from animal psychology or, as Hegel put it, psychology of a Slave (Hegel 1977). A real Subject, the Master is ready to risk its life for irrational reasons not to acquire the right to unceasing life, but, to some extent, to please the Other, particularly to win its absolute recognition. Thus, only a post-Hegelian subject, i.e., a post-Christian man can bring his ethic to the absolute maximum, i.e., he does not serve his animal instincts, but some values, which are, in fact, assets and possession of the Other (Devlin 2004).

Hence, yearning for recognition of the Other is the fundamental condition of my subjectification. This means that I cannot become an individual unless another individual is present in the world. Kojeve holds that: 'Then, a man can come into the world only as a part of society. Thus, the only acceptable reality for a human is a reality where society is present' (Kojeve 1969).

The status of the supreme reason for a subject's assiduous activity is assigned to the *category of recognition*, the most important category of the Hegelian anthropology. Hegel explicitly identified a man with the desire of recognition, more specifically, recognition of his uniqueness in the world, accepted and asserted by the society of similar beings. 'Every person, insofar as being a human (or a "spiritual" being), wants, on the one hand, to be unlike the others and be "one of a kind in the world", but, on the other—he longs for acknowledgment as having positive value due to his uniqueness accepted by more people and ultimately by everyone. And, in Hegel's terminology this implies that a real Human (i.e., a creature cardinally different from

an animal) is in constant search of Recognition and can come to being only when he is actually acknowledged. This means that he (actively) desires Individuality and can objectively exist only if he is Recognized as an Individual' (Kojève 1969).

In turn, the mechanism of recognition of me by the Other has intricate dialectical structure that discloses the commonality, constitutiveness and immanency of the Other. The fundamental element of this mechanism is the claim to be recognized as nothing less than *an Individual*. Only in such recognition my freedom can be asserted. The very definition of an Individual, in its turn, can shed light on the dialectic of emerging as a *Subject*. Individual, according to Hegel, is the synthesis of *Unique* and *Common* (Hegel 1977). Requirement of *commonality* implies that a human is a human (i.e., free and historical) to the degree to which he is recognized as such by *all* other humans, i.e., by the entire humanity. *Unique*, on the other hand, denotes the set of the subject's a priori characteristics—its nature, temper, talents, living circumstances, surrounding and environment. By maintaining its unique characteristics, a subject would expect the kind of recognition that implies consent to love him the way he is. But insofar as the subject is driven by negation, he is never 'what he really is and he really is not what he is' (Kojève 1969). To put it another way, a real man always strives to suppress his uniqueness, the predetermined givenness (e.g., a condition of being born to a poor family or in a country lacking freedom). How then in practice it could be managed for one to be recognized by everybody if the one is an element of the commonality himself? Here a clarified definition of the act of recognition will be of use: recognition is an obligation to recognize *the Other* and particularly *the perpetually Other*. This is not a maxima of the kind: 'recognize the Other as you recognize yourself', but rather: 'recognize the Other as he has recognized You'. In this case there will be no contradiction, but in reality a person is doomed to be discontented with the acknowledgement he has acquired, as the scope of acknowledgment is always *incomplete* because it is never represented by the opinions of *all people*.<sup>4</sup> However, such reciprocal recognition reveals the interconnected nature of the process. It is true that recognition of a subject by the community can be perceived by him as a significant event only if he, in his turn, has recognized the community. I have to admit the right of the Other to its intrinsic value, and only then can I acquire my personal value. I have to get involved into intersubjective relationships of reciprocal importance (Honneth 2004). Somebody's opinion is of importance to us only insofar as we highly regard the one who evaluates us. In other words, by the time we realize that we are fully dependent on somebody's authoritative judgment, our opinion about that person's reputation has already been formed, and that just proves the antecedent nature of our abilities to evaluate. Then we end up with deeply immanent reciprocal claims for recognition. Any autonomous individual must perceive the others as valuable individuals, as meaningful recognition occurs only when one is recognized by those he has regarded in the first place. The effect of this mechanism provides for dialectical sublation of one of the fundamental problems of political philosophy, namely the problem of the public-private conflict. Recognition, as a category, will be that common point where the public-state, and

<sup>4</sup> Always delayed in time possibility of achieving the universal recognition implies continuation of the dialectical method ingrained in the subject's development. A man is merely moving toward this universal recognition, which, by being delayed, extends the process of his becoming a man.

public-civil interests will cross. According to Hegel, such intersection of interests will provide for peace, not war (Hegel 1977). If a subject is continuously driven by the need of recognition, given he is granted considerable freedom to act according to its own beliefs and desires and restricted only by the guidelines of legislative and moral nature, the social order (the Other) will likely receive an object abiding *by* the rules of the social order, rather than *opposing* them (Habermas 1990). The probability of such prediction to be true is very high, provided that social order is perceived as some sort of space generating and distributing distinctive marks of social recognition. Consideration of this model would help to explain how an individual, being motivated by self-interests, is capable of acting not in opposition to other individuals, but in conjunction, coordination and cooperation with them (Dews 1999). If a subject is motivated exclusively by the desire of being recognized, then exercising its personal freedom, it will have to direct it toward the 'elements of commonality' (Hegel 1977) as only there it can find something it was longing for—the unanimous recognition and assertion of its uniqueness of a free being. Equally so, the subject is doomed to follow certain socially acceptable algorithms, established by the 'common', in order to gain approval of the community (Dews 1999).

Thus, we have run into a vicious circle—a subject in its quest to be recognized as a free willing and affirming this will being, who wills exactly what is prescribed by the social order, but who manages to maintain his personal, unchallenged by nobody and nothing, freedom. Then it turns out that the individual's will is a representation of the universal will. To defend this idea, Hegel employs the following logical explanation. One acts only in accordance with the oughtness accepted as personal (otherwise it would be regarded as coercion). Such acceptance implies that assumed obligations are perceived to have some value for the one accepting them. But the rest of the community has to share this value and if they don't, it would be regarded as a desire to implement a disapproved act. By engaging in this mechanism, a subject becomes a part of an intersubjective environment, where his personal will agrees with the wills of other individuals, yet is not getting absorbed. All individuals should recognize each other as valuable members of society (Honneth 2004). Hence, values assumed by one must also be equally shared by the others because ultimately an individual wants to be perceived as something of value himself and, therefore, his deeds must be in line with the common values (Hegel 1977). The above supports the fundamental notion of the neoclassicism: a subject's inner world is a continuation and recurrence of social games, and it is through the value judgment that the Other penetrates the subject's inner world. Individual is the space for the 'extimate' (Lacan 1966), i.e., the area where intimate is externalized because subjects play the role of reciprocal conductors of the energy used to achieve social recognition. Thus, an individual is the one who succeeded, albeit temporary, to become a subject of the desire of the other. To achieve that, he had to sacrifice his uniqueness, but at the same time he has managed not to assimilate into the Other completely. An individual, therefore, is an entity differentiated and recognized by the other.

Thus, having wrapped up the overview of Hegel's works thematizing the image of the Other, we presume that most of what is to follow will be easily understood. While Hegel constituted the Other using the concept of Desire, other theories of continental philosophers basically attempted to further elaborate the same main idea pronounced by Hegel: 'I do not exist unless there is the Other' with some variations.

## Mirror for the Other: Lacan

Now, after all these metaphysical insights, we can embark on examination of the Lacan's interpretation of the concept of the Other, which, as I pointed out above, can be considered one of a few attempts to research the matter from the perspective of psychology. Then, we can also allocate some time to see how the image of the Other is getting filled with psychological content not only in the Lacan's theory, but in some other psychological contexts. I should remind that dealing with the psychological aspect of the concept of the Other implies some sort of an empirical search for specific empirical equivalents of this phenomenon in the real evolving life of a subject, or more precisely, in the developmental path of the subject's psyche. Ultimately, Lacan's objective is to expose a hidden psychological mechanism triggering development of a subject. Though he provides an in-depth empirical analysis of the matter, we can easily hear philosophical overtones, derived from the Hegel's theory, described in detail above.

However, at the beginning, we should refer to the well-known remark made by Karl Marx, which preceded Lacan's mirror stage theory (Žižek 2006) in the most unthought-of way. Marx stated that since a man '...is born without a mirror in his hands and not a natural Fichtean philosopher ('I am I'), then initially a man looks at another person as if he is looking in the mirror. Only after identifying Paul as a similar being, Peter will acknowledge himself to be a human as well. At the same time, Paul as he is, in his entire pavlovian physicality, becomes for him a manifestation of the 'human' species' (Marx 1990).

Marx's remark refers us to the beginning of this article, where we raised a question of how a subject maintains its integrity and where it derives the knowledge of its own Self as no self-immersion in the depths of psyche and sensory experiments renders this knowledge. It seems that now, thanks to the "Other", representing some sort of an icon of an integrated subject, the core idea of non-classical theory of the Other is making more sense. Only by gazing at the anthropological contour of the Other, one can fully comprehend his being as a human. 'I' in this case is a social phenomenon and it can progress to become a subject only in the presence of others.

Thanks to the Lacanean "mirror stage" concept, the above does not sound as a mere metaphor. At a minimum, the 'mirror stage' describes a typical phase of evolution of the human psyche. It is within the framework of the general developmental psychology that the developmental period when an infant (approximately at the age of 6 months) begins to respond to his image reflected in a mirror by expressing joy and trying to engage with it as a game partner is described (Piaget 1952). The fact that a 6-months-old baby reacts to his reflection in the mirror emotionally prompted psychologists to stage a number of experiments to determine why and how a baby can recognize his image and understand that it is a reflection of his own body, and, ultimately, realize that it is after all only his image (Émile 1998). Henri Wallon had experimented with a mirror even before Lacan did, and had described it as a sort of a final 'test' a baby had to pass during his developmental stage to establish normal 'adult' connection with his own reality and the reality in general (Émile 1998). However, similar descriptions, well-known to any psychologist, often provide an account of empirical facts or, at the most, an in-house theory explaining them, but not a fundamental theory (e.g., theory of personality). The Lacanean theory, on the contrary, is a thoroughly thought-through theory that could be viewed as more philosophical than psychological concept (Žižek 2006). This is proven by the fact that at the commencement

of his research, Lacan stated that: 'it puts us in opposition to any philosophical theory directly derived from Cogito' (Lacan 1966). Therefore, Lacan in his studies uses the Hegelian dialectic in the interpretation of psychic facts, as opposed to the French tradition, which considered consciousness to be static. For example, even those philosophers who have experienced the direct impact of Kojève, could not get rid of the 'illusion of autonomy of Self from consciousness'. Lacan, first of all, meant Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who based their ideas on the notion of autonomous Self (Self exists primordially, while interactions with the Other are initiated at a later stage), whereas for Lacan the initial step is a relationship with the Other, which prompts emergence of the Self (Lacan 1966). Lacan described dialectical transition from the visual (an image in the mirror) to the imaginary (a realization that the observed reflection is just an image), and then from the imaginary to the symbolic (incorporation of the Other into the Self). If we rest our observations on Hegel's theories, we can deduce that a subject does not precede the world of shapes, which fascinates him, but is constituted by them and in them. The external environment is not outside of the subject, but inside it; the Other is already instilled in it. An external or a sensation of external does not exist because initially the external environment, which later outlines the subject's attitude to the real external world, is already a part of the subject (Žižek 2006). According to Lacan as well as Hegel, social arise precisely at the moment of formation of subjectivity as something unique, assisting an entity in becoming a subject (Dews 1999).

Thus, Lacan studied classical facts, which had been reported by psychologists, and gave them his own interpretation. In this hypothesis Lacan holds that babies under 6 months of age are at the 'pre-mirror' stage, at which they lack the awareness of their integral and finite bodies (Émile 1998). A baby can experience only heterogeneous sensations at that time and study some parts of his body as isolated fragments. He is not able yet to integrate the perceptions of his body, *endured by him*, into one consistent experience. A child is born physically undeveloped, with motor incoordination expressed in a feeling of incompleteness of his body. Corporal "windows", through which information about the external world seeps, will, during the first 6 months of the child's life, exist only in dispersed, autonomous, incoherent and fragmentary form. Lacan called this child's experience during the pre-mirror stage the 'fragmented image' of the child's body (Lacan 1966), stressing that this primary experience of the Self (which is not a Self in a full sense of the word yet) is scattered and partial. A child is fused with the world at this point. He does not recognize integrity and unity of an individual, which would imply separation from the external world.

Later, when a child recognizes his image in the mirror, it seems that those fragmented perceptions of his body he accumulated during the pre-mirror stage are combining together into an integral 3-D image—the Gestalt (Webster 2002). Visualization of the image promotes synchronization of the internal feelings and the external objectivation of his body. This means that only the extra-mundane visualization of the Self in the world, i.e., observation of the Self from outside prompts consciousness to differentiate the Self from the world, thus promoting emergence of a subject. In the terms of the Lacanian theory it is called 'endowed subjectivity' (Fink 1995). Ultimately, under subjectivity he understands observable external phenomena, e.g., contours of the body, which is perceived as a foreign body I have to take a possession of and make my own. Here, we already sense some features of intersubjective psychology, postulating that the Other is already a part of you and is, in a

sense, already constituting you, blurring the distinction between internal and external, the Self and the Other, in other words, forming a kind of primordial social organism (Chiesa 2007).

Such activity, implemented by a child, can be perceived both as a real staged experiment, and as a successful attempt to link the two distinct things: the perceived 'inner', expressed as a certain set of movements, and visual images of such movements reduced to something almost schematic (Lewis et al. 1985). 'Such evolution is experienced as temporal dialectic, strongly projecting the formation of an individual on history. The 'mirror stage' is a drama where inner impetus rapidly transforms from being insufficient to being overpowering, which creates illusions for the subject caught by the bait of spatial identification, gradually descending from a fragmented image of his body to the shape which we will denote as 'orthopedic' to reflect its wholeness and, above that, to the armour of some alienating identity he is clad in and whose rigid structure will govern his brain development' (Lacan 1966).

A child will not only realize that he is in possession of his own individual body at the 'mirror stage', but will also be encouraged to constitute subjectivity. Interaction with his image, reflected in the mirror, is a part of the process, triggering the mechanism of intersubjective relations. The fact is that a 6-months-old baby, once having discovered his image in the mirror, will promptly and permanently engage in a systematic game with it, apparently enjoying this exploratory game. Such behavior sharply contradicts that indifference displayed by an animal observing its image in a mirror. Not only young chimpanzees, but also adult animals do not express much interest in their reflections (Lacan 1966). This fact is especially curious because a human baby lags behind a baby chimpanzee in his bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and will catch up with it only by the age of 11 months (Lacan 1966). However, despite this developmental delay, a human baby, unlike baby animals, lively reacts to his reflection and shows genuine interest in it. The fact that the image in the mirror repeats his own movements and gestures excites the child and indicates his ability to recognize himself in the mirror. Apparently, the child's mind at this moment makes a bold discovery that those scattered, isolated experiences of his own body he endured during the pre-mirror stage, can be linked together into his integral body.

'Simultaneosity' of the movements produced by the child and the image, connectedness of inner feelings with the observed integral image create a powerful impetus initiating mental work, characteristic only of mankind. Thus, the holistic body image would play a role of the defining matrix for the child, the matrix shaping his concept of his body. The child will be captivated, captured and charmed by it. This is the climax of the action. When a child "sees" himself in a mirror, he has no choice but to believe that what he sees there is himself. However, what he sees there is, in fact, the Other. One of the crucial prerequisites for the development of the human psyche would be the prerequisite for a child to acknowledge that the image he sees in the mirror, his own, integral and permanent image is nothing more than an image. Comprehension of the corporal integrity is not a product of the child's internal feelings, but is the result of his visual experience. The corporal integrity here is exteriorized and given to the child as an object. The child's task is to recognize that it is a part of him and even further—that it is him himself. Therefore, a human receives that most significant something from outside, under the guise of the Other. Having encountered his reflection in the mirror, a child will progress from perceiving it as something alien to embracing it as his own. The only thing which would maintain the 'mental consistency' in a human being would be that holistic sense of Self, pulling together the mosaic of identifications and

separating the Self from others (Chiesa 2007). Thus, at the 'mirror stage' a child develops that constitutive niche of the psyche, which later, at the end of the 'mirror stage' and upon having learned the language, would be occupied by the Other.

Therefore, even in his early childhood a human enters into a relationship with the Other through the exploration of his own body. Actually, this phenomenon can be construed in a broader sense. Developmental psychology gives plenty of other examples when the Self is shaped through communication with the Other. For example, when a child simulates external visually recognized expressions of maternal attention toward him (his mother's gestures and facial expressions), he, in response, will experience a fit of passion, which can be considered the moment of origination of his subjectivity (Meltzoff et al. 1999). This is, so to speak, instilled or contagious, infectious subjectivity (Lawtoo 2011), which takes shape of an extra-linguistic communication in the border zone between the mother and the child. It functions as the corporal, psychological and physiological reflectory experience, subconscious and beyond the control, which flows across the boundary of the individual being of the subject and represents its primary communication line with the outside world.

This is exactly what Lacan is trying to show—a subject does not come to the world as an isolated monad, but from the very beginning enters into the relationship with the Other (the Other's body). Strictly speaking, communication is primary and the subject is secondary, i.e., it is the result and product of communication (Chiesa 2007). From the first moment of its birth it contains in itself and incorporates in itself this social relationship. If we refer to examples of communication, other than the Lacan's 'mirror stage', we would notice that the concept of primordial intersubjectivity still exists. For example, the mother and the child are not viewed as two separate beings entering into communication, but the subject, as such, comes to existence through communicative experience (Lawtoo 2011). Communication, then, is not a consequence of, but a prerequisite for the formation of the inner world of a subject. Here we can speak of the primacy of the social, a certain psychology of *socium* (*socius*) in the sense, which this concept received from a French psychologist and psychiatrist Pierre Marie Félix Janet (Janet 1937). Based on the ideas of Janet, we can try to re-think the birth of a subject in the Lacan's interpretation through the primacy of social contact, i.e., socialization with the Other. Primal acceptance of the Other into the child's inner world occurs when the child recognizes himself in the mirror. Prior to that event, he has no knowledge of communication and, strictly speaking, there is no subject (as well as there is no awareness of the boundaries of his body), which could separate itself from the world and put it in opposition to him. It is important to note that in some sense the child is initially open and sensitive to the process of incorporation of the Other in him. The source of this primary initial permeability is *the ability to simulate*—a kind of contagious reaction to another individual (Meltzoff et al. 1999). The child simulates his mother or imitates the reflection in the mirror. Psychology, thus, reveals the key concept of *simulation* and is using it in some contexts in the same way Hegel uses the concept of *recognition*, where the Other penetrates the structure of the Self in a constituting way through these mechanisms. Both of these mechanisms make the Self permeable for the Other and convertible into the Other.

In fact, the major conclusion, which can be drawn from the principle of work of the mechanisms described above, is that an area of initial alienation, responsible for segregation of inner and outer realms, is established in the course of development of a subject. It takes to alienate from the Self, externalize and objectivize to become a subject, and, in addition, I have to let the Other into my inner world. 'Alienation' from

the Self results from allowing something external, which could be anything symbolic, like language, *socium*, culture, i.e., various manifestations of the Other, to intertwine with its own mental structure. A subject acknowledges itself through recognition of the world of forms in which it is realized and where the presence of an object is a prerequisite and the result of the subject's mental activity. Thus, a disruption is introduced to the subject's position. An encounter with the *socium* does not occur when a person is faced with restrictions or banned desires; rather, he himself is the creator of this *socium*, the environment he developed himself for himself.

Here, we end up with approximately the same principle of circular justification, which we have already encountered in Hegel's works. Lacan actually outlines the anthropological horizon of a human desire conforming to the Kojève's comments on Hegel, '... anthropogenic Desire is different from an animal Desire ... because it is not aiming some real, "positive", given object, but some other Desire (Lacan 1966). Desire, therefore, would be born in the domain of the Other, who will be "prompting", "pushing" and, in fact, forming the entire field of human Desire' (Lacan 1966).

Apparently, a child will achieve the status of a subject much later, at the time of entering into the realm of symbolic, the environment of language, culture and *socium* (Fink 1995). However, it would be possible only if a child develops a specific mental mechanism of recognition of his own image. One mental act will immediately afford the child his ego and the discovery of the world around him, which, in a sense, he will have to embrace without question, as it has happened with the first in his life mental experiment of acknowledgement of the Self—the recognition of his own image.

### **Conclusion: What feelings can the figure of the Other provoke?**

Thus, the integrity a subject is endowed with, in fact, expands outward. Subjectivity does not constitute a part of a subject as he does not experience it internally; to be exact, it was Hume who pointed that out earlier. Thoughts, images, impressions are regarded strictly as internal human experience, but it is from outside that they are finalized as something integral and constituting an autonomous entity. This, inspired by external things, 'imaginary unity', which a man objectively needs in order to discern his Self will be yet another name denoting the Other (Frie 1997). The Other is integrated into the Self from the very beginning because the Other constitutes the subjectivity of the Self. Yet the truth is that there is *no any real Self*. It was acted out outside of the subject and was wholeheartedly adopted by him. And since this act of interiorization of the Other happens to be a condition for my subjectification, then a man is the Self only insofar as he is also the Other. Subjectificate oneself in order to become a subject implies incorporation of the 'percepts' of the Other into the very integrity of the consciousness of the Self. Practically this means broadening and deepening of the concepts of Hegel and Marx that every person looks at the Other as in his mirror: if there were no Other, I would never become an object for myself, i.e., I would never gain consciousness. Hence, intersubjectivity is a constitutive part of an individual's consciousness (Frie 1997).

An interesting question might arise in connection with the above: how the Self should react to the Other? Should the Self love or hate the Other? It was actually Lacan who pioneered critical attitude toward the Other in continental philosophy

answering to this question. Whereas in Hegel's, Kojève's and Marx's theories the image of the Other can be associated with the major tonality if we compare their theories to a music piece: in Lacan's works, on the contrary, we hear more sounds of minor tonality. For Hegel and Marx the image of the Other is mostly endowed with grace and has positive traits—after all we have to be grateful to the Other as it is owing to him we acquired our Self and became subjects.

Lacan accentuates the cause of the split consciousness and the idea that on the large scale a subject can never be a subject in the full sense (Zizek 1989). The Lacanian notion of the Other is similar to the famous statement by Sartre, 'Hell is—other people' (Sartre 1989). Thinkers before Lacan and Sartre did not assign any negative features to the Other—a subject owes to the Other his subjectivity, and there should be no hard feelings. Lacan, by contrast, emphasizes the aggravating characteristics of the Other—an individual gains his subjectivity at the cost of an internal split and deep internal conflict: I am the Other, and, therefore, I will never be myself. Neither Hegel nor Kojève make such discouraging statement. However, for such leading philosophers of the post-Lacanian era as Jean-Louis Nancy and Emmanuel Levinas, as well as modern philosophers Julia Kristeva and Bernhard Waldenfels, the motif of neurotic or at least aggravating nature of the Other has become the leading motif.

Lacan made yet another discovery: he postulated that a subject is not only aggravated by the Other, but should conceal this fact from itself. The very existence of the Other should remain a secret of consciousness, the fact of incorporation of the Other is some sort of taboo, a 'blind spot', exposure of which threatens the integrity of an individual (Chiesa 2007).

In other words, it is some sort of a secret that a subject's socialization, i.e., incorporation of the Other into his personality implies that the subject's consciousness has no privacy, i.e., the integrity of cogitability, underlying the classical understanding of a subject, does not really exist. A subject relates to itself through the medium of the Other, where the Other is an external image the subject identifies itself with in its mind, but does not feel it inside. And this is due to such mediation that the subject's consciousness, eternally affected by the presence of the Other, is awakened.

Thus, it is owing to the principal originators and contributors to the topic of the Other—Hegel and Lacan that the theme of the Other has been permanently incorporated in the repertoire of some continental theories. Over time, though, more of new connotations will be attached to the term 'Other', and the Other will become synonymous to a language, ideological reservoir of culture, social and symbolic space in general, etc. (Cadava et al. 1991).

In addition, almost all subsequent continental (mostly post structural) philosophers after Hegel have been assigning a repressive role to the Other, hence, the dialectical idyll when Commonality and Individuality overlap is deemed absolutely unachievable. But, regardless of the mentioned variations, the cornerstone conclusion of such philosophy will remain steadfast—it is the Other, lending us an illusive image of subjectivity, who actually constitutes one's Self.

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