

## **Strings: A Political Theory of Multi-Dimensional Reality**

### **Abstract**

*An "unfaithful" interpretation of Michael Weinstein's oeuvre illuminates a complex, interpenetrative system of realities that reflects the lived experience of his vitalist ontology. By connecting Weinstein's radical separation and agonic contradiction with Karen Barad's radical entanglement, I show that reality is an ever-changing unique presentation of active relational engagements in perpetual tension. I propose that theoretical physics and socio-politics have a great deal in common: a unified field theory of being rooted in a multi-dimensional presentation of reality.*

KEYWORDS: *Social String Theory, Ontology, M-Theory, Weinstein, Globality, Prozorov*

Robert L. Oprisko

*Center for the Study of Global Change  
Indiana University*

"Existence can only be grasped in the paradoxical simultaneity of togetherness and disseminated singularity."<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

Sergei Prozorov has uncovered what is arguably the most important problematic in international political theory in his 2009 article "Generic Universalism in World Politics: Beyond International Anarchy and the World State", when he links semiotics to the logic of consequences. He concludes that altering the discipline's name from "international relations" to "world politics" is an agential act within the discipline that not only alters the nominal value of the discipline, but also moves the discussion, and therefore how one conceives of the discipline itself, from one extreme, *identitarian pluralism*, to another, *generic universalism*.<sup>2</sup> Although Prozorov ends the article arguing that the world appears trapped within Schmitt's existential ontology of identitarian pluralism, he suggests, perhaps hopefully, that generic universalism does indeed exist:

. . . the generic community actually exists in today's world as a finite fragment of its own infinite unfolding. Consigned to indiscernibility in the encyclopedia of contemporary global politics, the existence of the world community may be verified by concrete local practices

that are able to force a momentary illumination of the truth of generic equality that the statist logic of the political obscures.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence of an occasionally awakened generic, human community within a political system dominated by identitarian states strongly suggests that neither identitarian pluralism nor generic universalism is representative of reality in total. A new political ontology is needed that will bind the universal to the particular without diminishing either, a unified theory of political reality.

The difficulty to construct such a unified theory lies in the seemingly irreconcilable position of the extremes available. Badiou, perhaps, says it best, "Ontology has built the portico of its ruined temple out of the following experience: what presents itself is essentially multiple; what presents itself is essentially one."<sup>4</sup> Ontology must account for both the universal and the particular, much like theoretical physics is searching for a theory that connects the quantum to the cosmos.

Reality is an ever-changing unique presentation of active relational engagements in perpetual tension. Building a unified theory becomes possible through embracing agonic contradiction as the unifying reagent of ontology. I propose that reality is a complex not of opposites, but of uniquely presented tensions that lie at the intersection of radical entanglement and radical separation. I suggest that praxis-as-tension between Barad and Weinstein is found in the failed act to achieve absolute separation or entanglement. I then argue for a multiplicity that combines Deleuze's focus on energy and Badiou's axiomatic sets to form social superstrings. I finish by developing social string M-theory as a universal system of phenomena that celebrates rather than diminishes particular existential agency.

### **Radical Entanglement: Karen Barad's Agential Realism**

Karen Barad has taken issue with an essential failure of representationalism in science, noting that reliance on instrumentalism obscures the importance of the concepts that we use to inscribe value onto things. Meaning cannot be independent of the method of interaction. She initiates the ethico-onto-epistemology of Agential Realism:

The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming. The primary ontological units are not "things" but phenomena – dynamic topological reconfigurings/ entanglements/ relationalities/(re)articulations. And the primary semantic units are not "words" but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted. This dynamism is agency. Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world.<sup>5</sup>

Her binding of materialism to ideationism is predicated on the rejection of Cartesian epistemology and its "belief in the inherent distinction between subject and object, and knower and known."<sup>6</sup> In this rejection is a simultaneous acceptance of a Bohrian philosophy-physics that is agent-object rather than subject-object oriented. Bohr's model is premised on the problematic of measurement and his argument that theoretical concepts are defined by "specific physical arrangements" that "define relationships required for their measurement."<sup>7</sup> Observation, including experimental observation, involves "indeterminable discontinuous interaction" leading Bohr to determine, "there is no unambiguous way to determine between the 'object' and the 'agencies of observation.'"<sup>8</sup> In order for an agent to recognize an object, there must be an agential cut that grants distinction of the object by separating said object from the world in which it is still interacting and interpenetrated. The separation and distinction is useful only to inscribe meaning onto the object of agency.

The beauty of Bohrian epistemology is that it presupposes a single system, the universe, and accepts that individuals cannot divorce themselves from being within the universe itself; it is impossible to be an external observer. Engaging the world is no longer one of Cartesian observation, but one of active engagement. For example, observing the stars from Earth requires that there be an agent who is actively looking at the stars at a particular moment in time and space. It also requires that there is something(s) that is directing the observer to observe. In the case of stars, they are engaged in nuclear reactions that generate energy, including light over vast distances. For Barad and Bohr, this is important; the observer-as-agent is located within the universal system with the stars. When observing their light, he sees into multiple pasts – each star is a specific distance away from Earth, thus each light photon must travel that distance, which is measured in time – the light-year (ly). The observer is witnessing the star's past, but from his agential cut, or parallax view, it is that star's relational present for that given situation and position in time and space. The revolutionary nature of Bohrian epistemology lies in the importance of perspective.

She employs a method of diffraction that rejects the sharp-edged distinction between the silos of study, most notably ethics, ontology, and epistemology; her position is that the social and scientific [material] relate through a process of "exteriority within."<sup>9</sup> Barad defends agential realism as a "legitimate interpretation of quantum mechanics" and champions its ability to successfully analyze interpenetrated phenomena/entangled practices, which "requires a non-additive approach that is attentive to the intra-action of multiple apparatuses of bodily production."<sup>10</sup> Agential realism is posthumanist, denying human exceptionalism, though necessarily inclusive of humanity and human phenomena within its material-discursive framework.<sup>11</sup>

Agential realism argues for a reinterpretation of reality as one that is intimately unified through the aggregation of everything as a system within which all parts are in interpenetrative communion with all other things (directly or not), placing practice within theory. "There is no godlike approach possible to the physical world whereby we may know it as it is 'absolutely in itself'; rather we are able to know only as much of it as can be captured in those situations which we can handle conceptually."<sup>12</sup> Any meaning that may be communicated must operate as an apparatus that cuts the agent of observation from the object of observation in order to resolve semantic-ontic indeterminacy.

The ontological nature of Bohr's realism is premised upon not individuated existence independent of a measurement apparatus and that the measurement apparatus is dependent upon the phenomena in question that represents the intra-action from which the agents emerge. Barad rejects the linguistic turn in favor of a posthumanist performative understanding of discursive practices. "Performativity is properly understood as a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve."<sup>13</sup> Agential realism is, therefore, a relational ontology "between specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted."<sup>14</sup> The material world is reconfigured by agents using apparatuses. "Apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices-specific material (re)configurings of the world-which come to matter."<sup>15</sup> For Barad, "Phenomena are constitutive of reality. Reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but of things-in-phenomena."<sup>16</sup>

The premise of such an ontology is that a part/portion of the universal reality initiates an active engagement with the rest/remainder of universal reality, which renders it momentarily distinct. Time and space emerge as important media through which the flowing processes of mattering matter. Matter is

the ongoing materialization of phenomena.<sup>17</sup> Barad is also politicizing reality through her use of the apparatus as a boundary-drawing practice. What she desires is for her colleagues to recognize that a person is engaging (a particular part of) the universe in a particular way. Barad's agent affirms his sovereignty through a decisive act.<sup>18</sup> By deciding upon how to approach the universe and what parts of it to engage/give meaning, the observer is giving distinction to himself and to that which he engages, making both exceptional.<sup>19</sup>

Barad's ethico-onto-epistemological theory of Agential Realism represents a fantastic advancement in arguing for radicalized entanglement/communion. The incompleteness of this framework, however, is evidenced when exploring the connection between matter as a materialist phenomenon and matter as an ethico-normative inscription of possessing value – to matter. The materialist reduction to matter and energy, yet inclusive of mental, social, and ethical phenomena has been the work of the eliminative materialism branch in neuroscience, with which Agential Realism appears to concur, especially state-space theory.<sup>20</sup>

Such a reduction, however, presents itself as problematic when rules are broken. We may all be nothing more than stardust that manifests in myriad ways and personality may be nothing more than neural impulses that pattern themselves, inscribing a logic of habit onto a unique presentation of replicable DNA patterns, however, each unique presentation of consciousness is forced by the condition of vitality to direct its efforts in a singular, unified way. Individual agency transforms mere action into vectors. Agency is vectored because it is not mere action, but directed action, sovereign action. The direction is important and not only echoes Barad's emphasis that the distance is important between entangled pieces of the universe, but also is an admission that there is separation between the particular pieces that comprise it. To accept radical entanglement, the integration of all things, requires that we also accept radical separation, the existence of meaningful distance between all things. This combination of radical entanglement and radical separation forms a *complexio oppositorum*, or complex of opposites that are simultaneously true without logical contradiction.<sup>21</sup>

### **Radical Separation: Weinstein's Existential Political Philosophy**

Weinstein's oeuvre provides the structure for a novel approach to metaphysics and ontology: being, while singular, presents itself in multiple realities. Man engages himself and his other(s) in four systems: material, social, psychic, and temporal simultaneously and without contradiction. These realities are not mutually exclusive, but are, rather, interactive and interpenetrate one another axiologically; value and meaning represent the tools of relation and thus form and frame how man engages himself, his surroundings, and others. They are also the tools by which man encounters who and what he was and develops his intention to project what he desires to be. Weinsteinian reality provides the argument for not only a multiplicity of being, but also a multiverse of social realities.

Weinstein's intention is to illuminate that "existentialism is a political philosophy."<sup>22</sup> His agonistic, existential-phenomenological paradigm precisely and sincerely reflects lived experience in social and political life, providing the "ultimate justification of anarchism."<sup>23</sup> Reveling in agony and contradiction, the Weinsteinian school of thought embraces lived experience and vitality at the expense of any singular, butchered worldview. He sees a world of radically separated individuals who, when viewed in aggregate, exist and live socially. Although he does not construct the puzzle for us, he has provided all of the pieces for a holistic understanding of reality. For Weinstein, the individual engagement is everything; man acts

within the world that is. Those *realms of action* define the places within which corresponding *complete human actions* present themselves as social fact.<sup>24</sup>

Weinstein, similarly to Barad, rejects the Cartesian epistemology, but replaces it with Pascalian activity rather than Bohrian agency. He explores "active transcendence or authentic existence" as a mystery of ontology that reveals the relationship of the data to the problematic itself.<sup>25</sup> He sees the individual man as Heidegger's the One who exists already as part of the mass ala Karl Jaspers' life-order, but authentically projects himself through the domain(s) of his reality with action that engages said reality as an active participant.<sup>26</sup> Active participation with the domains within which the self may project requires judgment regarding where or in what direction said projection should be directed. As Cassirer tells us, judgment always contains, "an element of universality and particularity."<sup>27</sup>

Reality itself is a realm of domains, its universal nature of encompassing everything that exists requires that it includes all material and ideational domains. The (social-)fact of existence reflects this dualism; to be the domain within which activity is being observed is to literally *be* reality, however this does not in any way interfere with, negate, or diminish the activity taking place in said domain. Reality *is* existential; the material existence occurs in a material domain and is beholden to the laws of the natural sciences, yet ideational existence is dependent upon the domain in which the act of projected will is directed. All domains interpenetrate one another.

In his earliest published works, Weinstein situates his socio-political inquiry into the rank-and-file of the existentialists, "to outline in general terms an existential theory of the political relation. . . . an existential political science and normative theory are both possible and meaningful."<sup>28</sup> His work begins by negating experimental consciousness in favor of personal consciousness, which "allows the individual to go beyond the experimental life and attempt to order his existence in other ways. It also permits him to be trustworthy, which is the first condition for his trusting others. Finally, it is the basis for reconstructing the political relation."<sup>29</sup> The problematic that he confronts throughout his oeuvre extends from these: I exist and the world exists and we are not one; we are in this, but are we in this together?

His question, therefore, becomes how does man exist authentically? Weinstein and Weinstein examine authenticity as active transcendence, "a being in the world that focuses attention not on future participation, but on the appearance of the world," to be an objective attitude from which one can intend anything other than itself, which is the objective position.<sup>30</sup> For the authentic being society is "an aspect of one's own life." Moreover, social phenomena present themselves to the authentic being as both problematical and necessary: they define a terrain within which the authentic being may act becoming agential, but by so acting, the agent participates and loses his objectivity and is no longer experiencing an authentic moment.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, though "an individual is known by his projects," which are "only satisfied through the use of cultural objects and within relational processes."<sup>32</sup> Weinstein apprehended, however, that human action was both social and relational: Weinstein's existential political science would require that individual men with individual projects oriented on cultural objects and acting with reference to the other individuals toward a goal that is a shared vision of a future; empiricism could be redeemed if social fact could usurp the unit of analysis.<sup>33</sup> The study of complete human actions, the social facts that comprise the core of Weinstein's desired political science, hinge upon the project-object relational process as the unifying field.

Weinstein and Weinstein continue to struggle with the Newtonian empiricism of social science and ultimately reject man's ability to engage with the social objectively. They present a series of contrasts that

reflect their rejection of any singular positivism that attempts to control the objects of existence through the techniques of scientific inquiry, making objects, "manageable and manipulable, bringing them under conscious control."<sup>34</sup> In this, the Weinsteins begin to construct a position that man's relationship to the natural world, the physical environment, is radically different from man's relationship to other men. They present man as a self to which there are at least two external realms: nature and society. Objective detachment is denied, however, and the puzzle-solving activities of natural science, rooted in "wondering doubt", including the search for laws, emerge as disrespectful intentions onto the objects of inquiry by the scientist. Scientists cannot remain objective because the manipulation of data is an act of engagement that disallows them objectivity as it cannot take place in an authentic moment.<sup>35</sup>

Weinstein's vitalist ontology depends upon the agony of contradiction. "Agony is authentic existence."<sup>36</sup> He laments, "I want to realize contradictory values, living them simultaneously. Yet in order to act politically, I must adopt one of these partial perspectives and collaborate with others who believe that it is true."<sup>37</sup> Purposeful action is necessary to live:

Life is apprehended neither as a stream of vital experience or will, nor as the inscription of codes by an alien culture, but as an objective structure with a subjective reference, as the diversity of the flesh extended into the world and then springing back into the flesh, penetrating the psyche, and superintended by the spirit.<sup>38</sup>

Purposeful action takes time and requires commitment. Life being a temporary state of affairs, the commitment to any action is predicated on a decision (not a choice) to do X rather than Y, Z, or simply not X at a given moment. When man acts, however, he encounters opposing wills and resistance against his living in his own way. Man gets denied, diminished, and disenfranchised, but it is only when he rebels against his finitude and rejects the vitality of life that he plunges into the torpor of resentment.<sup>39</sup>

Weinstein finds that the radically separated being is desirous of entanglement, of purposeful action that is meaningful, a committed relationship with something(s). Separation itself is only possible in a world of multiples, even separation of self from self (to be of two minds) requires that the self be divisible. The project-object orientation of Weinsteinian existential phenomenology is not the opposite, but the flip-side of Barad's agent-object orientation of her agential realist onto-epistemology. They form, in tandem, an ontology premised on existence as tension.

### **Praxis: The Failed Attempt<sup>40</sup>**

The tension of reality is maintained through *failure*. The Baradian agent's activity results in finite moments of self-and-other distinction before being drawn back into the entangled matter of the universe. The Weinsteinian actor projects himself through his world within the universe, constantly separated, always purposeful, which requires external engagement. Barad's agent fails to separate herself and be rendered distinct from the universe in her search for critical distance. The Bohrian epistemology is predicated upon universal interiority of every particular – absolute separation is impossible. Weinstein's existential phenomenology is predicated upon individual interiority – being trapped in a Stirnerian bag of bones that both allows and requires the self's failure to fully engage with externals. It is in Zizek where we can achieve praxis between the Barad and Weinstein as well as the universal and particular.

Zizek's synthetic ontology is nothing less than an attempt to understand the real as the failed attempt. Failure penetrates the entirety of the text and is reminiscent of Doc Hammer's take on *The Venture*

*Brothers*, “It’s about the beauty of failure. It’s about the failure that happens to all of us.”<sup>41</sup> For Žižek, the real is inseparable both from the radicalized material reality that forms everyone and everything from stardust as the heavenly bodies explode and collapse in the creative destruction of our ever expanding universe and the social meanings of our unique presentation as Nancy would say, as being(s) singular plural.

The material realm of Žižek’s ontology is derived from Barad’s take on Bohr’s epistemology. He keys in on radical diffraction, “Diffraction itself is thus diffracted into combining and splitting [much like the universe’s dual process for expansion] into overlapping and spreading.”<sup>42</sup> Žižek then likens radical diffraction to parallax, “the shift of perspective needed to produce the effect of the depth of the Real, as if an object acquires the impenetrable density of the Real only when its reality reveals itself to be inconsistent.”<sup>43</sup> Žižek asserts that there is a price to be paid for something to appear out of nothing; his sexual encounter is explicit:

In Lacanese, the idealist position is “masculine,” it totalizes the universe through the observer as the point of exception, while materialism is “feminine”; that is, it asserts the “non-All” of every measurement. However, it would be too easy to simply privilege the “feminine” non-All and to reduce the “masculine” totalization-through-exception to a secondary illusion – here, more than ever, we should insist on (sexual) difference itself as the primary fact, as the impossible Real with regard to which both positions, “masculine” and “feminine” appear as secondary, as two attempts to resolve its deadlock.<sup>44</sup>

The Real for Žižek is the cohered singularity of the idealist-materialist dichotomy. This ontological position is the agential cut or parallax gap from which both classical realism and quantum realism emerge as explanatory constructs.

Žižek’s Real issues forth from his theory as a nexus between Barad’s radical entanglement and Weinstein’s radical separation.<sup>45</sup> Reality is the tension of the void that is nothing, but is capable of holding everything. The nothingness presupposes the sublimation of an emergent something, which will give meaning to the void as the Real that encompasses the somethings and nothings, but IS both of them simultaneously and without contradiction, a pre-ontological proto-reality.<sup>46</sup>

The Real is thus an effect of the symbolic, not in the sense of performativity, of the “symbolic construction of reality,” but in the totally different sense of a kind of ontological “collateral damage” of symbolic operations: the process of symbolization is inherently thwarted, doomed to fail, and the Real is this immanent failure of the symbolic.<sup>47</sup>

Tension is the key. What Žižek does not do an adequate job illuminating, however, is that this tension is necessarily between the ontic In-itself (the Void) and the ontological Thing-in-itself, which emerges spatio-temporally within the void. The (inter)actions of objects located in space and time are also symbolic gestures with meanings dependent upon the coordinates of the transcendental subject that is critically engaging that interaction and searching for meaning.

*Less Than Nothing* provides a powerful reminder that philosophy is an abstraction of reality and that we philosophers are inherently always-already situated within a web of social networks that affect, effect, and infect us. Progressing Žižek’s sexual metaphor, we can accept the “feminine” objective reality as void that only has meaning, including what it means to be a void, when it is filled with the totality of objects as subjects that both fill and fail-to-fill it. This philosophical discovery of zero, or the void, is an important

addition for political practice, which Žizek helpfully points out in his conclusion: “The Political Suspension of the Ethical” in which he posits that the goal of eliminating class inequality involves the organized politicization of a class to self-negate. Žizek’s proletariat can only find equality with the bourgeoisie by eliminating the relationship and its meaning that renders each distinct; for class equality to emerge, classes themselves must no longer exist or have a meaning perpetuated by a relational identity.<sup>48</sup>

Žizek’s political agent is a dignified rebel, an individual who operates outside the logic of appropriateness and focuses instead on the freedom of action proscribed only by what Zhao would call personal talents.<sup>49</sup> This normal, limited human being is a harbinger of annihilation, “the apocalyptic subject”, whose in/action that, in a true Camusian sense, is always both a “no” and a “yes”, is the symbolic gesture that binds the individual person with the infinity of humanity.<sup>50</sup>

### **Multi-Dimensional Reality**

Weinstein clearly presents the radically separated being as an individual situated in three domains of specific relational activity: self, others, and material.<sup>51</sup> Projects, however, occur within the domain of time, encompassing assessment of who one is, reflecting on who one has been, and contemplating who one ought become.<sup>52</sup> The sovereign individual is authentic and accepts himself in his power and limitation, avoiding resentment. Authenticity provides freedom for the individual, placing him within his contexts such that he not only reflects upon his situation with a mind to potentiality and possibility, but also prepares to engage his world in the anticipation of action, the precession of commitment to his unified and indivisible act as a non-transferable being and the "center of originality, responsibility, and choice."<sup>53</sup> With this first absurd dilemma faced by man, Weinstein begins to conceive of reality as a complex-system of real domains within which authentic actions are taken rather than as singularity. Direct life experience reveals, "a oneness that is always changing", a unity in flux.<sup>54</sup>

The unity that is the radically-separated individual/person confronts the absurd in all things. Weinstein quotes Jose Ortega y Gasset, succinctly laying his foundation, "My life is the radical reality."<sup>55</sup> Living then, in all of its forms and processes constitutes reality, as radical, complicated, or contradictory as it may be. Philosophy that presents man with how life ought to be is striving to contain life – an impossibility. Life, as we shall see teems with potentiality and possibility; "it is inalienable, insubstitutable, and intransferable."<sup>56</sup> For Weinstein, man has to confront and engage his world singularly, as a unified individual with a personality. The process of living, of confrontation and engagement is what constitutes reality, not a mere existence of being. This is what drives Weinstein to focus upon ontology and to eschew metaphysics because *being* is not living and only life is real.

Focusing on the level of analysis as the core of actuality is what Weinstein refers to as the "lived present", a "vital space and time", which is the "context in which the primary responses of the self to its environment are occurring."<sup>57</sup> Life happens within an environment and, within said environment, the self actualizes according to the values that the solitary person has internalized to be important. These values are, to Weinstein, virtues – that which makes personal existence worthwhile – and though they are experienced personally, the concepts are universal and reflect the individual's situation within a lived present.

The vital spaces for man are: the natural world, the social world, his personal psyche, and time. The first three are explored within *Finite Perfection*, the last in *Meaning and Appreciation*. Nietzsche sees them as places where the individual person projects his intentions through action in an effort to overcome

obstacles; success produces feelings of power; Weinstein adopts Nietzsche's premise, but suggests that man need not seek out obstacles in order to attain glory and thus "the good life", but rather may overcome obstacles as they appear, enjoying virtuous moments – finite perfections.<sup>58</sup>

A virtue may be understood as a perfection of experience, there being three general virtues in correspondence with the three kinds of entities to which the self refers: itself, objects within the environment, and other selves. The perfection of the self to itself is self-control . . . the perfection of the relation of the self to objects in the world is artistry . . . the relation of the self to others selves is perfected by love.<sup>59</sup>

Life is reality. The agony of uncertainty provides the impetus to drive us forward on a quest to be, realizing ourselves through the culmination of actions and reflecting on the patterns. The authentic individual emerges by embracing reality as life and determining his position as situated in a moment of time and space. In this way lived experience obeys the Heisenberg uncertainty principle: if he knows where he stands, he cannot know where he's going because once action is initiated, the current moment vanishes and the self is projected into a task. The unity that is the person is a collective that sets forth purposefully risking everything for one goal until the individual ceases his action for reflection once more.

This view is not new in Weinstein's work; it came before and it has come after. Tracing Weinstein's thoughts lead us invariably back to Max Stirner. Stirner echoes and foreshadows Weinstein's focus on the unity of man as a singularity, "everything I do, think, in short, my expression or manifestation, is indeed conditioned by what I am."<sup>60</sup> For Stirner, man's bag of bones was his reality, his property with the ego as the owner and his social roles mere spooks that qualify his reality.<sup>61</sup> Stirner precedes existentialism when he cries out to "raise the value of myself, the value of ownness." to be unconditionally valued and respected – to be a whole person rather than a part, an image of it in action.<sup>62</sup>

Simmel's engagement with reality is very similar to Weinstein's. He divides lived-reality into "comprehensive provinces of life", which are "everywhere enmeshed in . . . dualism."<sup>63</sup> Simmel's provinces of life are: personal, objective, and social.<sup>64</sup> They conform very well to Weinstein's vital spaces: personal/psyche, objective/material, social. Simmel suggests that man lives always showing two contrasting parties of his self in opposition. For Simmel, life is a "central vitality" that grows out of neither pure optimism nor pure pessimism, but from both simultaneously.<sup>65</sup> Each action can manifest simultaneously opposed results. He shows that an action of conflict has both integrative and disintegrative forces.<sup>66</sup> Again, he foreshadows Weinstein, but while both are accurate, neither is comprehensive.

The dyadic form of analysis and dialectic is inherently flawed because it focuses only on opposing forces. If we ask ourselves whether or not this integration and disintegration happens with only two opposed parties or is it more complex than that? Can I, with one action, integrate with multiple others to form stronger unions to varying degrees just as I disintegrate with multiples groups of others to whom I am united? Can I with one action alter my union – strengthening certain bonds and weakening others? Synthesis of multiple theses is inherent within the complexity of lived reality, within province(s) that is/are comprehensive. As the catalyst for change, action emerges as nothing less than the radically altering force that makes a given space comprehensively vital. In order to ascertain the real, it becomes necessary to reject the dialectic in favor of the *multilectic*, or collection of competing theses that produce a synthesis; philosophy must allow for life's complexity in order to present an ontological theory that is comprehensive, parsimonious, and accurate. Rather than to envision life as being in tension between two opposing forces or motivations: to do or not to do, etc., it is perhaps best to radicalize Simmel's web of

group affiliation. Each individual is a fulcrum point with diverse motivational forces, Buchlerian procepts, and impulses vying for immediate dominance.<sup>67</sup> As the motivational forces wax, the scales tip, the balance shifts, and man acts. Once action is taken, the situation changes and a new status quo emerges. This process is necessarily continuous, however, the action based upon the decision is not necessarily in line with the single dominant force, but represents a judgment call regarding the balance as presented at that critical moment.

Zizek echoes the multilectic engagement of man as a radically separated individual who is situated in a complex of realities simultaneously within *The Parallax View*. For Zizek, it is the connections between the subject and its object premised upon observational position and the actions that accord with their nominal values: to subject (submission) and to object (opposition). Every subject is the object to all others; the relationship is mediated by the meaning that links two beings together, though the point-of-view necessarily alters the ontological markers of who counts as what.<sup>68</sup> He recognizes an “irreducible parallax gap between the ontological and the ontic” and emphasizes that “the great Heideggerian political temptation” is “to forget this gap and endeavor to impose an ontic order that would be adequate to the ontological truth.”<sup>69</sup> Zizek argues against Meillassoux’s “naïve ontology of levels: physical reality, life, mind” advocating for an engaged philosophy with a political project.<sup>70</sup> Finally, he uses quantum physics to parallel ontological reality as a means by which to premise Heidegger as the appropriate philosophical vehicle from Kant to Hegel; “reality is ‘in itself’ non-All . . . reality itself is ontologically ‘incomplete,’ indeterminate . . . it is our very epistemological limitation which locates us in the Real: what appears as the limitation of our knowledge is the feature of reality itself, its ‘non-All’.”<sup>71</sup>

We, beings that we are, must be located in domains of reality because we cannot *be* reality itself. We are not all that is because if we *were* reality writ large, we would no longer engage others, we would *be* the field of domains into which diverse parts of our totality would engage one another, the void set that establishes the parameters of possibility, and the space in which stuff exists and interacts. The spark of life that distinguishes the conscious awareness of self and existential radical separation propels living beings into a more complex reality than exists for purely material fragments of the universe. “The distinguishing feature of a human as opposed to merely biological life is a meaning that integrates various pursuits and dynamisms.”<sup>72</sup> Man strives to find patterns. The domains of reality that are engaged in the human condition include: time, materiality, society, and the psyche.

### Temporal Domain

“Among many other distinguishing characteristics, human beings are marked off from other creatures by the activity of creating time.”<sup>73</sup> Existential philosophy introduces the multiverse of possible futures. The individual’s project is nothing more or less than a personal strategy to alter one’s reality from the present less-desirable state to a potential future that includes a more-desirable state. Projects presuppose motivation and Weinstein suggests that meaning, being placed within the context and holding value not only with contemporaries, but holding a position that is valuable and, therefore, valued by those who came before and to those who will come after is an activity that transcends any single individual will. Time, and one’s position in it, is negotiable, not while navigating through it as a domain of action, but in shaping the reality of a self with regard to the narrative of one’s holistic contribution within particular domains.

There is, therefore, an uncertainty principle similar to that for which Heisenberg is famous. Man can either consider where he is at within a given [set of] domain(s) or he can project himself into a domain in order to alter the inertial progress of the domain and his meaning within it. Therefore, man cannot

know with any certainty both where he stands in a particular domain and where he is going. He may either strive for clarity regarding the value that others inscribe upon him and thus his meaning as value or he may seek to persuade others to perceive him as embodying a particular value and thus gain meaning that he feels is lacking, whether that is a correct sentiment or not.<sup>74</sup>

Zizek argues that Heidegger's greatest achievement is "the full elaboration of finitude as a positive constituent of being-human . . . finitude is the key to the transcendental human. A human being is always on the way toward itself, in becoming . . . far from limiting him, this exposure is the very ground of the emergence of the universe of meaning."<sup>75</sup> As Sartre illuminates, individuals are trapped in a non-transferable presentation of awareness that is linked to a corporeal, material form.<sup>76</sup> Although the progression through time is, as of yet, constant and decidedly moving forward, the historic self is negotiable. There are lies that individuals incorporate into the narrative of their social relational-identities that emerge as social-truths without being social-facts. One's past presents difficulties, but not necessarily limitations on our present and may not limit the self as project. Our epistemology is not necessarily different from either Descartes or Bohr here as factual statements regarding the past are premised upon observations that reflect the best theory of how to comprehend our reality and the best practice of how to assess vital statistics of valuable evaluative descriptors of an object or life-form.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, the future is filled with numerous possible future presentations of the self in variation from miniscule to massive.<sup>78</sup> As we desire to change our present circumstances for the future so as to alter the meaning that we have within the domains we project, we decide upon how to cultivate the myth of our own existence and we must negotiate these alterations with others upon whom our desired future-selves hinge. The alteration of identity requires that others so identify an individual as such in order to grant them the benefits and honors of said relational-position. Academics know this only too well; we are our production of work and said work must be peer-reviewed in order to be included in the body of work that counts toward the defense of claiming the identity of an academic. In fact, one may work toward the goal of being a professor and have others arbitrarily deny the attainment of said identity, thus denying the individual the right to claim such an identity regardless of the work that he has done; the activity of the self represents nothing more than an argument that may or may not be found to be persuasive by others who may or may not be receptive to such persuasiveness. There are multiple futures in which this sentence was never written, this paper never presented, and you the reader skipped ahead of this sentence for reasons ranging from boredom to an emergency phone call or the distraction of an attractive passer-by.

### **Material Domain**

Systemic forces rule the material world. We study them via the natural sciences. Chemical, biological, and physical limitations ground the flights and fancies of all living creatures, including man. The material domain evokes the political realism within consciousness, ascribing significance to that which man does not and cannot control. Anxiety over this lack of control floods the cognition of man and politicizes the world: that which is me [ego] vs. that which is other [alter]. When extrapolated into groups, us reflects the ego and them the alter, but this is nothing more than the continuous (re)drawing of lines in the sand. Weinstein's material reality is rooted in Stirnerian egoism; he sees man as concrete, durational beings.

It becomes impossible to grasp reality as a whole because of its totality. The finitude of man's existence presents a problematic to skillfully articulating what is and what is not. The struggle to encapsulate everything into one abstraction has led some thinkers to reject parts of it as mere illusion or as fantasy. Max Stirner's wrestling match with reality becomes apparent in a deep reading of "The Owner".

He begins with a confrontation between man as he is and man as a concept.<sup>79</sup> Stirner is experiencing life encapsulated and limited by his corporeal self, the self through which he encounters the world around him. He rejects the conception of man as a "spook" and posits himself as un-man which contains, "my quality, my own and inherent in me; so that man is nothing else than my humanity, my human existence, and everything that I do is human precisely because I do it, but not because it corresponds to the concept 'man' . . ." <sup>80</sup> Stirner's man is un-man because of his finite self, because he does not and cannot measure up to the image of Christ that is the exemplar par excellence of man.

Stirner's separation of his self from the ideal image is the first division of reality for man. He acknowledges that the separation is conceptual and limited because he remains un-man as well as man:

I am really man and un-man in one; for I am a man and at the same time more than a man; I am the ego of this my mere quality. . . . Against the egoists 'human society' is wrecked; for they no longer have to deal with each other as men, but appear egoistically as an *I* against a *You* altogether different from me and in opposition to me. . . . Therefore we two, the state and I, are enemies. I, the egoist, have not at heart the welfare of this 'human society'. I sacrifice nothing to it, I only utilize it; but to be able to utilize it completely I transform it rather into my property and my creature; that is, I annihilate it, and form in its place the Union of Egoists.<sup>81</sup>

Stirner rails against the rules on life dictated to him by others defended by the aegis of society. He despises those who stand crowded together within the group as failing to grasp the truth of life in its base, non-transferable materialism. However, by rejecting the spooks and spectres of the social realms, Stirner's materialism helps to illuminate the primacy of dualism, especially when he states that to cut off his hand is to alter the extent of his ownness as the hand would no longer be something he owns. The importance of vitality and life-in-the-present emerges as the central theme to Stirner's paradigm – man is nothing more than his bag of bones, but the bag of bones is negotiable and does not diminish the vitality of man.

Strict materialism divides the world/universe into two realms, the interiority of the self, one's physical manifestation vs. the exterior forces of other beings and systems that limit the individual will and absolute egoism. Artistry is Weinstein's virtue within the material domain, valuing the material that one finds and engaging it to the best of one's ability, however limited one may be.

### **Social Domain(s)**

There are multiple social worlds within which each person is forced to act.<sup>82</sup> Weinstein finds social realities to be confining, limiting possibility away from a comprehensive intra-history in favor of the official history of each group, "From the outside I may appear to be a point on a probability distribution, an exemplification of a social character, or a bundle of group affiliations."<sup>83</sup> According to Oprisko, individuals are affiliates and/or members of groups with whom they identify and are inscribed with value. The archetypes of interaction: individual to individual, individual to group, and group to group form the relational identities including the inscribed expectations that derive from cultural norms associated with particular relationship types.

Meaning is paramount. A person cannot be something unless he is that something to other(s).<sup>84</sup> To cultivate and hold onto an identity requires that an individual form a relationship and then persuade others to ascribe to that particular vision of reality, that particular form of social organization. As Kornprobst suggests, there is a continuous (re)negotiation of social relationships predicated on experience and

engagement wherein individuals seek to be as persuasive as possible and seek for others to be as receptive as possible to them.<sup>85</sup> Herein lies the contestation of Nietzsche's blonde beasts, each seeking to shape the world in their image, trying to will their ideal reality into power.<sup>86</sup> Power in this sense is socially manifested, which means that the individual must have power over something else, internalizing that which is other into the self.

The social nature of power illuminates both the symbiotic nature of relationships and the parasitic nature of political authority. Political authority is a form of power wielded by an individual or group who claims sovereignty over others. To be sovereign, one must be exceptional. To be exceptional is to stand out/apart from the crowd. This requires that there be a crowd to which one belongs and from which one seeks to escape. There can be no separation of the individual without the mass, one cannot be superior without inferiors in abundance around them.<sup>87</sup> Absolute docility is improbable to achieve and even less likely to be indefinitely maintained, thus there is a need to incentivize docility through rewarding citizens for displaying excellence.<sup>88</sup>

The democratization of excellence comes with the increasing complexity of society. As individuals specialize and as greater feats of prowess are cataloged as societal goods, citizens enjoy a greater ability to distinguish themselves vis-à-vis one another, allowing for larger opportunities to be great in small ways. Adherence to structural authority and its norms, "The citizen . . . has become a constituent and a receptor of rewards and punishments programmed by a hierarchy."<sup>89</sup> This hierarchy is navigated by unique individuals who comprise humanity, allowing the seemingly concretized structure to show its lack of integrity. In a Badiouian sense, using his set theory, humanity would be the universal category, to which all groups and individuals that ever have existed and ever might exist would belong.<sup>90</sup> At the other end of the spectrum there are individuals, unique presentations of humanity that operate as radically separated beings, but are not individually divisible; they must each act as a holistic entity. They are the particular elements of society, including no other persons within them (or they would lead a group), but belonging to numerous groups that both compete with and nest inside others like warring matryoshka dolls. The groups themselves are negotiable as they are navigable; they exist as the extensions of the egoistic selves of human individuals and reflects their identitarian pluralism.<sup>91</sup>

The multiple overlapping presentations of social reality are derived from the cognitive engagement between lived individuals and their realms of interaction.<sup>92</sup> No groups are inherently necessary, none must manifest, but the void presents nothing less than limitless potential to shape and create reality moment by moment.<sup>93</sup> Social reality is the ontology of category theory, determined not as being qua being, but being as action, relation, or movement. It is always already in a perpetual state of flux.<sup>94</sup> The maintenance of social reality is at the mercy of individual will(s) that seek to reshape it as each individual dances the line between the absolute persuasiveness of a blonde beast and the absolute receptivity of an automaton. The desire to shape is dependent upon the projects that individuals create for themselves as they seek to alter the world as it is into a world they wish to be.

Love is Weinstein's social virtue. It is unidirectional and must be given without any hope of return. It is a Camusian act of rebellion against nihilism, actively willing away one's will in exchange for that of one's loved one – purposefully sacrificing the ego's will to power for the alter's. Love is an act of appreciation, which Weinstein argues is the transcendence over our ambiguity of the other's existence and is used to, "express one another to ourselves."<sup>95</sup>

## Psychic Domain

Being what one desires is difficult. Not only is humanity sundered into individual humans, each of whom have their own interpretation of what ought to be, but each human is often also of several minds about what the constitutes The Good. We are torn. As Weinstein puts it, "From the inside, I experience myself as a series of critical choices between my will to actualize and appreciate contradictory ends and my desire to act to help others realize values."<sup>96</sup> We experience ourselves through our eyes and others and we seek to shape the images of our engagement. We make being ourselves into a lifelong series of projects.

Cultivating who we are now is impossible. The present is always immediate and there is no possibility for using persuasion to change this momentary state of affairs. Happily, the future is not foreordained and we may seek to alter our actions and/or the perception of our actions in the eyes of others in order to bring the vision of our ideal self closer to fruition. Sartre suggests that our character is represented by the totality of our actions over time.<sup>97</sup> Weinstein believes that, "Character becomes intellectualized to the point that it is an image even to its maker."<sup>98</sup>

Our bag of bones is the draft-animal of our unending plans, carrying out our will and dragging our psyche along the way. Weinstein appropriately calls us *concrete durational beings*, stating that we, "can only will the mysticism of life in the optative mood: May it not happen that I neglect the other voices that might be raised within me. Yes these voices are constantly being muffled in the process of projecting a *persona* into the past-present-future."<sup>99</sup>

As we move inexorably forward in time, our consciousness engages with the self as a multiplicity; memories of the past are judged according to present circumstances just as future projects are gauged by a mind that can only estimate likely scenarios. The self falls short as the ideal model of how we wish we were because we suffer our weaknesses and endure our limitations as we revel in our strengths and celebrate our talents. As mentioned earlier, failure to attain the ideal is our reality. Forming ideal images of the self and the self's desired situation and position in time, space, and relationships is the foundation of psychic reality. Weinstein lists self-control as his virtue for this domain; the good is found by balancing the self by the self and not seeking out absolutes or extremes.

## String Theory

Simmel was correct, to a degree, with his choice of the web to illustrate how groups affiliate with one another. The complex weaving of individuals into groups, group with group, and group within group provokes the thought of a tangled interplay of identification woven together and composing the whole of humanity within societies. To understand this visual representation, we must begin with the component parts.

If humanity exists in the abstract and humans exist corporeally, it is perhaps best to define the corporeal and allow it to illuminate the abstract. Individual humans are unique presentations of life, but they are defined via relations. As discussed previously, the definition is produced socially through continuous processes of persuasion and reception between the individual and those he interacts with. It is, therefore, relationships that bind individuals together and form the fabric of social and political reality.

The most simplistic relationship is of singular affiliation, a connection with only one facet to it. The connection that links individual to individual in this singular way can be imagined as a harp string, run from

~~individual to individual. This pure form of relationship would, when plucked, resonate with the pure tone of a single note. Complex relationships, where individuals relate to one another in multiple ways function similarly; the number of strings increase and sound summoned forth becomes more complex. Notes become chords, there may be harmonic and disharmonic overtones. However, the fundamental concept of human connection via social interaction remains.~~

If we think of each individual as a string, formed and framed by their simple and complex relational identities, each identity may be more or less important or impactful at a given moment dependent upon their spatial and temporal location of the interacting individuals.

Each of their identities' individual fiber strands, some thicker and more obvious and some thinner, some almost non-existent at times, some denser and more important to the individual's sense of self, such that the honorableness of the individual's relation to a particular identity could be measured in denier or tex. As the individuals' lives proceed, as their thread lengthens, the strands of their thread wax and wane. Some strands disappear and new strands begin twisting within the thread that makes up the social totality of the individual.<sup>100</sup>

As groups are composed of individuals, the fabric of their reality is a weave of individuals' threads. Social reality is nothing less than the interplay of individuals as they relate to one another; it can only be accurately framed in terms of relational identity, in terms of similarity and difference. The fibers that constitute the weaves of social fabric are not monopolized by any particular group's cloth; the individuals whose identities form that cloth also form the fabric of other groups. As Weinstein points out, it approximates James' pluralistic universe where, "all components are related to some others but none is linked to all of the others."<sup>101</sup> However, the web itself is comprehensive; individual patterns of life connect disparate groups together. The cloths of groups linked together, representing meta-societies, generate the patterns that make up the tartans of civilizations. The social sciences examine these cloths and describe their unique qualities.

The vision of civilization and the cacophony of interaction resonate through time as well as space. As individuals seek critical distance from which to view the world, they look back in time, the further away one is, the further back one sees. Similar to the viewing of stars in the night sky, each heavenly body is a specific distance away and we, mere concrete durational beings that we are, occupy a mere point in the space-time continuum. Each concrete moment for us contains the vision of plural histories. We see each star as it was and is no longer; the present moment in time contains beautiful visions of the fiction that is my radical reality. Stars I see today and will perceive to exist until my death may have already exploded into supernova.

We are inextricably linked to the universals by being particular elements. We cannot remove ourselves from being simultaneously radically entangled and radically separated from one another. We must relate to one another in groups as failed attempts to bind humans into humanity. Our lived reality is vital and failure to realize a universal harmony of interests in action.

Thus we return to the divestment of Descartes for Pascal and Bohr. The world, the universe, is a blend of stuff and space, things and the void that separates them. Appropriately, distance is relative and the further away you go from the objects of your interest, the smaller the void between

~~them. The void is where the music of interaction plays, where the component parts form and frame the universe. It takes the separation of the void to define the limits of these component pieces and to represent the space within which they act.~~

This is politics. All that binds us and separates us; that brings us closer and pushes us apart – the acts of relating – is the political. Globality, the “end state of globalization” is already here.<sup>102</sup> Humanity, from the dawn of its existence until its twilight, has been and will continue to be linked by the interactivity between individuals. The difference is that the meaning has changed on an epic scale – the space that separates us from one another is less meaningful because it feels smaller. Globality is not an act of becoming, but a reality premised on the recognition of our simultaneous radical separation and entanglement, of life being a complex of opposites.<sup>103</sup> The world is both identitarian pluralistic and generically universal. The world is humanity and the humans that comprise it. It is all of our overlapping realities happening simultaneously and it affects us as we affect it. It is what we have done, what we are doing and what we do next.

What will we do next?

---

### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sergei Prozorov, "Generic Universalism in World Politics: Beyond International Anarchy and the World State," *International Theory* 1, no. 2 (2009): 215-17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London, UK: Continuum, 2005), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Gender and Science* 28, no. 3 (2003): 818.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 813. Barad argues that Bohrian reality is not simply contra-Descartes, but also contra-Kantian phenomenology, however, her argument rests primarily on the former.

<sup>7</sup> *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Kindle ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Oprisko, "The Rebel as Sovereign: The Political Theology of Dignity," *Revista Pleyade*, no. 9 (2012).

<sup>19</sup> Carl Schmitt's political ontology is highly useful for understanding the political implications

of Barad. His seminal works, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL:

University of Chicago Press, 1996); *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005)., clearly show that identification, agency, distinction, and exceptionalism are features of sovereignty.<sup>20</sup>

Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, Revised ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); *Plato's Camera: How the Physical Brain Captures a Landscape of Abstract Universals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Patricia Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986); *Brain-Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Michael A. Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 93.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Weinstein uses "realm of action" as a more precise term for "level of analysis" and focuses on "complete human action" in lieu of "units of analysis". I find that these phenomenal changes more appropriately reflect Bohrian epistemology. "New Ways and Old to Talk Politics," *The Review of Politics* 35, no. 1 (1973): 56-58.

<sup>25</sup> Deena Weinstein and Michael A. Weinstein, "An Existential Approach to Society: Active Transcendence," *Human Studies* 1, no. 1 (1978): 41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>27</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy on Human Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), 206.

<sup>28</sup> Michael A. Weinstein, "Politics and Moral Consciousness," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 2 (1970): 214.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>30</sup> Weinstein and Weinstein, "An Existential Approach to Society: Active Transcendence," 44-45.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> Weinstein, "New Ways and Old to Talk Politics," 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>34</sup> Deena Weinstein and Michael A. Weinstein, "On the Possibility of Society: Classical Sociological Thought," *Human Studies* 5, no. 1 (1982): 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Culture/Flesh: Explorations of Postcivilized Modernity*, ed. John A. Loughney, Social Philosophy Research Institute (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 103.

<sup>39</sup> *The Wilderness and the City: American Classical Philosophy as a Moral Quest* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 150.

<sup>40</sup> A portion of this section was previously included in: "Failure as the Real: A Review of Slavoj

Zizek's *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*," *Theoria and*

<sup>41</sup> Jackson Publick and Doc Hammer, 2006., in Lea Rosen, "'I'm Not a Boy Adventurer Anymore": Success and 'Failure' in the Venture Bros," *Journal of Venture Studies* 1 (2012): 2.

<sup>42</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012), 949.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* For Zizek's full treatment of parallax, see: *The Parallax View*, ed. Slavoj Zizek, Kindle ed., Short Circuits (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, 934-35.

<sup>45</sup> Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*; Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life*.

<sup>46</sup> For the most cutting-edge work being done on void ontology, one cannot ignore Sergei Prozorov and his following works: "What Is the 'World' in World Politics? Heidegger, Badiou, and Void Universalism," *Contemporary Political Theory* (2012); *Ontology and World Politics: Void Universalism I*, ed. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams, Interventions (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014); *Theory of the Political Subject: Void Universalism II*, ed. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams, Interventions (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Zizek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, 959.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1010.

<sup>49</sup> Robert L. Oprisko, *Honor: A Phenomenology*, Routledge Innovations in Political Theory (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); "The Rebel as Sovereign: The Political Theology of Dignity."

<sup>50</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Living in the End Times*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Verso, 2011), 395.

<sup>51</sup> Michael A. Weinstein, *Finite Perfection: Reflections on Virtue* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*, Google E-book ed. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1978).

<sup>53</sup> "New Ways and Old to Talk Politics," 52.

<sup>54</sup> *The Wilderness and the City: American Classical Philosophy as a Moral Quest*, 142.

<sup>55</sup> *Finite Perfection: Reflections on Virtue*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>60</sup> Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Quentin Skinner, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-221.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 224-25.

<sup>63</sup> Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1964), 16.

<sup>64</sup> This footnote on page 16 of *Conflict* has made the largest impression on me of all of his works. Within it he constructs an argument for vital life as reality mired in conflict with the hope of union and finds the absurdity to be refreshing rather than agonizing. I am continually amazed by the power of footnotes.

- 
- <sup>65</sup> Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*, 16.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., 16-20.
- <sup>67</sup> Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgment* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1955); *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Dover, 1979).
- <sup>68</sup> Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Location 244 of 7574.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., Location 4751 of 7574.
- <sup>70</sup> *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, 908.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Weinstein, *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*, 25.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Markus Kornprobst, "The Agent's Logic of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement," *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011).
- <sup>75</sup> Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Location 4724 of 7574.
- <sup>76</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007). Suicide is an option, according to the existentialists to absolutely reject one's unique existence, but such Nihilism is an act of authentic engagement to disengage oneself from the responsibility of being a role-model of mankind.
- <sup>77</sup> Oprisko, *Honor: A Phenomenology*, Chapter 2: "Honor and Value".
- <sup>78</sup> Terry Pratchett's L-Space, a theoretical system of libraries that contain all books that have been, are, or could possibly be written is an excellent example of this engagement with time. It is detailed well in *The Science of Discworld*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 2002). <sup>79</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, 155-66.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., 159.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., 159-61.
- <sup>82</sup> Oprisko, *Honor: A Phenomenology*. Chapter 3: Honor and Identity
- <sup>83</sup> Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life*, 22.
- <sup>84</sup> Weinstein and Weinstein, "An Existential Approach to Society: Active Transcendence."; Weinstein, *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*.
- <sup>85</sup> Kornprobst, "The Agent's Logic of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement."
- <sup>86</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books ed. (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1968); *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989); Ulrik Enemark Petersen, "Breathing Nietzsche's Air: New Reflections on Morgenthau's Concepts of Power and Human Nature," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no. 1 (1999).
- <sup>87</sup> Sergei Prozorov, "X/Xs: Toward a General Theory of the Exception," *Alternatives* 30, no. 1 (2005).
- <sup>88</sup> For the seminal engagement with docile bodies, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Vintage ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 1995).
- <sup>89</sup> Weinstein, *Culture/Flesh: Explorations of Postcivilized Modernity*, 110.
- <sup>90</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*.
- <sup>91</sup> Prozorov, "Generic Universalism in World Politics: Beyond International Anarchy and the World State."
- <sup>92</sup> Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London, UK: Continuum, 2009).
- <sup>93</sup> Prozorov, "What Is the 'World' in World Politics? Heidegger, Badiou, and Void Universalism"; *Ontology and World Politics: Void Universalism I*.

<sup>94</sup> ~~Alain Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, trans. A. J. Bartlett and Alex Ling, Kindle ed. (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014); Robert L. Oprisko, "I.R. Theory's 21st Century Experiential Evolution," *e-International Relations* (2013), <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/05/25/the-fall-of-the-state-and-the-rise-of-the-individuals-ir-theorys-21st-century-experiential-evolution/>.~~

<sup>95</sup> Weinstein, *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*, 127.

<sup>96</sup> *The Tragic Sense of Political Life*, 22.

<sup>97</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*.

<sup>98</sup> Weinstein, "Politics and Moral Consciousness," 207.

<sup>99</sup> *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*, 122.

<sup>100</sup> Oprisko, *Honor: A Phenomenology*, 155.

<sup>101</sup> Weinstein, *Culture/Flesh: Explorations of Postcivilized Modernity*, 101.

<sup>102</sup> Daniel Yergin, "The Age of "Globality"," *Newsweek* (1998).

<sup>103</sup> Harold L. Sirkin, Jim Hemerling, and Arindam Bhattacharya, "Globality: The World Beyond

Globalization," *BCG Perspectives* (2008),

[https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/Classics/globalization\\_strategy\\_globality\\_the\\_world\\_beyond\\_globalization/](https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/Classics/globalization_strategy_globality_the_world_beyond_globalization/).

## References

Adorno, Theodore. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will.

Routledge Classics. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham. London, UK: Continuum, 2005.

———. *Logics of Worlds*. Translated by Alberto Toscano. London, UK: Continuum, 2009.

———. *Mathematics of the Transcendental*. Translated by A. J. Bartlett and Alex Ling.

Kindle ed. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Kindle ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

———. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Gender and Science* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801-31.

Buchler, Justus. *Nature and Judgment*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1955.

———. *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Dover,

1979. Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy on Human Culture*.

New

Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944.

Churchland, Patricia. *Brain-Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

———. *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

———. *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*. Cambridge, MA:

---

MIT Press, 1986.

Churchland, Paul M. *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. Revised ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

———. *Plato's Camera: How the Physical Brain Captures a Landscape of Abstract Universals*.

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

Davis, Murray S. "Georg Simmel and the Aesthetics of Social Reality." *Social Forces* 51, no. 3 (1973): 320-29.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by

A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1982.

———. *Discipline and Punish* [in French]. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage ed. New York, NY: Random House, 1995.

Kornprobst, Markus. "The Agent's Logic of Action: Defining and Mapping Political Judgement." *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 70-104.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*. Translated by Joseph O'Neil, Elliott Schreiber, Kerstin Behnke and William Whobrey. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne. Crossing Aesthetics. edited by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989.

———. *The Will to Power* [in German]. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. Vintage Books ed. New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1968.

Oprisko, Robert L. "Failure as the Real: A Review of Slavoj Žižek's *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*." *Theoria and Praxis* 1, no. 2 (2014).

———. *Honor: A Phenomenology*. Routledge Innovations in Political Theory. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.

———. "I.R. Theory's 21st Century Experiential Evolution." *e-International Relations* (2013). Published electronically May 25, 2013. <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/05/25/the-fall-of-the-state-and-the-rise-of-the-individuals-ir-theorys-21st-century-experiential-evolution/>.

———. "The Rebel as Sovereign: The Political Theology of Dignity." *Revista Pleyade*, no. 9 (June 2012): 119-36.

Petersen, Ulrik Enemark. "Breathing Nietzsche's Air: New Reflections on Morgenthau's Concepts of Power and Human Nature." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no. 1 (1999): 83-83.

Pratchett, Terry. *The Science of Discworld*. Kindle ed. New York, NY: Random House, 2002.

Prozorov, Sergei. *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.

———. "Generic Universalism in World Politics: Beyond International Anarchy and the World State." *International Theory* 1, no. 2 (2009): 215-48.

———. *Ontology and World Politics: Void Universalism I*. Interventions. edited by Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.

———. *Theory of the Political Subject: Void Universalism II*. Interventions. edited by Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.

- . "What Is the 'World' in World Politics? Heidegger, Badiou, and Void Universalism." *Contemporary Political Theory* (2012).
- . "X/Xs: Toward a General Theory of the Exception." *Alternatives* 30, no. 1 (2005): 81- 112.
- Publick, Jackson, and Doc Hammer. "Home Insecurity (Dvd Commentary)." *The Venture Bros. - Season 1* (2006).
- Rosen, Lea. "'I'm Not a Boy Adventurer Anymore': Success and 'Failure' in the Venture Bros." *Journal of Venture Studies* 1 (2012): 1-8.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- . *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- . *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*. Translated by G. L. Ulmen. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Simmel, Georg. *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. Translated by Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1964.
- Sirkin, Harold L., Jim Hemerling, and Arindam Bhattacharya. "Globality: The World Beyond Globalization." *BCG Perspectives* (2008).  
[https://http://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/Classics/globalization\\_strategy\\_globality\\_the\\_world\\_beyond\\_globalization/](https://http://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/Classics/globalization_strategy_globality_the_world_beyond_globalization/).
- Stirner, Max. *The Ego and Its Own*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. edited by Raymond Geuss and Quentin Skinner Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Weinstein, Deena, and Michael A. Weinstein. "An Existential Approach to Society: Active Transcendence." *Human Studies* 1, no. 1 (1978): 38-47.
- . "On the Possibility of Society: Classical Sociological Thought." *Human Studies* 5, no. 1 (1982): 1-12.
- . *Postmodern(Ized) Simmel*. Routledge Revivals. New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.
- Weinstein, Michael A. *Culture/Flesh: Explorations of Postcivilized Modernity*. Social Philosophy Research Institute. edited by John A. Loughney Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.
- . *Finite Perfection: Reflections on Virtue*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985.
- . *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life*. Google E-book ed. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1978.
- . "New Ways and Old to Talk Politics." *The Review of Politics* 35, no. 1 (1973): 41-60.
- . "Politics and Moral Consciousness." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 2 (1970): 183-215.
- . *The Structure of Human Life: A Vitalist Ontology*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 1979.
- . *The Tragic Sense of Political Life*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1977.
- . *The Wilderness and the City: American Classical Philosophy as a Moral Quest*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982.
- Yergin, Daniel. "The Age of 'Globality'." *Newsweek* (1998).

- ~~Zizek, Slavoj. *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. ———  
Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012.~~
- . *Living in the End Times*. Kindle ed. New York, NY: Verso, 2011.
- . *The Parallax View*. Short Circuits. edited by Slavoj Zizek. Kindle ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.