

2
engl

Efficiency Ideology Possibilities Account

Robert Pfaller

University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz, Austria

The Efficiency of Ideology and the Possibilities of Art: An Althusserian Account

Abstract

Louis Althusser's theory of ideology allows us to account for all kinds of joyful obedience performed by individuals. This theory does not require any assumption of lacking knowledge or "false consciousness" on the side of subjectivated individuals. Therefore, it provides the crucial tools for explaining the specific political efficiency of art. This efficiency does not stem from any new "information," as the predominant tendencies in alleged "political" or "documentary" art since the 1990s have presupposed, and as the popular notion of "artistic research" may still suggest. On the contrary, in order to be politically efficient, art has to tackle not the knowledge but the specific subjectivations individuals have undergone. When one augments Althusser's fragmentary account of subjectivation by the distinctions between "belief" and "faith" introduced by Octave Mannoni, and additionally introduces as a third category that of "paranoia," then one can specify the predominant types of subjectivation in current Western societies—as well as the exits that critical art can offer from these subjectivations. Artistic exit

strategies from forms of faith and paranoia will be analyzed with regard to works by John Heartfield, Bernard Mandeville, and Christoph Schlingensief.

Keywords

Althusser, artistic research, belief, ideology, faith, paradoxical intervention, paranoia, subjectification

Introduction

In the first part of this essay I want to present a few cornerstones of an Althusserian theory of ideology, including a few augmentations I have developed over the last few decades, starting from my book *On The Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions Without Owners* (2014) as well as *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt* (What life is worth living for) (2011). These two books build up the framework of what I will briefly present as a methodological set of distinctions I regard as indispensable for a contemporary theory of ideology. Starting from Althusser's groundbreaking concept, these distinctions seem to provide the theoretical tools for tackling those problems that have remained open in Althusser's own, sometimes fragmentary, accounts.

In the second part I will present a crucial example in order to analyze how art relates to ideology and politics, especially in the current field of art to which I pertain as a philosopher who has been teaching at several art universities in Europe and in the US for more than twentyyears. Here I want to show how Althusser's concept of the relationship between art and ideology not only does justice to art's efforts but also helps avoiding widespread theoretical and institutional mistakes as well as "spontaneous philosophies" that occur today with regard to art's becoming academic and the correlating understanding of its practice as "research."

1. Elements of an Extended Althusserian Theory of Ideology

In his posthumously published essay, *Sur la reproduction* (1995), Althusser gives a remarkable definition of ideology. He writes, "Ideology makes the individuals act on their own, without it being necessary to put a personal police officer behind their asses." (212; own translation). Two aspects here appear remarkable:

1. First, an aspect of form: this remark by Althusser is unusually drastic; it has a certain poetic aspect to it; and by its drastic quality it could have a clarifying dimension which may be different from other definitions Althusser had given before. So there is a surplus of form in this quotation which I find remarkable. Before coming back to this point later, I will briefly say that this surplus could in itself be regarded as an example for the difference between art's and science's break with ideology.

2. With regard to its content, this definition of ideology is in perfect accordance with other definitions that Althusser has given. For Althusser has always emphasized that ideology belongs to the ethical, it belongs to the field of practical philosophy, and not to that of theoretical philosophy. This is the crucial point that distinguishes Althusser's definition of ideology from for example that of the Frankfurt School which rendered ideology as "objectively necessary false consciousness."¹

Ideology belongs to the ethical precisely insofar as ideology "makes the individuals act on their own"; or, in other words, insofar as it produces *subjects*; as it transforms individuals into subjects.² As one may remember, there are two connected theses that Althusser presents in his essay *On Ideology*:

¹ Adorno and Horkheimer conceive of ideology, in their notorious definition, as "objektiv notwendiges und zugleich falsches Bewusstsein" ("objectively necessary and simultaneously a false consciousness") (Institut für Sozialforschung 1956: 168). For Althusser, on the contrary, ideology is not a "consciousness" (1986: 239f.), neither for the subject, nor in relationship to any objective reality. Ideology according to Althusser, even when it has got some apparent "theoretical" or propositional contents (which is not always the case), does not represent the world (as it may pretend), but the subject's position in it. And it does not represent the real position of the subject in it, but a wishful image of this position: "...rapport qui exprime plus une volonté (conservatrice, conformiste, réformiste ou révolutionnaire), voire une espérance ou une nostalgie, qu'il ne décrit une réalité" (Althusser 1986: 240; cf. 1994: 471).

Schematically speaking, the Frankfurt school and all similar approaches conceive of ideology as a single relation, i. e., as a (distorted) representation of the individuals' relation to the social conditions; as fulfilling a theoretical function; whereas Althusser conceives of ideology as a double relation, i. e., the way individuals "live" their relation to this first relation; as fulfilling a practical, ethical function: "...un rapport de rapports, un rapport au second degré. Dans l'idéologie, les hommes expriment, en effet, non pas leurs rapports à leurs conditions d'existence, mais la façon dont ils vivent leurs rapports à leurs conditions d'existence" (Althusser 1986: 240).

Althusser's concept of ideology as representing not social reality, but the subjects' wishful self-positioning within it ("unevolonté"), can well be compared to Freud's notion of "illusion" that Freud, too, sharply opposes to "error" or any kind of false consciousness or assumption, by emphasizing that the mark of the illusion is its origin in a *wish* (see Freud 1927c: 31).

² This gives us Althusser's minimum definition of a subject: an individual that acts on its own (or, at least, believes to do so).

1. there is no practice except by and in an ideology;
2. there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects (Althusser 2008: 44).

So, in order to make people act on their own, a society needs ideology. This is, by the way, why Althusser states that ideology is eternal, that it does not have a history. In any society whatsoever, even in a classless one, it is necessary to have people act on their own, and therefore even a classless society will have ideology as an indispensable part of its social edifice (1986: 242). Of course, this does not mean that any particular ideology is eternal. Particular ideologies come and go; a new one may replace an older one, but there is never a moment in any society where there was no ideology at all.

Yet, making people act on their own, or, in Althusser's words transforming individuals into subjects, can imply different types of subjectivity. There are different "subject-effects," not just one. On this point, Althusser's essay on ideology as well as his studies on discourse have remained fragmentary. Several commentators have noticed this unexplored territory within the Althusserian mapping and the necessity to tackle the problems that are located within it. They insisted on this question of different "subjects" (e.g., notions of the subject) involved, and on the gap that seems to separate, in Althusser's theory, the Pascalian notion of the materiality of rituals and apparatuses on one hand, and the Spinoza-based concepts of "interpellation" and imaginary "centring" on the other.³

The different types of ideology's subject-effects that bring individuals to act on their own can most easily be explained with regard to different types of religious subjectivity. It is symptomatic here that whenever Althusser addressed the issue of religion, he treated Christianity as the exemplary model of religion, and barely bothered with any other forms (2008: 46; 2014: 56), not the most "elementary" forms such as totemism, according to the account of Emile Durkheim (2008), nor other forms of "primary religion," such as ancient Greek or Roman paganism (Assmann 2003: 11).

To put up a most rough and basic distinction, one has to take into account three types of subjectivity, connected to three types of ideology. I have suggested to classify these three types as belief, faith, and paranoia (Pfaller 2011; 2014). These three types of ideology can in general be characterized in the following ways:

1. *Belief* is a form of ideology that is structured according to Octave Mannoni's formula "I know quite well but still" (*Je sais bien mais quand même*) (1985). Politeness can be regarded as one of the most widespread

³ For the notion of "centring," cf. Althusser (2008: 54). For the discussion concerning different subject-types in Althusser, see Dolar (1991); Žižek (1988, 2014: 51ff.); Pfaller (2015).

ideological phenomena of this type in everyday life: a dealing with illusions which, as Immanuel Kant remarked, are obviously “nobody’s illusion,” or which—as in the cases of some superstitions—appear to be the illusions of unknown naïve others (2006 [1798]: 44). Intellectual disregard and affective contempt of the belief are here strangely connected to strict and immediate obedience to this very belief’s requirements. The activating “subject-effect” in belief is therefore not based on a subject’s recognition in any ideological ideal, but rather on “dis-identification” (see Mannoni 1985)—at least with regard to ideals. In this sense, belief is not “centered,” but remains as it were decentred: with its purely external and literal requirements, belief functions analogous to laws of nature that have to be known and accepted but do not require identification.⁴ Somebody may, for example, know quite well that horoscopes or sports news are strictly irrelevant for her life but still have to obsessively read these respective pages in the newspaper before anything else (Caillois 2001: 47). A “sacred seriousness,” an extreme affective investment occurs here, precisely where there is a “better knowledge” that things are “not real” (Huizinga 1955: 24ff.; cf. Pfaller 2014: 73–98). The content that is not believed is therefore often not even conscious to the individuals (they get subjected to “imagination without images”⁵). Since the belief is not accompanied by intellectual and affective approval, obedience to it is often commented with ironic or even self-despising expressions such as “*Unfortunately* I have to read my horoscope right now.” In this type of ideology, individuals look down upon something which they regard as smaller, or lower (or lesser) than themselves. It is silly, maybe childish, and not respectable, it cannot reasonably be believed, yet it has to be done. The mobilizing force of this type of ideology is considerable; its mode is comparable to that of neurotic compulsion (Freud 1999 [1907b]). Obeying its requirements may bring relief, in some cases pride, and often joy or pleasure. Disobedience would cause shame, anxiety, or feelings of uncanniness.

2. *Faith* is a rare and late achievement in cultural history, probably first brought forward by monotheist religions. This type of ideology transforms individuals into subjects insofar as they recognize something (an idea, a cause, an idol, a leader, etc.) that they regard as bigger or higher

⁴ This literalness does not only characterize magic as well as certain religious practices but also everyday customs such as politeness. Therefore politeness, as the philosopher Alain perspicuously remarks, has to be learned (1973: 225).

⁵ For the whole issue of belief as opposed to faith, and in particular for *imagination without images*, see Pfaller (2014: 5ff.). Since Althusserian theory of ideology is based on both Spinoza’s notion of *imagination* as well as Freud’s concept of *illusion*, I use both terms here synonymously.

than themselves.⁶ Looking up to it, they intellectually and affectively approve what is to be believed. They “recognize” themselves in the ideal that the ideology provides for them and declare themselves as the owners of such illusions (Althusser 2008: 46, 48). Ownership as well as the content of the illusion involved are, in this case (as opposed to that of belief), never difficult to discern. Faith is always conscious, and it never occurs as an imagination without an image. Relating to their faith fills the faithful not—as in the case of belief—with pleasure or pride, but with self-esteem.⁷ Disobedience to its requirements causes feelings of guilt.

One additional remark has to be made here about faith with regard to its relationship with belief. As can be seen in any matters of faith, this form of ideology never comes alone. Faith in a certain cause is always accompanied by some “silly” ritual or mythological elements. This double layer of ideological form that is characteristic for every ideology containing an element of faith leads to those tensions within one and the same ideology, which often amount to the miniaturization or even abandonment of certain parts of its own practices (Humphrey/Laidlaw 1994; Freud 1999 [1907b]). Where faith occurs, belief is present too, but under the condition of increasing pressure. This hostility of faith against its “own” belief leads to the increasing destruction of external, material elements; to the “internalization” of ideology (Sennett 1977 [1974]: 5ff.); and, since belief is the pleasure principle in culture, to ascetic ideals.

Increasing hostility against its own practices of belief can make faith invisible. This is the case in the concept of an invisible religion, as David Hume has constructed it and has been epitomized by Miran Bozovic(2000) with the formula: “Precisely because I believe in God, I do not show that.”⁸ Just as belief can become invisible and unnoticed by its subjects under the condition of being purely external and representing an imagination without an image, faith can also become invisible under the condition of being purely internal. This has been remarked by Max Weber who states that the Protestant spirit can radicalize itself to a degree of internalization where

⁶ What Althusser describes as the ideological relationship of recognition between a subject and a big “Other Subject” (2008: 52ff.) pertains to the ideological form of faith. Althusser’s focus on faith is based on his analysis of Christian religious ideology. Yet this form, as I want to claim, is not universal and does not cover all possible subject-effects.

⁷ There is a crucial difference between pride and self-esteem. Pride is always external: it requires efforts of representation; it is made for the eye of some (sometimes purely virtual) Other. Self-esteem, on the contrary, is internal: it announces itself often by an almost obscene avoidance of any effort of representation. What Althusser describes as “presumptuous modesty” (2006: 117) can be regarded as an effect of self-esteem, not of pride.

⁸ “... the Human philosophical theist is someone who believes in God, someone who knows that God exists—yet for that very reason he acts *as if God did not exist*” (Bozovic 2000: 14).

it becomes impossible for the subjects to recognize the Protestant, or religious, character of their faith-position (1988 [1905]: 202ff.).

3. Whereas in belief and faith subjects look either down or up to something conceived as lower or higher, in the third type of ideology, *paranoia*, they often seem not to look at anything—at least not at anything different from themselves. They seem concerned with an ideal property of their ego. They are obsessed with their health, their self-optimization, their ecological footprint, their security, their sustainability, their nutrition, their ethical fashion, etc. Yet in some other cases, there seems to be an object—significantly, an object that is assumed to be infinitely vulnerable and threatened; for example, the innocent child as a victim of sexual abuse (a notorious symptomatic object of ideological paranoia since the 1990s). Be it an ideal property of the ego, or an infinitely threatened object—both, as will be shown, amount to the same, and they present themselves as absolute priorities, calling for unconditional commitment. Almost every day a new absolute priority seems to pop up and require total subjection. Urgency is the most significant mark of paranoic subjectivation. Individuals who have turned into paranoic subjects must act immediately and at any price.

This urgency seems to be a common feature of paranoia and belief, where subjects, too, have to act compulsively, without delay. Yet in belief, there is a distance of “better knowledge” between the subject and the “silly” requirement. In paranoia, on the contrary, there is no such distance. The subject does not know better at all, but is caught up in absolute, dogmatic certainty, such as: “from now on, I must not eat meat/smoke/drive a car (etc.) anymore, and I will hate anybody who still does.”

This lack of better knowledge or humor with regard to one’s silly obsessions can, at first sight, appear as a shared feature between paranoia and faith. For in faith, too, subjects rarely laugh about their highly esteemed trusted objects, and faith also tends to be dogmatic. Yet again there is a fundamental difference. Faithful subjects are forever separated from their ideal, and only in very lucky moments can they forget about that. They are (more or less) constantly asking themselves whether they really are good Christians, good liberals, have good family values, are good communists, etc. For paranoic subjects, conversely, such a guilt-guided distance does not exist. Paranoic subjects do not have a faith in something remote from them; on the contrary, *their faith seems to have them*. They are caught up in it completely, like the angry person in her anger or the jealous person in his jealousy. (The German saying “mich-frisst der neid” [I am eaten by envy] catches this devouring, distanceless nature of paranoic subjectivity quite appropriately.

To put this into psychoanalytic terms, we could say that in faith there is a superego at work that can fill the subjects with guilt if they do not match their ideal. Yet at the same time, this *ideal ego* and its instance of observation (the *ego-ideal* or *superego*) are not identical (Freud 1999

[1921c]: 134). In Althusser's terms, the (small) subjects are never the (big) Subject. Subjects are not expected to coincide with the instance that judges them. There is a distance that separates superego and ego (including the ideal ego); and this very distance sometimes allows the superego to even look down upon the ego with a merciful loving smile—which is, according to Freud, the case in humor (1999 [1927d]).

In paranoia, on the contrary, there seems to be no distance. Paranoia appears to follow a model of narcissism where, in Freud's words, the ego was its own ideal (1999 [1914c]: 94). To be topologically precise, we should say: superego and ego are still not identical here, since there is no peaceful satisfaction but, on the contrary, a demand, an injunction, from one to the other. Yet this demand does not, as in faith, call the ego from far away to move on toward a remote ideal. Rather, superego as it were "surrounds" the ego. Ego and superego are like concentric circles; their centers coincide. Thus there is no leverage for the ego, neither with regard to its ideal, nor to its judgmental instance of observation. The superego in this position appears "sartorial" (Copjec 1994); it constantly bombards the ego with merciless injunctions such as "Enjoy!" or "Be yourself!" (Lacan [1953–54]: 102; Evans 1996: 201). This may explain why, in paranoia, subjects feel this merciless urgency and tend to such total subjection to a command which ultimately leads them to even ride over their own dead body. At the same time, it may account for the corresponding merciless aggression and envy toward others: every other that still seems to have mercy for herself (or for her others), granting everybody a little bit of pleasure, appears now as an infinitely happy, enjoying other; and consequently, since enjoyment is necessarily only one, she appears as a "thief of enjoyment" (Žižek 1993: 203).

In order to clarify this classification of three ideological types, it may be helpful to look at their effects with regard to religion. Here these three types of ideology produce the following forms:

1. Belief: taboo-religion; ancient Greek and Roman paganism ("primary religions"); magic practices.
2. Faith: monotheist religions ("secondary religions").
3. Paranoia: religious delusion (sects or individual religious, or also secularized madnnesses).

Referring to religious examples of the contemporary world, these three different ideological forms and their corresponding types of subject-effects can be illustrated as follows:

1. The example of belief-religion is today, among others, exemplified by the obsessive television observer who has to follow certain programmes at the very moment they are broadcast; thus giving himself a sense of the "punctuation" of time, or a "liturgy" that may structure his whole day or year. In this sense, perspicuous theologians have argued that television today has taken on functions that previously pertained to religion, and that therefore television in itself has to be regarded as a religion; watching

television being a kind of religious behavior (Albrecht 1993; Jochum 2000; Thomas 1996).

Not watching the evening news, missing one's favorite Friday night crime series or every Saturday's football reports may give the viewer a feeling of having failed to properly structure her day or his week and thus cause a strange, amazingly uneasy feeling, comparable to those connected with a violation of taboo. Practitioners of this form of ideology always look down upon it, often with disdain, and sometimes even with self-contempt ("unfortunately I have to watch..."). Still, they feel a strict compulsion to follow it. Of course, this "liturgic" or "cool" function of television or radio is largely independent of its content.⁹ Thus the practice of listening to BBC radio news at 7: 00 p.m. each day could, as Marshall McLuhan mentions, easily be adopted by a member of an African tribe without any understanding of the English language (1987 [1964]: 20). Just as the content, that is, the image, is not conscious in this type of imagination, its ritual character may not be obvious to its practitioners either. Yet, just as, according to the ancient Christian militant theologian Tertullian (2008), ancient theater and sports performances were pagan rituals without the pagans knowing so, today's mass communication rituals may have, as contemporary theologians assume, a religious character without the religious subjects knowledge. The ritual appears entirely "external" to them, just like politeness; therefore they consider themselves to be non-believers, and of their practice as non-religious.

2. The form of faith is structuring monotheist religions such as Christianity, Althusser's key example and object of investigation with regard to religious ideology. Its contemporary form can be found in the description that Slavoj Žižek has given in his endeavor to defend it (2000).

Here, just as in any other ideology centered around some higher cause or goal, individuals become subjects by *looking up* to something conceived as higher or bigger. For example, God in Christianity, as in other monotheist religions, is regarded as bigger, as a big Subject (in Althusser's terms). Christian humans regard their God as older, wiser, and morally superior to themselves. Yet this is not a necessary feature of divinity. Many religions have gods who are younger than the religious subjects; they can be little children (e.g., Eros/Cupid in Greek/Roman mythology); they can therefore be less wise than humans, and often even morally inferior.¹⁰ In this point however, faith-religions differ significantly from belief religions. In faith there is always something to look up to that functions

⁹ For the distinction between content-oriented, "hot" media and low-detail, "cool" media, see McLuhan (1987 [1964]).

¹⁰ In Ancient Greece this led to the harsh criticism against the assumption of immoral mythological Gods by Xenophanes; cf. Pfaller (2014: 10). It also led nineteenth century scholars to ask themselves if the Greeks "really believed" in their Gods; cf. Engels (1973: 14); Veyne (1988).

as its center.¹¹ And it “centers” individuals and transforms them into subjects precisely insofar as they can recognize themselves in the ideal image that the ideological center provides for them. Yet being centered does not imply that individuals find their place always or at any time right in that center: on the contrary, faithful individuals always compare their actual behavior and status to the ideal image presented to them by their ideology. Sinners are the normal case of faith-religion subjectivity. They measure their distance from that ideal and fill with self-esteem whenever, for a moment, they feel they have come close to it.

In a centered religious ideology, individuals experience themselves as subjects when they have the feeling that, as Spinoza puts it, “some ruler or rulers of the universe” had “arranged and adapted everything for human use” (1955: 76). Feeling centered, at home in one’s world as it were, provides individuals with agency: interpellation tells them it is up to them to do something; they are entitled, obliged, and justified to act, and their action is not without meaning. Thus their action itself can be called “centered,” since it is powered by a higher cause and aims at a higher aim (“ad maiorem Dei gloriam”).

3. The religious form of paranoia appears when people believe themselves to be Jesus. Of course, this appears manifest only in symptoms of religious delusion as can be found in psychiatric clinics. Yet, if we take Max Weber’s insight that a radicalized form of religion may not be aware of its own religious nature, it can be said that currently many people believe themselves to be Jesus without knowing it. Becoming a paranoid subject and assuming a Jesus-position is a narcissistic attitude that is widespread in postmodern societies.¹² Narcissism here consists in experiencing one’s own ego as “pure” and in attempting to expel everything “impure.” This has consequences, for example, with regard to health and nutrition. Trying to avoid everything impure means to desperately try to eat only healthy food. This attitude has by some observers correctly been described as “health-religious” behavior (given that we understand the term “religion” here in its paranoid meaning). Subjects are here totally obsessed by a phantasy of (their own) purity. They must completely match their pure ego; sinners are not admitted. And purity is such an absolute goal here that the paranoid subjects sacrifice everything for it—finally even their own health: thus they end up in “orthorexia”: a new, fashionable disease

¹¹ At this point, similarly to the problem of using the notion of “subject” with regard to the four discourses Althusser has distinguished and analyzed (1993 [1966]), the question arises whether the notion of “subject-effect” should not exclusively be used for faith-type ideologies alone. For “centering” only seems to occur in faith. Yet if we regard subject-effect as the cause for individuals becoming active, we have to equally speak of subject-effects in belief and paranoia.

¹² For discussion on this, see Grunberger/Dessuant (1997). For the postmodern actuality of this phenomenon, see Sennett (1977 [1974]).

consisting of detrimental effects caused by eating nothing but healthy food. Today's Jesuses of healthy nutrition are sacrificed for and by their very aim. To keep in the picture just evoked before with regard to paranoia, we can say that subjects here get eaten by what they eat. The goal is high and absolute here, as in faith. Yet it is so absolute that, unlike in faith, everything must be sacrificed for it—ultimately even the goal itself.

Another example of today's paranoid ideologies can be seen in contemporary "animalism"—the ever more radical attempts of avoiding substances of animal origin in food. According to vegans, fetishists of "sustainability"¹⁵ and other activists, not only should human beings not eat animals (or their products), but even animals should not eat animals. Again, there are no sinners admitted. Merciless paranoia does not allow subjects to accept their own carnivore animal nature or culture and the fact that in the end human beings always cause more harm than they can good. Secretly, there is not only concern here about animals being our neighbors and remote relatives in nature; yet there is a specific moral subject-formation going on. Subjects are driven by a radical desire to be good. And they want to be good with regard to an object that appears to them in an exemplary way to embody the features of goodness—in this case the unprotected animal, the innocent victim. This object secretly functions as a narcissistic ideal ego. Only from this fact can it be explained why in paranoia an object such as the animal (or in other cases, the helpless child, or the woman, or the minority, etc.) can assume such importance: the menaced object requires such unconditional, absolute, and immediate commitment because it secretly embodies the ideal ego. Thus today's "lambs of God," the Jesuses of animal rights and radical vegetarians, unconsciously identify with herbivores; as Nietzsche has already remarked, they secretly aim at their self-transformation into pets (1984 [1887]: 233).

Both health-religion and veganism are to be regarded as paranoid forms of religious ideology. Health-religion is openly concerned with an ideal ego; veganism conceals the ideal ego behind the image of the vulnerable object. Comparable to faith-religions, these paranoid religious ideologies pursue radical moral issues since they are far more concerned with the self than with any outer being or issue: for its subjects, it is far more important that they themselves are "good," than that the world gets any better; and they would immediately sacrifice any improvement of the world for their alleged self-improvement.¹⁴ Yet, differently from faith-re-

¹⁵ For an analysis of the sustainability discourses, see Luks (2002, 2014).

¹⁴ This appears to be the "litmus test" of moral ideologies: if subjects learned that their "good" behavior actually made the world worse, would they be ready to renounce their "good" behavior? In other words, would they be moral enough to become immoral? This dialectical point, perspicuously marked by Bernard Mandeville (1980 [1705]), would be the point of transition from morals to politics.

ligions, the moral agenda in paranoid religions is not always directly visible for the subjects. It is concealed from them by an either seemingly scientific, medical agenda (from which it differs only by its significant immoderateness), or by the obvious and blinding image of the threatened helpless object—the fascinating image of the weak other that calls for immediate action at any price.

Therefore, again differently from faith-religions, paranoid religions would not regard themselves as religious movements (admitting the religious character would, for the paranoid ideologies, blur their alleged concern for and commitment to the object). It is only from the viewpoint of ideology analysis that this can be asserted. It is in accordance with Althusser's theses that religious ideology has to be judged not by its ideas, but by the materiality of its practices (2008: 39ff.). Religious subjectivation does not always reveal itself by a certain consciousness in its subjects, but rather, for example, by the severe persistence of certain practices of nutrition.

2. Art and Its Possibilities With Regard to Ideology

In his letter to André Daspré, Althusser once made a small, apparently modest remark, which at first sight may even appear as a kind of depreciation of art. Althusser remarks that art, like science, establishes a distance toward ideology. But unlike science, art does not break with ideology from outside but produces an “internal distance” from the very ideology in which it is held. Whereas science “makes us know” ideology, art “makes us perceive,” “makes us feel” or “see” ideology, “from the inside” (2008: 174ff.).

So, whereas by its “epistemological break” science produces a true outside of ideology, art, if it *breaks* at all with ideology, does that from inside and thus remains inside ideology: “inside the whale,” as it were (to quote George Orwell's well-known title). If ideology builds a kind of raw material for both practices, on which both art and science apply their own tools and produce their specific results as something not foreseen in the ground material, the results are yet different in both practices: the product of science does not belong to ideology; that of art does belong to ideology—or at least, it deals with ideology on ideology's own ground.¹⁵ If one recalls the “theoristic” preferences in early Althusserian theory, with all its optimistic emphasis on the notion of science, this account sounds as if, according to Althusser, the possibilities of art with regard to ideology

¹⁵ Still Althusser insists that “real art” does not rank among the ideologies (2008: 173).

are more limited than those of science; as if art could never achieve as much as science can.¹⁶

Yet from Althusser's account the opposite conclusion can be drawn very well. Stating that art breaks with ideology from within ideology attributes to art a power that science does not possess. Althusser has always been clear and explicit about the fact that breaking with ideology in science does not destroy ideology. One may recall here the example from Spinoza's ethics that Althusser refers to: we all perceive the moon as if it's two hundred meters away, even if science has taught us its real distance. Despite our scientific knowledge, our ideological perception persists. This persistence of ideology stems from the fact that ideology does not actually speak about the same object as science. Since ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 2008: 36), and not the real relationship, nor the real conditions, it tells us something about the subjects and not as much about the object. Being "wrong" about the object, ideology can still be truthful about the subject—for example about his or her desires, wishes, hopes, fears, etc. This "truthfulness" of ideology with regard to the subject remains untouched by science's discoveries. Since according to Gaston Bachelard, ideology (or in his words, "opinion") "translates needs into knowledge," (2002: 25) it is clear that new, true knowledge cannot remove the initial needs. Spinoza has rendered this in his formula: "No positive quality possessed by a false idea is removed by the presence of what is true, in virtue of its being true" (1955: 191).

Now this is totally different with art and its way to establish a distance toward ideology. If it is true that art breaks with ideology "from within," this means that art is able to destroy an existing ideology and replace it with a new one. Art can establish a new imaginary relationship of individuals toward their real conditions of existence.¹⁷ It can modify the "needs": the wishes, desires, hopes, fears, etc., involved in the produc-

¹⁶ This is how, for example, Gregory Elliott has read this passage (1987: 176).

¹⁷ Althusser has sometimes been accused of presenting an "authority-compliant" concept of ideology, apparently not conceding any leeway for the interpellated individual. For this criticism, see Butler (1995); for a short account of the debate see Sonderegger (2014: 172–175). Yet it is obvious that this criticism is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of ideology. Ideology is not only subduing individuals. Althusser has clearly emphasized that in a classless society there will also be ideology (1986: 242ff.) As a consequence, liberation from domination is not identical with liberation from ideology as such. And liberation from a certain ideology does not work by "critical desubjectivation" or "dis-identification," as Butler (1995: 25) and Rancière (2009: 73) suggest, applying a concept introduced by Octave Mannoni (1985). Althusser, on the contrary, follows the Spinozist argument that a thing can only be limited by another thing which is of the same kind (Spinoza 1955: 45). Therefore a "break" with a given ideology can only be effectuated due to a new ideology. Or, as Althusser (1990: 211) puts it in Leninist terms, if a stick is bent, then only another bending can make it

tion of the “overdetermined unity” of imaginary and real relationships (cf. Althusser 1986: 240ff.). Art can thus tackle the “positive quality” possessed by the false idea. And since the false idea only persists as long as the positive quality behind it remains untouched, art can destroy the false idea by replacing its hidden cause.

To illustrate this with an example, I would like to recall the perspicuous remark by Stricker that Freud (1999 [1900a]: 460) quotes affirmingly in his *Interpretation of Dreams*: If one dreams about robbers and is afraid, then the robbers are dreamed, but the fear is real. A scientific break with the dream could only prove that the robbers are not real. Yet the break that art can bring about would stick to the dream’s truthful part and work on the dreamer’s fear. This can explain the paradox, nicely commented by Alexander Garcia Düttmann,¹⁸ about art either not being able to lie or, conversely, only being able to lie. The dream—and art—may lie about robbers, but they are truthful with regard to the fear. This is equally important with regard to contemporary ideologies such as racism: when people are racist and fear immigrants, one has to state that the danger of the immigrants is dreamed, but the fear is real. This is why the typical answer of the social democrat, “Don’t worry, they are not dangerous,” is not sufficient. There is a huge class of people today who fear becoming declassified. Their ideology represents this fear, on the imaginary level, where it appears most easy and comfortable to handle—with regard to a weaker group, for example immigrants. The imaginary relationship is the attribution of the fear to immigrants as its cause. Yet, of course, this imaginary attribution does not invent the fear. If there were nothing to fear or to be angry about, people would not bother about immigrants. So, instead of criticizing the “falseness” of racist ideology with regard to its object, immigrants, one has to stick to its truthfulness with regard to its cause, fear of declassification. And one has to find a different imaginary relationship, a different place where subjects could like to position themselves with regard to this problem, and a different way to express it. Only a new, more appealing imaginary relationship that equally respects the true cause of fear will allow such subjects to abandon their racist ideology and become, for example, activists for a redistribution of social wealth.

Now, if according to Althusser, art breaks with ideology within ideology, this means that art is able to establish a new imaginary relationship of individuals toward their real conditions of existence. In other words, art is able to make people act on their own differently without a police officer behind their asses; or art is able to produce a different subject-effect. The question is how? How does art do that?

straight. In Althusser’s theory, art seems to be, besides philosophy, one of the forces capable of such “bending.”

¹⁸ Alexander Garcia Düttmann, *Nuptials, Or Can Art Lie?*, lecture given at the conference “Art Politics Ideology,” Bard College, Berlin, July 18, 2014.

For this I would like to present an example. This relates to a study I have recently completed together with my Viennese research group on psychoanalysis where, in one sector, we dedicated some attention to the notion of “magic” in art (Laquière-Waniek and Pfaller 2013). As you may recall, Sigmund Freud (1999 [1912–13]: 90) referred to one aspect as magic which still haunts even contemporary art, as did Susan Sontag (2001) in her essay “Against Interpretation” where she accused Psychoanalysis and Marxism of methodically ignoring art’s specificity, its particular form, and replacing it with some meaning. Thus, according to Sontag, interpretation destroys the “magic” of art. Accordingly, Theodor W. Adorno (1994: 298) also spoke of “magic” with regard to art.

To give a rough and not very mystical definition of this quality, I would say that the magic of art consists precisely in those parts that have to be just like this and cannot be paraphrased, said in other words, be depicted differently; they cannot be rendered adequately by other materials, other gestures, other iconic signs or other signifiers. The magic is always that which has to be like that. There is a literalness which is constitutive for art, just as it is for certain magic rituals: you have to say those words, and precisely so many times, even if you do not know what they mean.¹⁹

This implies that art belongs to the first type of ideology; it produces a subject-effect which is that of *belief*, just as magic. By doing this, art produces a certain affective mobility—especially when individuals are trapped in the other subject-effects, faith or paranoia. By its specific work on affects, art is able to drag people out of paranoia, out of faith—and maybe even out of other beliefs.

Belonging to the domain of belief, art, as every belief, produces pleasure. But I would define pleasure here not so much as Freud would have defined it—as a decathexis of some unpleasant tension—but would give a more Spinozist definition of pleasure, saying that pleasure is what increases our power to produce effects, on our own. This means that art is also able to drag us out of what Spinoza (2002: 285) called “sad passions” like jealousy, envy, anger, depression, etc. Art is able to cure sad passions—and that is not only a medical or ethical issue, but also a political one. Since it is specifically sad passions that make individuals “function” without a personal police officer behind their asses, and even against their own interests. Sad passions are what makes, in Spinoza’s words, people “fight for their own slavery as if it were their happiness” (2007: 7; cf. Reich 1970: 8; Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 29). Of course, this paradoxical outcome observed and described by Spinoza can only be accounted for with a theory of ideology. If people fight for their slavery, it is not that they only passively endure suppression, but they act on their own and spontane-

¹⁹ For this literalness of magic and its relationship with belief and the instance of the naïve observer, see the section “Why magic has to be performed out loud,” in Pfaller (2014: ch. 9).

ously promote their own suppression with a feeling of liberation. This is of course much more than a purely repressive apparatus, even an army of police officers behind our asses, ever could achieve.

Now, in some lucky cases art seems to be able to break the spell of such sad passions and to produce a new, liberating subject-effect. As an example for this I would suggest a famous work by the German artist John Heartfield, a photo collage from 1935 with the inscription “Hurrah, the Butter’s All Gone!”²⁰ There you can see an exemplary Nazi family, gathered around the dinner table in front of a wallpaper ornamented with swastikas and a Hitler portrait, trying to eat several metal parts, some of them parts of a bicycle. Even the baby in its carriage and the dog on the ground attempt to chew an axe and a big screw. This artistic and propagandistic intervention, published in a leftist exile newspaper in Czech Republic, was Heartfield’s answer to a predominant Nazi propaganda campaign formulated shortly before. At this time, due to some consequence of Nazi foreign policy, butter had become scarce in Germany. Now this scarcity of butter was rendered by Nazi propaganda in a very interesting and specific way. The Nazis did not deny this lack of butter; instead, Hermann Goering claimed, “Butter has only made people fat. But guns have made them strong.” Rudolf Hess coined the slogan “Guns instead of butter!” It was this propaganda that Heartfield countered with his collage.

This appears to be a typical situation in ideological struggle. What is at stake here is a confrontation between two different subject-effects. Confrontation takes place purely on this level. It is not a debate about an object; it is not about facts or “signifiers of knowledge.” It is only about the “master-signifier” by which these facts are to be interpreted;²¹ or, with a metaphor by Marx, about the “general illumination” that is to be given to these facts (1971 [1857]: 637). The whole combat is about the subject-effect produced by these master-signifiers; about how people identify with the suggested interpretations.

The stunning point about this conflict is that the facts remain completely untouched, by both sides. It is not that the Nazis claimed that there was enough butter in Germany and that everybody who stated the opposite was a Bolshevik agent and would land in Dachau. On the contrary, they openly admitted the lack. But what they did within the ideo-

²⁰ <http://www.johnheartfield.com/John-Heartfield-Exhibition/john-heartfield-art/political-art-posters/heartfield-posters-aiz/butter-is-all> (accessed 12 March, 2015).

²¹ The Lacanian notion of the “master-signifier” is not explicitly used by Althusser. Yet in absence of the word, the concept is there—in its Leninist rendering as the “weak link”: “It is not simply a question of choosing the ‘weak link’ from a number of pre-existing and already identified links: the chain is so made that the process must be reversed. In order to recognize and identify the other links of the chain, one must first seize the chain by the ‘weak link’” (Althusser 2008: 68, footnote).

logical struggle was to give a certain coding to this lack. They suggested a certain interpretation which produced a specific subject-effect—an effect of faith. The lack of butter now became able to fill German Nazis with self-esteem. It gave them a chance to feel brave. They now had faith in something bigger than butter, and could look up to something bigger than themselves. The lack had thus turned into a centering. It is also worthy of note that here we also encounter the characteristic feature of ascetism, which is usually connected with the production of faith and ideals.

Heartfield, on the contrary, used for his political counterpropaganda a typical Surrealist technique. This is quite remarkable, since this technique had only recently been reinvented, and not at all with the purpose of serving political aims. The old technique of collage had been newly and vastly used by avant-garde artists, the Cubists and Dadaists, and in particular by the Surrealists in order to create effects of funny, strange, or uncanny absurdity, for example when Max Ernst cut up and rearranged Victorian novel illustrations for his series “Unesemaine de bonté” (A week of kindness) in 1934.²² Heartfield had the unexpected idea to use this Surrealist technique in order to demonstrate the absurdity of the Nazi interpretation. By means of the photo collage he created effects that were able to relieve people from this seemingly evident identification with some great cause. His work dragged the powerful Nazi interpretation into the ridiculous, allowing for laughter, and for a sound philosophical materialism that would claim, as did Brecht, “Erstkommt das Fressen, dannkommt die Moral” (First food, then morals) (1984: 1117).

This transformation of one ideology into another, different one, was only possible with the specific form of Heartfield’s artistic intervention—the form of the photo collage that openly showed (in Althusser’s words, “gave to see”) the absurdity of Nazi codification, and demonstrated (“made perceive”) that a different view on these matters (or on their lack) was possible. Heartfield’s intervention tackled the dominant ideology precisely in its overdetermination. It did not only aim at the real poor conditions of existence in Germany, but equally at the Germans’ imaginary relationship toward these real conditions; their faithful, heroic subject-effect. And this overdetermined unity could only be efficiently attacked by a form that rendered the previous form unnecessary and ridiculous.²³ Just like his opponents, Heartfield also left the facts untouched. There was nothing revealing in his work with regard to the facts. It is not that he had conducted some secret piece of research by which he found

²² <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/in-the-musee-dorsay/exhibitions-in-the-musee-dorsay-more/article/les-collages-de-max-ernst-20484.html?cHash=83c594fbd8> (accessed 12 March, 2015).

²³ With Freud, one could argue here that laughter arises precisely when a certain expenditure of cathexis (*Besetzungsaufwand*) has become unnecessary; the difference can then be decathected by laughing it off (1999 [1905c]: 187).

out that there was no butter in Germany. This would have been what today is often called an “artistic research.” Instead, Heartfield invested all his artistic research capacities into finding a form that was able to tackle the existing, predominant form of ideology; to tackle the political enemy’s master-signifier; the specific interpretation or “illumination” the Nazis had given to the well-known facts, and the subject-effect that they had produced that way.

Form and Transference

At this point, I would like to claim that the specific form allows for something that the facts and contents never allow for—namely, transference. It is precisely transference that brings about a certain conviction in such cases—a conviction that is never immediately caused by the simple facts alone. As the butter example shows, you can have the same set of facts, but can still have strictly opposed convictions; you can say, “Yes, we want guns!” or you can say, “No, we want butter!” Here I rely upon a remark by Slavoj Žižek. In his book *Tarrying with the Negative*, Žižek has a beautiful chapter on “insufficient reason” (1993: 125ff., cf.76). There, Žižek claims that it is always transference that bridges the gap between the facts and their interpretation, or between knowledge and action, or between the epistemological and the ethical, or between causes and effects. One of Žižek’s examples is love. When you are asked “why do you love this person?” you may be able to name a few reasons, but as soon as you start naming them, you are justified in having the feeling that you are betraying your love. All the reasons you can name are insufficient for your love; you would love this person even without all these qualities,²⁴ and on the other hand, there are many other persons with these qualities whom you still do not love for them. So there seems to be one additional reason that cannot be named on the level of this set of reasons, and this is because this additional fact is not so much a fact but rather a decision by the subject. Yet on the side of the object, there has to be a point, or rather a void, an empty space, that allows to project this decision upon it. Then the subject can say, “you are irresistible,” or, “you have got this magic ‘certain something,’ a certain ‘je ne sais quoi.’” This unnameable cause of love has, in literature on both love and art, occurred under the name of the “certain something” (Ullrich 2005).

So in the object of love, or art, or even propaganda, there has to be an empty space that allows for the subject’s decision, and at the same time for the subject to conceal her decision from herself. There must be a cer-

²⁴ This coincides with Althusser’s remarks regarding the subject-effect: one is only a subject if one has the feeling that one has always already been one; long before certain interpellations and ideological practices had turned one into a subject (2008: 50).

tain something that allows the subject to subject himself to this object, and not only appreciate this object or acknowledge the reasons that this object has got on its side. In art and propaganda, this is what the form brings about. It is the form that causes the love, that is, the subject's transference. One can also say it is the magic, or the charm of art, or its master-signifiers, that bring this about.

Speaking from the Accursed Position

This charm of art very often requires a certain formal trick. It requires, for example, that the artist speaks from a foreign, apparently alienated, even "*impossible*" position. For example, to say "Hurrah, the Butter's All Gone!" is in a way strange. One can say, "It is a shame that all the butter is gone," or "I am so sad that all the butter is gone." But to say "Hurrah, the Butter's All Gone!" is a kind of "paradoxical intervention" by the artist. It immediately calls for a response, saying, for example, "How can you say that?"; "Are you crazy?"; "You are a fool, but now I will tell you what is true," etc. By taking this impossible position, the artwork allows for a dialectical relationship with the audience, it invites a reply, challenging and seducing the audience to engage and take the correct position by themselves. This way of speaking from an impossible or alien position is one of the crucial features of form in art, and one of the crucial features of art's ideological efficiency. If one just briefly thinks of what has been presented in the last decades under the label "political art," the difference is obvious. For most of these recent political endeavors in art always try to promote a *possible* position: how good the artist is, how concerned they are about the mischief of some minority or some repressed group, etc., and everybody says, "Yes it is true," everybody agrees and leaves, satisfied and feeling good about themselves. But one does not go out with anger, saying this is a scandal, there is no butter, etc.; one has not been transformed into a fighting subject. Everybody has just been transformed into faithful subjects who just thought what they should think and then forgot about it.

To recall a little of the history of this paradoxical way of speaking—of this speaking from an "impossible position" that, as Althusser has pointed out, was for example practiced by Machiavelli²⁵—I would like to mention two other exemplary cases. The first dates from 1705—Bernard Mandeville's notorious poem, a favorite text of Karl Marx (1863), entitled "The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turn'd Honest" (better known under its later

²⁵ "I remembered Machiavelli, whose rule of Method, rarely stated but always practised, was that one must think in extremes, which means within a position from which one states borderline theses, or, to make the thought possible, one occupies the place of the impossible" (Althusser 1990: 209).

title, “Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits”). This text is written from an absolutely impossible position that caused everybody to hate Mandeville. For example, stating that it would benefit the public more to let big crooks go free and only hang small crooks was a scandal: it aroused the big crooks who said that of course this was the wrong description of the situation, and big crooks were not actually let go; whereas the small crooks who said it was the correct description rebelled against the text’s judgment and claimed that this injustice could not be beneficial for society.

A similar artistic constellation occurred in the year 2000 when Austria had a rightist coalition government and faced a heyday of hostility in the public mind against migrants and asylum seekers. At this time, German artist Christoph Schlingensief presented in the center of Vienna a performance where he showed a couple of containers, pretending that these were inhabited by immigrants and inviting the Austrian public to vote who should be expelled first—just like the case with people on television shows like *Big Brother* who had to be voted out of their containers.²⁶ So the Austrian public was asked by Schlingensief to vote who should be brought across the Schengen borders first—the cook from Kenya or the engineer from Vietnam. Again, this performance, endowed with the considerably paradoxical title, *Please Love Austria*, spoke from an impossible position; it immediately aroused the anger of all political sides, left as much as right—a fact that can be regarded as a mark of honor for its impossible position of utterance and the respective formal efficiency. From the left-wing fighters with good intentions who stormed the containers in order to “free” the refugees, to the right-wing freedom party minister of justice who personally sued Schlingensief for alleged “neo-Nazi activities”—everybody started to act like a marionette of Schlingensief’s dramatic performance. Thus, in Althusser’s words, it let people “perceive” the predominant ideology, to an extent that made it difficult even for the involved subjects to maintain their subject-position.

For a Political Formalism

Engaging individuals with a belief-position that does not allow for identification proves to be an efficient means to shatter predominant subject-effects. What Heartfield, Mandeville, and Schlingensief achieved by means of artistic form can thus be fairly commented on using a well-

²⁶ For more on this, see Lilienthal/Philipp (2000). See also the brilliant analysis by Friedlander (2013: 12), which demonstrates in detail how this artwork tackled the predominant ideology and how “using a fictional, game-like, mode of representation to describe a politically reactionary event” may help to overcome it. This is a precise account of art’s magic; i. e., its symbolic efficiency.

known sentence by Karl Marx which should be read, literally, as a remark on the political efficiency of art: “these petrified relations must be forced to dance by singing their own tune to them!” (1844; 1976 [1844]: 381).

Here, again, it is “singing,” and not just knowing or telling, which brings movement to petrified relations. In this sense, Althusser’s thesis that art does not produce a *knowledge* of ideology, as does science, but makes people *perceive* ideology (to the degree that it becomes difficult to maintain their predominant subject-effects), should be read as a groundbreaking insight into art’s unique possibilities of political efficiency, due to its formal means.²⁷ This insight is outstanding with regard to the Marxist tradition for which “formalism” has mostly been a swearword.²⁸ And it

²⁷ This power of art goes far beyond what Jacques Rancière describes as the “aesthetic effect” (2009: 73). Rancière refers to what happens when workers unexpectedly start to write poems or make aesthetic experiences (like looking out of a bourgeois villa’s windows)—an event that may cause an unexpected shift from a proletarian class position to a hitherto bourgeois aesthetic position. These observations by Rancière are most valuable, since they prove the politically liberating force of experiences of aesthetic autonomy and purposelessness, as they are typical for bourgeois art—an aspect of sovereignty that has been largely forgotten in contemporary “engaged” art (see Pfaller 2013). Yet this notion of the “aesthetic effect” only comprises what happens when aesthetic experience occurs as an unexpected exception; it only compares aesthetic experience to its absence. It does not care for the specific quality of the particular aesthetic achievement (for example, if the worker’s poems are brilliant, or mediocre, or kitschy). What a theory of the aesthetic, and of its critical power with regard to predominant ideology, has to account for, are the effects produced *within artistic practice*: i. e., what happens when one aesthetic “framing” proves to be more powerful, more seductive than another—for example by what precise features Heartfield’s collages proved to be stronger than the aesthetic framing of the Nazi propaganda. Just as, in epistemology, the notion of the “effect of cognition” (“effet de connaissance,” Althusser 1969 [1965]: 75) does not only account for the difference between cognition and sheer ignorance, but for the superiority of one cognition against another, for its power to break with an epistemological obstacle; in aesthetics the notion of the “aesthetic effect” has to account for the superiority of one aesthetic framing over the other—for its power to break with an “obstacle of taste,” as it were. This would describe what Althusser calls the break “within ideology”; i. e., the break performed by one aesthetic against another.

²⁸ See Bennett (1979). This lack of sense for form is a huge “epistemological obstacle” for a Marxist theory of art. One of the reasons for this obstacle seems to be the Aristotelian equation of form with the spiritual element, as opposed to *matter*. Yet, as can easily be seen, this conceptual design is misleading with regard to art: For in art, form is on the side of matter; it concerns the specific materiality of the work. The opposite of form, the “spiritual” part, as it were, is here *content*. Therefore, significantly, the predominant anti-formalist reforms in art schools since the 1990s always aim at abandoning the studios and turning the arts into a kind of humanities. Hostility against form thus implied transforming artistic practice from a “blue collar” job into a “white collar” one.

is a remark of high actuality: since it can help overcome the misleading, pop-leftist attempts to politicize the arts that has dominated a certain sector of artistic practice since the early 1990s. Here, as in the classical Marxist tradition, the politicization of the arts was always understood as an increased emphasis on content, and neglect of form. On the level of art, for almost two decades this program led to a huge wave of boring artworks full of good intentions, and on the level of art education it triggered attempts to make art more scientific. For artistic practice these tendencies brought about a massive disenchantment. Artistic practice fell under the tacit regime of a “protestant spirit” (which, according to Max Weber, can well exist without being aware of its own religious nature)—the hegemonic ideology that could be observed in many cultural fields, in the last instance serving the neoliberal interest of dissolidarizing society and making it ready for “austerity measures” by rendering people anxious toward their own pleasure and envious toward that of others.²⁹ Justification for this tendency toward an allegedly “enlightened” artistic practice mostly followed the model of the “perspectival illusion” well described by Octave Mannoni (2003; cf. Pfaller 2014, chapter 2). As soon as a faith-type ideology looks down upon a belief ideology, it feels to be smarter than the other—assuming that the belief were a faith and that the belief subjects were as convinced of their beliefs just as the faith subjects are of their faith. Thus, the attempt to transform artistic practice from an allegedly superstitious craft into an apparently enlightened science only made art actually become a practice of faith, rather than one of belief. It thus deprived art of its most efficient instruments and weapons for ideological struggle.

Consequences for the Epistemology of Arts and Sciences

At the level of university art education this development has had detrimental consequences not only for the arts themselves. By the newly introduced notion of “artistic research,” most people spontaneously understood the scientific research that was done for an art project. Yet this was a profound misunderstanding. Here again, it may be useful to recall Althusser’s theory of the “three generalities”: If we assume that research is for a given discipline the very activity that provides for its specific results, it is clear that chemical research is what makes a certain activity lead to results in chemistry, and likewise artistic research is what makes a certain activity lead to artistic results. Whatever the raw material (“generality 1”) of this practice may be—be it artistic, ideological, scientific, or other ma-

²⁹ I have elaborated on this problem in my book *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt. Elemente materialistischer Philosophie* (Pfaller 2011).

terial—artistic research is what transforms (“generality 2”) this raw material into specifically artistic results (“generality 3”) (Althusser 1986: 187ff.).

By suggesting a misunderstanding of artistic research as scientific research, promoters of this ideology³⁰ not only contributed to depriving art of its critical weapons and subjected it to the criteria of scientific practices,³¹ but equally caused harm to the sciences themselves. For the emphasis on “content,” and the focus on “signifiers of knowledge,” promoted forgetfulness about the fact that science itself is necessarily based on “master-signifiers.” Suggesting that knowledge was self-transparent and step-by-step predictable, this ideology lead to the submission of scientific practice under bureaucracy—the big winner of the neoliberal university reforms in Europe since the early 1990s. Scientific projects are now mainly based on applications, and the applications have to predict what the project will discover. The results of such projects are then mostly not scientific results but reports about results. Scientific practice thus becomes subjected to its (anticipatory or retrospective) report, and scientists to the rulers of the reports, that is, bureaucrats. This whole enterprise of “redoubling” science by reports is commonly justified as a practice serving “reflexive consciousness” and “transparency.” Yet, from Sigmund Freud’s theory it can be learned that “reflexive consciousness” and “transparency” are very often not means of increased cognition but rather arms of defense against it, and useful instruments of self-misrecognition. Reflexive self-images are, as Gaston Bachelard (1953: 20) has demonstrated, obstacles against understanding what science is actually doing. They serve the “imaginary of the scientific spirit” or a science’s “spontaneous philosophy,” and not the philosophy it requires or deserves. Against this ideology of transparency, Althusser has insisted on the unpredictable character of scientific discoveries, and, referring to Spinoza, on the “factual character” of scientific knowledge (1990: 224). This is the reason why, according to Althusser, science has to be judged by its own, immanent

³⁰ This is one of the rather rare cases where an ideology has clearly identifiable agents or even “authors” (Althusser 2014: 222). Promoters of art becoming “scientific” were, in the first instance, second-class theorists affiliated to the art world and, in the second instance, second-class artists who tried to gain symbolic capital that would let them appear superior to artists equipped with more wit and formal skills.

³¹ One of the favourite fields of action of this ideology is “documentary art.” Jennifer Friedlander, developing a Lukácsian argument, has perspicuously pointed out that these documentary methods in art “may be said to ‘lie in the guise of the truth.’ As Lukács puts it, fictional forms which employ ‘documentary procedures [...] end up by fetishizing facts;’ they ‘lie’ through the ‘confusion of the totality with a mere sum of facts>’” (Friedlander 2013: 13). For the blossoming of documentary methods in the arts since the 1990s, see (Gludowatz 2004); see also “Nichts als die Wahrheit.” *texte zur kunst*, Vol. 51 (Sept.), 2003. <https://www.textezurkunst.de/51/umfrage-dokumente-sprechen-nicht/> (accessed 25 February, 2016).

criteria of validation (1990: 208), and therefore by internal members of its scientific community; and not by external criteria, such as publishing points, the currency of external, bureaucratic agents. If there is an urgent Althusserian agenda with regard to university politics, it consists in the liberation of scientific practice from the predominant “monitoring” and “controlling parasites.”

These are the far-reaching theoretical and political effects of Althusser’s powerful insight that art is not about knowing but about perceiving. Of course this has not to be understood in a sensualist meaning of the senses against the intellect.³² What is at stake here is, as it were, a perception of second degree. Art can give us a perception not of outer reality, but of *ideology*—that is, it can give us a *striking perception about how we usually spontaneously perceive*. This means to “live” a new relation toward our lived relation to our social conditions of existence. If art succeeds in producing a new ideology, it is this new ideology that seduces us to free ourselves from the hitherto predominant ideology.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. (1994). *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Alain (1973). *Alain on Happiness*. Trans. Jane E. Cottrell and Robert D. Cottrell. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.
- Albrecht, Horst (1993). *Die Religion der Massenmedien*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Althusser, Louis (1969). “Préface: du *Capital* à la philosophie de Marx” [1965]. In *Lire le Capital*. 2nd ed., ed. Louis Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Jacques Rancière, and Pierre Macherey, 9–85. Paris: Maspéro.
- Althusser, Louis (1986). *Pour Marx*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Althusser, Louis (1990). *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays*. London: Verso.

³² In particular, Jacques Rancière in his aesthetic theory appears to promote this “sensualist” misunderstanding of art’s ideological efficiency—for example, when he speaks of the “Distribution of the Sensible.” Yet what people, due to art, may see, hear, feel, taste, smell, is not some sensible data, but—as Rancière correctly points out—their own hitherto predominant identification (from which they may thus “dis-identify”; see Rancière [2009: 73]; yet only due to a new identification). This is not seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling in any classical understanding. One may ask here, which specific sense is able to do this (for this question, see Heller-Roazen [2007]). It is not a sensual perception of the world or of the single relation of an individual to the conditions of its life, but a perception of this very individual’s double relation: a perception of its predominant way of “living” this relation. One may say: this perception is a new way of living a relation to this lived relation.

- Althusser, Louis (1993). "Trois notes sur la théorie des discours" [1966]. In *Écrits sur la psychanalyse*, 111–71. Paris: Stock/IMEC.
- Althusser, Louis (1994). *L'avenir dure longtemps, suivi de Les faits*, 2nd augmented ed. Paris: Stock/IMEC.
- Althusser, Louis (1995). *Sur la Reproduction*. Paris: PUF.
- Althusser, Louis (2006). *Reading Capital*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: Verso.
- Althusser, Louis (2008). *On Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Althusser, Louis (2014). *Initiation à la philosophie pour les non-philosophes*. Paris: PUF.
- Assmann, Jan (2003). *Die mosaische unterscheidung oder der preis des monotheismus*. Munich: Carl Hanser.
- Bachelard, Gaston (1953). *Le Matérialisme rationnel*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Bachelard, Gaston (2002). *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: a Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge*. Trans. Mary McAllester Jones. Manchester: Clinamen Press Ltd.
- Bennett, Tony (1979). *Formalism and Marxism*. London: Methuen.
- Bozovic, Miran (2000). *An Utterly Dark Spot. Gaze and Body in Early Modern Philosophy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brecht, Bertolt (1984). *Die Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht in einem Band*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Butler, Judith (1995). "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All." *Yale French Studies* 88 (Althusser, Louis, and Étienne Balibar. Macherey and the Labor of Reading): 6–26.
- Caillois, Roger (2001). *Man, Play and Games*. Trans. Meyer Barash. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Copjec, Joan (1994). "The Sartorial Superego." In *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists*, 65–116. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1983). *Anti-Oedipus* [1972]. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dolar, Mladen (1991). "Jenseits der Anrufung." In *Gestalten der Autorität. Seminar der LaibacherLacan-Schule*, 9–25. Vienna: Hora.
- Durkheim, Emile (2008). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Carol Cosman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, Gregory (1987). *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*. London: Verso.
- Engels, Friedrich (1973). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Evans, Dylan (1996). *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). "The Interpretation of Dreams" [1900a]. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud [SE]*, Vol. 4–5. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* [1905c]. SE 8.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* [1907b]. SE 9, 115–27.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *Totem and Taboo* [1912–13]. SE 13, 1–161.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *On Narcissism: An Introduction* [1914c]. SE 14, 67–102.

The Efficiency of Ideology and the Possibilities of Art

- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* [1921c]. SE 18, 67–143.
- Freud, Sigmund (1999). *The Future of an Illusion* [1927c]. SE 21, 3–56.
- Gludowatz, Karin, ed. (2004). *Auf den Spuren des Realen: Kunst und Dokumentarismus*. Vienna: MUMOK.
- Grunberger, Béla and Pierre Dessuant (1997). *Narcissisme, Christianisme et Antisemitisme. Etude psychoanalytique*. Arles: Actes Sud.
- Friedlander, Jennifer (2013). “Public Art and Radical Democracy: Christoph Schlingensiefel’s Deportation Installation.” In *Urbanity. The Discreet Symptoms of Privatization and the Loss of Urbanity*, 11–17. Vienna: Privately printed by content.associates.
- Heller-Roazen, Daniel (2007). *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*. New York: Zone Books.
- Huizinga, Johan (1955). *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Humphrey, Caroline and James Laidlaw (1994). *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual. A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Institut für Sozialforschung (1956). *Soziologische Exkurse. Nach Vorträgen und Diskussionen*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Jochum, Christian (2000). *Fernsehen als Religion*. Diplomthesis, University of Innsbruck.
- Kant, Immanuel (2006). *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* [1798]. Ed. Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lacan, Jacques (1988) *The Seminar. Book I. Freud’s Papers on Technique* [1953–54]. Trans. Sylvania Tomaselli. New York: Norton.
- Laquière-Waniek, Eva and Robert Pfaller, eds. (2013). *Die letzten Tage der Klischees. Übertragungen in Psychoanalyse, Kunst und Gesellschaft*. Vienna: Turia + Kant.
- Lilienthal, Matthias and Claus Philipp (2000). *Schlingensiefel’s ausländer raus: bitte liebt Österreich*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Luks, Fred (2002). *Nachhaltigkeit*. Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Luks, Fred (2014). *Öko-Populismus: warum einfache “Lösungen,” Unwissen und Meinungsterror unsere Zukunft bedrohen*. Marburg: Metropolis.
- Mandeville, Bernard (1980). *Die Bienenfabel oder Private Laster, öffentliche Vorteile/The GrumblingHive or Knave’s Turn’d Honest*. [1705]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Mannoni, Octave (1985). “La désidentification.” In *Le Moi et l’Autre*, ed. J. Dor, 61–79. Paris: Denoël.
- Mannoni, Octave (2003). “I Know Well, But All the Same...” In *Perversion and the Social Relation*, eds. M. A. Rothenberg and D. Foster, 68–92. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Marx, Karl (1844). *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>.
- Marx, Karl (1976). “Zur kritik der Hegelschen rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung” [1844]. In Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. *Werke*, Bd. 1, 378–391. Berlin: Dietz.
- Marx, Karl (1971). “Einleitung [zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie]” [1857]. In Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. *Werke*, Bd. 13, 615–42. Berlin: Dietz.

- Marx, Karl (1863). "Abschweifung über produktive arbeit." In Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. *Werke*, Bd. 26.1, 363–364. https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/marx-engels/1863/tumw/standard/add1.htm#mew26.1p363_add1-11.
- McLuhan, Marshall (1987). *Understanding Media. The Extensions Of Man* [1964]. London: Ark Paperbacks.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (1984). "Zur Genealogie der Moral" [1887]. In *Werke*, Bd. III, ed. Karl Schlechta, 207–346. Frankfurt: Ullstein Materialien.
- Orwell, George (1971). *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Pfaller, Robert (2011). *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt. Elemente materialistischer Philosophie*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Pfaller, Robert (2013). "Vier Fragen an Robert Pfaller, Interview von Tobi Müller." *Monopol* 11. <http://www.monopol-magazin.de/Robert-Pfaller-interview-halle-14-leipzig>.
- Pfaller, Robert (2014). *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions without Owners*. Trans. Lisa Rosenblatt. London: Verso.
- Pfaller, Robert (2015). "The Althusserian Battlegrounds." In *Slavoj Žižek and Dialectical Materialism*, eds. Agon Hamza and Frank Ruda, 23–42. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rancière, Jacques (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. London: Verso.
- Reich, Wilhelm (1970). *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Trans. Vincent Carfagno. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Sennett, Richard (1977). *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Knopf.
- Sonderegger, Ruth (2014). *Art and Ideology Critique after '89 / Kunst und Ideologiekritik nach '89*. Eds. Eva Birkenstock et al., 172–175. Bregenz: Kunsthau Bregenz.
- Sontag, Susan (2001). *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Picador.
- Spinoza, Benedict de (1955). *On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Spinoza, Benedict de (2002). *Complete Works*. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Spinoza, Benedict de (2007). *Theological-Political Treatise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tertullian [Tertullianus, Quintus Septimius] (2008). *De spectaculis. Über die spiele*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Thomas, Günter (1996). *Medien—Ritual—Religion. Zur religiösen funktion des fernsehens*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Ullrich, Wolfgang (2005). "Je ne sais quoi. Warum es auf die frage 'Was ist Kunst?' keine Antwort gibt." In *Was war kunst? Biographien eines begriffs*, 9–30. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Veayne, Paul (1988). *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*. Trans. Paula Wissing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Max (1988). "Die protestantische ethik und der geist des kapitalismus" [1905]. In *Gesammelte aufsätze zur religionssoziologie I*, 1–206. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Žižek, Slavoj (1988). "Das subjekt vor der subjektwerdung." *Kulturrevolution* 20: 36–37.

The Efficiency of Ideology and the Possibilities of Art

- Žižek, Slavoj (1993). *Tarrying with the Negative. Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2000). *The Fragile Absolute—or, why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* London: Verso.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2014). *Absolute Recoil. Toward a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso.