

# MARXISM REDUX OR HOW TO RE-THINK MARX IN LIGHT OF THE MATERIALISM OF CHANCE?

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## Introduction

Zeroing in on possibilities, history creatively repeats itself. As creative recurrence, we are echoing Deleuzian different repetitions in terms of history re-creating events of mild variances. Today's political climate presents capitalism fuelling global North against isolated remnants of cold socialist blocs. The same old-recurrent themes of history redesign conflicts between these powers, thus creating strong dialectical oppositions in economic and political ideologues. Theoretically speaking, the Hegelian logic welcomes us to the future sublation of events to reveal the Absolute Spirit eluding in-between dialectical forces of the *inverted world*. Synthesis becomes the ultimate promise of history, the final reconciliation between parties; in other words, metaphorically voiced as the final flight of the Owl of Minerva towards the darkest night. But, as Walter Benjamin writes as the coming of an Angel, history becomes teleological,<sup>1</sup> a stormy search for a grand Meaning of everything in light of material unfolding of things. Ultimately, where can we situate negating-negation in the time of historical-material pre-determinateness? Popular interpretations of Hegel will lead to linkages of Marxism embracing the same logic of historical materialism yet with teleological stint. The complete Marxist theory once and for all should master the mode of history.<sup>2</sup> Marxism, however, had gone too far from its original beginning.

I will argue in this paper the return of Marxism to its 'beginning' that is to 'settle accounts with ... former philosophical conscience.'<sup>3</sup> Marx's pronouncement as no Marxist<sup>4</sup> drew a clear line between him as progenitor

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<sup>1</sup> To quote Benjamin: "...also in the storm that has gotten caught in the Angel of History's wings, drawing him 'irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm.'" (Walter Benjamin, "Angel of History," in *Selected Writings* Vol. 4, eds. Marcus Bullock, Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003], 392).

<sup>2</sup> Louis Althusser, "Marxism Today," in *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientist & Other Essays*, trans James H. Kavanagh, ed. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011; New York: Verso: 2011), 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>4</sup> Allegedly translated by Engels in 1882 correspondence with Eduard Bernstein. According to Engels, Marx said, "If anything is certain, it is that I myself

of proletarian consciousness and Marxism experimented by the dominant Ideology, State, and the Party. However to posit a “return” will entail us to break doctrinaire Marxist interpretations existing among intelligentsias inside and outside the circle. What happens today is that Marxism—arisen in the radical interpretations of Lenin, re-reading of Gramsci and serious practice of Mao—befell in the mastery of Capitalistic machines of power, economics and governmentality transforming into abstract field of global economy of labor, work and estrangement. Not until recently, capitalism upon mastering the logic of production, necessity and fetishism, took over the mechanism to convert materiality into abstract immaterial algorithms.<sup>5</sup> Marxism unfortunately failed to master the history’s flow thus missing its prime tenet as scientificity. Louis Althusser saw the crisis in intelligentsias’ failure to translate its topology from practice to theory—from theoretical to ideological—which brings us the problem of who or what governs the apparatuses of this topological transformation. Here we will recognize *critical* efforts set forth by Althusser in his later works on *Aleatory Materialism* as he championed Marx through the atomists, the Machiavellian Chance and the probable non-dialectical process of history.<sup>6</sup> Upon seeing this crisis, he claimed a form of materialism that will recognize this ‘failure’ concomitant to State and Party politics. He thinks of an aleatory materialism as non-rational viz. the materialism of concrete and embodied freedom out of abstract determinateness of history. This paper will try to conclude by discoursing a *Marxism redux* to its originary, aleatory and humble beginnings of philosophical conscience.

## Crisis of Marxism

Marx is different from idealist philosophers in terms of his non-allegiance to any illusions about the power of ideas. Can we, at least, situate a ‘Marx’ that is unscathed by any philosophic, economic and scientific interpretations? But to ask this question is basically rehashing Marxism of its failure to go beyond what Marx had contributed in the search for a non-rational “critique [that] represents one class...the proletariat.”<sup>7</sup> For Marxism has been a business of *who-is-in-control* politicking. The repressed

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is not a Marxist” (Friedrich Engels, “Engels to Eduard Bernstein in Zurich,” in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 46 [London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992], 353).

<sup>5</sup> See Franco Bifo Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (California: Semiotext(e), 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, eds. Francois Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 98 cited in Althusser, *Marxism Today*, 269.

proletariat class still haggles for their place in the society, free from any manipulation and exploitation of owners of production. However farther we see the complexity of Marxism not until we realize that the main problem bubbles within its circle. For Althusser, the search for a class critique brought bourgeoisie intellectuals such as Marx and Engels within the working class movement changing their thinking as critical and revolutionary.<sup>8</sup> This facticity resulted to arrays of debate. During the German Social Democracy in 1902, Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky affirmed that the Marxist theory had been produced by bourgeoisie intelligentsia branded as sole guardians of science and introduced into the proletariat class struggle from without.<sup>9</sup>

Marx and Engels, for Althusser, are indubitable bourgeoisie but their experiences defined their sentiments for the working class. The progress of their thoughts is visible in the contradictions of their early works starting from the *dramatic confrontation of philosophy and political economy in the 1844 Manuscripts*.<sup>10</sup> This early confrontation resulted to three sources of Marxism: German philosophy, British Political Economy, and French Socialism.<sup>11</sup> According to Althusser, Marx as an ‘author’ knows how to combine these elements protruding to the popular triad devised during the Second International (not of Marx’s postulation) Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism and Scientific Socialism, respectively. Here is the gist: we can find in Marxism today important elements that are not present in Marx or even in Engels. Yes, perhaps we can find in Marx the radical interpretation of Hegelian Absolute as mere radical negativity,<sup>12</sup> or a concrete philosophy of history defined by progressive epochs of mode of production but these germinal texts generated as many variants of Marxism today.

From the *Communist Manifesto* onwards, Marxism’s project remained unchanged: to satisfy the historical condition of a class struggle of the proletariat against capitalist will pave way to the realization of Communism as “real movement.”<sup>13</sup> Real movement ruminates a determined historical

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<sup>8</sup> Althusser, *Marxism Today*, 269.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Althusser’s *Marxism Today* [Ibid., 270]. Lenin also affirmed the same notion (See Vladimir Lenin, “What is to be done?”, in *Collected Works*, vol. 5 [Moscow: n .p., 1961], 383-4.)

<sup>10</sup> Althusser, *Marxism Today*, 271.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For further reference on *radical negativity* see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: The Revolutionary Economic, Political and Social Treatise that has transfigured the World*, trans. Samuel Moore, ed. Joseph Katz (New York: Pocket Books, 1964).

flow set to Hegelian dialectical design as translated by Alexander Kojève: “the future and History belong not to a warlike Master...but to the working of the Slave.”<sup>14</sup> With this, the main proposition of the *Manifesto* calls for a global conjuncture as Althusser puts namely by culling the unity of all workers with respect to history’s place for the return of the repressed. However this global reality as he noticed is one component of Marxian topology; on the other hand, *ideological* position is limited and determined by global reality: “men become conscious [class] conflict and fight it out.”<sup>15</sup> From a publicity call of global spectrum which advances theoretical assumptions of historical movements, there enters a shift into ideological consciousness based in the class conflict. Althusser writes,

The measure of Marx’s materialism is less the materialist content of his theory than the acute, practical consciousness of the conditions, forms and limits within which those ideas can become active.<sup>16</sup>

Hence materialism’s thesis remains grounded, for Althusser, in the power of ideas fluctuating not in historically active persons but in a form of mass ideology adopted in class struggle,<sup>17</sup> though it poses a scandal in materialist theory by its failure to meet the requirements of the concrete by presupposing the effectivity in the realm of idea. Basing on such allegation, Althusser comments that Marxism is still at the level of Marx (assuming his topology from theoretical global conjuncture to ideological consciousness) exclusively adding nothing but what only Marx left us.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to its scientific and non-utopian presentation specifically of its triadic Dialectical and Historical Materialism and Scientific socialism, Marxism has had been a repetition, distortion and ossification in the process.<sup>19</sup> Science progresses; however, its progression requires the validation or inquiry of its precedent form (e.g.; questioning former theories to prove anew). But Marxism botched to inquire about its older schemes—its ideological constructs buoyed by historical correlations. In other words, Marxists today still live in their glorious past vis-à-vis the historic tendencies to depend on the fabled scheme of the Party as ideological instrument for social change. Nevertheless, to remove *idea* from the equation would likewise eliminate

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<sup>14</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Spirit*, ed. Alan Bloom; trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, New York: Basic Books, 1969), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, Preface to *a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 426; cited in Althusser, *Marxism Today*, 274-5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

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

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

ideological forms that maintain structural organization that sustains unity through apparatuses (which is inconceivable to Marx but to Althusser). According to him, Marx never abandoned ideology as “consciousness” or system of ideas and [still] never succeeded in conceiving its materiality or realizations governed by apparatuses functioning as forms of dominant ideology depended upon State.<sup>20</sup> But then again sustaining ideology will require the apparatus of control; but who is in control? This is the point that Marx greatly missed: that aside from historical determinisms there is an intervention of the State politicking in ideological formation.

Althusser did mention that Marxism turned into an evolutionary philosophy of history and Marx’s *Capital* into a treatise of political economy.<sup>21</sup> By evolutionary philosophy, Marxism and not Marx (again) became the charlatan of Darwinian schema by following certain stages of historic unveiling, more precise as evolutionary development or in science, as progress, of a body (material). Marxism reeled as philosophy (Dialectical materialism) which Historical materialism becomes an important component and Scientific Socialism as application.<sup>22</sup> The problem in Marxism brewing this triad is that it scuffled its very essence of an accessible flight for consistent struggle for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. As Althusser took for an example, Stalin fixed the formula of this poor man’s Hegelianism as the Absolute Knowledge without exterior.<sup>23</sup> He continues,

The definition of the True was the prerogative of the leaders of the bourgeoisie ideology of the omnipotence of ideas triumphed in the monstrous unity of State-Party-State Ideology, the masses had only to submit in the very name of their liberation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 276; Ideological State Apparatus concerns about public lives that is being advanced in terms of rituals and practices and less repression or violence that may incur when the subjects became bad subjects. ISA conditions the mind of the subjects to act or behave in order to become performative societal activities. ISA is plural and diverse, meaning, omnipresent and existing in all corners of society; however, it works in private mechanisms such as the Church, School, Family, Legal, Political, and Communication and Cultural activities (See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

<sup>21</sup> Althusser, *Marxism Today*, 277

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

As we analyze the problem of Marxism today and submit it to validation, we expect that the spurts of bourgeoisie intellectuals in its sphere can cause a rift within its ideological formation. As for Althusser, the interpellation of masses in ideological/repressive apparatuses promotes a massive backfire if not prevented in the level of who controls the ideology. The deformity of ideology lies in who controls the Party as represented by a leadership that wrestles the Truth muddled with power that paves way to class biases; hence, as history's famous habit does, re-creating a Bourgeoisie State.<sup>25</sup> An answer is something we can shuffle in the materiality of organizational structure to reproduce an effective structure of State free from personal ideological control. However Lenin (involving masses in the ideological formulation; Gramsci (caught in philosophy of history) and Mao (denied metaphysical idea by submitting dialectics in *dialectics* as presupposed by his *On Contradiction* but personally played his finger on separation and power of the Party from the masses) failed to convert these *practices* into a monolithic theory of ideology vital to the structuration of an effective Marxist philosophy. In a nutshell, Althusser said that what has happened in history is the absence of a theory of ideology, State, Party and politics.<sup>26</sup>

### Complete Marxist Theory

How to posit a complete Marxism, if possible? Marxism should diagnose the contradictions and illusions of history. By finding a theory "representing the proletariat," it should master historicity by subjecting this theory in the history of struggle independent of demised ideological make-up. Struggle carries a conceptual baggage that is prone to deformity and illusion. What Marxism needs is to qualify itself not only in struggle but its history whose nature presupposes a theoretical validation. Furthermore, vital to Marxism is to recognize tragedies and cognize its roots.<sup>27</sup> The recognition of its *beginnings* yield to the understanding of its flight; namely, its originary essence free from hermeneutic decorations. Hence, for Althusser, let Marxism today finally "begin to know itself as it is, and it will change."<sup>28</sup> He warned us that for theory to plunge we should stop frolicking with apparatuses as controlled by few. As he noted, Marxism will continue to be in a critical position as it is engaged, surprised by mass movements and open to the demands of the unpredictable history of struggle. Marxism is a poignant business of philosophers and affirming

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 278

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 279

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Gramsci, men are all philosophers. The ordeal to the unknown future laid out by history is a struggle. Simply put, in order to understand history's non-rationality, Marxism should return to its humble beginnings that is to settle with Marx and the former philosophical conscience.

To presuppose that flight's beginnings, one needs to consider a dispersed and fragmented Marxism today that is culled by State and Party Politics. The atomized form of Marxism needs a unifier, but this Messianism will not point on Marx who is long ago dead. But, how? Only in the future where we can gamble the entourage of chance.

### **Interlude: determination-in-the-last-instance**

I will temporarily suspend the entourage of chance to give way to a certain *wound*.

What is this wound left by Hegel to Marx as if Marxism became the scar? I will elaborate the answer to this question by posing two statements I found in Althusser's essay, *How can one be a Marxist in Philosophy*:

- I. Marx was close to Hegel in his insistence on rejecting every philosophy of the Origin and of the Subject, whether rationalist, empiricist or transcendental.<sup>29</sup>
  
- II. Dialectics was the only means of thinking within a philosophy which had very good reason for original refusing the use and guarantee of the categories of Origin and Subject.<sup>30</sup>

The first hypothesis speaks of the rejection of the rationalist Origin and a participant Subject in a historical process. Despite Hegel's allegiance to the final reconciliatory essence of Absolute Spirit, the Origin is undermined which leads us to the second hypothesis that affirms the replacement of the Origin by dialectic itself. The dialectical position is espoused by certain radical negativity as an expositor of the remainder. This remainder is what is left at the process and re-creates another opposition in history until the formation of succeeding variables of historical unveilings. On the process, Hegel inevitably (and perhaps unconsciously) conjectured the generation of an Origin and also of Subject. To illustrate, months before the French revolution, the escape from Monarch absolutism is unthinkable for the middle class including merchants and intellectuals. As the monarch acts as

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<sup>29</sup> Althusser, "Is it Simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy?", in *Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientist*, 216.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

synthesis of history, there ignited the opposition viz. the middle class insurgency. Mercantilism defined history of the Origin and the Subjects; the origin namely where it came from (from injustices of the Monarch) and the subjects as participants (new historical agents that creatively repeats history known as capitalists). And as capitalism rise to power and wealth, it created new opposition that guarantees consistent dialectical progress. Conversely for Althusser, Hegel is prone to create circles within circles or spheres within spheres<sup>31</sup> vis-à-vis the dialectics proposed of Hegel (as possible critique for historical Origin) failed to comply with concrete facticity by clinging to the promise of the Spirit. Using the language of Althusser, in this turn, Marx *detoured* Hegel; one must be on guard on the idealist temptation involved in the Spirit. As Marx wrote in the *Postface of the Second Edition of the Capital*, “Hegel mystified dialectics.”<sup>32</sup> It is in this purpose that Marx demystifies Hegel by *inverting* the very essence of dialectics. Hereafter, Marx acquiesced dialectics to the conditions of materialism.

The inversion occurred when instead of affirming the Hegelian Unity or Totality, Marx on the other hand described his materialism as *whole*. Whole in a sense not of a circular unendingness, but that of an edifice of unevenness.<sup>33</sup> This edifice works upon the recognition of unevenness that exists between superstructure (politico-moral and juridical legitimacy) and infrastructure (the economic base where workers lives) that continually molds the historical process as determined-in-the-last-instance. Marx’s topography works through recognition that in the order of determination, the share of superstructure and the infrastructures is unequal and the dominating unevenness constitutes the whole social formation.<sup>34</sup> One must recognize an interplay of differences to come up with a possible confrontation determined-in-the-last-instance. What basically determines? It is clear that in both Engels and Marx, economy is the determinant-in-the-last-instance:

According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this, neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>32</sup> Marx, Postface to the Second Edition of *Capital*, vol. 1, 102-3 cited in Althusser, *Marxist in Philosophy*, 217.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Joseph Bloch, 21 September 1890, Selected Correspondence Moscow 1975 pp 394; cited by Althusser, *Marxist in Philosophy*, 214.



By positing economy as the ultimate determinant, Engels (which is also of Marx) sought that there are other determinants like politico-legal and moral aspects. The determination in the last instance by the economic base purportedly divides unevenly the whole materialist structure that which “the last instance explodes the peaceful fiction of the circle, or the spheres.”<sup>36</sup> It is through economic unevenness where we can locate the *beginning* certainly (according to Althusser) where Marxist topography desires at finding the place of the questioner in the historical process. He continued: “this place in which you must fight is no longer a point nor is it fixed—it is an articulated system of positions determined in the last instance.”<sup>37</sup>

One can see that the Hegelian wound (the wound of totality and idealism) disappears in a sense that the determining factors (and in the last instance, economy) foment unevenness that furnishes historical revelations. It is how Marx detoured Hegel by admitting the unevenness and inequality in social structure that flatly spoils the illusions of Totality. Even for Marx, every development is uneven, that the dialectics works not in an exaltation of both oppositions but in a fashion of a coming revolution,

In both cases, the dialectic functions in the old manner of pre-Marxist philosophy as a philosophical guarantee of the coming of revolution and of socialism. In both cases materialism is either juggled away or reduced to the mechanical and abstract materiality of the productive forces. In all cases the practice of this dialectic runs up against the implacable test of the facts: the revolution did not take place in nineteenth-century Britain, nor in early twentieth-century Germany; it did not take pace in the advanced countries at all, but elsewhere, in Russia, then later in China and Cuba, etc.<sup>38</sup>

Dialectics in Marxism still tempts us of messianic tendencies (mechanical and abstract) inasmuch as the *poor man's Hegelianism* altered and dogmatized by Stalin and perhaps by other dictators in taking advantage of economism as the last determinant which all people share. Unless Marxism is able, now or never, to find its theoretical roots, it will advance a *leitmotif* establishing its edifice free from any control, interventions or manipulation. As Lenin puts it, “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.”<sup>39</sup> It is clear to Althusser that we cannot doubt the idea that in some countries class struggle seems to be the weakest link

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 219-20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>39</sup> Vladimir Lenin, *What is to be done?*, *Collected Works*, vol. 5. Moscow 1961, p.369 (ed.)

and even to those countries whose revolutions seems to be victorious, the process remains stagnant due to lacking of a theory that will guide struggle the uneven development. What appears in some cases is the *undetermination* of dialectics to realize its inverted form that results in premature or miscarried revolution. This loss of momentum tells something about dialectics: so long socialist countries embrace the promise of Marxism (not Marx at all); so long they modify Marx's thoughts to conform their interests and dissuade unevenness of history; they are still tangled in the webbing of idealist invitations.

How to clean the Hegelian wound if not in terms of repositioning Marxism in light of how Marx formulates his inversion of Hegel by supposing a different form of dialectics void of any idealist promises. Althusser successfully traced it in Marx's works, in order to do such, by taking the path determined in the last instance simply put, by acknowledging the unequal treatment of history to its subjects.

This *interlude* recognized determination in the last instance in Marxist theory. In so doing, what Marx never expected is a theory that will realize his materialism (since we found out that dialectical materialism collapsed into Hegel's dreams leading also to the same fate of historical and its application scientific socialism) in the most determinate instance which Althusser flavored as chance.

### Enters Aleatory Materialism

Narrowing the possibilities of a history to repeat itself, Louis Althusser presents us a new motif in comprehending (and also critiquing) dialectics suspended in materialist theory which he called aleatory materialism. His main thesis is that "[the] materialism of the encounter... [is] the negation of the End of all teleology, be it rational, secular, moral, political or aesthetic."<sup>40</sup> By this negation, Althusser claims the opposite, that is, the accomplishment fact of freedom from pre-determined powers of history. Since we are localizing in this paper the very foundation or the *beginning* of materialism, hence settling the score with former *philosophical conscience*, we must present this very conscience that influences philosophy itself. Conscience, that is, external to philosophy, ulterior to any influence of logocentric tradition, of the search of Meaning in everything. With this, enters the kind of opposing materialism against the rationalistic-materialistic tradition of Lenin and Marx that follows disguised forms of materialism such as teleological and necessary. Hereafter, "the existence of an almost completely unknown materialist tradition in the history of philosophy; the

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<sup>40</sup> Louis Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 190

materialism of the rain, the swerve, the encounter, the take ... of the aleatory and the contingency.”<sup>41</sup>

This materialism proposes a profound theme in history of philosophy drawing back from Epicurus (and also of Lucretius). Althusser started his essay about ‘raining’ the very same edge where materialism begun exceptionally in the face of Epicurus whose atoms fell in parallel to each other in the void.<sup>42</sup> The underlying reality of the parallel atomic fall suggests the activity of micro-realities of smaller spheres that moves within the void,

The formation of the world was brought by falling of infinity of atoms parallel to each other. Before the said formation there was nothing, there was no Meaning neither Cause nor End nor Reason nor Unreason. The non-anteriority of Meaning is one of Epicurus’ basic theses by which he opposed to the likes of Aristotle and Plato. In this parallel rain, swerving of the clinamen is introduced.<sup>43</sup>

Epicurean atomic rain suggests a non-logocentric theme where he decentered Meaning in its place to give credence to the void, the nothingness, which is equivalent to the Whole (or something in Parmenides) and Heidegger<sup>44</sup> himself accounted for an attunement prior to Dasein (through anxiety). As movements of atoms shows nothingness, Epicurus introduced the theme of freedom,

The clinamen is an infinitesimal swerve, as small as possible, no one knows where, or when or how it occurs or what cause an atom to swerve from its vertical fall in the void, an encounter with the atom next to it and from encounter to encounter, a pile-up and the birth of the world—agglomeration of atoms induced in the chain reaction by initial swerve and encounter.<sup>45</sup>

This infinitesimal swerve articulates freedom from the nothingness of the atomic fall wherein an atom encounters another atom from the primacy of their vertical fall that readies the collide-pile-up-interlocked atomic particles in order to create. For Althusser (and even to this Lucretian swerving which means is not original to Epicurus), this lasting encounter

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 167

<sup>42</sup> See Brad Inwood, “The Origin of Epicurus’ Void,” *Classical Philology*, 76, no. 4: (October 1981), 273-285.

<sup>43</sup> Althusser, *Underground Current*, 168-9.

<sup>44</sup> See Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> Althusser, *Underground Currents*, 169.

will produce a world which is an *accomplished fact*<sup>46</sup> brought forth by the swerving of clinamen whose pure effect is of contingency since it depends upon the aleatory encounter. This unknown encounter submits necessity to contingency<sup>47</sup> by virtue of its indeterminateness and non-localizability. The aleatory effect gives power to any variable to intervene inasmuch as Epicurus and Althusser favored for something unknown to introduce its result. Just as Althusser utilized Heidegger's rejection of the Origin, Cause and End that echoes same of Epicurus', he espoused this term *es gibt*, which means *there is*, which gives incredulity to every being that exists. This materialism is purported at the observation of *es gibt*, to give power to a transcendental accident or contingency, which we did not choose, but accidentally existed as if an infinitesimal swerving occurred. Thusly, we are led to the possibility of a materialism that concentrates on the aleatory effects that leads us to the concrete exposure of *es gibt*, which is free from any teleological contraventions. From this unknown materialist tradition, Althusser tried to stretch its boundaries from Epicurus up to philosophers prior to Hegel and Marx:

### I. Machiavelli's *Prince*

Machiavelli envisioned to think in the fifteenth century Italy the conditions of unifying into a national state.<sup>48</sup> This vision is possible through a Prince, whose nature is that of a fox and a lion, enough to sustain prowess and power in dire times of corruption and sustenance of control. The prince should be the encounter in this atomic time: "[i]n sum, an atomized country, every atom of which was descending in free fall without encountering its neighbour. It was necessary to create the conditions for a swerve, and thus an encounter."<sup>49</sup> The Prince, who is also the unifier of people for Althusser echoing Cesare Borgia, is a nameless man from a nameless corner of Italy where he will start from the atomic point the founding of a national state in his possession of enough luck and *virtu*. In here Althusser recognize the ability of the Prince to possess *virtu* that will encounter the power of *Fortuna*, of fortune and chance to his side to atomize and eventually for the aleatory encounter to take effect. Thinking of politics by way of aleatoriness of a lasting encounter, Althusser further writes,

The Prince is governed, internally, by the variations of this other aleatory encounter that of the fox on the one hand and the lion and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

man on the other. This encounter may not take place but it may also take place. It has to last long enough for the figure of the Prince to ‘take hold’ among the people—to ‘take hold’, that is, to take form so that institutionally, he instils fear of himself as good; and if possible so that he ultimately is good, but on the absolute condition that he never forget how to be evil if need be.<sup>50</sup>

To take hold is to take form sort of saying to create to set conditions to the reign of either terror or fear that will craft the Prince a lasting encounter among the people until the establishment of a unified Italian national state. With such encounter, the prince emerges in shadows as he holds a dice and toss it in the air for which side of his Janus face to reflect. In such way, the Prince can encounter in its most aleatory kind the determination of history set forth by his grueling enemies.

## II. Spinoza’s *Singular Essence*

Thought for Spinoza develops into three stages: first, man is thinking illusion, confused thoughts and hearsay, which will then take place to the second, as man forms common notion the eventually embracing the third, searching for a singular essence (like freedom, love and God).<sup>51</sup> However, there is no guarantee of a transition from first to second then to third such as the Cartesian cogito of reflection and affirmation towards a thinking subject. Erstwhile, Spinoza claims that politics is a construction of necessary myths since most people embody illusions and confused thoughts becoming array of notions. Henceforth, for Althusser, Spinoza supports the same view of Machiavelli—that of the idea of a political being that rejects any finality, religious and transcendental affinities.<sup>52</sup>

## III. Hobbes’ Leviathan

Althusser opened his discussion on Hobbes with the line, “All society is based on fear.”<sup>53</sup> With this, Hobbes cognizes the striving of man to complete in order to attain his desires, to create an atomic behavior to persevere their being to grapple the void to which men will carve their own freedom. To wit Althusser,

An individual joins the *war of all against all* only out of a desire to avoid every obstacle that would prevent him from forging straight ahead (one thinks here of the atoms descending in free fall parallel to each

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 180.

other), basically he would be happy to encounter no one at all in a world that would in that case be empty.<sup>54</sup>

This free fall state of nature qualifies Hobbes to think of primitive human activities to secure life out of the jungle of perils. In this treatment of Agambenian *bare life*, Hobbes think that man ‘will bestow death’ to any being that will block his free fall as atomic unit in a void. Heretofore, man will wage war to declare his atomic supremacy. However as man loses his power in war, he will enter a contractual state with other men in order to negotiate their place (Althusserian encounter; swerving). A mutual pact *takes place* in name of a rational bond that pledges all men as atomic individuals and submit one another to an omnipotent power that secures all their rights (by punishing them if there is an enmity of these rights): Leviathan.<sup>55</sup> In here, Hobees tries to contribute in the discovery of a New World as the aftermath of certain historical process (that is parallel fall of atoms) that will welcome a possibility of binding all men in name of a Leviathan akin to Machiavelli’s Fortuna that will define the aleatory constitution of the world.

#### IV. Rousseau’s Forest

Rousseau postulated to types of state: the state of nature which is a modification of a pure state and the pure state of nature as the radical Origin of everything.<sup>56</sup> By saying state of nature, without a doubt, Rousseau is voicing society as modified form of nature that is coming from a primeval forest where people do encounter one another, crossing paths still less probable of meeting and saying hi to one another. In a forest, there is an encounter but this encounter at the same time doesn’t take place. Two people are there in a same place but hardly do they encounter one another. For Althusser, it is comparable to the Epicurean void where atomic particles fall but least to swerve with another except in the fortunate chance of aleatory encounter despite its brief conjunctions. Prior to any society, there is a radical absence of encounter that is the pure state where there is no social relation. Not until man is constrained to relate himself to other for example in the time of catastrophe or plagues, he will find associations and encounter as last pieces of human nature and finally the conception of society. In this very encounter, “[a] long, slow dialectic comes into play...forced contacts produce language...passions, and amorous exchanges or struggles between men; such struggles eventually

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 183

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 184.

lead to the state of war.”<sup>57</sup> When the society is born, the social relation takes place and war find its abode. Man will now learn to accumulate resources, be it wealth, territory or other economic fixations that sheltered an *uneven development*, in Lenin’s term aimed, at his *perfectibility*.<sup>58</sup> Or, for some to cater a state of pure nature in terms of *pity*, an ability to bear one’s suffering...a thirst for the Other.<sup>59</sup> These two states give man certain conjuncture in historical unfolding, thus his own presence wither become a perfect being or a being who knows sympathy. With that coming to view, it is inevitable to feel the former, as history shows, where people fall like atomic rain in the thrust of perfectibility which collides to pity. Hence, men will enter illegitimate contract in which the poor and the marginalized will be dependent on the powerful.<sup>60</sup> The social contract will be deemed as a repulsive agreement to take over a certain place in the void, yet the aleatoriness inhibits the possibility of taking an encounter when one realizes the *threat of abyss* that is the solitary state where radical absence conjuncts. As for Rousseau, as the social contract fails to become utopia and hence falling in the illegitimate encounter, *one has to postulate* a singular essence in Spinozist kind; enabling a conversion into a legitimate encounter in the most unknowable time. Since history is one of the vanguards of the social contract (in light that the powerful controls the variables of historicity), Althusser thinks that Rousseau is espousing a *necessity of contingency* like an intuition during eighteenth century that refutes teleologies of history to give a broad path for French Revolution to aleatorily *took place*.<sup>61</sup>

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While Fukuyama postulated the End of history, Althusser imbibed the same idea, yet in the parlance of Epicurus, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes and Rousseau. These materialist thinkers of aleatory tradition proved that coming from nowhere or when, certain contingent solutions can be activated giving way to surprising changes in historic débuts. Without these micro-interventions, history repeats, literally, and a repeating history is a boring repetitive encounters. Yet Althusser, shy of classifying Marx, writes: “[Marx] too of course but Marx is constrained to think within a horizon torn between the aleatory of the Encounter and the necessity of the Revolution.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 185-6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

## Contingency or Necessity?

But to ask the question: is the aleatory encounter a contingency of necessity or a necessity of contingency?

The rhetorical question rests on the nature of the encounter first in theoretical point and second on concrete historical leaning. In other words, it is a survey whether theorization about the encounter complies with parameters of experience and history. In so doing, this viewpoint regards that encounter more or so happens as contingent or perhaps as necessitated by a Reason, Origin or End. However we have known that aleatory encounter rejects philosophical essences (in order to accommodate conscience exterior to philosophy itself) such as the Whole *in favor* of dispersion or disorder.<sup>63</sup> To accommodate disorder is to gather nothingness prior to any assembling or order, that is before welcoming the measures of philosophy (logos aphophantikos according to Aristotle) nothing explains the essence of something with respect to Parmenides who once annexed nothing as which shapes the spherical being (nothing is outside the being). In such connection one can see the Epicurean void, the floating point where atoms align parallelism to their fall prior to swerving of clinamen that begins Order or Assembling.

To situate this materialism Althusser asked: what is the origin of the world? Aleatory materialism will answer ‘nothingness’ or there is no obligatory beginning to philosophy; on the contrary, it catches a moving train again, knowing nothing where the train tracks are.<sup>64</sup>

It is on the complex language game of Althusser where he played this void, this nothing whom he treated as *there is* (es gibt) translatable to *there-has-always-already-been-nothing*, which primordially proved the “readiness” of the conditions of any aleatory encounter (for history to occur, there are sets of conditions which precedes the historical event per se) thus, *necessity*. However the aleatory encounter itself gives way to the event in such way that despite the conditions, any alterations or perhaps adjustments on these conditions would likewise occur. In this line of reasoning, it is surefire true that there is the primacy of contingency than necessity,

Primacy of the positivity over negativity (Deleuze); primacy of the swerve over the rectilinearity of the straight trajectory (the Origin is a swerve from it); the primacy of disorder over order; primacy of dissemination (Derrida) over the postulate that every signifier has a

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,188.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,189.



meaning and in the welling up of order the very heart of disorder to produce a world.<sup>65</sup>

The non-assignability of the end as a characteristic of the materialism of the encounter defines a process that has no definite subject (proletariat or God). Everything that comes about falls as incidences of chance with no exact or determinate temporal and spatial emergence. *Everything that occurs, occurs by chance.* In this kind of world where history loses its power, the virtue of development is guaranteed by occurrences in the flight of chances that is of encounters of any unknown agents either passive or active in a “we know not where, we know not when”<sup>66</sup> state of affairs. One thing is sure that an event will take place and take the form of something which will be relevant in succeeding process. In this plain view, one can articulate the primacy of aleatory materialism over the formalistic designs of any materialism like the dialectical and historical. In here necessity has a place abruptly by accepting necessity as thinking of the *becoming-necessary of the encounter of contingencies*.<sup>67</sup>

By way of thinking as becoming-necessary, contingencies and its intersections in history unfolds the events that appear in *surprising way of taking hold*.<sup>68</sup> However it is on these very revelatory surprises where most of events fail to arise completely. Interestingly when participants grabbed the chance however presupposing that they are the center of the event (hence thinking themselves as atomic necessities), they are throwing away both virtue and Fortuna, the void, the swerve, and the encounter setting the elusive dodo bird of chance to fly in the Hegelian Night of the World.

### **Aleatory Conclusion or, how to return Marxism?**

This entire atomic exposition of history in spirit of dialectics flawed from Hegel aimed at returning Marxism in its original bent; that is to say, recognizing Marx by returning to the original philosophical conscience. The return to the philosophical conscience suffices the understanding of an aleatory history.

This non-teleological shift in historic conception likewise influences materialism as chanced encounter of various elements playing in any field, in any history. This encounter is non-determined by any variables but only of itself as its occurrences can be of different make-ups like Paul Klee’s painting—the Angel of History. The Angel of History will come from the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 189-90.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 193-4.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 196.

wall whose debris touched the poor Angel's fate in a stormy encounter. I used the word coming to signify the quintessence of "to come" as if the promised future is near for any grasp. This is to strengthen the claim of the Heideggerian "es gibt" in which the *there is* is equal if not an exact connotation of *has-always-already-been*, the continuity of process namely the *al-readiness* of things to collide-interlock.

Capitalism *already* (again, the *al-readiness* of things), as espoused by understanding the logic of the material *there is*, mastered and designed itself to auto-produce in such a way that the world revolts around capitalistic machines. We should not disregard that capitalism itself is a product of encounter from atomic parallelism. The creation of capitalism, however, is a silent encounter for no one knows that in the backdrop of significant historical events, its germs, namely, its inchoate structure transmutes resources in the flight of its own design. Today we are witnessing how capitalism unfolds in acceleration the very nature of things, from acquisition, production, and disposal and at least attesting its self/auto-production, how to parthogenetically create itself from the plane of machines, science and biotechnological innovations. How can we design history from the plane of freedom if today's capitalism controls its networks viz. its own tenets? If we will design an encounter from the teleological perspective, we cannot see the horizon enough to be blinded of the facticity happening in the reality. What we need is an encounter that is to say aleatory, by chance, and yet capable of occurring.

Since Marxism is a *leitmotif* from the Soviet experimentation, it deluded much of its essence veering away from its original accentuation. It loses its conscience, so to speak, in the flight where it should stand as a critique of the proletariat against the opposite class. What happens is that it swings into a machinic encounter against historical processes curved by Hegelianism (which capitalism always-already mastered) by which Marxism loses its own freedom of expression as a powerful critique representing the oppressed. Marxism as posited by Lenin in the axis of the three sources (dialectical, historical materialism and scientific socialism) hopped to the train of Hegelian determinism and thereafter forgets the aleatory materialist conception of history. We thought that it is Marxism that abandoned revolution as necessary step to communism *but it is us*, who is unaware of what really is going on, never had expected Marxism is a flawed attempt to discuss the possibility of a legitimate society based on the slaves becoming future tyrants as if the *future* itself is compromised. This compromised future passed from Lenin to Stalin and other remnants of the cold world socialist blocs. Yet to sound less deterministic, Marx himself (and again, not Marxism) affirmed otherwise hence our *bringing back*,

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under the circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly **encountered, given** and transmitted from the past.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 300; [emphasis mine].

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