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Sanitary Enigma (2004)

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Analysing the tense relationship between culture and the subject in his article *Discomfort in Culture* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*), Freud, for the first time, addresses the problem of cleanness in a very explicit manner and from a psychoanalytic perspective. In addition to defining, determining and describing culture as a) a composite structure of institutions, achievements and practices that facilitates

overcoming of natural disasters and organisation of people's way of life in communities, and b) a prominent characteristic of human beings to nurture higher aspirations for intellectual and psychic (artistic, scientific and technical) development, Freud makes a further point and adds to the class of cultural characteristics, and in a way a third definition of culture, the human's need for beauty, cleanness and order.

These three characteristics, however, in his view, appear to be differently transparent, comprehensible and accessible to psychoanalysis. Freud relates the human's need for order to the perfect harmony of the heavens (which, the way he sees it, has no metaphysical connotations), and is important for the psychic economy. If order assumes a certain daily routine, performing the activities as a ritual prevents people from wasting their everyday energy in overcoming hesitation and their contradictory instincts. Freud incidentally explains the need for beauty. He feels that at the beginning of the century it is vague why an object is perceived as pleasing to the eye; he knows that this pleasing is transferred from the realm of the agreeable and the consensual to the realm of the subjective and the subject's perception (view), but at this point onwards he is unable to offer a psychoanalytic explanation that emerges from the relevant psychic processes.

The most interesting is the mystery of cleanness, this dark enigma, for which he quite openly admits that his analytical skills surrender to, i.e. it becomes obscure and meaningfully 'dirty'. Regarding the need for cleanness, he, nevertheless, recognises a very important (later we shall see that it is actually the only statistically relevant) utilitarian function: cleanness as a bodily phenomenon has a hygienic value. Although he placed the enigma of cleanness close to the utilitarianism, in contrast to the beautiful which is artistic in itself (art for art's sake), Freud was still not any closer to the uncovering of its psychic justifiability. Knowing that the mystery called hygiene, which is a basis for most of our cultural practices, must have deeper roots, in the end, he simply admitted: "The usefulness cannot completely account for this tendency (for cleanness, author's note), there must be something else in question".¹

Thus, a theoretical crisis regarding the hygiene issue, the so-called sanitary enigma, was inaugurated in psychoanalytic circles; crises which could not have been solved by the first generation post-Freudians mainly due to the fact that this generation was characterised by an intense abjection of the holes, the stains and the dilemmas in Freud's doctrine and focused its energy, in the words of Lacan, on walling up the 'cracks' in his own theory. This generation of prosthetic specialists, orthopaedic specialists and construction workers, put in the shade of the grandeur of their mentor and builder, failed to perceive the only valid truth they taught every day and practiced under the axiom of psychoanalysis: that, namely, the secret of what is being searched lies, not in what was stated, but what was kept quiet; that the answers should be looked for, not in the wall, but in the hole, the crack, the crevice of that wall, in the cracks that Freud recognised, but did not have time, knowledge, openness nor courage to provide answers for.

On the other hand, the hygiene drama was resurrected in the last decades of the past century, in another tradition and by another generation, whose determination to restore Freud, as well as its own insights concerning the identity issues, stopped where Freud touched upon the symptoms rather than where he made a diagnosis, which, from that perspective, was equally scandalous and revolutionary. The issue relates to Jacques Lacan's school, which unorthodoxly spread his ideas through his seminars. While he addressed the audience in a metaphorical, poetic and obscure manner, he actually wanted the world to open towards the idea of the crack, developing the sense that it is from this hole that the contents of the unconscious leak, thus offering the answers to many inexplicable dilemmas. After half a century, this school had the power to renew the sanitary dilemma. Lacan's successor, though not a direct pupil of Lacan, Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian theorist who found her permanent asylum in France, used in her work conceptual tools/categories that emerged from Lacan's work thus reviving the dark enigma of cleanness in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* in 1980. This book touches upon that porous place where a libidinal, archaic child becomes a subject and enters the world of culture. She offers a genuine insight into our anxious relation towards culture, our weakness to fully surrender to it, as well as its weakness to fully absorb, incorporate, and finally assimilate us. The book title itself introduces the antipode of cleanness - the abjection, a term adopted by Kristeva from the existing lexicon but given new connotations and used as an operative conceptual tool/category that enabled her to approach the Freudian puzzle.

TWO BOSNIAN EXAMPLES

Indeed, where does this need for cleanness come from? Perhaps you belong to the group of people who regard cleanness as an imperative? Nevertheless, even if you cannot imagine your daily routine without dusting, washing up the dishes, personal hygiene and spatial hygiene, it is highly unlikely that the reasons for such need seem more transparent to you than the reasons for their own tolerance of uncleanness (or dirt) are unintelligible to other people. The obsession for cleanness goes hand in hand with the desire for order - namely, for many people, cleaning is the synonym for order, therefore, cleaning to them means tidying up, arranging things in the right place, despite the indefinite question: what is the right place for an object? One thing is clear: if you practice the cleanness rituals without a high degree of guilty conscience or if you practice them in order to overcome a guilty conscience, then you belong to the group of socialised people because the culture and its institutions act in a way that they impose a guilty conscience about uncleanness. All cultural segments that offer ready-made models for proper life point to this and they are most evident in the advertisements, which constantly compete in saturating the market with products that successfully help the struggle against uncleanness. In other words, the conventional culture sanctions its citizens to believe that the values of cleanness are part of the civilised people's habits. There is another group of people who have a guilty conscience caused by cleanness. Unfortunately, this feeling, though not rare, is not supported by cultural institutions, including the church. As such, this group of people have no choice but to quietly endure their contradictory drives for uncleanness because the culture refuses to channel them. Women especially nourish the habit of cleanness - statistics reveal that in the life of a heterosexual couple it is the woman who is the stronghold of hygienic habits, whereas the man adopts a more careless, indifferent and at times even an aggressive attitude towards cleanness. For many women, dusting is part of the self-

cleaning ritual. Cleaning as a result of nervousness or neurosis is a common type of female struggle against anxiety. Such habits are not accidental. In her book *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas treats these issues from an anthropological point of view for the first time: "Absolute uncleanness does not exist, it is formed in the eye of the beholder.", - she wrote - "We feel uncomfortable about uncleanness not because of fear, let alone awe or terror of God. In addition, the variety of our hygienic habits cannot be explained with our notions for the life-threatening diseases. Uncleanness is a breach of the order..."²

People, apart from various other issues, are generally different regarding their experience of uncleanness as an ethical equivalent of the fall and corruption. Just as uncleanness is stigmatised and must be overcome to some people, to others uncleanness is acceptable, even pleasing, and an act of taking a step forward to the moral virtue as opposed to the sterility of the moral horror. Just as cleaning is an act of purification of the guilty conscious to some people, to others, cleanness inaugurates a whole set of feelings of guilt, concern and a need for 'getting dirty'. To some people, a dirty and untidy fate is part of the hell of this world. Let us remind ourselves of the Bosnian writer Ivo Andric, a Nobel Prize winner for Literature, who wrote the following in his famous book of meditative prose *Signs by the Roadside*:

"The people in a small town are chatty, brutal and stupid, while life is smelly and futile, full of misery and humour, Gogolian humour ... A peaceful thought rests in me – to work, to exceed the others (a thing I should have done a long time ago), but to live my own life within myself. So I will - and this is only the first step - start doing mathematics. I have faith in my ability more and more. I need to make up for everything I have missed out... Seeing around me the despairing ugliness and the multifold severe consequences of the disorder and unwillingness, I promised myself that I will work with a thought and with my hands, for myself and for the others, always and everywhere, yet I will work. This way I will live permanently in a fertile movement and useful changes; I promised myself that I will defend myself and the place where I live from disorder and uncleanness, from stagnation and poverty."

According to Andric, as we can see, the ethical dimensions of brutality towards oneself and others, as well as the cultural dimensions of stagnation and poverty are directly related to the feeling of disorder and uncleanness. Thus, the struggle against the unethical and the uncivilised begins with the struggle against disorder and uncleanness. For other people, however, the perfect order is the hell of this world. Miljenko Jergovic, the famous author of *Sarajevo Marlboro - a portrait of the war in Bosnia (1992-1996)*, in the women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* (May, 2003), in other words, a magazine intended for cultural inauguration of cleanness and tidiness, published an article in which he described order and cleanness as synonyms for stagnation and ethical hell.

"My next-door neighbour in Sarajevo was the old professor at the Faculty of Economy, who never got married and his home was the tidiest apartment I have ever been in. As a child, I was afraid of the sorrow of that apartment. The floor smelled of an old headachy chemical substance, the windows were so clean that one might have thought that there were no windows at all, the furniture was polished - not one fingerprint of the ten professor's fingers. I used to go once a month into his apartment to get him the electricity and water bills and, in return, he would give me chocolate wrapped in white paper and a pack of Fructal juice with a straw. Even this ritual spoke of his tidiness, as well as my greed - for I would cry in tears if someone else got him the bills before me. When the war started, the professor, out of no reason, left Sarajevo. He died in a collective refuge centre somewhere in Eastern Bosnia, among the

disorder of other people's fates. I believe that the untidiness was the worst punishment for him. What the unfortunate man did not know was that to other people tidiness is hell of the same kind."

The way Kristeva inaugurated the abjection, was practically to unite the two perspectives from a psychoanalytical point of view - the repulsiveness and the attractiveness of the phenomenon of uncleanness. In dictionaries, the abjection (also abject) denoted something despised, mean and poor, i.e. something that had little direct connection with the physical uncleanness and had more associations to a moral, cultural and sociological fall. In the Oxford Dictionary of English Language from 1990, the abjection (abject) is still defined in three ways: 1. terrible, extreme situation; 2. completely without pride or dignity; and 3. very poor, completely without success. However, for the psychoanalysis the abjection signified rehabilitation of the cultural stigma of uncleanness and a psychoanalytical answer to the question why civilisation is perceived as a need for cleanness and uncleanness is a blow to civilisation, terrorism against the system, i.e. as Douglas writes, a breach of the order.

UTOPIA

Territorial issues related to the phenomenon of order and disorder are treated as controversies, at the very least. Many of us, for instance, are ready to agree with the theoretical postulates of globalisation such as strengthening the humankind, transforming all people in a single unique and equal global force, which is no longer torn among each other by mutual wars and conflicts but it aims to become an ethical formation, an astral force that will explore time and space and humanise the universe. If this is the case, why do, then, all visions of global life, Huxley's Brave New World, Zemjatin's We, and Orwell's 1984, that deal with unified and normative world, a world of ultimate order, describe cleanness as sterility, a hygienic numbness and a counterpoint to our own experiencing of humanity? We are not discussing the levelling of cultural differences but rather purifying the differences between the cultural filth and tribal reek, i.e. banishing (both culturally and physically) the uncleanness of our lives and implementing the ultimate fatal Orwellian cleanness. The territory of cleanness is obviously an easily manipulated territory, a territory that lies on a property that has already been inaugurated. Cleanness is always managed by an owner. It makes use of business managers that operate with it thus becoming part of the realm of the subject's economy. Who is the owner?

The Symbolic or Symbolic order³ are terms used by Lacan to describe the world of culture, institutions and language as an order guided by the Father (hence called paternal). It is a synthesis of paternal lawful structures, language practice and linguistic signification, in other words, it is the name of the patriarchal universal principle behind the entire culture. According to Lacan, the Symbolic is not identical to what we simply call reality. The Symbolic is just as imaginary, i.e. post-imaginary (being different from the imaginary of the pre-subject) because it is a place of signifiers rather than referents. This (post) imaginary order, hence the possibility for culture, means that the possibility of creating laws and the possibility of meaningful language, i.e. a language that creates meaning, is a result of the repression of the libidinal drives, including the repression of radical addiction of the child in the first Other, the maternal body. It was Lacan who noticed and Kristeva who further elaborated the point of relation

between uncleanness-maternal thus giving the abjection, and at the same time cleanness, a psychoanalytic interpretation for the first time. It is interesting to point out that Ana Dimiskovska-Trajanovska, a Macedonian philosopher and poetess, in the poem *Betrayal* from her book of poems *Flower Blossom*, intuitively complies with Kristeva's theory when she defines the principle of entering the world as a principle of betraying one's mother: "First/ you betray the non-being / for your mother's sake / Then / you betray your mother / for the world's sake." Let us use the concept from the poem, from non-being to a state of conscious/aware subject, and assert that everyone of us experiences a phase when one is in the state of pre-subject, a state when one enters the Symbolic order, in the order of the Father, a state which lasts from the birth until the Oedipal phase (i.e. as late as the age of 3-4 and probably much earlier). When I am a proto-subject, pre-subject, I (actually 'I' is a kind of 'pre-I') am still not a subject, although I am no longer a non-being as well. The pre-subject is a dweller on the territory which Lacan refers to as the imaginary, and Kristeva as the semiotic, both concepts do not bring out a significant difference in the quality of the territory. While it exists on the territory of the imaginary/semiotic, the pre-subject has an illusion of uniqueness.

This illusion is megalomaniac in its nature, for the proto-newborn is, just as everyone in the world is, part of a single unique entity. This means that there was no difference between the former me (as pre-subject) and any other object, occurrence or phenomenon from the outside world (of the object). In other words, I, the proto-subject, was the whole world. We might just as well say, with a certain degree of naïve simplification, that the proto-subject is a kind of God, or even better a proto-God. Given the chance to talk about the experiences from the proto-phase, this entity, with an endless authority, would repeat the words of the Christ's god that he is equally within all of us. This crazy proto-subject who enjoys the grand megalomania, to its own misfortune and (maybe) fortunately for the others, will have to replace this megalomania later in its life with a more modest position of a renegade from the Middle Ages, who will never smile again nor be able to say that he feels like God, except in the rare moments of infinite happiness (let us remind ourselves about the definition that life is fifteen minutes of infinite happiness). If he continues to claim this about himself even after the process of subjectification, the culture will make sure that it is labelled as criminal or pathological, and being isolated and on the margins, he will be outside the courses of the agreed culture, unable to influence. For the proto-subject, which is referred to as the libidinal child by Kristeva, the reality is the very principle of enjoyment - he will never be able to say the things that a child in a semiotic phase might say: that the only reality is my own enjoyment because there is neither a system of norms and values nor an order which is endangered by my enjoyment. I and I only exist and my enjoyment as part of me, and this will be the case as long as, through the speech and the choice of the desired object in the phase of the Oedipal triangle, I enter the world of language, which is paternal.

This narration, which is related to analytical research, practically maintains that the child in pre-Oedipal phase cannot distinguish between subject and object.⁴ To him, his body and his mother's body is the same thing. In this phase, the certainty of his mother's body is the only reality, but this reality is the same with the certainty of my body - between our two certainties there is nobody else - neither the father nor a third party. Unfortunately for this libidinal archaic child, this phase does not last forever. Melanie Klein introduced the concept of inconsolable child who, after a certain period, notices that his

mother's body is not the infinitive source of ultimate enjoyment, neither in temporal nor in objective perspective. There are parts (objects) on this body which are capable of offering infinite satisfaction - meaning enjoyment in Lacan's terminology - of the child's libidinal desires (for instance, his mother's breasts) and parts which cannot offer such enjoyment. Furthermore, even the good objects are not constantly available to the libidinal child. The parts of the mother's body that offer enjoyment come and go just as the waves of enjoyment and asceticism come and go. The child begins to objectify his mother the moment he starts dividing his mother's body into good and bad objects (i.e. to those which satisfy his drives and libidinal desires, and those which do not). The revolutionary theory, which resulted from Klein's insight, is based on the premises that the objectification of the Mother is a prerequisite for every subjectification. In other words, I become a subject who knows that the whole world is not the same as me only when I turn my Mother into an Object. Only when my eyes perceive a partial mother, I become a unique and complete subject.

This cruel law of psychic dynamics indicates that my promotion into a subject, my birth as a subject, is conditional upon my invested energy in simplification, instrumentalisation and decomposition of the Mother. In short, every birth as a subject is accompanied by the logics of the degradation of another subject, followed by the rotation - the child as a proto-object will create an object from his mother, so that it can be reborn as a subject thanks to her instrumentalised and fragmented body, which, on the other hand, conditions the power of the perception used to perform the metamorphosis of the Mother, the perfect power of perception in general, which, in Lacan's words, creates a perfect God of truth from the Other.

Therefore, the entrance to culture, language and meaning is marked by the image of the incomplete Mother. In this respect, there are certain culturally attractive theses which reached an upsurge in the gay movement claiming that the capacity for creative and artistic production is rapidly increased with women who choose other women for their sexual partners. According to this lesbian theory which is partially based on the statistic number of gay-oriented female artists especially in the so-called Western world, when a woman chooses to love another woman, she activates the forgotten memory about the relation with maternal body, i.e. she revalues the position of objectified mother. Contrary to expectations, instead of declining in compliance with the culture of banished mothers, i.e. the culture of Lacan's paternal order, her creative capacities increase progressively. Obviously, this theory aims to establish a possibility for critical evaluation of the results from the Oedipal knot - implying that they are not as progressive as claimed. In fact, it is argued that the progress of our civilisation, based on Oedipal sons and partial mothers, consists of false perceptions regarding growth. It is likely that many critics of the concepts regarding the progress of civilisation would agree with this conclusion although lacking faith in the psychic utopia emerging from this theory and with completely different arguments.

BARGAINING

Do you remember Kant's anecdote about a man who was given a chance to make love with the woman of his dreams for one night (in other words an achievement of the ultimate enjoyment) at the price of being hanged immediately after the love night, the moment he steps out of the room? Kant asks: what will this lover do - will he enter the room to enjoy or will he renounce the sex of his dreams? Kant says that he will always choose to give up. Kant's man has the capacity to bargain with the world - he will give up his high demands given the idea that further along the road he might encounter other, though smaller, pleasures.

Lacan doubts the certainty with which Kant rejects the possibility of this suicidal love making. 5 There are times, Lacan says, when I choose to enjoy without caring about the balance of the universe, without thinking of the price I have to pay, be it my own life. How else can you explain a drugs addict's choice to use drugs when he is certainly aware of the price of addiction? Neurotics often choose to repeat their painful experiences (compulsive repetition), Lacan says, and asks the question: what about the neurotic, who is able to enjoy sex provided that he knows that an important momentarily threat awaits him afterwards?

Clearly, there is a difference between the two choices. When the subject chooses pleasure that weighs the balance of gain and loss, practically, when the subject bargains for pleasure, this is a kind of pleasure. Another type of pleasure is when the subject does not take account of the economy of loss and when the choice breaks certain or any kind of prohibition. The second case of pleasure is undoubtedly on the other side of pleasure, for which Lacan introduces the notion of enjoyment (probably in the closest sense of what Lacan meant under *jouissance*). Lacan discusses his views on the differences between the expected enjoyment (pleasure) and the achieved enjoyment during the seminars in 1972-1973. When a lover does not enter the room, Lacan's notion of achieved enjoyment, or what we previously referred to as pleasure, is the same as Freud's principle of pleasure. According to Freud, pleasure is an economic category which evaluates the losses of possible gains and maximises pleasure as far as minimum pain is reached. Ego, in Freud's words, bargains with reality to the benefit of id. Lacan's *jouissance* is the other side of the bargained pleasure: it is the enjoyment that no longer makes use of the mediating role of the Ego in the process of bargaining with the principle of reality. To the contrary, the subject usually transcends his own sensuality so that he can survive in the Reality. This transcendence means that the subject will always choose to avoid anxiety resulting from the insistence for prolonged pleasure, which would not take account for the balance benefit/damage.

Let us ask again the generically modulated question: when and how is the Order in which the subjects transform into traders of their own pleasure constituted? We are not referring to Kant's question (whether any of us would enter the room of ultimate enjoyment without taking account for the price he pays i.e. sacrificing his own life) but rather ask how it happened that the subject constitutes himself as someone who will try to bargain with the world for his pleasures and, at the same time, pay as low price of suffering as possible. In other words, where does the concept of bargaining Order come from? The essence of the Freudian Oedipus complex, if we may say so, lies in the attempt to answer this question. A child does not recognise the significant but momentary threat; for the child the rope at the exit of the

room of infinite enjoyment does not exist. Every child in pre-Oedipal phase is, in other words, Kant's ultimate lover.

Being so, why, then, the child abandons the logic of infinite enjoyment? It is the question that Freud posed and answered - because of the Oedipal triangle. Personality constitution is accomplished through, as Freud called it, a successful distribution of libidinal energies in the emotional knot. According to Freud, the emotional knot is 'successfully' bridged when the child understands that he needs to abandon his desire to possess his mother. Such deprivation of the desire to possess his mother will enable the child to enter the world of adults. During the phase, when he lives within the 'knot', a (male) child does not know that the gain will be high (entrance to the world of culture), in the given moment, what the child only knows is that he needs to bridge the fear of castration which, according to the analytical material, is felt as acute by the child and which originates from the Father as a threat. In order to overcome his fear, the child decides to abandon (betray, in the words of Dimiskovska) his mother thus gaining in return an entrance ticket to the world of culture. From now on, a (male) child leaves his mother to his father at the same time hoping that he himself will become a father in the place of the Father (in various modern interpretations this axiom is given numerous Oedipal versions, as, for instance, the maxim 'a caliph instead of the caliph' used in the famous comic about Isnogood) and eventually enjoy all the pleasures available to the father.

This is the first Bargain made by every subject with the world and himself. Following the school of Levi-Strauss which stresses that culture is an exchange of women, then the Oedipal triangle, as the first Bargain, chronologically complies with the phase in which the culture 'begins' for every subject. As it seems, culture is conceived at the moment when the child abandons the desire to possess his mother. This is not a bad choice at all. However, the theory of the abjection leaves a certain vague awareness that we are not generic futurists who might know what their culture would look like providing the subject remained tied to the initial love towards his mother (for some subjects this relation remains the most vital relation in their life) although, by saying this, it gets a comic value and becomes a legend which (hardly!) fills (yet it does!) numerous pages of texts about pop culture, its main interest being male-female relations. 'Hardly', because this joke is not based on a serious psychoanalytic thought, and 'yet' because it is obvious that the obsession with and about the mother continues to be the most important one in the modern culture. In other words, the relation with the mother is very important and definitely not completed within the Oedipal phase. This relation, in a phantom manner, persistently returns in our everyday lives and even when we think that it has disappeared or that it has lost all of its psychic value. This phantom manner, which constantly renews the banished relation, is actually the very phenomenon of uncleanness.

TABOOED LATER

Uncleanness, in other words, guarantees the failure of every subjectification as well as the rigidity of the order. For instance, when a bank clerk issues cheques, he requires that you put the same signature you

used to sign your name with yesterday, and this seemingly naïve administrative request is a process of identity stabilisation, materialised through the signature. For years now I have found this a traumatic experience, my signature is never the same as the one I signed yesterday; a poem I have read in the morning makes me different from myself i.e. what I was yesterday. The bank does not even take into consideration the possibility of an interim transformation and often kindly asks from the clients to 'act' or perform their signature, kindly offering another cheque for comparison. Culture demands from its subjects to be stable; its institutions want to see the stabilised subject in us once and for all. Consequently, faced with such cultural expectations, people highly value and often admire stability as a characteristic in other people. Most of the emotional articles give simple advice: find a stable partner because "People eventually end up with honest people". Stability, therefore, is perceived as a synonym for honesty. A friend of mine complained that his wife used to be a wonderful person when he met her but is no longer the same person after several years of marriage. Our social perception and our social valuation of other people are greatly based on the belief that today a subject should be the same as he was yesterday. Neither repositioning reduces the sin of betrayal of one's own stability. These expectations are derived from the way an agreed culture works, a culture which can easily count its subjects and place them on a map. All cultural institutions are included in this struggle for stability: schools, prisons, hospitals, marriages etc., to list few of the favourite places of Michael Foucault. Many years ago, the news that state officials in San Francisco were allowed to have sex change operations was announced, including the fact that a large part of the expenses would be covered by the social insurance i.e. the state budget. Though liberal in nature, this example only proves that the state silently agrees with our metamorphoses only if its apparatus is large enough to categorise them i.e. control the changes. Transsexuals are welcome, even stimulated to exercise their human rights, as long as the sophisticated state administration can have a reciprocal insight in the conversion and the culture can minimize the revolt against the order by allowing seemingly greater freedoms.

In fact, the subject never forgets that he used to be a dweller in the semiotic space. Due to this fact, the subject will always be dual in nature, having the memory of the imaginary, pre-subject phase, and at the same time he will continue to live the symbolic cultural universe because he knows no other universe. The entire language experience of the subject thus becomes schizophrenic, both deficiency and desire experience. I from the pre-subject phase remember that there used to be a territory where the reality was the reality of my desire. I, subjectified, as part of the order which marks, uses, gives and produces meaning, remember the illusion of uniqueness. This way, every one of us creates a deficiency (of the illusion of the uniqueness) and an infinite desire (for it). The desire can never be satisfied because of the missing illusion since the very essence of the subjectification implies the principle of rift. This rift, depending on the subjectification success, will remain a generator of deficiency feeling. It is in this rift that I will continue functioning indefinitely long, practically forever.

The reason for the inability to achieve final stabilisation lies in the capacity of the semiotic space to enter the symbolic. Occasionally, various personal states and various phenomena, within and outside of me, remind me of the semiotic state of all allowed and achieved enjoyment, which Kristeva called abjections. Kristeva robs them of the objective quality - they are neither tools, objects, machines nor anything that has the qualities of an object, therefore, they cannot be part of the symbolic because the

symbolic consists of objectified phenomena, of signifiers with correlatives. Since they are not part of the symbolic, abjections logically originate from the semiotic. Thus, abjection is produced in the semiotic, but receives and gives life only when the semiotic tries to penetrate the symbolic. We now see the logic of the name ab-ject i.e. the quality which is between the sub-ject and the ob-ject. The ab-ject 'takes' a bit from the two, but this bit is 'extracted' only when the abjection does not belong to either of the two and only when it possesses a quality to stand against I, to be the threat for I. According to Kristeva, apart from uncleanness, the food, the taboo and the sin have similar capacity to threaten the fundamental stability of the subject. Culture needs to hide these phenomena, to force them out as obscure because it fears their power over the subject.

For example, the desire to swallow your own vomit is considered as culturally unexpected and disagreeable behaviour, although such an act would not defy the organic logic as smoking cigarettes does, being an act which gives no nourishment to the body. Unlike the animals, it is hardly likely that a sane person would dare break the powerful vomit taboo although until recently it has been part of the subject. Nevertheless, that is the point. The vomit was part of the subject and the moment it was objectified, more than any other object, it becomes dangerous for me as a constituted subject. It seems like an object and, since the memory about its origin is active, it cannot acquire the status of an object because what was once part of me still bears the potential of a subject. Abjection is everything that originates from the subject: saliva, vomit, blood, menstrual bleeding, urine, sweat, and faeces. Our culture is established in an effort to sanction them, not because they are dirty or unhealthy, but because they are a threat to the stability of the subject. From a statistical point of view, practicing filthiness does not necessarily cause diseases. The same applies for practicing being clean, only the statistical probability is slightly different. The differences in the ways people practice and understand cleanness reveal that what makes culture affirm such abject materials as taboos is not the abjection of a disease, or as Kristeva says lack of cleanness or health. It is quite the opposite, i.e. the culture affirms them as taboos later sensing a threat to the stable identity.

MEDIA REGIME OF ABJECTION: SADAM'S SONS

Stating something as a taboo comes later and it is interesting to follow the types of cultural struggle which use the abjection operation. In an interview given by Aleksandar Stankovski, a Macedonian painter, he criticises the existence of laws against the use of soft drugs and the non-existence of laws against coprophagia and coprophilia and asks, "(whether) this means that eating faecal matter is more regular than drug abuse..." However, it is interesting to point out that the same argument is used by the opponents of tobacco industry (provided that we consider soft drugs those drugs that can be smoked). Such an example is the shame of smoking cigarettes in public in California, although, according to Žižek, the arguments against the so-called passive smoking are dubious at the least. The idea about this new abject threat involves the subtle possibility to experience the cigarette as an incomplete object since any smoke coming from another person, and ultimately somebody's breath, is always regarded as bad/unclean breath.

The media representation of the abjection, as pointed out, is never naïve, whereas the means of representation of uncleanness are a part of the process of power exchange. In July 2003, the American Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld was asked to explain to the public why the bloodied photos of the dead bodies of Odai and Qusai Hussain, the sons of the overthrown Iraqi President Saddam Hussain, were openly displayed. The public opinion was divided whether the USA violated the human dignity of the murdered sons by providing the photos to the news agencies. Those who were interested in the course of the events⁶ can remember that the photos were abjection – bloody swollen corpses. According to Kristeva, the corpse is the ultimate representation of abjection – not just any corpse like the corpse which is contextualised and used for religious service or exposed in a scientific laboratory of which it draws its meaning, but the corpse which is thrown in the yard, or photographed in the middle of the road, and shown out of context thus becoming a final, definitive, crucial and ultimate representation of the abjection in itself. The Iraqi religious community strongly objected to the incident and demanded that the corpses are given context in accordance with Muslim tradition and religion by saying that the bodies should have been washed, not exposed and cremated. Rumsfeld explained that the reason for issuing these photos was to persuade the Iraqi people fearing Saddam's regime that he would never again regain his authority. Precisely because of such full-frontal iconic representation of the subject as the ideal bearer of uncleanness, the uncleanness produced by the subject is regarded as a display of power through the horror of uncleanness.

In the summer of 2003, there was a TV advertisement for Axe deodorant showing several handsome men dancing a folk dance, the context alluding to a Balkan wedding. They were tightly pressed against one another and all covered in sweat. One of them called the woman observing from the side to join the dance, and while she hesitated due to their sweating bodies, another man joined the dance instead. The advertising slogan said: "Male sweat can only attract other men. Are you sure that this is what you want?" This is an interesting example of how media censure is used on the physical abjection, the allusion being that, if present, the physical abjection suggests a less developed and primitive culture. It also points out that in addition to the censure of the abjection (the sweat) as culturally undesirable, there is, at the same time, a battle for censure on other two front lines: against the Balkan style (avoiding the oriental way of life and customs) and against the gay threat (acknowledgment that a homosexual identity is disapproved of).

Being more than a powerful clash between two paradigms: nature and culture, this scene represents the ultimate strike of the Reality – it distorts the underlying convention we use to comprehend the differences between our body and its industrialised definition. The shock is caused not only by the difference between the patriarchal body and the industrialised norm but also by the fact that we perceive this striking difference, by the distortion of the order which, as Lacan says, contains an extra signifier, i.e. "a signifier which is empty in the sense that there is nothing to correspond to it in reality".⁷ Lacan's sense of extra is the purity which is "added": there is nothing clean about sweating as a bodily phenomenon, but this is exactly the paradox – sweating is clean until culture views it as dirty, i.e. since culture considers it to be dirty, culture has to represent sweating as clean by employing the operation "added extra".

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Footnotes:

1 Freud, Sigmund: From Culture and Art. – ODSF, book five (translated from German, dr. Vojin Matic, dr. Vladeta Jerotic and dr. Djordje Bogicevic), Novi Sad, Matica srpska, 1969, 298.

2 Mary Douglas: Purity and Danger. – Belgrade, Biblioteka XX vek, 2001, 10.

3 In this text the notions Symbolic order (Lacan), culture (Freud), order (Mary Douglas) and the symbolic (Kristeva) are used as synonyms. Although there are notional differences among them, the emphasis on the tense relation between culture and the subject allows us to treat them as equal in sense.

4 I doubt the validity of this psychoanalytic formula. Based on the solid body of Freudian theory, it was first exposed by Anna Freud and accepted by most of the branches of psychoanalysis, as well as the cognitive psychoanalysts such as Piaget. Melanie Klein with her views on psychoanalysis was the only one to oppose this theory (Kristeva, on her part, is mostly inspired by her work) although she is seemingly in conflict with Freudian standards (she would not agree with this latter interpretation, but this is irrelevant to our discussion). Although there is an apparent difference between Freudian and Kleinian baby (the former is libidinal narcissistic conscienceless child, similar to a protoplasm thrown in a world without objects, without causality, without conscience or idea about the Other, while the latter is a subject capable of showing complex emotions such as envy, gratitude, a rich internal life, a clearly expressed conscience about the good and the bad in the objects and having the capacity for fantasies), I am more and more convinced that the two theories cannot sufficiently account for the enigma of the affective life of a newborn. I believe that in the psychic dynamics of a speechless subject, the place of the Other is more important than the place of the subject, and this is not necessarily contrary to the basic logics. I also think that the centring of the conscience should be sought for outside the subject itself despite the central nervous system. The role of the Other in the enjoyment of the subject, which was marvellously pointed out by Lacan, has to go beyond. Having in mind the latest finds regarding mirror neurons which will present a turning point in psychoanalysis, I believe that this intuition will solely prove to be fertile.

5 More details on the topic provided in the text: Adrian Johnston: The Forced Choice of Enjoyment: Jouissance between Expectation and Actualization, in: The Symptom, issue 2, Spring 2002

6 The American military operations were broadcasted by CNN under the motto “War against Terror” instead of “War against Terrorism”. This ‘error’ was almost unnoticed by the public. The fact was that the media promoted the war as a struggle for the moral good rather than the political good.

7 Slavoj Zizek. “In his strict look, my doom is a great condemnation” in: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan, But Were Afraid to Ask About Hitchcock, Templum, Skopje, 2002, 232.