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Editor's Note:

The topicality of the subsequent paper was recently underlined by the internationally reported comments of The US Marine Corps' Lt Gen James Mattis shortly after assuming leadership of US Central Command. He said:

"Actually, it's quite a lot of fun to fight; you know, it's a hell of a hoot. I like brawling; it's fun to shoot some people."

Source - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4234751.stm>

“First to Fight!” Playing Your Identity, Hooking Your Desire and Body

Janne Kurki, University of Helsinki

1. Introduction

In spite of its complicated nature, the topic of this paper is simple to state: how is one's identity – especially one's political identity – formed in the beginning of the 21st century, especially in the so called developed countries and the areas in which the brutal battle for souls of the youngsters is going on? Completely answering such a broad question in a short paper is impossible, but in order to fulfill the task as well as possible, I will introduce both new theoretical concepts ('ideological power apparatus' and a 'move' as an object *a* and some very concrete examples (Xbox game *Close Combat*, the web side of the US marines etc.). In this way, I want to continue and develop the line of thought opened by Slavoj Žižek and some other contemporary thinkers: I will use Lacanian concepts without hesitation for conceptualizing social and political matters, as well as mix them with certain Marxian concepts (especially Louis Althusser's 'Ideological State Apparatus').

The lists of concrete examples are intended for stressing the empirical generality of these phenomena and for answering the possible accusations of over-interpretation.

I will begin with what I call the 'ideological power apparatus' and explain why, with this concept, it is important to analyze the concrete ways media hook people's desires. After this I will elaborate some concrete examples, one of which I will later conceptualize with the concept of the *move*. In the end, I will juxtapose my analysis with some passages of Žižek's work on this subject and present some remarks and questions for the future research. The provocative title of the paper announces the most awful products of the ideological processes analyzed here: through these ideological power apparatuses, those young men and women who are first to fight against the Enemy are produced. The background question is simple: why is a young man or woman from a "civilized" Western country ready to travel a long way to Afghanistan or Iraq and shoot some civilians? There can be only ideological "answers" to such a question.

2. Media as Ideological Power Apparatuses

So-called aesthetization of politics is not a new phenomenon: those in power have strengthened their grip on power and people, for example, with parades, uniforms and architecture for millennia. Already in his *Republic*, Plato expressed the idea of using art only for advancing the interests of State. Our time is no exception here, however, it is characterized by certain typical features, such as the massive increase and development of entertainment industry, the "democratization" of the world by whatever means and the so called breakdown of great metanarratives. Politics is pursued with images and stories on individuals (the better your individual story is, the better your chances in politics are, an excellent example being Barack Obama). Thus, individualistic entertainment is evidently typical of the political aesthetics of our time: politics and entertainment traverse and impregnate each other.

In the 1960's and 1970's, Louis Althusser began to use the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses in order to conceptualize those discourse formations that maintain the prevailing relationships of production and ensure their renewal and thus the prevailing political power relationships (Althusser 1976). For Althusser, the most important Ideological State Apparatus was the education system – universities included. However, among his examples, he mentioned also the "cultural Ideological State Apparatuses," such as arts and media. Since the 1980's, the Althusserian concept of Ideological State Apparatus has mutated, for example, by Slavoj Žižek's ongoing analyses on media products like Hollywood movies (see, for example, Žižek 2002). This change from Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses to Žižek's concentration on media seems to be motivated: generally speaking, nowadays media affect people's worldviews probably more than the education system does. This is connected to the possibly changed role and position of the contemporary State in ideological and economic battles – which is why I will use the concept of

ideological *power* apparatuses without capitals (the question of the role and position of the State is especially topical today, in the middle of the biggest economic crisis since the 1920's). What is more – and too broad a question for this paper – this change seems to imply a manifold and complex change in the relationship between the aesthetic and the political.

As the first example group of ideological power apparatuses, we could mention political documentary movies and their position in political struggles, for example, in the presidential election 2004 of the USA and in the events effecting and following the election. The 2004 election was characterized by certain peculiar features: for example, it bred several bestsellers that peddled or resisted the candidates. An illustrative example of this is the film *Fahrenheit 9/11* by Michael Moore. The whole movie is based on the criticism of George W. Bush and his administration. In spite of this, *Fahrenheit 9/11* won the 2004 Best Picture Award of the Cannes Film Festival – known as the introductory place for new art films. In the prize-giving ceremony Quentin Tarantino, the Chair of Jury, emphasized to Moore that the award was not in any way a political comment, but was based solely on the fact that Moore's film is so entertaining. *Fahrenheit 9/11* brought forth a number of DVDs, TV-shows and books, such as *The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader* (Moore 2004). In fact, with its success in Cannes, *Fahrenheit 9/11* was the final world-wide breakthrough of Michael Moore phenomenon – and in its turn, the political stakes of this phenomenon have been documented, for example, in Steven Greenstreet's film *This Divided State* which documents the heated campaigns for and against Michael Moore's visit to Utah Valley State College just two weeks before the 2004 presidential election.

The political identities of people are affected and constructed also by such documentary films as: *Why We Fight* (directed by Eugene Jareck) which deals with the reasons and backgrounds of the War in Iraq; *The World According to Bush* (directed by William Karel) which analyses the actions of G. W. Bush's government 2000-2004 and the background of Bush's family; *Stolen Nation* (directed by Rebecca Chaiklin & Donovan Leitch); *The Fog of War* (directed by Errol Morris) which won the Oscar of long document movies and several other awards in 2003; and *The Road to Guantánamo* (directed by Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross) which tells a "true story" of three young men taken to Guantánamo prison camp by the US army. Here, it is easy to see how the borderlines between document, entertainment, politics and art become not only blurred, but vanished – at the same time as political media have become big business and entertainment for the masses. It is this political entertainment business that characterizes the political aesthetics of our time: people are given bread and circuses but not freely, for people are ready to pay (and pay well) for them – filling cinemas and bookstores.

From the political documentary movies that have become entertainment, we could move forward to the entertainment that functions as propaganda. This phenomenon is well known already from the times of the Second World War, for example, from the propaganda films by Walt Disney, Jean Renoir and Alfred Hitchcock (for example, Renoir's *This Land is Mine* and

Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent*). Even more revealing than this kind of open propaganda are the entertaining mass movies that modulate the image-world of their spectators as if between images. A good example is the large genre of catastrophe movies: according to Žižek, catastrophe movies created the fantasmatic worldview that made it possible and easy to connect the attacks of September 11 to Saddam Hussein's Iraq and thus to invade Iraq as the nation of terrorists (Žižek 2002). This connection between international politics and Hollywood is not only thematic, but the Pentagon made direct contact with the directors of Hollywood catastrophe movies after 9/11.

The classical form of traditional ideological struggle may be found in the third group of examples: in the struggle between different TV and radio channels. For example, in July 2004 the US Congress made a bill the aim of which was to start up a radio and TV channel in Venezuela sponsored by the USA. According to the bill, the purpose of this channel was to offer "correct and objective" news on Venezuela and, thus, to counterbalance *Telesuria*, a TV channel sponsored by Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba and Uruguay that started up on the 24th of July 2005, the birthday of South-American independence fighter Simón Bolívar. Similar examples are *Radio Martia*, which is sponsored by the US government, broadcast from Florida and heard in Cuba; the Arabic *Al-Hurra* started by the USA; and the *Voice of America*, which is sponsored by the US government and broadcast in 44 languages all over the world. Even the European Union (EU) is participating in this kind of operation: in November 2005, radio broadcasts sponsored by the EU began in Byelorussia. Similarly, the BBC began an Arabic TV channel in 2007 and finished its broadcasts in Bulgarian, Polish, Slovenian etc. – in other words, in languages already "converted" to Western ideology. In December 2005, French politicians also announced the launch of a worldwide 24 hours a day French TV news channel. These examples remind us that, besides the more "discreet" Hollywood propaganda, there is still strong traditional direct propaganda, which complements our concept of contemporary media as ideological power apparatuses. In our day, among the business propaganda there still haunts – as its ancestor – freely distributed defamatory propaganda, a kind of spectral ghost of propaganda history directed to those who cannot afford entertainment.

Different PR programs of different States form the fourth group of examples. An excellent case is the PR campaign of Pentagon: in December 2005, the public was told that Pentagon would begin a world-wide PR campaign, including other NATO and allied countries of the USA. In other words, the Pentagon will use \$300 000 000 in 2006-2010 to produce information – presented as independent – for the worldwide media. This money is delivered to three big corporations: *Lincoln Group*, *SYColeman* and *Science Application International*. With this money, these corporations have to produce "truths" for Pentagon. For example, such a truth was produced about the death of Pat Tillman an American football player. Tillman had an opportunity for a several million dollars contract for playing football, but he decided to go and fight in Iraq – and died in action. The Pentagon produced a story about his death making it a heroic event; later, it was discovered that it was the Americans who shot him. The reason for this campaign is evident: during the war in Iraq,

the imago of the USA has been tarnished even in the so-called Western countries, not to mention Arabic ones. With the money for this campaign, the Pentagon not only advertises itself and its actions in a positive light, but also buys positive news and “truths” about its actions. When the public was informed about this, the Pentagon had to modulate the truth about its own actions; thus its representatives replied to accusations of lying: “The enemy produces propaganda, we deliver information.”

The fifth group of examples demonstrates how traditional propaganda is connected to contemporary everyday technology which makes an effective weapon of media – and not only for superpowers: I refer to Al-Qaeda and other similar “organizations,” especially their way of using videos and pamphlets distributed through the Internet and TV channels. After September 11, voice and video messages have become a central part of al-Qaeda’s functioning (Osama bin Laden videos, videos representing hostages and their killing, short documents and reports - the form of which approaches that of movies and which represent fighting action in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan...). Thus, media are not anymore only the supplement of terrorism which tells about the past or future strikes and murders, but the medium in which the strikes and murders are represented, for which they are staged and for which terrorists write manifestos and dramatizations. Concrete examples of this are: the death of American Nicholas Berg published on the Internet on the 11th of May 2004; *Heroes of Fallujah*, in which masked men set a bomb on a road over which an American tank drives and explodes posted on the Internet in April 2004; and the video presented on the first of September 2005 at the Arabic *Al-Jazeera* TV channel, figuring a participant of the London bomb strike, Muhammed Sidique Khan, who threatens Western countries with new strikes and blames the citizens of Great Britain and other Western countries for voting in governments that oppress Khan’s “Muslim brothers and sisters.”

These concrete examples are connected to the concept (expressed often by experts) that Al-Qaeda is not a united organization, but an ideology. Its existence is founded solely on the ideological apparatuses of which media have to be conceived as the precondition of its existence and spreading: there is no Al-Qaeda without the media in which it spreads and is born as an ideology. Furthermore, as the brother of a killed British hostage said explicitly in a TV interview, media themselves have become the weapon of Al-Qaeda: it shoots staged (but real) killing videos, and the additional wounds created by these shots are the horrors for spectators. In order to show that the Internet is important also for superpowers, let us remember the way the USA published its nuclear weapon strategy openly on the web pages of Pentagon in autumn 2005: through the Internet, the nuclear weapon deterrence argument was distributed as effectively as possible.

The sixth group of examples is formed of Internet blogs, www-pages and published books connected to these blogs that tell the other side of the official narrative. A kind of prototype blog was written by Colby Buzzell: he began writing in August 2004 during his service in the US Army in Iraq and published it as a book *My War – Killing Time in Iraq* in autumn 2005 (Buzzell 2005). There

are abundantly similar www-pages and books, for example www.iraqfiles.com, Jason Hartley's *Just Another Soldier – A Year in Ground in Iraq* (Hartley 2005), John Crawford's *The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell – An Accidental Soldier's Account of the War in Iraq* (Crawford 2005) etc. On the one hand, these blogs and books function as an excellent example of the way – theorized by Jacques Rancière – in which the masses articulate their own, politically highly disturbing truth of history and of social situation. On the other hand, these blogs and books demonstrate how the capitalist market absorbs the rebellious voices into itself and transforms the disturbances into entertainment.

3. First to Fight!

The last group of examples is constituted by video and computer games. I will take a closer look at this group in order to conceptualize and elaborate in detail the concept of ideological power apparatus. It is essential to understand how media catch desires of youngsters and tie their identities by hooking their desires at a practical level. The example I will use is the Xbox game *Close Combat: First to Fight – United States Marines*. The game's front cover states that it is “based on a training tool developed for the United States Marines” and the back cover reminds us: “Never turn your back on the enemy... unless the man behind you is a Marine.” In the game itself, the player is a Marine in the front line of urban combat in Beirut – which resembles very much the scenery we have seen through TV reports on fights in Iraqi cities and, in 2006, again in Beirut. On the screen, the player sees what a singular soldier sees (for example, the barrel of his gun) and s/he is a Marine. The message is clear: you are one of us, fighting for the USA. When the player begins to move, s/he has to go out of the building under the US flag. In the ‘Instruction Manual’, s/he is given an identity, that of a Marine:

Created even before Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, those who have earned the right to be part of the Marine Corps live a kinship that is older than the US nation. Marines share a closeness that is forged by fires of intense discipline and a steadfast commitment to each other, the values of honour, courage, commitment and their country. As the US nation's smart, tough, elite warriors, Marines guard the White House and America's embassies around the world, they provide helicopter transportation for the President and secure the nation's most valuable nuclear weapons sites. There are very few who have earned the right to be called a United States Marine. They are the US's noble and elite warriors. Always First to Fight.

The fantasy story of the game is closely detailed: it imitates situations heard from the news, but also introduces the player to inside information. In other words, reading and hearing this kind of story makes the player feel him-or-herself as an insider, as someone who has access to important secret knowledge. This inside knowledge, formulated as narration, explains how killing preserves peace, and no other explanations are needed. Implicitly this story explains, not only the fantasy

setting of the game – but also how the US Marines shown in the news can, and in fact must, preserve peace by killing bad men, Muslim terrorists, for example. Again, no other explanations are needed. The end of the ‘Instruction Manual’ refers the reader and the player to the Internet pages of the US Marine Corps at Marines.com.

Needless to say, through the www.marines.com you can recruit yourself, that is, become a Marine. In other words, the game is a quick way to join the army: you can try the game and if you enjoy it... you have found your future, the identity you have been looking for. The fantasy weapons become real and the dying figures turn out to be living human beings. The hook is set: it is the enjoyment of playing that hooks you. This point of captivation of your identity is structured around enjoyment, enjoyment of killing figures, fantasized or not. In fact, often – if not always – even the killed “real” persons are, for the killer, only his/her own fantasies: it is impossible to kill *intentionally* the other in his otherness. The death of the real other is always fantasized.

It should be noticed how the play world and the world of Internet are integrated here. In this case, the web pages at www.marines.com have a significant position in the whole picture: from “just” a game you move to the “official” territory of the US army. In physical reality, you do just a couple of clicks and you transfer yourself from the game to www.marines.com; in an individual young mind you have unwittingly made a big “sublime” step; infrastructurally, a consumer has become a potential object of recruitment. It could hardly be easier – clouded behind the sublime words. This ideological and as if sublime tune finds its most naked tuning in ‘Parental Guide’ at www.marines.com:

Our Marines are warriors of the finest kind, prepared to do battle, but tempered with compassion, respect, and maturity. Marines all over the world right now are helping to write history and change the course of things. And when our Marines return home, they almost always become the kind of dependable citizens that make our communities thrive. This is no ordinary occupation, and Marines are not ordinary people. There is something very special about the Marine Corps and its cause, and we’re proud to say it attracts the best people and families in the world.

When the previous passage is juxtaposed with the following passage in the end of the ‘Instruction Manuel’ for the game, the sublime style of the two sources sounds almost identical, as if written by the same ideologist:

The US Marine Corps graciously sent over 40 combat-experienced Marines to our offices to help us make *Close Combat: First to Fight* accurate, sometimes within just weeks after they returned from combat operations in Iraq. For many of us at Destineer, getting to know these men is one of the greatest honours of our lives. We knew ahead of time that these Marines would be remarkably fit physically. What truly impressed us was the very high degree of mental and moral fitness exhibited by these young Marines who had just returned from a war. We don’t know whether it is because of something these men had inside themselves before they joined the Marines, or if it is because the Marine Corps had transformed them into smart, tough, elite warriors, but these young men are built with qualities that inspired us all.

There are people in this world whose purpose is to serve, who embrace a code of values and who are willing to sacrifice their lives to defend those who cannot defend themselves. We know, because we met a few dozen of them this past year. We thank them for their sacrifice and for their service. But, most of all, we thank them for inspiring us with their honour, courage and commitment. These men are among the best America has to offer. You can learn more about the Marine Corps at Marines.com.

Together the game and the web pages of Marine Corps form a hyperreality that structures the political identity of players and the fantasies they have of themselves and of the “cause”. When the play is played, a capitation point in a Lacanian-Žižekian sense is formed:

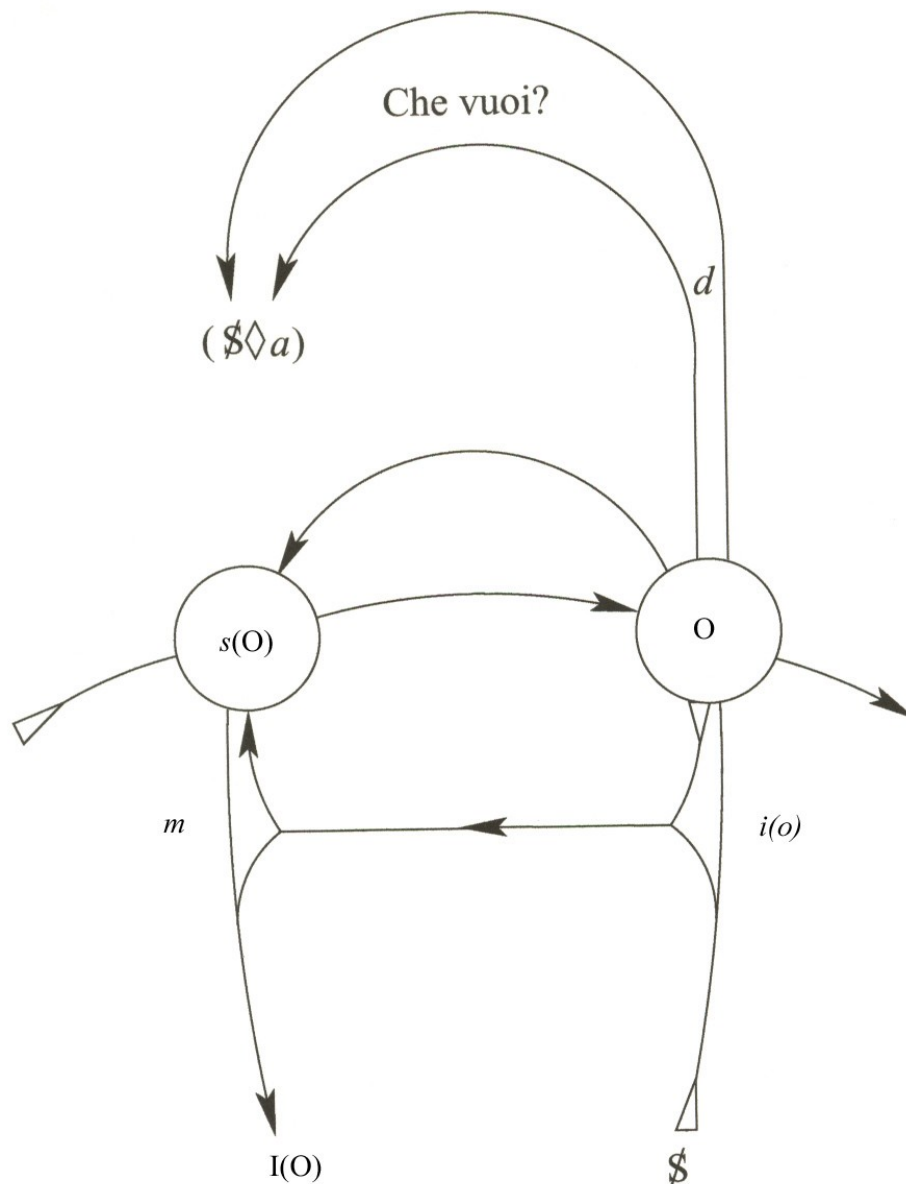


Figure 1. The graph of desire

As usually, also in this case \$ means the subject of a player. I (O) means the ego ideal (the sublime Marine ideal); *i(o)* means the ideal ego (what is shown and described as player's image in the game) for the ego of a player. O means, as always, the Other, but this time we must emphasize the role and position of media in offering, creating and structuring this Other. The *capitonnage*, the anchoring of endless change of signifiers takes place in the act of playing and around the enjoyment of play. It is from this enjoyment that the answer to desire's question *Che vuoi?* arises. The answer is given in the form of fantasy (\$ ◇ a). I will return to this a of fantasy below.

As noted above, the point of captivation and capitulation of your identity is structured around enjoyment, enjoyment of killing figures, fantasized or not. In the case of game, it is a bought enjoyment marketed by private companies who own its rights; in the case of war, it is a fought enjoyment marketed by the US government who owns its rights. The vicious circle is ready: you read on the front cover that the game "is based on a training tool developed for the United States Marines" and you think that it has to be of high quality – in other words, it has to be very "real" – if Marines use it; you or your parents pay for it; you play it and it is so different from the duties of your dull everyday life that you are captivated by the enjoyment of excitement; you read about the Marines from the 'Instruction Manual' and then you go to www.marines.com to learn more about them; you become more and more excited, you play more and more and you notice that you are becoming better and better (there must be something special about you, you must have a gift, a talent, to do this); you become more and more assured and convinced ("This is what I am created to do")... Finally, the only way out from this vicious circle is evident (after you have become overexcited): you become a Marine. Meanwhile, the money for playing games has to be deserved – either by your own or your parents' labor. In either case, you work for the capitalist system the last guarantor of which is the use of Marines, that is, real war.

The ideological sublimity around what takes place in corporeality could hardly be tenser than what you find it to be at www.marines.com. The actual violence of the present day is justified by a long history of honor and ethical virtue. In the end, you can kill if you do it following the great moral tradition. For example, under 'Marine Corps Core Values: Honor, Courage and Commitment', it is said:

From its beginning in 1775, the Corps has striven to produce not only the best warriors, but the best people. They are men and women who live by a code which forms the bedrock of good character. [...] Marines are held to be a high standard of the utmost ethical and moral behavior. Honesty and honor are held in great regard. Respect for others is essential. You are expected to act responsibly in a mature and dependable manner. Every Marine is accountable for his or her actions and meeting the highest standard of the Corps.

Respect for others... well, this has almost Levinasian sound, does it not? The Marine Corps Oath is also highly revealing, for according to the web page “[t]he day you take the oath of enlistment is one you’ll always remember: I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the order of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.” No matter, who is the president and what he decides...

To be sure, the play and the web pages are as if synchronized. In the ‘Credits’ of *Close Combat: First to Fight*, you can read: “*Close Combat: First to Fight* is dedicated to United States Marines serving their nation in harm’s way across the globe, right now.” Together the play and the web pages form machinery hooking young minds behind the loftiness of ideological messages. Of course, a question arises: who owns 2K Games and Destineer Studios, the companies behind this game? Whoever or whatever the owner is, the combination as such forms an excellent example of the functioning of ideological power apparatuses. It is a question of seamless field of identification machinery, in which companies and States are interwoven. So, be aware: it might be your child playing this game tonight in your living room and leaving home tomorrow in order to fight for the flag – thanks to the game you have bought to her/him with your own money.

4. A Move

What about the game “itself”, what happens when you are playing it? First of all, it has to be noted that controlling the movements of a soldier – being a Marine – is quite difficult, at least, for someone who has last time played such games 20 years ago with a Commandore 64. In fact, it takes a lot of time and energy to learn to play this game. However, at a shopping center I saw how a ten year old boy played it fluently (there are always some games to be played freely in order to commercialize them and to coax youngsters to become attached to games and thus addicted by them – in a similar way as drug dealers give youngsters free trips in order to get them hooked). This means that with patient practice you can learn to master the Marine figure. This practice itself is essential in the functioning of ideological power apparatus. The more time and desire you put on the game, the more you will be hooked.

Thus, it is essential to discern the kernel of lofty words and images, for it is this kernel that produces the enjoyment and that fantasy situated around it. It is this kernel, this *a*, that ties the body to the network of lofty words, ideological images and sublime narrations. Without this *a*, the graph of desire would be void and null; without this *a*, ideological power apparatuses would be ineffective. In fact, it is this *a* that justifies the use of psychoanalytic theory for conceptualizing ideological processes. And what is more, without this *a*, it is absolutely impossible to explain how

individual bodies are hooked into the collective apparatuses like media. In the end, it is the position of this *a* that has changed when the meaning of politics has changed.

In the case of *Close Combat: First to Fight*, the most important *a* may not be the gaze – even if the gaze certainly has its role in this identification process – but what I call a *move*. A move is what the player is trying to catch: a move is the object cause of player's desire as far as s/he is playing. This move makes the game a much more effective ideological power apparatus than a pure TV image could provide: besides the gaze, the player's desire is caught in the very movement of his/her body – even if it is only a small movement. It is a move that puts the player to move: it is a mover move that the player tries to catch with his/her own movement. A move is more in a player than the player him- or herself; a move is outside the body's borderline and with his or her manual movement the player opens, or better, oversteps the zones of his or her own body:

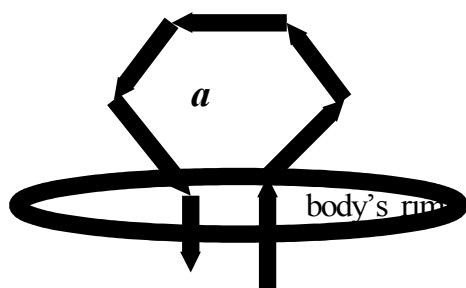


Figure 2. A schema for a move as an object *a*

This figure imitates the one we find in Lacan's Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, the lecture of the 13th of May 1964 (Lacan 1998: 178). In a similar way as a gaze looks at the one who looks at, for example, a painting, a move moves at the one who, for example, moves his hand in order to move a figure of a game. This brings forth the auto-erotic character of playing: by trying to catch a move (*a*), a body enjoys of itself (in a movement that takes it beyond itself). Through the game, this auto-erotic enjoyment is turned into fuel of ideology. In the end, the pollution of this kind of fuel is formed by bodies in the deserts of Iraq as the deserts of the real. It is a too short step from the masturbatory kind hand work of a game to the one that pulls the trigger.

However, a move as an object *a* has its "bright" sides too, as all objects *a* do. It is this move, this *objet petit a*, that we find in sports and that explains the global position of sports among other arts and entertainment. We do not only sense our movements, but also desire through them. Sport is more than just looking at and to be looked at; sport is moving beyond or on the hither side of images. This is why sports are so effective in raising the national feelings of peoples: in sports, desire is given its co-ordinates through a move as an *a* – and this desire is harnessed for patriotism.

It is this desire coordinated by a move that the game industry has found and caught. The claim that playing games would be somehow more interactive than just watching TV misses this auto-erotic nature of playing games: watching TV requires as much or as little action as playing games, and the as-if interactive character of a game just brings forth the same kind of movement of desire that takes place in watching TV or listening to music. In other words, there is no essential difference between a gaze, a voice and a move. They are all object causes of desire and function through the erotic zones of body, that is, through different senses of human body. However, due to its bodily nature, a move escapes easier conscious critique than a gaze or a voice. This is testified already by the Lacanian tradition “itself”: even if psychoanalysis is centered on the human body, so far a move has escaped its critical articulations. What makes us move is not always a gaze or a voice, but the “moving itself”, in other words, the desire caused by a move.

5. With Žižek, otherwise than Žižek

In Žižek's theory, the functioning of ideology has been circling around enjoyment (*jouissance*) since the 1980s. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek comments on Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses and states that “the weak point of his [Althusser's] theory is that he or his school never succeeded in thinking out the link between Ideological State Apparatuses and ideological interpellation: how does the Ideological State Apparatus [...] ‘internalize’ itself; how does it produce the effect of ideological belief in a Cause and the interconnecting effect of subjectivation, of recognition of one's ideological position” (1989: 43). Žižek stresses that in this internalization process there is always a leftover that is the very condition of submission to the ideological command (*ibid.*). This leftover is, of course, the Lacanian-Žižekian object *a*. This object *a* “sustains what we might call the ideological *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense (enjoy-meant), proper to ideology” (*ibid.*: 43-4). Briefly, for Žižek, Althusserian theory overlooks the functioning of the paradoxical object-cause of desire (*ibid.*: 44).

In “The Spectre of Ideology”, originally published in 1994, Žižek analyses the concept of ideology using the Hegelian differentiation between doctrine, belief and ritual translating this into “the Hegelian triad of In-itself – For-itself – In-and-For-itself” (Žižek 1994/1999, 62-3):

1. Ideology in-itself belongs to the heritage of Enlightenment, and the last great representative of the analysis on ideology in-itself is Habermas. Here, ideology is understood as a distortion of communication, a disturbance to be eliminated, thus cleaning communication from pathological interests (*ibid.*: 63-4). Behind the blurred vision of reality is a true communicable reality to be obtained through the critique of ideology.
2. Ideology for-itself means a step “to ideology in its otherness, externalization” (*ibid.*: 65). Here the representative concept is Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) which

designates “the material existence of ideology in ideological practices, rituals and institutions” (ibid.).

3. In ideology in-and-for-itself, the externalization of ideology for-itself “is, as it were, ‘reflected into itself’” (ibid.: 67). This leads to “the disintegration, self-limitation and self-dispersal of the notion of ideology” (ibid.). The concept of ideology “turns into a Wittgensteinian ‘family’ of vaguely connected and heterogeneous procedures whose reach is strictly localized” (ibid.). This leads Žižek to the following statement:

Today, in late capitalism, when the expansion of the new mass media in principle, at least, enables ideology effectively to penetrate every pore of the social body, the weight of ideology as such is diminished: individuals do not act as they do primarily on account of their beliefs or ideological convictions – that is to say, the system, for the most part, bypasses ideology in its reproduction and relies on economic coercion, legal and state regulations, and so on. [/] Here, however, things get blurred again, since the moment we take a closer look at these allegedly extra-ideological mechanisms that regulate social reproduction, we find ourselves knee-deep in the already mentioned obscure domain in which reality is indistinguishable from ideology (ibid.: 67-8).

Thus, non-ideology turns out to be ideology, in other words, “the very In-itself of extra-ideological actuality” turns out to be ideology for-itself (ibid.: 68). Briefly, ideology is to be found in the non-ideological practices of everyday life. A corollary of this is that “the market and (mass) media are dialectically interconnected” (ibid.): “the media structure our perception of reality in advance, and render reality indistinguishable from the ‘aestheticized’ image of it” (ibid.). This does not lead Žižek into a “postmodern” position of abandoning the notion of extra-ideological reality and, with this, the concept of ideology (this would be ideology par excellence); instead, he persists in the impossible position of maintaining “the tension that keeps the *critique* of ideology alive” (ibid.: 70, Žižek’s italics). However, there is one essential condition: “*this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality*” (ibid., Žižek’s italics). This, again, leads Žižek into the core of today’s Ideological State Apparatuses:

Finally, this ‘extra-textual’ social reality itself splits into the institutional Exterior that dominates and regulates the life of individuals ‘from above’ (ISA) and ideology that is not imposed by the ISA but emerges ‘spontaneously’, ‘from below’, out of the extra-institutional activity of individuals (commodity fetishism) – to give it names, Althusser versus Lukács. This opposition between ISA and commodity fetishism – between the *materiality that always-already pertains to ideology as such* (material, effective apparatuses which give body to ideology) and *ideology that always-already pertains to materiality as such* (to the social actuality of production) – is ultimately the opposition between state and market, between the external superior agency that organizes society ‘from above’ and society’s ‘spontaneous’ self-organization (ibid.: 70-1, Žižek’s italics).

In *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, originally published also in 1994, Žižek discusses Althusser again (Žižek 1994/2005: 59-62). Because the main argument seems to be quite parallel with “The Spectre of Ideology”, I take up the main point of Žižek’s critique of Althusser here. Namely, Žižek is not happy with Althusser’s concept of subject: prior to Althusser’s subject of ideological interpellation and recognition, there is “a kind of ‘vanishing mediator’ that has to become invisible if the subject is to achieve symbolic identity”; this vanishing mediator is “an uncanny subject that *precedes* the gesture of subjectivization” (ibid.: 61, Žižek’s italics). Thus Žižek considers Althusser’s constraining of the subject to ideology as “a clear case of theoretical ‘regression’” (ibid., 62). Briefly, Althusser misses the Lacanian subject – and thus the object *a* – that precedes logically Althusser’s ideological subject. Combined with the critique articulated in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, in spite of his reading of Lacan, Althusser misses both Lacan’s subject and the object *a*.

In *The Ticklish Subject*, Žižek discusses Althusser only shortly using him as a kind of starting point for commenting Badiou, Rancière, Laclau and Balibar (Žižek 1999: 127 ff). These four thinkers’ “everlasting merit is that they went forward from Althusser without allowing themselves to be immersed in the postmodern and/or deconstructionist morass” (ibid.: 232). The shared problem of these four thinkers is, from Žižek’s point of view, that “they seem to fall into the trap of ‘marginalist’ politics, accepting the logic of momentary outburst of an ‘impossible’, radical politicization that contains the seeds of its own failure and has to recede in the face of the existing Order” (ibid.). This problem is linked “to the reduction of the subject to the process of *subjectivization*” (ibid., Žižek’s italics). Even if the subjectivity in the works of these four authors is not an Althusserian ideological misrecognition and interpellation, they seem to remain – this can be read between Žižek’s lines – in a kind of Althusserian trap. In other words, they seem to repeat, from Žižek’s point of view in 1994, Althusser’s way of missing the Lacanian subject and the object *a*.¹

So, let us summarize the essence of this article. The State and market need each other: it is the function – today its main function? – of the State to maintain and protect the market, whereas the market produces for the State what the State needs, for example its democratic justification (what is an election, if not a market of representatives and votes) and its soldiers (it is from the market of occupations and professions that the army has to recruit its blood, flesh and brain). With regard to ideology, the market needs the State to produce the sublimity – for it sells well, be it a Xbox game or a Hollywood movie; and again the State needs market to market its ideology to the youngsters as effectively as possible. So, with Žižek we need to analyze this utterly ideological co-operation of the State and market in the practices of everyday life on the ground level (and act accordingly? – which is a bigger problem even). In Lacanian terminology, it is definitively the *a* that forms the pivotal concept here; in fact, I do not see how one could conceptualize ideology’s functioning in Lacanese without the *a*. It is through the *a* that ideology catches and controls human bodies.

Partly for personal historical reasons,² partly due to the Lacanian tradition, in Žižek's corpus the most frequently discussed object *a* is a gaze. Again and again Žižek returns to and explicates the object *a* through a gaze (and sometimes also, of course, through a voice). And no doubt, the visual field supported by the sonic field may have a dominating place in speaking being. However, at least as elementary a level of human being is that of a move: already when it sees only the obscurity of a womb within, a fetus tries to catch a move; and in the development of a baby, the radical changes occur with the new phases of moving (turning around, crawling, getting into a sitting position, learning to raise into a standing position, learning to walk, learning to run, learning to ride a bike, learning to drive a car) – and, in the end, losing all these one by one or all of them at once.

6. Some Hypotheses and Further Problems

In this paper, my aim has been to analyze the forming of political identity through media with concrete examples, for example and especially, a seamless couple of a Xbox game *Close Combat* and the Internet web side of the US marines (www.marines.com). Here we have an example of powerful union of a capitalistic State and private companies supporting and maintaining each other by manipulating and creating political identities. The theoretical background of my presentation has been formed by Lacanian, Althusserian and Žižekian concepts. Through these examples, I have wanted to demonstrate a conceptual transition from Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, of which the most important one is the obligatory education system, to the post-Althusserian conceptual systems: today, subjects themselves desire and buy for themselves parts of ideological power apparatuses. This change in ideological power apparatuses could be called a transition from educating to consuming: Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses educate people (forcing them more or less) to be obedient citizens, whereas people of the 21st century consume themselves to be obedient consumers, voters and soldiers. Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses support and maintain capitalism, whereas contemporary power apparatuses are capitalism. In this manner, capitalism traverses, saturates and absorbs into itself the social phenomenon that has historically accompanied it: representative democracy. We can say that previously entertainment has been an instrument for representative democracy, but now representative democracy has become or is becoming pure entertainment. This means change in the relationship between the aesthetic and the political: if previously the aesthetic has been understood as an instrument of the political (as in Plato's *Republic* and to a certain extent also in Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus), now the political itself has the function of the aesthetic.

All this implies certain huge questions: How do people identify themselves in the 21st century and how do they find answers to questions like who they are and what they should do? How does political power make of people its subjects through unofficial ways? How are people's desires

structured and modified, beginning from entertainment addressing children, so that subjects do not assimilate so much a great ideological metanarration (for example, the real socialism of the Soviet Union or the Christian doctrines of the Catholic Church), but the desire of subject is structured through and in media without his/her knowing it, without explicit metanarration, to become the desire of a political subject? What kind of counter powers do we have for this kind of “blind” adopting of practical ideology and what is the position of philosophy, sciences, arts and media here? Can they be conceived also as the free marginal of power or are they only ideological power apparatuses, as Althusser understood them (with the possible exception of sciences and historical materialism)?

However, it is not enough that we analyze how media offer an ideological identity (the analysis of the position of media), for we have to analyze also why this identity offered by the media “wins” and buries under itself all the other identities offered by the environment: why someone prefers the identity of “bad” terrorist instead of “good” academic researcher, why someone chooses the uniform of a soldier and not that of a pacifist physician etc. These questions are tightly connected to the question concerning the change in the relationship between the aesthetic and the political: why consuming media is less and less an instrument and more and more “the thing in itself.” In this manner, the logic of capitalism steps to a new infrastructural level changing the position of ideological power apparatuses from an instrument to an end in itself.

What has to be described in a concrete way and conceptualized with all the possible nuances is the link and connection between the individual identity and the communal identity. In other words, how are an individual and a society formed ideologically together? There are no separate ideological power apparatuses for forming the identity of an individual and other ideological power apparatuses for forming the identity of a society, but the identity of a society is formed by forming the identities of its members and vice versa. This is possible only if there really are some kinds of apparatuses that encompass a great part of the processes that form the individual identities. The base of society consists in the power apparatuses connecting individuals: the political identity is not determined, at least not mainly, by common genes or “humanity”, but by practical processes like media. At the same time, these processes have to ensure that the individuals feel themselves individuals: the power of contemporary ideological power apparatuses is in the fact that they make of (more or less imaginary) individuality the glue of society. It is individuality produced on the conveyer belts of factories – for example, by mass media. At the same time, the power is more and more in the “hands” or conveyer belts of supranational companies, not in the hands of representatives of people: the Ideological State Apparatuses form a less and less important group of ideological power apparatuses.

Thus, we have several levels for further research, for example:

1. to analyze in detail the on-going change in the relationship between the aesthetic and the politic;
2. to analyze in detail the role of States and their real relationship to capitalism and companies;
3. to analyze in detail the possible counter discourses (sciences, arts, philosophy) and their possibilities to affect what is taking place.

For this we need new concepts (like 'ideological power apparatus' and a 'move' as an object *a*) that, however, must draw from the best sources of our intellectual heritage.

Notes:

¹ To be sure, personally I have great difficulties in accepting Žižek's argument here. It may be true that the concept of enjoyment (*jouissance*) is not articulated well enough by these thinkers, but to say that, for example, Badiou had reduced the subject to the process of subjectivization and that he had, thus, missed the Lacanian subject or the object *a* is, from my point of view, a coarse exaggeration. No wonder Žižek returns to Badiou's theory again and again after this (Žižek 2002; Žižek 2006; Žižek 2008a; Žižek 2008b). The relationship between Badiou and Žižek would be worth of a book or two and someone is probably already writing such a book, so I cannot go deeper to this question here.

² "I was somewhere between cinema theory and cinema practice, because I also had a Super-8 camera. So the original decision was not to be a philosopher; this was kind of a secondary choice, the second best thing" (Žižek & Daly 2004: 23).

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