The Dialectic of Solitude in the Redemption Myth
Man as Exile, Nostalgia and a Search for Communion

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January 31, 2021
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ABSTRACT

Throughout history man has expressed his dire need for redemption, envisaged as the re-establishment of a past ideal order, transposed and transfigured into a future totality that will put an end to the long exile, that will resolve the guilt, sin and separation and will restore man's natural self. This essay suggests the importance of Octavio Paz's dialectical notion of solitude as a way to illuminate this fundamental aspect of the human condition. Following Paz, it puts forward the idea of the torment of our divided subjectivity, our self-consciousness, and the punishment of solitude in the realm of the historical experience of man as the ground out of which our sense of sin, our need for redemption and our nostalgic longing for the re-establishment of a lost totality arise. As a solitary, fractured being in a fragmented world we long for a state in which all opposites vanish and resolve themselves in communion. Life and death, light and darkness, good and evil, time and eternity, subject and object – self-consciousness is polarity, the splitting off of opposites. As a result, our whole being strives to abolish our solitude and we rebel against our alienation. Essentially, it is this propensity which is expressed in various myths and which the essay tries to explicate. To illustrate this, it discusses the way in which the dialectic of solitude can be identified in two different redemption myths: the Christian creation myth and the Marxist utopia. Both redemption myths serve as a clear example of man's nostalgia and search for communion. The modus operandi is thus twofold: first, by way of discussing Paz's dialectic of solitude, it seeks to highlight a fundamental part of the human condition and thus deepen our self-understanding; second, by way of discussing the aforementioned redemption myths, it aims to clarify Paz's dialectic as well as illustrate the way in which Paz's dialectic can be identified in the history of ideas.

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I. Introduction

Octavio Paz is one of the most important and recognized contemporary Latin American poets and writers. However, as Oliver Kozlarek notes, although Paz certainly belongs to "the elite of the international republic of letters"[1], "the potential significance of his contributions for many of the contemporary debates that dominate the social sciences and the humanities has not yet truly been appreciated."[2] Recent scholarship has tried to fill in this gap and show the potential significance of Paz's contributions, most notably in the form of a collection of essays edited by Oliver Kozlarek, *Octavio Paz: Humanism and Critique* (2009). Although this collection of essays is an important step in recognizing the potential significance of some of Paz's contributions to various contemporary debates in the social sciences and the humanities, there are still many of his contributions that are left unappreciated. One such contribution is his notion of the dialectic of solitude, a notion which might serve as a powerful tool to understand and interpret various, (seemingly disparate) redemption myths. Or in other words, the notion might offer a blueprint of the structure that redemption myths seem to adopt and display, which would make it possible to view disparate myths and ideas in the history of thought as expressions of a common denominator, our solitude. The central question with which the essay will be concerned, then, is in what way the dialectic of solitude can be discerned in different redemption myths. To investigate this, the essay will discuss two different redemption myths – the Christian creation myth and the Marxist utopia – and try to identify the dialectic of solitude in them. These two will be discussed because of three different reasons. First, both seem to be clear expressions of the dialectic of solitude and thus serve as good case studies. Second, both have proven to be and still are extremely influential all over the world. Third, Paz himself alludes to the possibility of them being expressions of the dialectic of solitude when he says that "it is possible that what we call "sin" is only a mythical expression of our self-consciousness, our solitude" and that "utopias – especially modern political utopias (despite their rationalistic disguises) – are violently concentrated expressions of the tendency that causes every society to imagine a golden age from which the social group was exiled and to which man will return on the Day of Days."[3]

Naturally, then, the essay will be divided into three main sections: the elaboration of the notion of the dialectic of solitude, followed by the discussion of the two aforementioned redemption myths. More specifically, the first section (II) discusses Paz's dialectical notion of solitude in the realm of (inter-)subjectivity. It conceptualizes solitude as being a split subject, as being incomplete, as the lack of the other. This fundamental separation, the punishment of solitude, manifests itself as a sense of sin, which, in turn, creates the need for redemption or dissolution of our divided subjectivity, of which love is the clearest example. Along the way, some ideas by Freud, Hegel and Plato are discussed in order to get the full picture of Paz's notion. These ideas are either implicit in the notion, as is the case with Freud and Hegel, or explicit, as is the case with Plato. The second section (III), before discussing the first redemption myth, begins by briefly discussing the way in which, according to Paz, the dialectic of solitude can also be identified in the collective, historical experience of man. It traces the concepts of 'guilt' and 'sin' back to the disintegration and dispersion of the primitive community. The elaboration of the notion of solitude in this parallel social realm[4], together with the first section, will set the stage for the remaining part of the second section as well

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1 Paz was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990 and much of his work has been translated into many languages.
2 Oliver Kozlarek, "Introduction: Crossing Borders, Reaching Humanity," in Oliver Kozlarek (ed.), *Octavio Paz: Humanism and Critique*, 2009, 3.
3 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 27; 211.
4 For lack of a better term, I use here the term 'social'. Although this domain is seen in some ways as contrasting with the domain of subjectivity, this does not mean that subjectivity is not social. As we will see, subjectivity presupposes the existence of the other, which means that subjectivity really is a matter of inter-subjectivity and thus social by nature.

as the third section. Based on the work of Late Antique philosopher Augustine, the remaining part of the second section will be concerned with the Christian creation myth and the theological elaboration of the notion of original sin. It begins with Augustine's evaluation of our earthly existence, the question of evil, injustice and responsibility, followed by his conception of original sin. The third section (IV) concerns itself with the second case study: the libertarian redemption myth. In particular, it looks at Marxist prophesy as an expression of the dialectic of solitude. It discusses the Marxist theory of primitive communism, its account of the origin of private property, class division and the state and its dialectical and revolutionary conception of history. The essay will be rounded off with some concluding remarks.

Before we begin with the first section, however, a few short remarks on the origin of Paz's notion of the dialectic of solitude might be necessary, even though Paz's notion is inherently philosophical. This is because the notion is elaborated in Paz's most famous and classic work, published in 1950, the literary essay *El laberinto de la soledad* (or *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, which is the conventional if not entirely exact translation[5]). Although a transdisciplinary, literary essay about Mexico, which investigates the complex and intimate relationships between psychology, myth, history, culture and identity, the dialectic of solitude, which Paz elaborates in the later added appendix of the same name, forms the central hypothesis and underlying structural argument of the book.[6] Given the deeply philosophical nature of its central hypothesis, the book is, therefore, fundamentally a philosophical work in which, as a result, Mexico can be read as a case study of the dialectic of solitude. On top of this, the book is littered with philosophical ideas, as a result of the well-known fact that *El laberinto* is heavily influenced by writers like Freud, Marx and Nietzsche as well as the intellectual and artistic movements of existentialism and Surrealism.[7]

II. Our Divided Subjectivity and the Dialectic of Solitude

For Octavio Paz, solitude is what defines human beings and what sets them apart from other beings, it is the "profoundest fact of the human condition" and is inherent to our existence.[8] For everyone of us, there comes a moment in our lives that we feel ourselves to be alone, separated and alienated from ourselves and the world. And, in fact, Paz says, we *are* alone and alienated, it is our basic condition. Solitude is more than just the feeling that one is alone, it is above all the knowledge that one is alone. This is, for Paz, what sets us apart from other beings: "Man," he says, "is the only being who knows he is alone".[9] Self-consciousness is, therefore, intimately linked with solitude: awareness of self is separation from and opposition to the other, it is a break, a fracture. Self-awareness, thus, *is* solitude: it is the knowledge that you are a distinct being "condemned to live

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5   "The English word 'solitude' has certain positive connotations (seclusion, privacy and quietude) that are mostly absent in the Spanish word 'soledad'. A more accurate title in English would be *The Labyrinth of Loneliness*." Anthony Stanton, "Introduction" in Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 1.

6   Anthony Stanton, "Introduction" in Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, 33; in terms of content, the appendix differs significantly from the rest of the book in the sense that it makes a claim on universality, while the first eight chapters are more focussed on the specificity of Mexico. Nonetheless, there are various passages throughout the book which reveal the seeds for the later added appendix and which are of great importance for our understanding of Paz's notion of the dialectic of solitude.

7   The influence of existentialism is due to the fact that *El laberinto* was written in 1949 France, which intellectually was then being dominated by the existentialist debates between the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This intellectual environment clearly influenced Paz's thought as can be seen by the presence, throughout the essay, of many existentialist themes, such as authenticity and alienation. However, Paz's literary, moral and political ideas were closer to those of the Surrealists than to those of the existentialists, with the possible exception of Albert Camus; Anthony Stanton, "Introduction" in Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, 6-9.

8   Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.

9   Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.

alone".[10]

The realization of the singularity of our being [*singularidad de ser*] usually takes place during adolescence.[11] At that moment, our self-discovery, our first radical self-awareness, manifests itself as the "realization that we are alone: it is the opening of an impalpable, transparent wall – that of our consciousness – between the world and ourselves."[12] For Paz, the story of Narcissus articulates exactly this moment.[13] Narcissus is the adolescent *par excellence*. He embodies this moment of our first radical self-awareness, of the realization of our singularity: "he is astonished at the fact of his being, and this astonishment leads to reflection: as he leans over the river of his consciousness, he asks himself if the face that appears there, disfigured by the water, is his own. The singularity of his being, which is pure sensation in children, becomes a problem and a question."[14]

Although the radical awareness and discovery of ourselves as a distinct, singular and solitary being emerges during adolescence, our solitude – or rather, the roots thereof – begins much earlier: it begins on the day we are born, "the day we are deprived of maternal protection and fall into a strange and hostile world."[15] The experience of birth is one of separation, loss and abandonment: "when we are born we break the ties that joined us to the blind life we lived in the maternal womb".[16] We are expelled from the world of peace, unity and harmony, which we have known up until now and leave behind our prenatal life, where no time elapsed between desire and satisfaction.[17] In short, we are expelled from totality. The foetus, once one with the world that surrounded it, now falls into an unknown world. Gradually, this first, primitive but radical experience of separation turns into a feeling of solitude and eventually into awareness.[18]

As already mentioned in the introduction, Paz was heavily influenced by Freud. This is most apparent here, since Paz adopts – although implicitly – the basic idea of Freud's account of psychological development, so it will be worthwhile to discuss this here. In his famous essay *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Freud begins by discussing the 'oceanic feeling', a feeling of wholeness, limitlessness and eternity, which supposedly[19] would be the source of all religiosity. Although Freud eventually rejects the idea of this feeling being the *fons et origo* of religiosity, entertaining the idea that it might have become connected to religious experience later on, he does provide an illuminating account of the development of the I [*das Ich*] as an attempt at providing an explanation for this so called oceanic feeling.[20] "Originally," he writes, "the I includes everything, later it separates an outside world from itself."[21] This process of differentiation, or in Paz's terms, the gradual process of becoming aware of our solitude, starts the moment we are born, through a set of diverse impulses, divided by Freud into three kinds of stimuli.[22]

The first stimulus Freud mentions, which, he says, must make a deep impression on the infant, is the fact that certain sources of excitation, in which the infant will later recognize the organs of his body, are able to send him sensations at all times, while other ones, including the most

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10 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
11 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 9.
12 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 9.
13 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 203.
14 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 9.
15 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 80.
16 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
17 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
18 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
19 Although Freud has not experienced this 'oceanic' feeling himself, he takes up the question in response to a comment of a friend of his, Romain Rolland, who uses the word 'oceanic' to describe the feeling of wholeness, limitlessness and eternity, assumes this feeling to have been experienced by many people and sees it as the *fons et origo* of all religious needs; Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 1999), 301-302.
20 Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur*, 309.
21 Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur*, 305.
22 Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur*, 304.

desired one – the mother's breast – are not. The mother's breast, therefore, is the first 'object' to stand in opposition to the I, as something 'outside' it and which can be forced to (re)appear as the result of a certain act. The second stimulus which slowly differentiates the I from the vast sea of sensations, is formed by the frequent, multifarious and inevitable feelings of pain and discomfort, which need to be abolished and avoided by virtue of the pleasure principle. The need arises to cast out all sources of discomfort and to form a pure 'pleasure-I'. Along the way, however, by virtue of the third stimulus, the reality principle, which is instituted through experience, the infant slowly discovers the fact that many sources of pleasure lie outside the I and many sources of pain and discomfort seem inseparable of the I, seem to come from within. In contrast to intrauterine life where desires and needs were instantly met at all times, the infant's psychical rest is now being disturbed by the gap between desire and satisfaction. The infant is thus confronted by the fact that the experienced disturbance is the result of discomfort which seems to come from within, as a result of its internal needs and the non-occurrence of the expected satisfaction, which seems to come from 'outside' in the form of the mother's breast and the mother's love. This increased significance of external reality also heightens the importance of the sense-organs and vice versa.[23] From here on, the reality principle will dominate the further development.

In Paz's terms, this process of differentiation, or slow emergence of the contours of the I, is the process of slowly becoming aware of our solitude. And once we are aware, we know that we have fallen, and this fall makes us feel guilty; guilty "of a nameless wrong: that of having been born."[24] Being condemned to live alone, to know that we are alone, is the penalty for having been born, for having been thrown into this world. Solitude thus is a sentence, a punishment and an expiation.[25] It is the awareness of our lack of another. This is why "the feeling that we are alone has a double significance: on the one hand it is self-awareness, and on the other it is a longing to escape from ourselves", to overcome, transcend and abolish our solitude and to rejoice in its opposite: communion [*comunión*].[26] We are, therefore, not only condemned to live alone, but also to negate our solitude, if only for a fleeting moment.

As mentioned, self-consciousness is defined, by Paz, as the lack of another: it is fractured, incomplete. Or as he puts it, "when [man] is aware of himself he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude."[27] Because of this negative definition, the self and the other, solitude and communion, are forever tied to each other and the definition of solitude is therefore necessarily dialectical. Since the conception of the self as a negative entity and the ensuing dialectical movement are heavily influenced by Hegel's phenomenological account of self-consciousness, I will first briefly touch on Hegel's account before elaborating on Paz's dialectic. In doing so, I will use as my hermeneutical framework Bernardo Ferro's essay on Hegel's account of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[28]

What Hegel tries to show in the *Phenomenology* is that self-consciousness is not a pre-existing, full-fledged, fixed and static entity, to which the consciousness of another is then added, but, instead, that the self needs the other for its emergence; the other is thus the very condition for the emergence of the self. For what the self is not, is as much part of its identity as what it is. And because what it is not, is not fixed, its identity is also not fixed. So when I utter the tautology 'I am I', I am not so much positively affirming my identity as negatively acknowledging that 'I am not

23 Sigmund Freud, "Two Principles of Mental Functioning," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII (1911-1913), (London: The Hogarth Press), 219-220, https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_Two_Principles.pdf.
24 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 80.
25 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 196.
26 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
27 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.
28 Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness: Hegel's Paradox of Self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *Otherness: Essays and Studies 4.1*, September 2013, https://www.otherness.dk/fileadmin/www.othernessandthearts.org/Publications/Journal_Otherness/Otherness__Essays_and_Studies_4.1/Hegel_Otherness.pdf.

another'. Self-consciousness thus never coincides purely with itself. "It is what it is through the simultaneous positing of what it is not, i.e., through the positing of an otherness it continuously discards."[29] The self is what is left after all otherness has been negated and discarded. However, after this return from otherness [*die Rückkehr aus dem Anderssein*], the self immediately loses its grip on itself, i.e., its possession of a firm and secured self-identity, because it is defined negatively, by what it is not – and thus returns to the other that it must, once again, negate and discard in order to return to itself. It is important to stress the non-chronological nature of this dialectical movement. Although self and other are both 'moments' of self-consciousness, they are not two different, chronologically successive movements. Self-consciousness, according to Hegel, is best understood as an infinite simultaneity, an ever-recurring, simultaneous double negation of consciousness at any given moment in order to conquer and obtain self-identity. It is "simultaneously the process and the result of that process",[30] i.e., the negation of negation. It is "an *infinite, self-reflected and self-moving being.*"[31]

It is also crucial that, for Hegel, self-consciousness can only really emerge when it is opposed by another self-consciousness, recognizes it as such and, in turn, is recognized by it. Only when recognition [*Anerkennung*] is reciprocated, can self-identity really come into being. Up until now, we have treated the phenomenon of self-identity as a unilateral movement – which is, in fact, also the structure of the *Phenomenology* itself – a movement enacted by an individual self within itself in opposition to otherness in general, regardless of its nature. As we have seen, the perceived otherness is posited by the self and thus a product of the self. On the other hand, the self's origin is nothing but the negated otherness or negated appearance itself and, thus, in this way, dependent on the perceived otherness. In other words, self-consciousness "is born out of the realization that both sides of the opposition are in fact one and the same", that "the antithesis between truth and appearance, or between subject and object" is in fact a false one.[32] Self-consciousness thus is the realization that it is, at the same time, subject *and* object. It is this realization that Hegel terms desire [*Begierde*]. However, in order to be truly subject and object at the same time and thus for this desire to be satisfied, self-consciousness has to negate not just some inert object; it has to negate itself. Only when it negates its own subjectivity, can it truly become an object as well as subject. And the only way self-consciousness can negate its own subjectivity is when it is opposed by another self-consciousness, which enacts the same dialectical movement within itself and thereby recognizes the first self-consciousness as object. Only then, only in this reciprocal way, can self-consciousness really come into being, and with it, Spirit. In Hegel's own words: "A self-consciousness is what it is for another self-consciousness. Only as such is it in fact self-consciousness, for only in this way does the unity of itself and its otherness become effective for it. (…) A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. (…) 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'." "And with this, the notion of *Spirit* is already available to us."[33] From this, it is thus clear that self-consciousness is, by definition, a purely reciprocal, symmetrical, inter-dependent and inter-subjective phenomenon.

We are now in a position to see the inherently dialectical nature of solitude. We have seen, that, for Hegel, self-consciousness exists because it lacks something: it lacks the other. Its incompleteness is thus what drives its existence. It is this idea, the idea of a split or divided subject, which lies at the heart of Paz's notion of solitude or alienation, which, as he puts it, "consists fundamentally in being another within oneself."[34] In other words, solitude consists in being subject and object at the same time. In the literature, however, Paz's indebtedness to Hegel's dialectic and his thinking about otherness is grossly overlooked. Even to the point that Xavier Rodríguez

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29 Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness," 3.
30 Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness," 5.
31 Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness," 3.
32 Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness," 5.
33 Hegel cited in, Bernardo Ferro, "The Return from Otherness," 10.
34 Octavio Paz, "Return to the *Labyrinth of Solitude*," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 352.

Ledesma has to state that Paz "contemplated and recorded" otherness "several decades before philosophers and social scientists."[35] Although in his paper Rodríguez Ledesma is focussed on otherness in the realm of modernity, the fact that he seems oblivious to Hegel's thinking on otherness and its influence on Paz is striking.

Now, as already mentioned, solitude is experienced by us as a punishment. Our divided subjectivity is a torment: we long for it to be resolved, for us to be freed of the painful awareness of our solitude. The separation that is our basic condition leaves behind a wound, which we are desperately trying to heal. We therefore strive to negate our solitude, to step out of ourselves and to overcome our predicament. In short, we rebel against our alienation. The solitary individual or incomplete subject, then, recognizes in another incomplete subject the possibility of completion or communion and thus accepts his solitude as a proof or promise of its dissolution. Our incompleteness is thus what drives our search for communion, which we hope to find in the unification with another subject. This idea, of love as the desire for completion, goes as far back as Plato's *Symposium* and is expressed in it by the character of Aristophanes.[36] In his speech in praise of Eros, Aristophanes presents a creation myth, an attempt at explaining the mystery of attraction that people feel towards each other. Once upon a time, the myth goes, there were three sexes: the male, the female and the androgynous. These beings – who were a rounded whole with four arms, four legs, two heads, two sets of genitals and so on – were incredibly strong and had great ambitions, so they decided to taunt and attack the gods. To keep them in check, Zeus decided to cut them in half, leaving our navel on the stomach as a reminder of what had happened to them, and as a result, "since their original nature had been cut in two, each longed for its own other half and stayed with it. They threw their arms round each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to form a single living thing." And with this, "the innate desire of human beings for each other started. It draws the two halves of our original nature back together and tries to make one out of two and to heal the wound in human nature." In other words, Aristophanes concludes, ""love" is the name for the desire and pursuit of wholeness." Paz adopts this conception of love, saying that Aristophanes' myth "awakens in us profound resonances" and that it is a "psychological reality".[37] And, indeed, what Plato seems to put forward here is the idea of the insoluble and contradictory, i.e., aporetic, nature of our subjectivity and of love as an attempt at resolving this irresolvable contradiction that is our subjectivity. Or in Paz's terms: because of the crime of being born, of which the navel is the reminder, and acquiring self-consciousness, we wander around as a split subject in search of communion as a way of overcoming our solitude.

In this sense, love, being desire and a hunger for communion, is one of the clearest examples of our fixation on totality, the dissolution of the aporetic nature of our subjectivity.[38] This, I think, is what Freud means when he says, that at the height of love, when we are the most infatuated with the other, the otherwise clear boundaries between subject and object, between I and you, begin to fade.[39] It becomes less clear where the I ends and the object begins, and as a result, during a fraction of a second which feels like eternity, we are relieved from the torment of our subjectivity and get a glimpse of totality. All opposites vanish and we declare that you and I are one. The act of love, then, which is, according to Paz, a mutual complete surrender to the other, a mutual "negation of

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35 Xavier Rodríguez Ledesma, "To Hear the Inaudible, To See the Imperceptible," in Oliver Kozlarek (ed.), *Octavio Paz: Humanism and Critique*, 246.

36 Plato, *The Symposium* (Penguin Books, 1999), 26-32.

37 Octavio Paz, *The Double Flame: Essays on Love and Eroticism* (London: The Harvill Press, 1996), 34; 67; although Paz accepts the idea of love as the desire for completeness, according to him, this only touches upon one essential aspect of love and leaves out many more. These other aspects will not be discussed here, since they do not have a direct link with the dialectic of solitude. For Paz's full thinking on love, see Octavio Paz, *The Double Flame: Essays on Love and Eroticism* (London: The Harvill Press, 1996) or see Juliana González Valenzuela, "The Blue Fire of the Double Flame," in Oliver Kozlarek (ed.), *Octavio Paz: Humanism and Critique*.

38 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 196.

39 Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur*, 303.

one's own sovereignty" and "acceptance of the other"[40], is the example *par excellence* of man's attempt at transcending his solitude and achieving totality, a totality of which we have a vague sense that we have lost it.

We have, writes Paz, "an obscure awareness that we have been torn from the All," and so our whole being strives to re-establish this lost totality which is nowhere to be found.[41] The alienated subject thus becomes afflicted by nostalgia, solitude becomes a nostalgic longing for the re-establishment of "the bonds that united us with life in a paradisiac past" and communion becomes the restoration of this lost primordial totality, transfigured and transposed into the future.[42] As a result, our very existence as a solitary and alienated being becomes an exile. It becomes a form of orphanhood, which manifests itself as a sense of sin.[43] However, this sense of sin is not resulting from the knowledge that one has violated some rule.[44] Rather, it is one's very nature. Solitude and original sin thus become synonymous, and with it arises the need for redemption. Or as Paz puts it in the following crucial passage: "The penalties and guilty feelings inflicted by a state of separation can be considered, thanks to the ideas of expiation and redemption, as necessary sacrifices, as pledges or promises of a future communion that will put an end to the long exile. The guilt can vanish, the wound heal over, the separation resolve itself in communion. Solitude thus assumes a purgative, purifying character."[45] It appears to us as a test and an ordeal, at the end of which we expect to find repose, plenitude and stability.[46] "What we ask of love", however, writes Paz, "is that it give us a bit of true life, of true death. We do not ask it for happiness or repose, but simply for an instant of that full life in which opposites vanish, in which life and death, time and eternity are united."[47]

III. Augustine, the Christian Creation Myth and Original Sin

What Paz tries to show, then, is that man's sense of sin and disposition to envision an assured redemption and future communion, which will restore man's natural state, arises out of the aporetic nature of our subjectivity, our self-consciousness, our solitude. But, before we turn our attention to the Christian redemption myth as an example of this disposition, another domain in which the dialectic of solitude can be identified needs to be discussed. Up until now, we have been focussing on what, for Paz, constitutes the essence of individual human experience, of being a self-conscious subject. However, Paz thinks that the dialectic of solitude can also be identified in the collective, historical experience of people.[48] This parallel social variant proves to be vital for understanding man's need for redemption and thus for understanding both the Christian and Marxist expression of this need. In other words, it serves as the social ground out of which the moral concepts 'guilt' and 'sin' as well as man's need for redemption and communion arise. Much like Nietzsche's attempt to uncover the "conditions and circumstances under which the [moral] values grew up, developed and changed",[49] Paz traces the historical evolution of these values back to the people we – inaccurately

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40 Octavio Paz, cited in Xavier Rodríguez Ledesma, "To Hear the Inaudible, To See the Imperceptible", 246.

41 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 20.

42 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 195.

43 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 64.

44 It seems that Paz's dialectic and Plato's dialectic part ways on this point, since Plato's original, complete humans did violate a rule. Aristophanes' creation myth does, however, leave room for interpretation. We could also interpret the story in such a way that the split subjects do not actually know that they violated some rule, but only have a vague sense that something is wrong. They are condemned to search for their other half without really knowing why.

45 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 64.

46 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 196.

47 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 196.

48 As Anthony Stanton notes, the force and power of Paz's notion of the dialectic of solitude as a way to accurately portray and explain history "are more symbolic and poetic than empirical of factual." Anthony Stanton, "Introduction" in Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad*, 28.

49 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Penguin Books, 2013), 7 (see especially "Second Essay: 'Guilt',

and complacently – refer to as 'primitives'.[50]

Primitive man lived in small, closed communities and was, solely by the fact of having been born within the group, secured of direct affiliation, of belonging to and being part of the group. The individual, from the start, is part of a whole, a body, which needs to be protected against the constant threat of falling apart. The group's unity, cohesion and permanence is the only source of health. Health and society are thus synonymous terms and so are dispersion and death. To safeguard the group from dissolution and the individual from solitude, "complex and rigid systems of prohibitions, rules and rituals" are in place.[51] However, despite all these safeguards, the group is not immune to dispersion. In fact, its dissolution is bound to happen: wars, religious schisms, changes in the systems of production, conquests... Anything can break the group apart. And when this happens, when the source of health is finally destroyed, solitude is no longer merely a threat, but the basic condition. The archaic, closed societies are gradually replaced by new, open and fluid societies and the fact of having been born in these societies, made up of exiles, no longer assures their members unconditional belonging. This separation from the whole, the punishment of solitude, manifests itself as a sense of sin. Again, this sense of sin does not result from the knowledge that one has violated some rule, but rather, constitutes one's very nature. Solitude and original sin thus, again, become identical. And health and communion become synonymous again, but this time located in a remote past, which now constitutes the golden age which needs to be reinstated to overcome the punishment of solitude and exile. Together with the acquirement of a sense of sin, then, the need for redemption arises. And with this, a new mythology and a new religion enter the stage: "The idea of redemption fosters religious speculation, theology, asceticism and mysticism", while the redeemer embodies the promise that "the group is an earthly prefiguration of the perfect society awaiting us on the other side of death."[52] In that hope for an afterlife, the nostalgia for the old society lives.

Now, it is against this background, then, that we need to understand the Christian creation myth as well as the theological elaboration of the notion of original sin, which, as we will see, are intimately tied together. The notion of original sin – since the 16th century formally incorporated into the Catholic Church's doctrine – forms a central part of the Christian tradition and, though not invented by Augustine, has been extensively discussed and explained and largely constructed and shaped by the church father, theologian and philosopher from the Late Antique period. Augustine's starting point is the world in which we find ourselves and the question of evil, injustice and responsibility.[53] His evaluation – and it seems hard to disagree with it – is that the world is full of evil and injustice: people who do harm, people who suffer from this, catastrophes that overcome us in the form of floods, droughts, wars, famines, diseases and personal disasters. Moreover, during our whole life our mind is being tyrannized by a whole range of desires and mental storms: fears, torment over the loss of someone or something, a burning desire for something we do not possess, anxiety, depression. Our whole life we are being tossed about, torn apart and enslaved by lust.[54] It seems, on the one hand, that there is no apparent connection between what people do and the evil that befalls them.[55] Irrespective of whether somebody lives exemplary or not, disasters and catastrophes can happen to anyone. The clearest example of this are infants, which we consider to be pure innocence, since they had not even had the chance to do harm (or good for that matter). Surely, they are not deserving of the misery and suffering to which they are often exposed. Not

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'Bad Conscience' and Related Matters").
50 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 205-207.
51 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 205.
52 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 207; as we will see, the redeemer comes in many shapes and forms: in Christianity he is personified by Jesus Christ, while in Marxism it becomes the proletariat.
53 Michael Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," (University of California Press, 2011), 161-162.
54 Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book I, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.
55 Michael Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," 162.

surprisingly, however, Augustine also thinks that we should not apportion blame to God, since he is infinitely good, just, loving and merciful. It must be the case, then, that we have brought it upon ourselves by our own doing, by our own free choice. But if we are not individually responsible for the evil that befalls us, there must be another reason for our seemingly unjust suffering.

At this point, Augustine introduces the notion of original sin: the free choice of the first parents to turn away from God would then be the reason for our suffering. But why should we be held responsible and suffer for something we did not do? According to Augustine, we *can* be held responsible, because the whole of mankind was already contained in Adam.[56] God did not create just one individual, but the whole of mankind. And mankind only exists as a collective, as a collection of differing parts, like Adam or Jesus. So, the moment God created mankind, he created such a collective. And it was this collective, mankind as a whole, which committed the first sin when Adam sinned. Consequently, it is mankind as a whole which is responsible for this sin and therefore, when God punished the first parents, the whole of mankind was punished. As a result, human nature changed: it became, in contrast to how it was first created, subject to sin and death.[57] The nature of this punishment lies within the nature of the transgression.[58] The moment Adam and Eve stopped obeying God's commands, their soul deserted God's dominion. It thus lost its original power over the body and became unable to subject the flesh completely to its will. From this moment on, the flesh began to rebel against the spirit: we were condemned to live a mortal life, to be receptive to sickness and to be enslaved by lust.[59] So, the terrible deed of the first parents cost us our freedom: we became enslaved by desire and began to cling to transitory things. Since the last actual free choice, the first sin, we do not possess a free will in the sense of actually being able to choose freely. All our sins, except for the first one, are the product of an enslaved will. However, although we are unable not to sin, we have brought all sins, or rather, our sinful nature, upon ourselves as a consequence of our last free choice.[60] So, because of our misuse of our free will, "we deserted the safe stronghold of virtue (*arx virtutis*) to submit ourselves to the slavery of appetite"[61] and "a sequence of misfortunes conducts the whole human race".[62] All our suffering, then, including our seemingly unjust suffering into which we are born, can be considered just since we have brought this punishment upon ourselves. In addition, we do not possess the ability to liberate ourselves from this predicament. Once mankind had fallen, we lost our freedom; our will became enchained by sin and so we became unable to choose freely and liberate ourselves. Thus the only one who now has the power to end our exile and liberate us, is the one who gave us our free will in the first place: only God's grace can save us now.[63]

Augustine thus paints a picture of a paradisiac past, a golden age, in which mankind lived happily and followed God's commands voluntarily. There was no need for a political community, for temporal laws or for coercion. This all changed when the first parents ate from the forbidden fruit, which, according to Augustine, was the result of man's turning away from God or the Good and his turn to himself. The corruption of mankind thus began with pride (*superbia*), with the delusional idea that man would not need God and would be competent enough to guide himself. As a result, man became corrupted, selfish, greedy, jealous and aggressive. The divine order of paradise was replaced by an earthly political order supported by temporal laws and coercion:

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56 Michael Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," 164.

57 Augustine, *The City of God, Books VIII-XVI* (Catholic University of America Press, 1952), Book 13, Chapter 3, 302-303.

58 What Augustine thus seems to convey, is the idea that, although we did not individually violate a rule, we can still be held accountable, since we are Adam and Eve's progeny and were already contained in them. After the first sin, their nature changed, and so did ours with them. Formulated in this way, Augustine's notion of original sin seems to accord with Paz's conception of original sin.

59 Augustine, *The City of God,* Book 13, Chapter 13, 316.

60 Michael Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," 167.

61 Michael Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," 165.

62 Augustine, *The City of God, Books VIII-XVI*, Book 13, Chapter 14, 317.

63 Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 14, Chapter 11, 376-377.

instead of subjecting himself to God's eternal law, man chose to subject his fellowmen.[64] Our sinful nature thus brings about our need for redemption. Our lack of God, our very incompleteness, is what drives our earthly existence and misery. We need God to be whole again, to reinstate the lost totality and put an end to our exile.

The Christian creation myth thus is a clear expression of the dialectic of solitude. Augustine's evaluation of the world and subjective experience is formulated as a punishment, a torment we necessarily have to endure because of our sinful nature, resulting from our fall from paradise.[65] Our sinful nature, in turn, creates the need for redemption, for us to be freed from the weight of earthly existence and be whole again. Or rather, as Paz would say, our fall from oneness into polarity, our separation from totality, which we experience as a punishment, manifests itself as a sense of sin. The state of separation and the corresponding torment become bearable thanks to the ideas of expiation and redemption. We thus accept our punishment as a necessary sacrifice, as a promise of a future restoration of man's original wholeness. The redeemer embodies this sacrifice and promise and, in Christianity, he is personified by Christ. Christ thus becomes the personification of man's yearning for the negation of our solitude.

IV. Libertarian Utopia as Redemption Myth

The Christian creation myth, then, is a clear articulation of man's need for redemption, his nostalgic longing for the lost totality transposed and transfigured into a future communion in which solitude and sin, guilt and separation will all resolve themselves. In libertarian thought,[66] on the other hand, this dialectic might be somewhat obscured due to the rational schemes and language as well as the focus on the existing order. This is hardly surprising, since modern man has attempted, from the Enlightenment on, to eradicate the myths: the program of the Enlightenment was the "disenchantment of the world", write Horkheimer and Adorno, "to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge."[67] However, as Paz points out, this process of rationalization did not fully succeed in destroying the myths. Rather, it merely concealed them: "The majority of our moral, political and philosophical conceptions are only new ways of expressing tendencies that were embodied earlier in mythical forms."[68] This is a very strong claim and might be somewhat of an exaggeration. I do not think that the *majority* of our moral, political and philosophical conceptions are *merely* new ways of expressing certain tendencies that used to be expressed in mythical form. However, certain modern political utopias do serve as a clear example of that tendency that causes man to imagine a golden age from which he was exiled and to which he will return on the Day of

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64 Frede, "Augustine: A Radically New Notion of a Free Will," 173; Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 14, Chapter 11, 377.

65 Bear in mind that this sinful nature, as discussed above and as formulated by Augustine, fundamentally consists in being subject to sickness, death, catastrophes and mental instability. These things are inherent to our existence and are very far off the meaning associated today with the word 'sin'. After centuries of the Church's power and influence, it is not surprising that the word 'sin' today has an almost exclusively religious meaning and is very strongly associated with anything in the realm of bodily appetites, especially sex. The Church, for reasons we cannot go into here, thus formulated its own conception of sin, the seeds of which can already be identified in Augustine. Fundamentally, however, Augustine's conception of sin thus constitutes the inescapable and inherent torment of man's existence.

66 By 'libertarian' I refer to all emancipatory, revolutionary trends of socialist thought with a strong anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and anti-statist orientation. In other words, I do not refer to what usually in the US (and in some other places) is meant by the term, which comes down to some form of anarcho-capitalism.

67 Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1, https://monoskop.org/images/2/27/Horkheimer_Max_Adorno_Theodor_W_Dialectic_of_Enlightenment_Philosophical_Fragments.pdf (consulted January 31, 2021); the phrase 'disenchantment of the world' [*Entzauberung der Welt*] is an allusion to a formulation of Max Weber's, who first coined the phrase.

68 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 211.

Days.[69] Indeed, there is an important aspect of libertarian thought, which, despite the rationalistic disguises, amounts to prophecy and resembles the structure of a redemption myth.

In all anti-capitalist revolutionary thought we can discern two tendencies that form a dialectical relationship, crystallizing in various proportions: on the one hand, we have, what Löwy calls, a restorative or romantic-nostalgic current, and on the other, we have a utopian current.[70] The restorative current focusses on the re-establishment of a past ideal state, a lost golden age, while the utopian current, in the literal sense of a non-place, aspires to install a future, radically new state of things, an order that has never existed before. These two contradictory yet inseparable tendencies form a dialectical relationship in the sense that they are both found in one another. As Gershom Sholem points out, "the completely new order has elements of the completely old, but even this old order does not consist of the actual past; rather, it is a past transformed and transfigured in a dream brightened by the rays of utopianism."[71] This dialectical relationship can be found in both anarchism and Marxism, albeit in varying proportions: the anarchist utopia, accompanied by a deep nostalgia for aspects of the pre-capitalist past, the traditional peasant community, or artisan economy, usually tends more to the romantic-nostalgic side of the dialectical scale, whereas the Marxist utopia, tempered by the admiration for industry and the economic progress that capital brings, tends more to the utopian side.[72] Since Marxist theory is more elaborate and cohesive than anarchist theory, the following will focus on the way in which this dialectic can be identified in Marxist theory.

The dialectic becomes especially apparent in its theory of primitive communism, most clearly formulated in Engels' work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.[73] As the title suggests, the work focusses on early human history, following the disintegration of the primitive community which brought about the emergence of private property, class division, the state and the oppression and exploitation of the majority by a small minority. Before the disintegration of the classless, stateless, primitive community, man was confined to his community, both externally and internally, i.e., in relation to strangers from outside the community and in relation to himself. The collective was an undifferentiated whole: each individual was still undifferentiated from the other; each individual was literally a part of a whole, was still, as Engels paraphrases Marx, "attached to the navel string of the primitive community."[74] Production and consumption in such a community were, though very limited, inherently communistic: producers had absolute control over their production process and their products, while consumption proceeded by direct distribution of the products.[75]

These communistic communities were, however, bound to be broken up, the umbilical cord to be cut. A process of individuation aroused man's "lowest interests – base greed, brutal appetites, sordid avarice, selfish robbery of the common wealth" – in other words, it was by "the vilest means – theft, violence, fraud, treason – that the old classless gentile society" was undermined and eventually destroyed.[76] It meant "a fall from the simple moral greatness of the old gentile society" based on shared communal property, into the new, civilized, class society based on private property.[77] This coincided with the replacement of the old conjugal systems, which were based on natural communal property, by the institution of monogamous marriage, which was based, not on

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69 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 211.

70 Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe* (Verso, 2017), 16.

71 Gershom Scholem, cited in Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 16.

72 Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 16-17.

73 Engels wrote the book one year after Marx's death and is based on a precis Marx wrote of *Ancient Society*, a book by US scholar Lewis Henry Morgan. Marx's precis contained numerous remarks on Morgan's work as well as other sources. Besides Marx's precis, Engels used some of Morgan's factual data and conclusions as well as his own.

74 Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 52, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf (consulted January 31, 2021).

75 Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 94.

76 Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 52-53.

77 Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 52.

natural, but on economic grounds, i.e., on private property.[78] Monogamous marriage meant the previously unknown antagonism between man and woman, it meant the subjugation of the female sex by the male sex and was the first class opposition and the first class oppression in history.[79] Although historically a step forward in that it opened a new period, morally it meant a step backward since this new historical epoch was marked by class division, exploitation and oppression.[80] As a result, because of the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity.[81]

　　With the emergence of the first antagonism, the first class division, history, essentially material and economic, became dialectical and revolutionary. Or, in other words, historical evolution progresses dialectically and revolutionarily because the economy is dialectical and revolutionary.[82] At each level of history, according to Marx, the mode of production, and thus the form of society, is determined by the production forces, i.e., human labour power and the means of production, which, in turn, determine the relations of production, i.e., the relations individuals must enter into in a given mode of production in order to subsist and produce. Every existing mode of production with its corresponding form of society will necessarily change and be replaced by a higher mode of production and form of society: at the level of the production forces antagonisms will inevitably arise which will eventually make the old mode of production obsolete. The old form of society thus already contains the seeds of the new form of society, which, in turn, carries within itself the next higher plane of society. The capitalist mode of production and its corresponding bourgeois society will be the last antagonistic form of the societal production process, because it creates the very conditions for the antagonistic nature of economy and history to be resolved; it creates the possibility for the one class, the proletariat, to become master of the means of production and gain control over the production process. Because of the laws of capital, the size of the working-class will increase until capital is in the hands of a very small minority, a handful of despicable masters whose growing power rests on exploitation and robbery. Eventually, the day will come that the disenfranchised, enslaved majority will find itself face to face with the handful of masters. On this day the working class will take control of the means of production and the production process. The working-class will discard the capitalist class altogether and private property and ownership will become communal property and ownership again. This will be the day of the revolution. With the disappearance of the capitalist class, the fundamental antagonism of class division disappears and consequently, also the state: "The society", writes Engels, "which organizes production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong–into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze ax."[83] The bourgeois order thus is the last form of society based on

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78　Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 34-35.

79　Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 35.

80　As David Graeber notes in his book *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, Morgan's work, which was widely published, made it clear that at least among the Iroquois nations the "fabled land of barter" was nowhere to be found, providing counter-evidence to the usual account of the origin of money dominating the field of economics since Adam Smith. Instead of trading arrowheads for slabs of meat, it showed that "the main economic institutions among the Iroquois nations were longhouses where most goods were stockpiled and then allocated by women's councils". Although most economists simply ignored this information, it did make an impression on many others, including Marx and Engels. Morgan's emphasis on "collective property rights and the extraordinary importance of women, with women's councils largely in control of economic life", so impressed Marx and Engels (and many other radical thinkers) that it "became the basis of a kind of counter-myth, of primitive communism and primitive matriarchy." From this it becomes clear, then, that, as we have seen Gershom Scholem pointing out, the completely new order, in this case communism, has elements of the completely old, but even this old order, indeed, does not consist of the actual past, but is a past transformed and transfigured in a dream brightened by the rays of utopianism. (David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (Melville House Publishing, 2014), 29, 403.

81　Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 94.

82　Karl Marx, "Voorwoord tot de bijdrage tot de kritiek op de politieke economie," https://www.marxists.org/nederlands/marx-engels/1859/1859voorwoordbijdrage.htm (consulted January 31, 2021).

83　Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 94.

private property and class division: it ends, Marx writes, the prehistory of human society and ushers in the real human history.[84] Or as Engels concludes his work, quoting Morgan: "the next higher plane of society … will be the revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes."[85]

Behind the rationalistic disguises, then, hides a prophetic dimension which assumes the character of a redemption myth. It foretells the end of human suffering, which will be the revival of a golden age, transfigured in a future totality. This is hardly surprising, since, despite the unequivocal atheism of Marxism, the origin of its view of history is clearly Judeo-Christian. As Camus notes in his work *L'homme révolté*, Christianity, Judaic in its conception of history, was "the first to consider human life and the course of events as a history which is unfolding from a fixed beginning towards a definite end, in the course of which man gains his salvation or earns his punishment."[86] For the first time, the idea of history and the idea of punishment became associated. History became identified with chastisement. Similar to Augustine, Marx's starting point is the evaluation of the world in which we find ourselves. History, for Marx, is class struggle: domination of the one by the other. It is characterized by exploitation, servitude and suffering. The capitalist order, although it meant the abolition of serfdom, enslaves the worker through wage-labour. "The height of this servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject* and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a worker."[87] The capitalist production process alienates the worker, estranges him from his labour, from nature, his fellowmen and himself.[88] Alone amidst the world of things he becomes a thing himself, a cog in the machine, his labour a commodity. At the end of this complete degradation, however, awaits the realization of "the complete affirmation of self".[89] As Camus notes, the particular proletarian affirmation is by its nature universal: "In affirming itself it affirms everything and everyone."[90] This is because, in affirming itself it brings about universal salvation. This, then, "is the mission of the proletariat: to bring forth supreme dignity from supreme humiliation. Through its suffering and its struggles, it is Christ in human form redeeming collective sin from alienation. It is, primarily, the multiform bearer of total negation and then the herald of definitive affirmation."[91] Once the proletariat finally accomplishes its mission, man will thus cease to be alienated, sin will be washed away and man will become his natural self again. It is not surprising then, that Camus even calls Marx "the Saint Augustine of the revolution."[92] At the end of history, when the final revolution puts an end to our exile full of misery, there awaits salvation in the form of the true human society: it will be "the reconciliation of the wolf and the lamb, the procession of criminal and victim to the same altar, the reopening or opening of a terrestrial paradise."[93]

The dialectic of solitude can thus also be identified in Marxism. Man's historical experience is formulated as a punishment, as the separation from the whole, as a fall from totality into polarity or antagonistic experience. The antagonistic nature of history, however, eventually will bring about its own dissolution. Man will then cease to be alienated: solitude and sin, guilt and separation will all resolve themselves and man's natural self will be restored.

Although a clear expression of the dialectic of solitude, an important distinction has to be made between, what one could call, the mythical or utopian expression, whether religious or political, and the (inter-)subjective expression. As Freud mentions while discussing different

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84 Karl Marx, "Voorwoord tot de bijdrage tot de kritiek op de politieke economie."
85 Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 96.
86 Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (Penguin Books, 2013), 138-139.
87 Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour", https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm
     (consulted January 31, 2021).
88 Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour."
89 Karl Marx, cited in Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 154.
90 Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 154.
91 Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 154.
92 Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 140.
93 Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 141.

approaches people take to mitigate the inherent hardship of life, the mythical or utopian expression articulates a break with (some aspects of) the world and an attempt to create another. As we have seen with both the Christian and the Marxist redemption myth, the existing order will be and should be replaced by a qualitatively different one, one in which man becomes a different being, his natural, original self. In order to be complete again and to overcome the fundamental separation that marks our existence, man thus has to turn his back on this world and create another one. In contrast, the (inter-)subjective expression, fixated on the achievement of totality by means of love, does not turn away from the world; in fact, it displays a strong attachment to objects, or more specifically, to other subjects, within that world by engaging in affective relationships with them.[94] Nonetheless, both expressions articulate man's propensity to negate our solitude and resolve our separation in communion.

V. Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussion has tried to identify the dialectic of solitude in two different redemption myths – the Christian creation myth and the Marxist utopia – in order to show the potential significance of one of Paz's contributions to contemporary debates in the social sciences and the humanities. Following Paz, it put forward the idea of the torment of our divided subjectivity, our self-consciousness, and the punishment of solitude in the realm of the historical experience of man as the ground out of which our sense of sin, our need for redemption and our nostalgic longing for the re-establishment of a lost totality arise. As a solitary, fractured being in a fragmented world we long for a state in which all opposites vanish and resolve themselves in communion. The separation from the whole, the fall from totality into polarity, i.e., the punishment of solitude, which manifests itself as a sense of sin, brings about the need for the dissolution of antagonistic experience and thus creates the need for redemption, which is envisaged as the re-establishment of a past ideal order, transposed and transfigured into a future totality that will put an end to the long exile, that will resolve the guilt, sin and separation and will restore man's natural self. The punishment of solitude thus becomes bearable thanks to the ideas of expiation and redemption and can be considered as a necessary sacrifice and a promise of a future communion. Essentially, it is this propensity which is expressed in various myths and which the essay tried to identify in both the Christian creation myth and the Marxist utopia. As we have seen, the former formulated man's subjective experience and historical existence as a punishment, one we necessarily have to endure due to our fall from paradise, a lost golden age in which man lived happily and was one with God. Our sinful nature constitutes this very separation from totality and thus creates the need for redemption, for the restoration of this lost primordial wholeness, which will resolve all the guilt, sin and separation and will re-establish the bonds that united us with life in our paradisiac past. Similarly, the latter also formulated man's historical experience as a punishment, as the fall from totality into antagonistic experience, as the fall from the moral greatness of primitive communism into a morally reprehensible order marked by class division. Man thus became alienated and sinful, and in need of redemption, in need of a return to the moral greatness of primitive communism transposed and transfigured into a future communion which will resolve the sin and separation and restore man's original self. The antagonistic nature of history will eventually bring about its own dissolution and (re)open a terrestrial paradise in the form of the true human society.

Now, the following concerns itself with some critical remarks on Paz's notion of the dialectic of solitude, discussions that were not included as well as some suggestions for further research. First of all, it seems possible to interpret the dialectic of solitude, especially in the (inter-)subjective domain, as an existentialist equivalent of a redemption myth and, as a result, might lose some of its potential explanatory force. This is especially the case with Paz's formulation of prenatal life, which seems to be equated with life in paradise, and to which we long to return.

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94 Sigmund Freud, *Beschouwingen over cultuur*, 319-320.

Although his characterization of prenatal life as an existence marked by the absence of a gap between desire and satisfaction is poignant, it seems a point of discussion to what extent, if at all, "the human being is dominated from the moment of birth onwards by a continuous regressive trend toward the reestablishment of the intrauterine situation".[95] This idea, first introduced by Sandor Ferenczi, psychoanalyst and close associate of Freud, was, quite soon after its introduction, "regarded as redundant and biologically improbable" within psychoanalytic circles.[96] On the other hand, even if Paz does provide us with an existentialist redemption myth, this at least accords with his own general point that man has the tendency to envisage a lost totality to which he will return and thus provides us with yet another expression of this tendency.

A discussion that was not included and one which is, to my knowledge, not mentioned in the literature, is the implicit presence of Heidegger's notion of thrownness [*Geworfenheit*] in Paz's notion of solitude. I did not include this, because it serves more as the existentialist and phenomenological background against which to understand Paz's notion of solitude and thus would serve more as a contextualization instead of touching upon the core elements of Paz's notion. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see future scholarship elaborating on this.

Now, if it is correct, as I have tried to show, following Paz, that the dialectic of solitude might be understood as a blueprint for various redemption myths, then it would be interesting to investigate whether the dialectic of solitude can be identified in redemption myths other than the two already discussed here. Two candidates that come to mind are the Orphic myth of Dionysus' dismemberment (or Zagreus myth) and the anarchist utopia. According to one influential position in relation to the former, that goes back to the late 19th century and is represented today by Alberto Bernabé, Orphism has "a core of specific Orphic doctrines: the duality of humans as body and soul, the belief in an 'original sin' for which the soul is being punished, the possibility of escaping this punishment through a cycle of reincarnations, and the purpose of the soul to be united with the divine."[97] According to Orphic mythology, the human race came into existence after the Titans dismembered Dionysos, condemning the human race to a mortal incarnated existence.[98] As a result of the crime of the Titans, the human race carries the guilt of their ancestors. "However, the Titans tasted Dionysos and this is why humans also have a divine Dionysiac element which they need to cultivate in order to escape from the circle of reincarnations and return to their primal state."[99] Regarding the latter, the anarchist utopia, we have already alluded to the possibility of the anarchist utopia as an expression of the dialectic of solitude, but it would be interesting to see this elaborated in more detail. All in all, I hope I have succeeded in showing the potential significance of Paz's notion of the dialectic of solitude for understanding and interpreting various myths and ideas in the history of thought.

VI. References

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