

From Dialectical Closure to Parallaxical Indeterminacy: A Study of the Political and Individual Modes of Being in Slavoj Zizek's *Antigone*

Sheheryar Khan

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College, Attock

Abstract

Parallax is the difference in perception caused by the spatial shift of the observer and the observed. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek has used this scientific notion to interpret apparently antithetical positions in the fields of politics, neurobiology and philosophy. His contention is that the parallax shift makes some phenomenon appear as two, while a change in perspective can make us see that they are, in fact, ONE. The notion of parallax can also be exploited to read a literary text and, in this article, I intend to use it to read Slavoj Zizek's own re-writing of Sophocles' play *Antigone*. Antigone, as a character, has enamored and appalled critics and philosophers throughout history. Her defiance against the State has been interpreted and evaluated from different perspectives and viewpoints. The play stages the conflict between two modes of being, the political and the individual, and the appeal of its polemic seems not to have gotten stale all these centuries. In his re-writing, Slavoj Zizek has provided two alternates to the original ending. He has described this as an "ethico-political exercise" (Zizek, 2016, p. xxv) and not a literary venture but I have attempted to read his play as a literary text applying his philosophical notion of the parallax. I have used textual analysis as my method in order to read the selected text. My contention is that the two alternate endings provided by Zizek present the individual and political as two warring modes of being but a shift in parallaxical position can make them appear as ONE. Moreover, it can also be argued that even the two alternates are an outcome of a parallaxical movement in perspective that masks the inherent ONENESS of the two.

Keywords: *parallax, individual, political, ONE.*

Introduction

Parallax is discerned when an object is observed from two different positions and the change in observer's locus brings about the change in the observed as well. Slavoj Zizek believes that this scientific phenomenon can be applied to the social domains as well whenever there exist two divergent and apparently irreconcilable positions. In his book, *The Parallax View* (2006), Zizek reads

such points of divergence in disciplines like philosophy, neurobiology and political science and he defines parallax as

...the illusion of being able to use the same language for phenomena which are mutually untranslatable and can be grasped only in a kind of parallax view, constantly shifting perspective between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible. Thus there is no rapport between the two levels, no shared space—although they are closely connected, even identical in a way, they are, as it were, on the opposed sides of a Moebius strip. (p. 4)

Parallax is usually perceived as a shift in the respective position of the subject that can make an object appear as two. The object observed does not change but the position of the observer brings about a certain change of perception. Zizek wants to make us see the opposite parallax, that is, when two objects seem to appear as two but actually are one object. In order to drive his argument home, he has formulated the concept of 'minimal difference' (Zizek, 2006, p. 18) that exists between the subject (as thinking being) and the object (as matter). Zizek is a Materialist and one of the fundamental questions Materialist interpretation of the universe has to confront is how the subject or the consciousness rose out of the dead matter or, in other words, how can object give birth to the subject? Zizek's method is an attempt to prove that the perceived difference between the subject and the object is parallaxical and actually they are ONE.

Zizek invokes French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to validate this theoretical formulation. Lacan is of the view that the subject is inscribed in the object through 'objet a' or the unconscious element of desire. Why is it that a subject desires one particular object? The subject cannot answer this question as his desire is always unconscious and thus inaccessible to him. This implies that it is not some quality of the object that makes it appear desirable to the subject rather it is some unconscious element of the subject that is present in the object and that is the object cause of his desire. Conversely, the 'objet a' exists in the object but its existence is totally dependent upon that vantage point from which it appears desirable to the subject. The subject is inscribed in the object through its unconscious desire and the object is present in the subject through the same itinerary. It is the parallaxical shift that makes them appear as TWO though, in actuality, they are ONE. Zizek, using Hegel and Lacan, has proved how the two opposite modes of existence, the subject and the object, are actually not TWO. In his book, he has applied his parallaxical view on politics, philosophy and neurobiology but it may also be utilized to read a literary text that stages the conflict between two modes of existence and, in this essay, I have tried to read Zizek's own play with parallaxical lens to demonstrate how the two alternate endings of the play are, in fact, ONE.

Slavoj Zizek's *Antigone* is a re-writing of the classical text, though the writer has put this disclaimer in his introduction of the book that "It doesn't pretend to be a work of art but an ethico-political exercise (p. xxv). Without changing the starting point of the Sophoclean play, Zizek has done some

maneuvering to turn his version into a kind of polemic. He has provided three alternate endings of the tragedy; one is the original Sophoclean one while the other two constitute his reconceptualization of the political dimension of the play. Out of the two alternate endings provided by Žižek, the first one shows if Antigone had won and the body of Polyneices had been given the proper burial, then Chorus would have sung a song pointing to the fact how ruling classes can adhere to their principles while common people suffer. In the second dénouement, in order to save the polis, Chorus takes matters into its own hands and installs people's democracy after killing both Antigone and Creon. The endings can be read as the antagonism that exists at the heart of warring political ideologies of oligarchic fascism and revolutionary democracy. Despite Žižek's claim to the contrary, I believe that this re-writing can be taken as a literary text as it contextualizes the action and, unlike any philosophical work, is not an abstract speculation. A parallax reading of the play suggests that the antagonism between the two endings is the result of the parallax. In fact, both are ONE.

In this article, I have invoked this literariness to read Žižek's *Antigone* using his lens of parallax view and to reveal the parallax nature of the alternate endings. Moreover, it is argued that political and social field does not hinge on a dialectical closure of the argument but, like a parallax, it is indeterminate. A dialectical movement is aimed at the obliteration of the inherent contradictions of an idea, hence seeking its closure. On the contrary, a parallax movement keeps it open, or to be more precise, indefinable.

Sophocles' *Antigone* and the Dialectic of the 'Individual' and the 'Political'

The main conflict in the original Sophoclean play is between Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, and Creon, who is ruling Thebes after the exile of the fallen king. After the death of Oedipus, his son Polyneices attacks Thebes, claiming his birthright while his brother Eteocles fights on the side of the city. Both perish in the battle and Creon honors Eteocles and brands Polyneices as a traitor, his punishment being that he won't be given a decent burial. Polyneices' body is thrown in the open for carrion birds to gnaw at and this unsettles his sister, Antigone. She upholds that this is desecration of the dead and totally violates the edicts of gods. Creon, on the other hand, stands by the principle that a traitor can't be bestowed with the honor of a decent burial. The conflict is between the individual a his/her immediate family and the institution of the State that represents social formation beyond blood relations. Antigone is an individual who rises against the State that is represented by Creon. Hegel is probably the first philosopher to interpret *Antigone* as a play that stages the conflict between these two modes of being and conceives this conflict as 'dialectical'. He deems these two modes as 'lyrical' and 'epic' and opines that dramatic poetry "unites the objectivity of the epic with the subjective character of the lyric" (Hegel, 1975, p. 1158). Here objectivity refers to the socio-political situatedness of the characters and subjectivity is adherence to one's personal and immediate affiliations.

Antigone's stance is lyrical as it is based upon her subjective and personal affiliation while Creon's standpoint is epic as it is grounded in socio-political mode of being. Tragedy, as Hegel sees it, sublates these two apparently opposite modes of being and its denouement is, principally, a kind of synthesis in Hegelian terms. Hegel opines that Sophocles' *Antigone* stages this conflict between the lyrical and the epic in which Antigone represents the lyrical and the filial while Creon upholds the epic or socio-political dimension. Hegel (1975) comments:

The chief conflict treated most beautifully by Sophocles [...] is that between the state [...] and the family. These are the clearest powers that are represented in tragedy, because the full reality of ethical existence consists in harmony between these two spheres and in absence of discord between what an agent has actually to do in one and what he has to do in other. (p. 1213)

The eternal ethical order is the unification of these two modes of being while the characters, owing to their adherence to the one, ignore the other. In doing so, they disturb the essential harmony of the social formation. The harmony can only be restored if the characters suffer at the hands of their opposition. When Creon orders Antigone to be buried alive and when he, through the death of his wife and son, bears the consequences of his decision, tragic action is sublated and the internal contradiction is resolved. Cathartic element of the tragedy is, primarily, the re-inscription of the epic back into the lyric. This implies that Hegelian interpretation of *Antigone* rests on the principle that the personal and the political, though antithetical, must be reconciled for the establishment of a coherent social order. Bergoffen (1986) also stresses the need that the two central characters, Antigone and Creon, must be conceived in symbolic terms:

Thus Creon, this particular man who rules the polis, comes to symbolize the male, the state and the secular law, and Antigone, this particular sister who insists on performing the divinely sanctioned burial rites comes to symbolize the female, the family and the sacred law. (p. 155)

Even though the Hegel's reading of *Antigone* sets the tone for the later interpretations of the play, not all other interpreters are in agreement with his perspective. Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, disagrees with Hegelian interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone* on many levels. Though Kierkegaard accepts the bifurcation between epic and lyric in tragedy, he does not understand this dichotomy in strict binary terms. Antigone and, for that matter, every human being, is born in an epically constituted social order characterized by family, state and fate. It is not the character who has the lyrical freedom to choose rather it is these epical constituent elements that have chosen him/her. Tragic action, in this sense, does not just consist of character's deeds as agents; it also involves what is done to them. Antigone is not lyrically free, but determined by her epic circumstances (her father's guilt and her uncertain relationship with her own family members). Kierkegaard (1987) comments:

Therefore, when Antigone, in defiance of the king's injunction, decides to bury her brother, we see in this not so much a free act as a fateful necessity, which visits the inequities of the father upon the children. There is indeed enough freedom in it to enable us to love Antigone for her sisterly love, but in the inevitability of fate there is also a higher refrain, as it were, that encompasses not only Oedipus' life but also his family. (p. 156)

The epic determinacy of Antigone's action brings a certain ambiguity into her guilt and innocence. Antigone is free and not free at the same time and, for Kierkegaard, this is the source of tragic conflict in the play. The conflict is not, as Hegel envisaged, in one's duty to family or to state. Kierkegaard conceives this conflict as irreconcilable and tragedy leaves this question to the reader whether Antigone is free in her actions or limited by her epic circumstances. Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard does not see any possibility of resolution for this conflict. If Hegel closes the question, Kierkegaard keeps it open. Though Kierkegaard comes to the question of resolution from a different angle, his insight that tragic action is not about resolution of the conflict is quite significant.

In the similar vein, Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, interprets the conflict between the personal and the political in *Antigone* from a completely different angle. He is of the view that Antigone is an individual but she is not a political individual. Her individuality must be understood in psychoanalytical terms. When she defies Creon, she is not an individual defying a tyrant and, thus, the conflict in the play is not the conflict between freedom and tyranny. Freedom and tyranny are located in the realm of the Symbolic, whereas what Antigone desires is something that goes beyond the Symbolic and enters the Real. Antigone carries with her

...the rupture of signification, that which grants a person the insuperable power of being — in spite of and against everything — what he [sic] is ... Antigone all but fulfills what can be called pure desire, the pure and simple desire of death as such [i.e., of that which is beyond the pleasure principle]. She incarnates this desire. (Lacan, 1986, pp. 328-329)

This desire of Antigone goes beyond the limits of our socio-political mode of existence and, as her defiance cannot be symbolized through rational signification, it would be incorrect to interpret her actions in strictly political terms. The individual desire of Antigone, the desire for death, is no ordinary desire that is constituted in the Symbolic. Lacan acknowledges that Antigone's act is ethical but, in his view, it cannot be generalized in the form of a Kantian universal maxim. The act is good but beyond all the goods of socio-political order and thus it is not a good adhering to a pre-conceived ethical norm. In annihilating herself, Antigone has created her own idea of good. Lacan sets off from Hegelian grounds but he does not discern the conflict in the form of a schism between freedom and tyranny.

Judith Butler rejects Hegelian reading on the ground that Hegel has confined the role of Antigone to the domestic sphere by interpreting her act as an act of kinship rather than politics. In her opinion, Antigone does not take a stand for the sake of kinship as the whole idea of kinship is warped in the play. Moreover, kinship is always epically situated and can't be divorced from the political. Her objection against Lacan is also based upon the premise that his 'Symbolic' is not 'social' but an abstract order and, in her view, Antigone's act must be located in the social and political. Butler's reading of the play is not centered on the this split between the 'individual' and 'political' as she conceives kinship rooted in the political. Butler (2000) upholds: "Antigone represents neither kinship nor its radical outside but becomes the occasion for a reading of a structurally constrained notion of kinship in terms of its social iterability, the aberrant temporality of the norm" (p. 29).

In these readings, the split between the 'individual' and 'political' is taken as 'dialectical' implying that the two modes of being are antithetical in nature and the tragedy of *Antigone* stages the conflict between the two. My contention is that this split is 'parallactical', not 'dialectical' and the two are, inherently, ONE.

The Parallax of the 'Individual' and 'Political' Modes of Being in Zizek's *Antigone*

If gods are playing dice with us, life could take any turn at any given moment and there is no way that the fragments may be restored; Zizek's take on Sophocles' *Antigone* opens with this nihilistic assertion. If life is "a chaos even gods can't master" (Zizek, 2016, p. 2), what possibilities lie ahead for a hero if each interventionist act further destabilizes the cosmic order? Sophoclean heroine, though acting as a free agent, finds herself tied to the wheel of necessity with imminent death ahead and this, according to Zizek, is just one possible unraveling of the tragic action. Tragic action is tragic because it is irreparable, irreversible and irredeemable but what if the arrow of time be stopped in the mid-air and the beginning has a new beginning? This is the scheme of Zizek's *Antigone*; to go back at the "point of bifurcation" (Zizek, *Antigone*, 2016, p. 2) and narrate other points of departure as well. Zizek has conceived two other possible outcomes of the tragedy of *Antigone* and it is highly ironical that even these alternatives prove inauspicious for the principal characters. This does not necessitate a cynical reading of the play as Zizek means it to be an investigation into ethics and the nature of political act. Moreover, a parallactical reading might reveal that these two alternatives are not dialectical but parallactical.

Meir (1993) is of the view that the central focus of Greek tragedy is 'isonomy' but it also delves into a more ground-level investigation — how the state or polis emerged out of an irrational chaos. In doing so, it also gives us an insight into the origin of the political. The play presents two opposing ontological modes, the individual and the political. The individual mode of being is associated with chaos and disorder while the political mode is

responsible for order and organization in the social formation. Antigone adheres to the individual while Creon is the representative of the political. In order to forward my argument, firstly, I would prove how the individual and the political appear as TWO because of the parallax, otherwise, both are ONE. In order to establish this premise, I would invoke certain other texts to prove how, in the beginning, there was just the individual mode of existence and the political was born out of the individual.

In the Greek culture tragedy, as an art form and as a religious ritual, performed a double function. It brings to the fore the genesis of the state and also how it is linked with the idea of justice. Exigency of the state is underscored through the threat of regress into a pre-civilized disorder, as Jonathan Strauss (2013) has pointed out that “the attempt to justify justice itself must reach back to some nonjudicial, nonpolitical, and indeed irrational substrate that was inexplicable within the norms of the state” (p. 17). The question is what was the nature of this nonjudicial, nonpolitical and irrational society and why was it that individual mode of existence was replaced with the political in the first place? Freud (2002) answers this question by saying that the primitive individual, in the absence of any political, moral and social authority, was free to live his life in the service of his id. But this freedom was partial as he was frail and helpless before the forces of nature. In order to survive, the individuals had to form a social group and Freud thinks two factors might have been responsible for individuals’ coming to live together. Humanity became civilized “in the service of Eros” (Freud, 2002, p. 58) and Ananke. Freud (2002) observes:

There were thus two reasons why human beings should live together: one was the compulsion to work, which was created by external hardship; the other was the power of love, which made the man loath to dispense with his sexual object, the woman, and the woman loath to surrender her child, which had once been part of her. Eros and Ananke (Love and Necessity) thus become the progenitor of human civilization too. (p. 36)

Eros is not limited to family but extends to other members of the group as well. Hence Eros and Ananke became the constituent elements of civilization, but the moment social structure came into being, it started to demand renunciation of basic human instincts characterized by id. Id demands immediate gratification of its lusts and the social group could not allow that as more often than not these lusts would be in conflict with the interests of other members of the community. This could only be avoided through “regulating their mutual relations” (Freud, 2002, p. 27). The regulatory injunctions thus introduced came to be known as Law and Morality and political institutions were required to implement them. The political originated in the individual, in his Eros, but the moment it was externalized and became supra-individual, it colonized the individual space. It began to demand instinctual renunciation from the individual for the cause of collective good. Freud notes that “[i]t is remarkable that little as men are able to exist in isolation, they should nevertheless feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices which

civilization expects of them in order to make a communal life possible” (Freud, 1961, p. 6). The scope of the political, with the passage of time, became wider and both modes of being came to appear as distinct. This proves that the political, in the beginning, did not exist of its own but was separated from the individual mode of being. Now that they are separated, they appear to be antagonistic but this separation is parallaxical as it is our respective position that makes them appear as Two while they are actually ONE. The individual desires to follow id while the political mode of being enforces its moral laws onto him. Apparently, the conflict cannot be resolved. Zizek’s parallaxical view and Freudian insight enable us to see how, in the beginning, there was only individual while the political separated from it at a later stage. Hence, when we observe the political from the vantage point of the individual, it appears in opposition to it and vice versa. After I have postulated the ONENESS of the individual and political modes of existence, now I come to the two alternate endings of the play.

In the original Sophoclean ending of the play, Antigone is condemned by Creon to be buried alive in a cave where she commits suicide. Haemon, son of Creon, to whom she is engaged also “Leaned on his sword and thrust it deeply home in his own side” (Sophocles, 1947, p. 157). Creon’s wife “Hearing her son was dead...drove the sharp sword home into her heart” (Sophocles, 1947, p. 161). Creon is the last member of his family to withstand the grief. In Zizek’s (2016) version, Creon, grief-stricken and desolate, utters these words:

I killed you, my son, without intending to.
 I don't know where to look or find support.
 Everything I touch goes wrong, and on my head
 fate climbs up with its overwhelming load.
 If only events could be unwound
 and take a different path, if I could reach back
 and change my past decisions.... (p. 20)

It seems his wish is granted and we are taken back to an earlier moment to see what would have happened if Creon had decided differently. The first alternative is that Creon acts on the advice of Tiresias and Chorus and sets Antigone free and buries the corpse of Polyneices. This does not sit well with the people who were already convinced by the speech of Creon that Polyneices is a traitor. The crowd “savagely slaughtered Creon and Haemon” (Zizek, 2016, p. 22) and this does not stop here and the crowd, “unable to restrain and control their demonic passion” (Zizek, 2016, p. 22), goes on a “murderous spree of destruction” (Zizek, 2016, p. 22). At this moment, Antigone enters and the stage directions describes her as “dazed and half crazy” (Zizek, 2016, p. 22) and “with fires burning all around her” (Zizek, 2016, p. 22). She tells chorus that it is in her nature to love but chorus retorts that it is all her doing. She cannot believe that this destruction can be caused by her simple demand:

I am perplexed. How could all this destruction
 be the outcome of my modest demand for a proper burial?

All I demanded was respect for our gods
and their immemorial laws.... (Zizek, 2016, p. 23)

At this point, chorus reminds her that her demand, though in principle just, was nothing but an egoistic self-assertion – divorced from ground realities. Chorus comments that people in power can “afford to obey honor and rigid principles” (Zizek, 2016, p. 23) but the ultimate price is paid by the masses. Antigone’s rigid adherence to the Law has brought this chaos upon the city. Law, as Freud tells us, is an instrument of the Eros — the name of a social bond and its primary purpose is to keep social cohesion by reining in individual’s anti-social instincts. When Antigone invokes the Law to legalize her demand, she ignores the primary function of the Law. Chorus reminds her that “A society is kept together by the bond of Word” (Zizek, 2016, p. 23) because the supremacy of the Law is important but

... the domain of logos, of what can be said,
Always turns around a vortex of what cannot be said,
And this mysterious vortex is what all our endeavors
And struggles are about. (Zizek, 2016, p. 23)

The Word of the Law is important but more important is to understand the unwritten element of the Law. This unwritten element is that Law is supreme only if it helps to keep social harmony. If it fails in this regard, then it is nothing in itself. Chorus informs her that

Our true fidelity
Is to what cannot be said, and the greatest wisdom
Is to know when this very fidelity
Compels us to break our word, even if this word
Is the highest immemorial law. (Zizek, 2016, p. 23)

What Antigone does that she upholds the logos and forgets the elision. In her case, even fidelity to the law turns into a personal desire and “in terms of a desire so stringent and uncompromising in its ethical fidelity that it effectively disrupts (or breaks apart: *dia bolon*) the moral standards shared by the community” (Robertson, 2016, p. 2). By sacrificing everything for the law, she loses law itself. When Antigone alienates the State and the people it represents and presents herself as an upholder of the law, she begins to resemble a Fascist leader who adheres to the law for an egoistic self-assertion and not to keep social harmony. She reminds one a speech made by Hitler:

I shall strike and not capitulate ... every hope of compromise is childish. It is victory or defeat ... I have led the people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am setting all my achievements on a gamble. I have to choose between victory and destruction. I choose victory ... We shall not capitulate — no, never! We may be destroyed, but if we are, we shall drag a world with us — a world in flames. (quoted in Wilmot, 1958)

This is what Antigone does in the first alternate ending. She chooses victory and destruction and no wonder she appears on the stage, “with fires burning all around her” (Zizek, 2016, p. 23). Antigone rises against the State, not realizing the fact that the State is founded on the ONENESS of the individual and the political. The State is nothing but an extension of the individual. The Laws of the State were formulated to control the id of the individual and, in turn, to strengthen the social bond. If an individual invokes these Laws for his/her own egoistic self-assertion and not for coherence of the social order, these Laws may also bring disorder and chaos. Antigone, in the first alternate ending, appears to invoke the political but her motive is embedded in the individual. This is the reason that her actions cause destruction and chaos. The law that she so dearly upholds is nothing if it does not preserve the unity of social structure.

In the second alternate ending of Zizek’s *Antigone*, chorus decides to act as a revolutionary agent. Apparently, it appears that the power is snatched from the individuals as Creon and Antigone are redistributed to the people. The parallaxical reading of the play would reveal that this is not so. Similar to the first alternate ending, here chorus does not represent the Law or the people but acts as a manifestation of individual will. In order to prove my premise, I have invoked Hegel and Freud. Hegel (1975) comments on the role of chorus in Greek tragedy that it represents the social and metaphysical belief system of the Greek culture but it

... does not actively exercise any right against the warring heroes but pronounces judgement purely contemplatively; it warns and sympathizes, or it appeals to divine law and those inner powers which imagination portrays to itself objectively as the groups of the gods who hold sway. (p. 1211)

This points towards a role that is purely at the level of abstraction. Chorus is supposed to be the commentator and not partakers in action. In the second alternate ending in Zizek’s *Antigone*, chorus comes out of this role and acts as a revolutionary agent. When Creon re-appears and tells chorus, “So she must die - that seems decided on” (p. 24), it refuses to be just passive observer any longer:

We are just tired of standing in the shadow, and allowed
to step forward just to comment your deeds, celebrating you
with empty wisdoms. (Zizek, 2016, p. 25)

Chorus further tells Creon that this irresponsible conflict between him and Antigone is threatening the survival of the State and decides to step forward as the representative of the people and take the matters of State in its own hands:

You're no longer fit to rule,
So, we'll take over as a collective organ
and impose a new rule of law, deciding together. (Zizek, 2016, p. 25)

This seems to be the words quoted from the speech of some French Revolutionary leader or any other such revolution. Chorus decides that it would enact a people's court and swift justice would be imposed. Creon argues that he was just doing it for the sake of the State but Chorus won't have any of it. It decides that Creon must be put to death immediately. Creon's defense is that as a ruler, his concern was just to maintain order in the State and his edicts were for that purpose. In response, chorus categorically tells him that "A true order, on the contrary, creates space of freedom for all the citizens" (Zizek, 2016, p. 26) and thus a good master is not the one who limits the freedom but he gives freedom. This is a highly radical stance and if the first alternate ending is about Antigone as representative of an elite fascist class, the second alternative seems more about democratic revolution. Chorus goes as far to say that Antigone cannot claim to speak for the underprivileged as

They don't want others to speak for them,
They themselves should speak and articulate their plight,
So in speaking for them, you betrayed them even more. (Zizek, 2016,
p. 27)

This stance of chorus is reminiscent of question of identity and politics of representation as found in postcolonial and other related disciplines. After Creon, Haemon and Antigone are dead; Chorus sings in praise of revolution and asserts:

No single man is fit to rule alone. It is only right
That they rule themselves collectively. (Zizek, 2016, p. 30)

On the surface level, this second alternate finale of the tragedy appears purely 'political' as the power of the individual is curbed by the rule of the majority. Was not this the teleological end envisaged by the work of civilization, that is, to take power away from the individual and replace it with that of the community? Freud (2002) seems to be in agreement:

Communal life becomes possible only when a majority comes together that is stronger than any individual and presents a united front against every individual. The power of the community then pits itself, in the name of 'right, against the power of the individual, which is condemned as 'brute force'. The replacement of the power of the individual by that of the community is the decisive step towards civilization. (p. 32)

If the community takes power from the individuals, in our case Creon and Antigone, and distributes it in its members, as chorus does, would not it simply make a case for individual vs political? Would not it be a conflict between two opposite forces — between id and superego? Apparently, yes, but a parallax reading of the second alternate ending reveals that this is not so. In the Sophoclean play, Creon is not an 'individual' but a representative of the State/community while Antigone is the individual 'brute force' aspiring to rise

against the 'right' of the community. In Zizekian second alternate ending, both are treated as individuals who are using 'brute force' to disrupt the 'collective good' of the community and chorus seizes control to stop them. Here it is Chorus that claims to represent the community and presents itself as 'right'. The act of Chorus, in this context, is a political act but what if this very act has its origin in the 'individual' rather than the 'political' and again it is the parallax that is making them appear as TWO? In order to prove this argument, I would trace the origin of the revolutionary act of chorus in the individual psyche.

Previously, it has been mentioned that Freud holds 'Ananke' to be the 'fons et origo' of human social formation as he has discussed in his book *Civilization and its Discontents*. But, in one of his earlier works, *Totem and Taboo* (2001), he has rendered Oedipal tension between the father and the sons as the genesis of civilization and law. Freud, in this book, refers to Darwin's analysis of the primal horde which is characterized by "a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (Freud, 2001, p. 164). Freud takes this Darwinian observation as his point of departure to conceptualize the next phase of this development. He avers: "One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually" (Freud, 2001, p. 164). Cannibals as they were, they killed and devoured their father believing that partaking of his flesh would make them equally powerful. This act, in its very nature, was liberating but it also spawned a profound guilt complex among the brothers:

They hated their father, who presented such a formidable obstacle to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him too. After they had got rid of him, had satisfied their hatred and had put into effect their wish to identify themselves with him, the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance, which in this instance coincided with the remorse felt by the whole group. (Freud, 2001, p. 166)

The brothers, consumed by their guilt, re-enacted the same prohibitions as were imposed by their father when alive: "What had up to then been prevented by his actual existence was thenceforward prohibited by the sons themselves, ..." (Freud, 2001, p. 166). They renounced and restricted the very desire which, in the first place, incited them to kill their father, namely, access to women. Hence the incest taboo transpired to be the elementary form of law.

In the discussion in foregoing pages, two insights are of relevance to my argument: firstly, how the brothers came together and did something that was, perhaps, unthinkable individually; secondly, this very act, that was supposed to end the oppression of their father and allow the fulfillment of their desire, paradoxically gave birth to law and more prohibitions. In the second Zizekian alternate ending, chorus, fundamentally a band of singers, who are supposed to remain in the shadow, comes out and seizes control. If

Creon, the head of the State in this case, who has access to power and privilege and whose very presence denies these to the others, can be taken as the mythical father envisaged by Freud, then the act of chorus can be interpreted as coming together of the sons and killing the father. Is not it that in every revolutionary act, people come together and depose a despot who, they believe, has access to all the privileges but he denies the same to his people?

Many revolutions in the history of the world literally staged the act of killing the oppressive ruler, French Revolution being one such example. Invariably, every revolutionary government, after it has unseated the tyrannical ruler, turns out to be even more totalitarian and oppressive. Hence the relevance of the second insight. Does not this validate the parallaxical interpretation of this second ending? Revolutionary act by the people, though in appearance 'political', has its seed in the 'individual' mode of being. The revolutionaries, symbolically, act as sons who rise against their father (oppressive ruler) and take power away from him. The psychoanalytic interpretation reveals that the act of sons/people is not a 'political' act but it has its origin in the 'individual' psyche as they conceive the oppressive ruler in terms of 'primal father' who is a hindrance in the fulfillment of their desire. The 'political' is also a form of desire, though collective, yet, in its constitution, it is no different than the individual desire. Despite appearing as TWO, they are, inherently, ONE.

Conclusion

The genesis of the 'political' is in the 'individual' and after it gets separated from it, it seems to have its own ontological dimension but, through a circuitous route, it does come back to its place of origin. The two alternate endings of Zizek's *Antigone*, apparently, stage this struggle between the two modes but a close scrutiny has revealed that the 'individual' mode of existence cannot be separated from the 'political'. Even in original Sophoclean ending we see that, at the end, though Creon represents the State or the 'political', he suffers as an individual. He takes the side of the 'political' in his conflict with Antigone, but when he loses his own family, death seems to him to be a happy alternative. He has this impression as if he has become 'nothing', he has no life (Sophocles, 1947, p. 161).

In the Zizekian treatment of the subject, as we have seen, in both scenarios, the principle characters suffer as individuals. The reason being that the 'political' mode is inscribed in them and any fallout experienced in the 'political' would affect their 'individual' modes too. Moreover, it can also be argued that this conflict between the individual and political is, in fact, not a schism between two conflicting modes of existence. As Freud has shown us, the 'political' is also a manifestation of Eros and, thus, there is no need for a Hegelian sublation for these two apparently antithetical modes of being. They are already ONE and it is just the parallax that makes them appear as two. This does not imply that the split between the 'individual' and 'political' is not there. The point is that these modes have their origin in Eros and the apparent antagonism between the two is a precondition for the social space to exist.

Adherence to the 'individual' would be chaotic and subscribing to the 'political' would be utterly 'robotic'. Our ontological potential is realized in the gray area between the two.

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