



## Non-Wakefulness: On the Parallax between Dreaming and Awakening

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**Abstract:** *Non-wakefulness proves to be a basic condition of experience, since human beings, living in webs of supernumerary information processes, can only build social relations through unacknowledged forms of passive or “interpassive” (Pfaller) structures of transference due to limited forms of being non-awake toward the properties of all kinds of things. This can cause multiple conflicts both for the individual human being reaching out to facts, as well as for political communities where one sees another as blinded by some kind of “dogmatic slumber”. The article tries to show how the concept non-wakefulness explains in what way mental states are – individually as well as collectively – in relations with objects that are necessarily “withdrawn” (Harman) from us as presented especially in contemporary debates on Speculative Realism. Furthermore, the text develops an understanding of waking-up as the latter marks the moment when a mental state of epistemic deficiency is temporarily left behind. Reality exists only insofar as it is smoothed out via unconscious structures of non-wakefulness, while in dreams objects may unconceal themselves for a short period of time when ‘secondary process’ functions (Freud) of our judgmental capacities are dropped.*

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# Non-Wakefulness: On the Parallax between Dreaming and Awakening

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It is apparent that we human beings regularly ascribe in our self-understanding as rational agents more unconsciously than consciously reasons to many of our actions and beliefs, individually and collectively, though we frequently cannot give good or sufficient reasons for them if we look with scrutiny at what we do and what we know. The variety of philosophical disciplines in which this topic has been reflected upon especially from phenomenology onwards, via critical theory (classical and contemporary),<sup>2</sup> to both the sociology of actor-

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<sup>1</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewers for thoughtful comments which helped me to improve this article.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2006); Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do. Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991).

network theory<sup>3</sup> as well as to externalism within epistemology,<sup>4</sup> should not surprise us, since this dilemma-like conflict, if it is one, is widespread and especially in daily practices of ours; for example when we buy plastic bags (though we should not, because of ecological rationales), fly on short distances (though we should not...), when we eat meat (though we should not...) et cetera. It appears as if we often do not really believe in our knowledge of, for example, global warming, though we know it for a fact; which is not the same as saying that we suffer from “acrasia,” Aristotle’s understanding of the lack of will, or from the lack of what Harry Frankfurt calls “second-order volition”.<sup>5</sup> It might be more fitting to say that we are in the mental state of belief and/or even of on ontologic-epistemological trust in reason-networks in which our actions are “competences without comprehension” (an expression used by Daniel Dennett to describe the animal-kingdom),<sup>6</sup> since we place our comprehensions time and again into others and outsource at the same time our knowledge into these networks. Already the broad tradition of phenomenology focused on the topic politically when it interprets the individual mind as being split by bodily as well as communitarian practices and especially Heidegger’s comments on “das Gestell” expose an unconscious incorporation of rational agents in peculiar rules within the public realm.<sup>7</sup>

An answer to this conflict can be given, at least in part, with the concept at center stage of this paper: non-wakefulness. It will not be developed with reference to the philosophy of mind (where different mental states of wakefulness or non-wakefulness are widely discussed) or classical action theories, but with the rather counter-intuitive reference to contemporary debates on Speculative Realism and Dialectical Materialism as presented by authors like Graham Harman<sup>8</sup>, Bruno Latour,<sup>9</sup> and Levi Bryant,<sup>10</sup> to name just a few. Non-wakefulness can help us understand new forms of mental states in a twilight zone between so-called access-consciousness and forms of mental semi-consciousness. It helps us focus on the question of how mental states correlate with objects of all kinds (abstract, ‘medium-sized’, physical) that are subtracted or “withdrawn” from us, but also from themselves (Harman).<sup>11</sup> A ‘dogmatic slumber’ appears not only to be necessary for an individual mind to function within collective forms of “competences without comprehensions,” but it also seems to be the precondition

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<sup>3</sup> Talcott Parson, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1937). Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth. Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018). Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society. Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> To name just a few: Hilary Putnam, “The Meaning of Meaning,” *Philosophical Papers, Vol. II: Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 215-271. Tyler Burge, *Origins of Objectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68:1 (1971): 5-20.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 49-75.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Die Frage nach der Technik,” *Vorträge und Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe Band 7* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 5-36.

<sup>8</sup> Among others, see: Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2011); *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2013); *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Bruno Latour and Steve Wolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Graham Harman, “Physical Nature and the Paradox of Qualities,” *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2010), 122-139.

of awakening into unforeseen logics of worlds – sometimes never seen before in the mental states of non-wakefulness. This is why the concept of awakening is the second most important subject-matter this paper focuses on.

The importance of non-wakefulness and its potential to understand an unconscious structure of being that is responsible for conflicts of all kinds (with regard to the individual, as well as to political communities) became clear to me a few months ago in a conversation with a friend of mine. The topic was trivial and similar to the conflicts mentioned above. We argued about whether it was reasonable for me to buy books by Amazon as I do, since it has, so I was lectured, obviously an effect on the book-market pushing bookstores to the brink of extinction. I argued that I support bookshops but that the question regarding the reasonability of my action was not well-posed. There are practices of mine as a consumer for which I do not need individual reasons. I can have faith in the conformity of my behavior within a broader consumerist network. “That’s simply the way my body acts,” I told my friend, “and millions of other bodies do too.” This argument, of course, made my friend angry. She rejected my refusal to enter into the game of giving and asking for reasons by referring to my deeds as if responsibility for them could be relegated into an anonymous consumer-body. I told her that her critique was not sound, as many of my practices have and must have relegated justifications (though they are still mine), justifications that prove or disprove to be in accordance with facts.

One obvious explanation for the lacking ground of reasons for many of our actions and beliefs is that their justifications are outsourced into political, scientific or artistic institutions. In recent years, the so-called “agent-network-theory” of Bruno Latour and his followers (Braidotti, Barad et al.) has disclosed how actions can neither be exclusively perceived as something that an agent (or scientific community) does with an “intention under some description” (Davidson)<sup>12</sup> nor simply as something based on a clearly defined “desire” with which the “agent identifies” (Frankfurt).<sup>13</sup> Often we rely with our beliefs and actions on multi-layered frames of institutional certainties and copy “descriptions” for our beliefs and actions; for example, that “global warming is a scientific fact” (Latour 2018, Morton 2016), that Cindy Sherman is a great artist, that “Corporations are people,” that “water is H<sub>2</sub>O”. And to act within this collective unconscious and un-retrievable justification-form is both reasonable as well as the source of conflicts. We cannot, in our practices, do justice to the entirety of actions we participate in, directly or indirectly, or to all the beliefs which we call our own. Especially

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<sup>12</sup> Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 70. At this point, I would like to take the liberty of making a brief note which the reader might only be able to understand after having read the article. As Davidson questions in his repeated critique of meta-epistemological skepticism the priority of subjective mental states (which are, within the rationales presented here, of importance insofar as they can be gateways to truth) his philosophy stands in contrast to several of my theses presented here. For Davidson, the realm of intersubjectivity is by definition the realm of objective truth. The latter is an effect of communication among reasonable agents. This means that the realm of intersubjectivity cannot be, by definition, a realm of collective epistemic deficiency. I do not agree with Davidson, insofar as the article takes the distinction between form and content of epistemic experiences for granted and maintains the “third dogma”, which was rejected by Davidson in his much-cited article “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973-1974), 5-20.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Frankfurt, “The Problem of Action,” *The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 69-79, here: 73.

debates both within the philosophy of mind as well as in the research-field of externalism and internalism, going back to the 1980s, have revealed that mind is not an entity within the individual brain, but a multilayered correlation of neurons, memes and signifiers inside communal structures of cognitive (Dennett, Clark / Chalmers, Manzotti)<sup>14</sup> and phantasmatic (Finkelde, Žižek)<sup>15</sup> administration. What is rarely reflected upon in this debate, however, is that even those actions, very close to ourselves – to our mental states and volitions – can appear outsourced as well – even if our mental intuitions give us the conviction of the opposite. And the debate with my friend, mentioned above, on my consumerist stance towards Amazon is an example of this.

I will describe in the following paragraphs the form of competence without comprehension, depicted above in broad strokes, as a mental state of epistemic deficiency which I call non-wakefulness. And I want to do this for three reasons. First, (in section II) to disclose that there are mental states other than being awake that can be located between sleeping and access-consciousness, and that are rarely reflected upon in practical and political philosophy with their focus on the rational agent within a “space of giving and asking for reasons” (Brandom).<sup>16</sup> And second, I want to deduce (in section III) from the concept non-wakefulness a theory of “awakening”. Non-wakefulness serves me as a hybrid to better describe the aforementioned aporias between actions and their justifications to develop a theory of what it means to wake up, to arise from a state of epistemic deficiency. Non-wakefulness and awakening are constitutively dissociated. Just as I can neither say in the moment of falling asleep “Now, I’ll fall asleep” nor in the moment of waking up “Now, I wake up,” non-wakefulness and awakening are disconnected in principle. Awakening, therefore, characterizes especially confrontations of the mind with properties of objects, facts, or state of affairs, which the mind was subtracted from. This concerns not only the individual human being but political communities likewise, because we attribute mind-like properties to them as well. In the final parts of this essay (IV-V) I want to show, with reference to Jacques Lacan specifically, how our mental state of being awake is maintained by objects and desires withdrawn from our consciousness that, in certain cases, can only reveal their hidden properties when we are dreaming. Properties of objects exist that can only unconceal themselves when ‘secondary process’ functions (Freud) of our judgmental capacities are dropped.

## I. Non-wakefulness

Being awake or wakefulness is in general interpreted as a reflection-intensive stream of consciousness, or as a form of access-consciousness. Because being awake enables us to

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1991). David Chalmers and Andy Clark, “The Extended Mind,” *Analysis* 58 (1998), 7-19. Riccardo Manzotti, *The Spread Mind. Why Consciousness and the World are One* (New York: OR Books, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Dominik Finkelde, *Phantaschismus. Von der totalitären Versuchung unserer Demokratie* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8 Verlag, 2016); Dominik Finkelde, “The ‘Secret Code’ of Honor. On Political enjoyment and the Excrescence of Fantasy,” *Culture, Theory and Critique* 59:3 (2018), 232-261. Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do. Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 17.

reflect with our mind about the states of consciousness we are actually in.<sup>17</sup> As such, access-consciousness can easily be set apart from our mental state as we sleep, as we daydream, or are absorbed, for example, by a movie or a novel. But – and this is a challenge for the determination of wakefulness – aspects of self-reflexivity can be found in the mental states of non-wakefulness as well, without the affected person being asleep or being unconscious.

We all know forms of non-wakefulness from daydreaming. But non-wakefulness can also be seen in rare and enlightening cases of “lucid-dreaming” when a person is in two exclusive mental states at once – asleep and awake. Especially Evan Thompson puts emphasis in “lucid dreaming” in his recent investigations to challenge a clear demarcation line between different mental states.<sup>18</sup> But also the investigations of Holger Seitz have shown how various theories of consciousness fail to define wakefulness.<sup>19</sup> Deficient criteria cannot delimit with sufficient reasons access-consciousness, states of sleep and states of mental absence with mental states of semi-consciousness still in place. Theories that fall short of a classification of what wakefulness comprises, include the so-called “arousal theory,”<sup>20</sup> the theory of unbiased processing, and the self-determination theory, which distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of the individual mind.<sup>21</sup> Seitz focuses on these theories to show that there is another mental state between sleeping and being conscious, and this state is being “non-awake”. Identity disorders, emotional disorders, and psychosis can be associated with non-wakefulness as well, as the people who are in those states are neither unconscious nor conscious as their fellow men.<sup>22</sup> Non-wakefulness can be described as a mental state that combines its own set of properties between different mental states of unconsciousness, non-responsiveness and self-reflective consciousness. For this reason, I will interpret the concept of non-wakefulness as an epistemic state of deficiency, or – to borrow an expression of Kant – as a form of “dogmatic slumber.”<sup>23</sup> The latter might explain, why we as individuals are almost exclusively in non-relations to multiple logics of worlds that – by definition – are smaller than the sum-total of their parts, as the parts themselves hide in ‘withdrawal’ from us and, according to Harman, from themselves. I will explain this line of argument, as I said, not in relation to the philosophy of mind, but with regards to Speculative Realism by defining non-wakefulness as an epistemic relationship of our minds to hidden properties of objects. Non-wakefulness is a state of human consciousness in which the latter is subtracted from essential properties of objects, facts, and states of affairs. Consciousness is within a constant mode of privation to its environment, which means that a multiplicity of objects (abstract, ‘medium-sized’, physical) are necessarily withdrawn from us.

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<sup>17</sup> On access-consciousness as opposed to phenomenal consciousness, see: David Chalmers, *The Character of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter IV; Ned Block, “On a confusion about a function of consciousness,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 18 (1995): 227-287.

<sup>18</sup> Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Holger Seitz, *Was ist Wachheit?* (Doctoral Thesis, Munich School of Philosophy, forthcoming 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Piero Salzarulo, Fiorenza Giganti, Ignio Fagioli et al., “Early steps of awakening process,” *Sleep Medicine* 3 (2002), 29-32.

<sup>21</sup> Holger Seitz, *Was ist Wachheit?*

<sup>22</sup> But to a certain extend we can apply this difference also to political communities as well, when, for example, the body politic of a nation state is through revolutionary turmoil like in a collective state of psychosis.

<sup>23</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, edited by Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

Graham Harman, to whom my analysis of “dogmatic slumber” is indebted, places the hypothesis of the “withdrawal” of objects, their privative qualities, at the center of his object-oriented ontology.<sup>24</sup> “[E]ntities must hold something in reserve behind their current relations,”<sup>25</sup> he writes, as the withdrawal or the privative mode of certain qualities of objects has the consequence that objects meet the human mind indirectly, or – to use a term I personally prefer – in refracted modes. In physics “refraction” stands for the change in direction of a wave passing from one medium to another. Optical prisms and lenses cause refraction and redirect light, as does the human eye. But within object-oriented-ontology refraction (or, as Harman calls it, withdrawal) has nothing to do with a medium between two entities (the object and the eye, for example), but is a property of the object itself. This is the precondition that makes possible experience along the limits of our senses and our cognitive faculties, without ever exhausting the object in that what it is. Harman sets out numerous ontological premises to justify his phenomenological argument, which concentrates on an ontology of the privative mode of object-to-object relations. Human beings are objects themselves as well as abstract entities. “For fire to burn cotton [...] fire does not need to react to most of the properties of the cotton: its smell and its color are irrelevant to the fire. The fire is going to burn the cotton based on flammable properties, whatever those are.”<sup>26</sup> Steven Shaviro calls this withdrawal in his interpretation of Galen Strawson’s panpsychism the “what-is-it-likeness” or the “private interior” of an object.<sup>27</sup> And it is here that we find the Husserlian legacy of Harman in the desire to postulate essential properties of things, even if we (or anything) can never get a hold on them. “Things exist not in relation, but in a strange sort of vacuum from which they only partly emerge into relations.”<sup>28</sup>

To be withdrawn from numerous information processes in the organic and inorganic textures of nature/culture is the condition of our organism. And that affects me as an individual in dealing with all sorts of things in everyday life, for example in my relation to Amazon. But that also affects us as sub-elements of social institutions that embody individuating qualities through us (as Latour’s actor-network-theory underlines).<sup>29</sup> Non-wakefulness is a basic condition of experience since human beings, living in webs of reasons, can only build social relationships of “interpassivity” due to limited forms of being non-awake toward the properties of all kinds of things. Robert Pfaller developed the useful concept of interpassivity.<sup>30</sup> He shows how many practices within society run smoothly as our dealings with objects are subtracted from our access-ability (even with regard to our higher-order mental faculties of thought) despite the fact that political institutions demand the citizen to be ideally enlightened all the time. One’s individual beliefs in social institutions, for example,

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<sup>24</sup> Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2011); *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); *Object-Oriented Ontology. A New Theory of Everything* (New York: Pelican, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2013), 259.

<sup>26</sup> Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Steven Shaviro, “Consequences of Panpsychism,” in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 19-44, here: 31, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks. Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: anamnesis, 2009), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 141-158.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Pfaller, *Interpassivity. The Aesthetics of Delegated Enjoyment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

have eccentric properties, insofar as they are maintained by the individual's beliefs in others. Social as well as religious institutions would not function properly without structures of this kind of unacknowledged transference, called interpassivity, or – more generally – “the symbolic”.

Reality exists only insofar as it is smoothed out via unconscious structures of non-wakefulness. Or, as Slavoj Žižek fittingly underlines: an unconscious structure is, literally, *within* the order of things, as things/objects are transcendently nested inside an ideological field of our individual and communal experience.<sup>31</sup> We live and act within non-wakefulness as the essential state we are locked into. This can, in part, explain why society is maintained by transference with belief in oneself as co-depending on the belief of others in oneself and vice versa. Ideology is not a dogmatic slumber holding us back from the true reality of the world, but the “unconscious phantasy that structures reality.”<sup>32</sup> Theories of ideology deal with questions “on what there is” on an equal footing as epistemological and ontological theories do. They effect the question of how things are within forms of outsourced and hidden justifications. This, though, refers us to forms of collective dream-work or to a collective management of “withdrawal” so that we do not experience our “indirect” every day contact with objects as incriminating – but, instead, as our space of reason to be free and responsible agents. In that sense, one can say that being awake is being in dreams as well, i.e. in an unconscious structure of withdrawal-administration. After all, society exists in the transitory relationships of objects that relate to and withdraw from each other which then enables, for example, me to enjoy Amazon without getting nervous when a critique, like the one mentioned by my friend, is uttered. Timothy Morton reflects upon similar subject matters in his book *Hyperobjects*, where the difficulty of knowing in what kind of hyperobject one is in (the hyperobject “Global Warming,” for example), makes it difficult for the individual to have truly access to facts and states of affairs.<sup>33</sup> Every relation to facts can become a source of repression and, as such, a source of conflict.

I do not want to deny that we have good reasons for many of our actions. When I want to open a bottle of wine I prefer, with reasons, a corkscrew not a hammer. Neither do I want to deny the value of various theories within philosophy of mind or epistemology that have touched upon, at least indirectly, what the concept non-wakefulness tries to delineate. For example, representatives of the already mentioned school of externalism in debates on epistemology know the outsourcing-effect of reasons. Hilary Putnam's famous example of the difference between an elm-tree and a beech grounds a well-known argument for externalism.<sup>34</sup> Though Putnam cannot differentiate between both species, professional botanists can and therefore lay the grounds and sources of our knowledge within a process of the “division of labor” (Putnam), making intensions (=bundles of properties) with regard to objects in the external world (=extensions) more and more precise. This example nevertheless underestimates what Latour criticizes in recent publications as an essential dilemma at the interface of politics and science: that it is not only possible by politicians to openly question facts warranted by scientists (take the debate on Global Warming again), but

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<sup>31</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989); see also Dominik Finkelde, “The ‘Secret Code’ of Honor: On Political enjoyment and the Excess of Fantasy”.

<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Hilary Putnam, “The Meaning of Meaning,” 257.



that within ever more complex forms of scientific research facts themselves are through constant revision time and again confronted with counter-justifications.

Within the philosophy of mind, David Chalmers speaks of an “extended mind,”<sup>35</sup> John Haugeland about an “embedded mind”<sup>36</sup> and Riccardo Manzotti of a “spread mind”.<sup>37</sup> The externalism of these philosophers, however, hardly reflects on the consequences for practical or political philosophy. Therefore, insights of Speculative Realism are more appropriate to appreciate political dimensions of the mental state of epistemic deficiency that I call non-wakefulness.

All kinds of entities can, or have to be with-drawn from us. The “Dutch East India Company” that Leibniz declined to call an entity<sup>38</sup> as much as the vase in front of me that might show up in an art-installation one day; or the details of the *Social Law-Code* whose true meaning I can only get a grip on with a lawyer on my side. These entities withdraw from multiple properties and are given within small reality bites/slices within multiple multiplicities. We can interact with them merely according to limited purposes of our species, our culture, our profession. This can be formalized as follows: The subject S might have in its state of non-wakefulness reasons to do X, Y, Z as she does do X, Y, Z. But there are no reasons accessible for her to do D, F, G – though, she also does D, F, G. These reasons are outsourced to the social group SG. The latter (for example: the group of employees, doctors, civil servants) might have reasons as well to do D, F, G, but it has no reason to do X, I, J because they are outsourced again: on the one hand into the individual subject S, on the other hand into meta-levels of other expert justifications. In turn, social groups of the size of nation-states may have reasons to do M, I, O. But they have no reason to do X, D, R because they are outsourced into the aforementioned groups again etc.

Modal states of withdrawal and refraction are enrooted in a collective and unconscious work of administration. It subtracts reality from an infinity of worlds. Gregory Bateson gives the fitting example of a piece of chalk. Within this object an infinite number of potential facts are withdrawn. But the piece of chalk as *Ding an sich* can never enter into communication of our mind and this is because of an inaccessible infinitude within the chalk itself. This, apparently, holds true for numerous facts within economy, politics and science as well. The object “Brexit,” for example, refracted within the political discourse of the United Kingdom between 2017 and 2019 in a multiplicity of different and contradiction subsets of facts. As such, it caused one of the most respected democracies of the world to be deadlocked for several months. Bateson falsely claims Kant as the author of the example, since Kant never refers to a piece of chalk in the way Bateson does.<sup>39</sup> The former nevertheless mentions in his third *Critique* how the faculty of understanding not only gives unity to empirical laws within nature, but also “make[s] an interconnected experience out of material that is for us so confused (strictly speaking, only infinitely manifold and not fitted for our power of comprehension).”<sup>40</sup> The chalk, Bateson mentions, is selected out of non-chalk-multiplicities,

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<sup>35</sup> David Chalmers and Andy Clark, “The Extended Mind”.

<sup>36</sup> John Haugeland, “Mind Embodied and Embedded,” *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 58 (1995): 233-267.

<sup>37</sup> Riccardo Manzotti, *The Spread Mind*.

<sup>38</sup> See Graham Harman, *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 35-41.

<sup>39</sup> Gregory Bateson, “Form, Substance and Difference,” *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 448-464, here: 453.

<sup>40</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72.

which has become, in modern terminology, information. Bateson underlines that what “we mean by information – the elementary unit of information – is a difference which makes a difference.”<sup>41</sup>

I follow Harman less as a defender of Leibniz’s monadology that he proves to be in his latest publications, where essences are postulated to credit eidiotic properties as underlying substrata of objects. I, rather, prefer to interpret him as a phenomenologically inspired bio-semiotician who tries to interpret various forms of contact of entities of all kinds within different flows of information (high-order versus low-order information, robust objects versus vague objects). He does so by postulating a fundamental non-coincidence of all objects with themselves. And indeed, since the 1960s, there has been a great deal of research into biosemiotics: from Francisco Varela and Gregory Bateson to Wendy Wheeler, Ruth Millikan, and Karen Barad. These philosophers, as different as they are, seek to dissolve a strict boundary between meaning-generating processes within the object-world of nature and meaning processes in culture. And the concept of non-wakefulness can help us to understand why we are unable to confront the continuous surplus-power of differences in different logics of worlds around us. Non-wakefulness is an epistemic state of privation (an epistemic state of deficiency). It reduces the human mind to refracted relations to facts and state of affairs, to selective extracts where objects are lifted into the cone of our attention, while these objects split themselves at the same time, opening up potentialities for never-seen properties before. In doing so, humans share the orientation of these cones as being part of certain epistemic and dogmatic factions, which isolates them from other groups according to refractive indexes. The isolation is due to the plurality (or even the chaos) of unbound structures of entities being presented to us within certain forms of property-administration and their multiple dimensions of being withdrawn. Reality is riddled with parallax gaps since the privative structure of entities surrounding me can never be the same compared to the one surrounding others. What we call reality therefore must be less compared to the totality of its parts, simply because forms of consciousness are modes of subtraction and refraction.

I am not saying here, that this has not been reflected upon in philosophy. On the contrary. The topic is talked about in many disciplines. But whereas epistemological investigations especially from the early modern period onwards focus on the question of how to secure the realm of experience and how to ground it, and phenomenologists focus on the way the mind is embedded in practices (bodily as well as collectively) non-wakefulness focuses on the fact that the realm of experience is, through being refracted, structured by unacknowledged fictions. How the view presented here is different to the various discussions on the limits of epistemic justifications presented so far, will become clear further on, especially in subsection IV. There I try to point out that objects may unconceal themselves to us especially in dreams when ‘secondary process’ functions (Freud) of our judgmental capacities are dropped. Dreams can provoke experiences of awakening with regard to refracted objects and trigger retrospective effects of how we relate to the to dream-work our everyday life of non-wakefulness is embedded in. The rationale of this thesis is presented in depths in the sections to come.

## **II. Awakening from epistemic deficiency**

I have related the concept non-wakefulness to Harman’s understanding of the “withdrawal of objects” because it offers the prospect to develop a theory of awakening. The latter marks, roughly speaking, the departure from a state of epistemic slumber where the confrontation

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<sup>41</sup> Gregory Bateson, “Form, Substance and Difference,” 453.

of new properties in former objects of collectively maintained refraction-formation can bring unforeseen realities to the fore. Waking up would then be, for example, the brief moment of leaving an epistemic dogmatism due to the discovery of properties of things that were previously unknown due to the mentioned reality-formation on a collective level. Objects lose certain features of privation and show themselves in a new angle of refraction.

We know this kind of experience of awakening in contact with things that reveal unexpected qualities especially from the arts. In front of a work of art I can have an experience of parallax – commented upon by Lacan in his remarks on Hans Holbein the Younger’s painting *The Ambassadors*.<sup>42</sup> The place from which the observer looks at an object is re-marked by an unexpected inscription of objectivity staged by the work of art. The experience reveals withdrawn properties in the object in the form of a reversal of my way of seeing. A sublime body reaches out at the beholder since there is something “[more] in the object [...] than the object itself”.<sup>43</sup> But awakening does not exclusively regard the arts. Bruno Latour’s sociopolitical investigations have in recent years advanced the insight into the need of political wakefulness within the “Anthropocene”. Referring to biology, where the symbiosis of organisms through sub-organisms and parasites has been discussed since the 1960s, he refers repeatedly to James Lovelock’s and Lynn Margulis’ so-called “Gaia-hypothesis” according to which living things form part of planetary self-regulating systems.<sup>44</sup> Symbiosis between all kinds of objects and entities is part of the basic structure of reality without the human species having an adequate concept of political agency yet with regard to its ecologically collapsing ‘kingdom of things’. When we board a plane, we, generally, do not (knowingly) locate us within a hyperobject that provides feedback loops of our flying to the ozone layer. Both objects (the ozone layer and the plane) with their different properties (abstract and ‘mid-sized’) are not self-contained entities but interact. Objects are filtered out within the relations they are constituted in. Likewise, it is not clear today how scientific objects are pending on political or economic objects and vice versa. They are dispersed within each other, making non-wakefulness for the human species – even as an a priori condition – a constant threat. Which entity (economic, scientific, ecological) is the set or subset of which? Where do the boundaries of a subject, those of an institution, or those of a tree begin? With Hans J. Schellnhuber’s comments on the need for a “modern Leviathan, embodying teledemocracy and putting the seventeenth-century imagination of [...] Hobbes into the shade,”<sup>45</sup> Latour asks, who can actually activate a global subject?<sup>46</sup> Who can bring about a certain form of awakening with the latter standing for a shift of attention to other properties of objects neglected before? For him the political impotence of the present era is philosophical insofar as a concept of what kind of agent we are is still lacking. The state we see the global

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<sup>42</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI), (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 91-93.

<sup>43</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (London: Verso, 2006), 17.

<sup>44</sup> Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan et al., *Slanted Truths: Essays on Gaia, Symbiosis, and Evolution* (New York: Copernicus Books, 1997); James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, “Earth System analysis and the Second Copernican Revolution,” *Nature* 402 (1999): 19-23, here: 22.

<sup>46</sup> Bruno Latour expresses this thought in a lecture and debate with Schellnhuber on 4 May 2018, at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtaEJo-jo8Q&t=982s> (accessed, 1 June 2019).

community in, is obviously one of too much non-wakefulness. Agents are not within an environment but produce it. More and more political issues present themselves as intertwined with questions of science, ecology, philosophy, and economy. As regions of non-wakefulness are widening today also in “western democracies,” Latour pushes his agenda to make people sensitive to new forms of awakening.

### III. Waking up in dreams, not from them

Lacan addresses non-wakefulness indirectly by indicating that the inferentially related symbolic forms affecting us must hide an unconscious structure that maintains the coherence of our logics of worlds via the suppression of what he calls “the real”.<sup>47</sup> The unconscious structure of reality-formation within the “symbolic” spreads into our unconsciousness so that “reality” can appear as real. But Lacan shows as well that the unconscious structure of reality, which causes our dogmatic slumber (and thus also our mental health), can conflict with a specific form of wakefulness in our dreams.<sup>48</sup> Here, in our dreams, we can be lead into unique encounters with properties of things/past events that are literally withdrawn into ourselves without us knowing that they are withdrawn within our mind and without us knowing what they are.

We humans have apparently two different forms of citizenships: one bound to our dreamworld as a special mental state of wakefulness, the other bound to the social-triangulated everyday world, which, as such, has been defined in the sections above as a special realm of non-wakefulness, dogmatic slumber or dogmatic deficiency. Now, it is especially after a nightmare that we escape the citizenship of dreams abruptly. And in cases like these, we might often think, “Thank God. That was just a dream.” But, as Žižek fittingly points out, for Lacan, “what appears in the guise of dreaming, or even daydreaming is sometimes the hidden truth on whose repression social reality itself is founded.”<sup>49</sup> A hidden parallax structure emerges that delimits being awake and being in dreams and that transforms both mental states into a form of mutual condition. For, in the confrontation with the repressed object X in a dream, the dreamer actually awakes out of a modal form of dogmatic slumber.

Before the nightmare-like confrontation with the object that caused the awakening, repressions might have helped to maintain a state of particular non-wakefulness in our unconsciousness with regard to the entity that suddenly unveils itself in the dream. We confront an object in ourselves that had for reasons a “privative” mode of existence, or of inexistence in the sense of Harman’s vocabulary. Reality in the state of non-wakefulness may therefore actually be a form of defense against an “*abject*” (not an object) withdrawn within ourselves – but that, as such, also guarantees the way we relate phantasmagorically to the world as “my world”. The object withdrawn (as *abject*) can be essential for the coherence of subjectivity as a gateway to the world of experience as a world of objects, facts and state of affairs. Withdrawal and “non-wakefulness” bring the individual subject into a stable relation with the frontier of subjectivity and the objectivity out there in the world as one that falls into subjectivity itself, into its libidinally and phantasmagorically maintained self-relation.

So, by repressing that which, for example, we want too much (the loved-one that we lost in a divorce, the success that was promised but never came) and by provoking withdrawal,

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<sup>47</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real,” *On the Names-of-the-Father* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 1-52.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 32-37.

<sup>49</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001), 198.

we protect ourselves from the fact that in our everyday reality in the waking state of our ego-function we are the hologram of what is lacking, of our dreams, our wishes, in which our real desires find a refuge and a place to articulate themselves unconsciously. It is this hologram-like property of ourselves, that non-wakefulness tries to apprehend specifically. Our ego is – as Lacan underscores – a complementary illusion of our dreams. My dreams tell me something about the modality of my world-picture. Or better: dreams can show me how my ego unconsciously administers with phantasies and desires the mentioned border-line between subject and object that falls within subjectivity. Dreams reveal something about the modal form of my world, i.e. of “non-wakefulness” as a formal condition of my access to reality. Because when the human mind comes within a dream too close to the “real” of its true desire, it suddenly escapes literally into a waking state. The mind came, in this situation, too close to a repressed desire. Non-wakefulness changes abruptly and painfully into unconcealment / wakefulness. This can, at least in certain cases, push a person into a new epistemic state. Psychoanalysis is based on this conviction as dreams are an important factor within Freud’s and Lacan’s concept of “the talking cure”. Dreams can urge the individual to change the epistemic and libidinal coordinates which, combining objectivity and subjectivity, fall within subjectivity as a feature of reality.

Lacan presents the parallax-like shift of perspective between the mental states of waking up in dreams and of being awake in every day-life (as being captured in some kind of collective dreamwork) in his seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1998) with reference to a dream presented by Freud. For Freud describes in the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* the fate of a father who had lost his child due to a tragic illness. During the death watch of his deceased child the father falls asleep in a room near by. The child now confronts him in his dream with the words: “Father, don’t you see that I’m burning?” Horrified by the encounter, the man wakes up. He notices that in the room, where his son is put to lay, small flames are visible. A candle had fallen onto the bed leaving burning-marks on the sheets. Lacan:

As he [the father] is falling asleep, he sees rise up before him the image of the son, who says to him, Father, can’t you see I’m burning? In fact, the son really is burning, in the next room. What is the point of sustaining the theory according to which the dream is the image of a desire, with an example in which, in a sort of flamboyant reflection, it is precisely a reality which – incompletely transferred – seems here to be shaking the dreamer from his sleep? Why, if not to suggest a mystery that is simply the world of the beyond, and some secret or other shared by the father and the son who says to him, Father, can’t you see I’m burning? What is he burning with, if not with that which we see emerging at other points designated by the Freudian topology, namely, the weight of the sins of the father.<sup>50</sup>

The dream stages a withdrawn knowledge of the father: to be co-responsible for the son’s death. This awareness comes to the fore by a contingent event, the fallen candle. Now an encounter with the Lacanian “real” – that what cannot be represented – sets in via the flames, which, so to speak, push their light through the eyelids of the sleeping father, enhancing and prolonging the traumatic encounter in which the son is alive again. This can take seconds or minutes as in dreams our mind is not bound to time as a subjective form of “pure intuition” (Kant). Lacan extrapolates a kind of ontological basic structure of reality from this example:

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<sup>50</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (my emphasis).

a fundamental sin or trauma is the hidden origin of our liveliness. Or in the terminology presented in this paper: non-wakefulness is inscribed into being. Lacan:

The sins of the father – are they not born by the ghost in the myth of Hamlet, which Freud couples with the myth of Oedipus? The father, the Name-of-the-father, sustains a structure of desire with the structure of the law, but the inheritance of the father is that which Kierkegaard designates for us, namely his sin.<sup>51</sup>

Lacan accentuates a fundamental privation within normative orders. This privation or – to say it with Harman: this “withdrawal” – chases time and again normativity like a ghost haunting what can only in-exist, but not exist.<sup>52</sup> I mention this to show that Lacan has his own theory of “withdrawal” and his own theory of non-wakefulness that is analogous to some of the features that Harman’s ontology grants. In retrospect to my remarks on non-wakefulness, one may therefore argue that the father awakens from a “dogmatic slumber” and encounters an object in a way that he had previously been spared from by an unconscious structure of refraction. He awakens in the dream to a truth he was unable to confront being awake. The father, escaping into a state of self-reflective consciousness, may then say: “Thank goodness, it was all just a dream.” But this dream may have been more than just an illusion. It was the encounter with an entity that conditions his state of non-wakefulness in his ordinary life after the death of his son.

Within dreams, we learn from Lacan, one can be confronted with a traumatic property of an object. One wakes up after a disturbing encounter with an object of desire and is glad, as I said, to be pulled away into familiarity. Now we are truly awake, meaning: now we are non-awake. The individual sinks back into non-wakefulness with relief, because the moment of awakening she had to endure was an encounter with the Lacanian real. Non-wakefulness proves to be soothing simply because it distracts us from a hope, an illusion, a sublime body within ourselves, a seemingly truthful life in this life that must be illusory.

#### IV. Zhuang Zi

The parallaxic relationship between dream and reality (perceptible especially in the moments of dissociation from nightmares) is the subject matter of the famous story of the Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zi living in the 4th century BC. Waking up one day after a dream in which he, Zhuang Zi, was a butterfly, he wonders whether he might not in reality be a butterfly, which, in turn, dreams to be Zhuang Zi. (It may be worth mentioning, that the episode “Real life” in the TV-Series *Electric Dreams* from 2017 and directed by Jeffrey Reiner is built on this plot. Individuals change their identity in the moment when they go to sleep – to wake up in the body and the world of somebody else. But both identities are combined like a Möbius-strip, where one identity holds the riddle of desire to its sleeping counter-part and vice versa.) Lacan refers to the story of Zhuang Zi in *Seminar XI* to underline how the butterfly is an object that constitutes the frame in which Zhuang Zi can be himself *as being withdrawn from himself*.<sup>53</sup> The butterfly is a fantasy-object that Zhuang Zi’s mind needs as his ego’s hidden backside to operate coherently in the state of being Zhuang Zi. Or in other words: The phantasm of being a butterfly with its intensional properties of being free,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> See on the topic: Dominik Finkelde, *Logiken der Inexistenz: Figurationen des Realen im Zeitalter der Immanenz* (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 76.

beautiful, uncontrolled et cetera... provides semantic illusions within the unconscious that are complementary to the illusions of our various ego-functions in everyday life. Zhuang Zi and the butterfly co-depend in a state of refraction. Zhuang Zi is indeed in the symbolic reality of his ego-function, of his non-wakefulness with regard to himself as being Zhuang Zi, only himself because he is on the level of his actual desire the kitsch-like dream of a butterfly. Butterfly and Zhuang Zi are mutually objects of withdrawal to themselves. They need to be, so that Zhuang Zi can, within an absurd frame of desire, be the one he truly is.

Dreaming and fantasizing is, without doubt, the human's species symptom. It is a condition of subjectivity just as social reality is essentially pre-structured by an unconscious form of collective administered refraction/withdrawal. Phantasms and dreams can be complementary frameworks for reality and show how it has always been virtually constructed by various forms of defense mechanism, individually and socially.

## **VI. Coda**

Slavoj Žižek underlines, that not only the one who dreams is a dreamer, but the one who does not want to stand up to his dreams and fantasies as well.<sup>54</sup> The Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes articulates this insight aptly when he reveals in his text "Culture and Ideology" how religion is not opium for the people (a witticism that is often attributed to Marx, but was already mentioned by Kant), but rather that culture is opium for the people.<sup>55</sup> Why? Because culture has to bring us into forms of non-wakefulness again and again. Only so, i.e. only when we encounter things "indirectly," does the world harmonize with us according to unconscious structures of reality-formation. Reality exists only in inexistence, i.e. insofar as it is pre-conditioned by non-wakefulness and hidden mechanisms of unconscious repressions. This has decisive impacts on understanding conflicting conflicts, since politics (as directed both by national parliaments as well as by economists and fact-establishing multi-national enterprises) manages objects and their properties in the foreground of attention while other objects/properties are pushed back all together. We see this in a plurality of debates when even political institutions themselves feel deprived of agency by economic liberalism that has the effect to limit nation-states in their reasonable choices "on what there is". Economy can blind politics and vice versa. Political conflicts are encounters between modal robust or modal vague states of "dogmatic slumber" without there being a homological state of wakefulness that brings people as well as political communities in relation to one basic structure of facts. Since reality is pending on unconscious structures of intentionality administration, it is always less than the multiplicities of its (refracted) parts. Society is based on transference relations of non-wakeful citizens in a shared domain of unconsciously interlocking objects, facts and practices. My thesis would then be that non-wakefulness is the condition of everyday consciousness (individually and socially/politically), whereas awakening describes moments (especially in political crises) in which privative modes of entities fail. Facts now can unconceal themselves like repressed memories and confront an individual as well as a political community with inexistences. As I said: We know the experiences of awakening in contact with objects that reveal unexpected qualities, especially from the arts. In front of a work of

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<sup>54</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Die brennende Frage. Hundert Jahre Traumdeutung lehren: Wach sein ist feige," *Die Zeit* (December 2, 1999), 50.

<sup>55</sup> Jacob Taubes, "Culture and Ideology," in *From Cult to Culture. Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 248-267.

art the place from which I look at the object is remarked by an unexpected form of objectivity. This experience reveals withdrawn properties in the object and shows that there is more in the object than the object itself.

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