

Missing the gap

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It seems the word “gap” does not exist in French language. **ENGLISH IS A DIFFERENT MATTER: GAP COULD ALMOST BE UNDERSTOOD AS THE VERY DEFINITION OF ENGLISHNESS. WHEN YOU HEAR “MIND THE GAP” IN THE LONDON TUBE, YOU HAVE TO WONDER IF IT’S NOT THE ISLAND SPEAKING OF THAT WHICH SEPARATES IT FROM THE “CONTINENTAL”. IT IS THE VERY THING WHAT HAS ALWAYS DEFINED ITS EX-CENTRIC PROFILE;** *un espace* is perhaps the closest one can get to this little opening in space and time or social order. An absence of a particular word signifying a gap is perhaps a precise gesture to signify the phenomena it denotes - there is an actual open gap where a word should be. Or *un espace*, a quick click to the next word, because gap is primarily a connecting figure.

The situation is similar to what happened to the feature article on Slavoj Žižek in The New Yorker magazine. In a style characteristic to most of The New Yorker writing that can excessively muse on minute details, Rebecca Mead introduced Slavoj Žižek as Marx Brother, i.e. un enfant terrible combining traits of Marxism, psychoanalysis and vaudeville. A great deal of a physical description of the philosopher went into his mouth (as you will notice in a few seconds, it actually went there literally) through a long sentence on the gap between his teeth. This detail came as a perfect figure to demonstrate the idea that gap lies at the center of everything (even if we don’t agree that “everything” exists), i.e. there is an absent centre at the core of the identity. In order to quote it correctly, I’ve purchased the article from The New Yorker and read it thoroughly looking for the exact sentence. The author mentions Žižek’s beard and hair, his TV watching habits, his jacket and socks (“all from Lufthansa,” according to the philosopher) but there’s no single trace of the gap between his teeth in the text. The sentence disappeared from the article or turned into a gap itself. Equipped with Žižek’s own rhetorical tools it almost proved that Žižek can only exist outside of his teeth-gap.

From here on things start getting even weirder. Just listen to this: two people were traveling in the same elevator in a hotel in New York in 1962. One of them noticed that there was no floor 13 between floors 12 and 14, while the other noticed that there was no floor 14 and 15. Who was right?

Both, because various superstitions in the 60s US were as common as they are now. Number 13 was considered unlucky, therefore it was not a big surprise to end up in public or private buildings that did not have floor 13. Was this just a numerical omission or an actual gap in the architecture? Perhaps both too because one day the first person from the elevator managed to get to a 13th floor through a half-closed door of his hotel room. He

noticed that when he closed the door, it would be merely closed and when he opened it, someone from a corridor could come in, so nothing special. But if he closed it almost fully, while still leaving a little gap in between the door and corridor, a whole different reality would emerge in it: this narrow passage led directly to the 13th floor.

What he entered was the most wonderful orgy of his life: both men and women of high intelligence, beauty and imagination, were sharing a difficult to memorize entirely moment whose glow pervaded the boundaries between what has been thought or just intended and what has been acted out. It even merged with unspeakable sometimes, but the infinite ceiling never reflected what was happening on the floor. It hasn't come down either. After hours of polymorphous exchange with strangers and several life-transforming conversations he came back to his double room. "Where have you been all this time?" a question came, perhaps from half of his voice, because there was actually no one in the room. "Nowhere," he was ready to respond. "But you were gone for 8 hours," insisted the voice. "Actually, it wasn't 8 hours," he grabbed his watch. But what he saw was an abyss with two hands sitting in exactly the same position they were in when he left the room: 1:23 pm. Actually, it was 1:24 pm now. "Where have I been all this time?" The question had become even more relevant than before because he realized that the time spent on 13th floor inaccessible from the elevator is not reflected in his master-clock either. A few hours there mean just a few seconds here. Or maybe even less. Perhaps he might have even gained time.

"Now I can go and spend a few months on the 13th floor every day. Having the most ecstatic, the most secret and the most open time ever. Disappearing into the abysmal niche of space, time and social order. Living out my utopian dream fully and still being fully in the world."

"A good reason to never fully close the door," he smilingly added after a pause.

Similar fantasies of unaccountable escape to the 13th floor loom in the minds of many men and women traveling in elevators. In both cases of spatiotemporal gap comes a figure through which this fantasy constitutes itself. One can compare it to the figure of the fold - a structure whose entrance can be invisible and undetectable as the fold itself. Although fold bears some characteristics of a gap and possibly needs a gap as an entrance point to it, a gap is a more complex trope summarizing connections between a blank interval, a pause, a lapse, a portable hole, a warp, in-between space, a fold and a void. Although it is a site and a figure of speech based on geometrics, it tends to deny established spatial relationships: a gap is not in between nor above nor inside, it is a pure deterritorialized transmitter of relations. Its exact location is not known, but wherever gap is it reaffirms a possibility of the world being not fully flat and transparent. Even if it is a fundamentally erroneous concept like Zero it consoles our desire that there should be more than it seems, that there is something behind and we can be entitled to access it. Being a signifier of unsignified it raises gap-poetic questions: Would there still be a gap if there is nothing around it? Can

there be a gap inside a gap? Is there time inside the gap of time? Is there “inside” where the gap is? Is a gap comparable to the window to the Real or is it just one of the flat multiple surfaces? Where does it begin? How can you own it?

The last two questions are actually worth trying to answer. If we are to follow our preferred logic of the article, a gap does not begin somewhere, but rather functions as a site of beginning. Therefore we should consider revising the most abused statement that “artists are filling the gaps” or an imperative claiming “artists should fill the gaps.” First, it is impossible to fill a gap because it is neither a container nor an absence. Second, gaps should be created or applied rather than filled. Reification of a gap is the worse that could happen. But being a gap is another story. In his *Visions of Hell*, J.G. Ballard claims “Hell is out of fashion - institutional hells at any rate. The populated infernos of the twentieth century are more private affairs, the gaps between the bars are the sutures of one’s own skull.”

Now, do you still want to know what happened to the second person in the elevator?

THERE IS ANOTHER good WORD IN FRENCH WHICH IS *MAINTENANT*. WHAT-IS-BEING-HELD-RIGHT-NOW-by-your-hand. The fullness of the moment. So lets hold the hand of the other person, in that elevator: main tenant main.

What is a human? Nothing but a gap. A gap is what we are. Man means gap, woman means gap. A gap in a time that only knows itself through its gap, a lapse in the infinite memory of the Universe, that doesn’t stop and doesn’t start, that breathes like the waves of the ocean, like bang and big bang, like physical love, to and fro, like respiration. We are the dizzy animal that thinks of the line when everything whispers, in its pricked ears that it is not a line, it is... a circle. The circle is gapless, the line is the pure illusion of a gap, it produces the gap somewhere, virtually, behind, further; the gap is the projection, the teleology, the illusion of a historical past, a pre-dicted future. There is no prediction, says the second person in the elevator as he passes the 13th floor, there is diction, dixit; the word, only the word. In the beginning there was that. The word names the gap, the word names its closure. The trap of transcendence is intranscendence, and vice versa, vice and versa. Which is why we wonder stupidly if we were incarnated *before* or what will happen *after* we have “shed our mortal coil”. The truth is simple, in our Cartesian world of relative values we can’t fathom it, but it is this: we weren’t, are and won’t be, it’s just this and this is it, the kaleidoscope of everytime, everospace, everlasting, nonexistent, no exit, no entrance. We are present. We live in the 13th floor, but we fuck up, we slam, we unhinge, we swing on the kitchen door... we go through, past, return, onto, at, for, in order to, but we don’t stay. Stay at the doorway, half

opened, enthralled. It's the design, our design, we are designed to forget, and by means of forgetting we have the possibility of remembering, *through certain half deserted streets, the muttering retreats... in the room women come and go speaking of Michelangelo.*

Gap is para doxa. An animal who can look at the Open that it *is* and loses the Open in the act of smelling its fragrance. But there is the promise, this animal can recover the Open, in a second phase, once again, the Open after the closure, a different Open altogether, not bestial but Divine, not Divine but Better.

Don't forget that Adam and Eve's land is nominated as the "pre-lapsarian". A Maintenance-pomme land, before the pomme is bitten, before the godlike and its like are bound in a double helix. The machinery of civilization depends on us forgetting that the full, filled, whole is all there is. We can never grasp anything, because our hand can't stay open. Gap is intranscendence. Gap is the mark of the beast in the infinite horizon line of time. Beast is fall, fall to the 12th, 11th, 10th floor, angel that falls. But here's the trick. The gap that we are is the only way of the Universe to experience its fullness: through a lack of fullness. The paradoxical animal that we are could only really live cozily in the 13th floor, the floor that terrifies us. 13th is an invitation to leap into a Klein blue, indoor pool of the 70s. We can't (Ok, some of us are trying).

Lets see, what else? Why does everyone forget, all the time that the light of the star that we see is in the past? Just push that notion a bit further in every direction you can; and then you see, you might perceive, for a second or two, that you have been here, were here, will be, and that here is there, and that the future of the star is in your iris, and beyond your iris, just a little bit further inside, is the universal magma, the milky substance that begot that star.

NOTE²

External Links

- [\[Kadist \]](#)
- [\[Book @ Sternberg-Press \]](#)

* Bold text by François Bucher for *Paper Exhibition, Selected Writings* by Raimundas Malašauskas.