Carolyn Shapiro, "Happiness, Dead and Alive: Object Theatre as Philosophy of the Encounter," book chapter for the book, *Second Nature: Comic Performance and Philosophy,* to be published by Rowman & Littlefield International, ed. Josephine Gray and Lisa Trahair, forthcoming January 2022.

The answer to the fundamental question, "what makes a happy life?" is that a "happy life" may not be, contrary to popular understanding, defined as feeling pleasure or satisfaction. A "happy life" might be a life in which we have successfully experienced "encounters." As exemplified in the plays *Happy Endings* by Harry Holtzman for the French theatre company Label Brut, and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett, comic object theatre stages happiness as encounter or "happening." In that it considers cause and effect, repetition, movement, and automation, my enquiry is both a philosophical and a psychoanalytical one. The etymology shared between "happen" and "happiness"[1] is telling. "Happy" has come to mean both "having good fortune" and "feeling content," but as the plays *Happy Endings* and *Happy Days* illustrate, to be "happy" simply means that something, anything, will have "happened." This notion of happiness, which I want to argue is key to object theatre and clowning, contends that "fortune" is not *necessarily* good fortune; it is the encounter (*Tuché*) with an event, good or bad, that may, or may not, take place. If fortune is not bestowed upon a person, he or she is hap*less*. A philosophy of the Encounter has as its patron the Greek goddess Tyche, who capriciously dispenses good or ill fortune. In line with this notion of fortune, Aristotle locates happiness outside not only the individual's feelings but even outside an individual's life: we cannot deem someone "happy" until after they have died, as emphasised in J.L. Austin's reading of Aristotle. The characters Winnie and Willie, and Harry, in *Happy Days* and *Happy Endings*, do not experience happiness as a present moment but as projected back from the future. In this sense, these characters await happiness on "credit," as Alenka Zupančič has described the blind trust of the comic character's faith in

possible encounter.[2] This future-perfect construct can also be understood through the Lacanian topology of the Möbius strip,[3] whereby "happiness" (encounter) and "haplessness" (automaton) move along different sides of one surface as joint articulations, overlapping one another.

My starting point for theorising object theatre[4] as a philosophy of the Encounter is Jacques Lacan's seminar, "*Tuché* and Automaton,"[5] which conceives the relation -- the "and" -- between encounter and self-moving repetition. In this seminar Lacan borrows Aristotle's terms *tuché* and *automaton* to explain the face-to-face encounter with the analysand's original trauma.[6] Lacan describes a generally "missed" encounter with the otherwise repressed traumatic event that might happen, albeit unexpectedly, through the therapeutic act of transference. Lacan's pile-up of double negatives here is challenging: *tuché* and *automaton* cannot be taken blithely as dialectical opposites. Even my own designation of "a philosophy of the Encounter," named as such because I am trying to name a philosophy of happiness, has elided the equal role that *automaton* plays in the relationship between the two terms. Zupančič builds upon Bergson's essay on Laughter to explicate this relationship as one of dovetailed movement. Her focus on the movement between *Tuché* and automaton is extremely helpful in helping to draw the parallels between comic performance and the Lacanian psychoanalytic setting: both are object-world scenarios in which movement itself takes a central position. She argues that the movement between *Tuché* and automaton is not one of dialectical opposition; it is one and the same movement. *Tuché* can only happen amidst the incessant repetition of *automaton*, understood by Lacan as the "coming-back, the insistence of the signs."[7] The absentminded repetition of *automaton* provides the material, objectified possibility for the chance encounter that is *tuché*. Jean-Michel Rabaté elucidates: *tuché* is the happening that is "found" through "propitious repetition."[8] Lacan tells us, reading Aristotle, that this propitiousness could be "favourable" either as "*eutuchia,*" the "happy

encounter," or as "*dustuchia*," the "unhappy encounter."[9] In the psychoanalytic context, they are both instances of the "happy encounter" in that they are equivalent therapeutic encounters that happen through the applied propitious practice of repetition. In his seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*,[10] Lacan points out that "[i]t's odd that in almost all languages happiness offers itself in terms of a meeting—*Τύχη* [tuché]…A kind of favorable divinity is involved" and that "'[h]appiness' is after all 'happen.'"[11] Lacan is particularly struck by Freud's proposition that "concerning happiness…absolutely nothing is prepared for it" despite happiness being the primary goal.[12] Thus, "happiness" can only "happen" when not expected. As I hope to unpack here, this psychic predicament is inherently comic. As the comic actor Harry Holtzman has explained about his play *Happy Endings*, "The desire to mark the occasion, one of the piece's meta-objectives, is already in the realm of the comic."[13] A philosophy of the Encounter would embrace, I propose, not only the happening of the unexpected event within a general milieu of non-eventful repetition or haplessness, but also the trusting subject to whom something will happen *not as an effect of expectation*.

Another aspect of a philosophy of the Encounter is rooted in Aristotle's notion of happiness as *eudaimonia*. In his essay "*Agathon* and *Eudaimonia* in the *Ethics* of Aristotle," J.L. Austin elaborates upon Aristotle's philosophy of "happiness." Best known for his series of lectures, *How to do things with Words*,[14]Austin proposed that language itself, not the intentional subject, is the site of performing action, "happily" or "unhappily." But however well-known Austin is for his location of happiness within the performative speech act, he is less well-known for his work which lays the groundwork for this philosophy of language. His essay "*Agathon* and *Eudaimonia* in the *Ethics* of Aristotle,"[15] written twenty years before the speech-act lectures, proposes that a "happy" and therefore "good" (*agathon*) life is such from the hindsight of *the end of* one's life, not from "feeling" happy through pleasure. Austin's main priority is to debunk the interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy of happiness put

forward by H.A Pritchard. Austin is frustrated by what he sees as Pritchard's blind spot, that is, Pritchard's translation of the Greek word *eudaimonia*, as "a state of feeling pleasure."[16] Austin elaborates the etymology of *eu-daimonia*: a life being "prospered by a deity,"[17] as well as Aristotle's own attribution of a life being "happy" only upon death: "hence the saying 'call no man εὐδαίμων until he is dead'.... it would be silly to say 'call no man pleased until he is dead.'"[18] *Eudaimonia* for Aristotle "means a *complete* life of *activity* of a certain kind" (Austin's emphasis) and is therefore related to "congratulations," "achievement" and "success."[19] Austin's essay anticipates his speech-act theory in its critique of Pritchard's metaphysical presumptions that we feel and know happiness, what we would today refer to as "subjective well-being."[20] On the contrary, proposes Austin, via Aristotle, "happiness" can only be "known" objectively, upon death. Austin's philosophy of happiness will prove to be useful in understanding object theatre and its comic dimensions.[21]

The plays of Samuel Beckett dramatise Austin's insistence upon happiness as *eudaimonia*: a reading of *Happy Days* will show that "happiness" is most certainly interrelated with "happen." The first act of *Happy Days* ends with Winnie's declaration, "Oh, this *is* a happy day! This will have been another happy day! (*Pause*) After all. (*Pause*) So far."[22] Not for the first time does she qualify the happy day with the future perfect tense. She says something similar earlier in the act to Willie: "Ah well what a joy and perhaps awake, and perhaps taking all this in, some of all this, what a happy day for me… it will have been. (*Pause*) So far. (*Pause*)."[23] Winnie's sentence, modified twice—"*perhaps*"—in addition to her use of the future perfect tense—her happy day "will have been"—conjoined through the *pause* to the present tense which itself is merged with the past – "so far"—enunciates the admixture of temporal constructs gathered in the word "happy." *Happy Days* pitches happiness beyond Winnie's present moment on stage and outside of her inner feelings. Beckett never allows his characters any happiness as pleasure or subjective well-being within

the staged present moment.[24] Winnie waits, at the mercy of her dramaturge, whether that dramaturge be Beckett the playwright, some larger force of Otherness within the internal world of the play or some existential force of the world outside of the play.

As she waits for anything to happen, Winnie's repetitive meanderings render her mechanical. She is immobilized in a mound of dirt that surrounds her from her waist down, suggesting an equivalence to the props surrounding her. Beckett's script, equally devoted to the italicised stage directions as it is to delivering dialogue, marks the exterior directorial force which acts upon his characters. Winnie and Willie are objects, examples of the "things" Winnie accentuates:

> It's things, Willie. (*Pause. Normal voice.*) In the bag, outside the bag. (*Pause*). Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, *things* have their life. (*Pause*.) Take my looking-glass, it doesn't need me."[25]

Material objects "have their life." Like the looking-glass and other objects that can be moved (into or outside the bag), Winnie and Willie do their daily best to be moved by "happy chance," "great mercies" and helpful "boons,"[26] waiting for a bigger outside force [27] to send them object-signs. Everyday objects such as the looking-glass are examples of the "endless metonymy of the Other" through which Winnie strives to gain her own meaningful constitution.[28] Beckett's characters, awaiting the (missed) boons of the Other, proceed with blind faith, providing the ground for the "comic subject," as Zupančič contends:

> The comic subject believes in his or her metonymic object, and this belief always contains an element of naivety. In the course of comedy, this belief usually and frequently turns out to be unjustified (that is, without any ground

> in the object/Other), and hence "naïve." … The paradox that constitutes the core of the comical is, rather, this: although the unshakeable faith in the Other turns out to be unjustified, or at least very much out of proportion, the comic subject is not simply a victim of his naivety; on the contrary, it is this naivety itself that ultimately makes it possible for him to come into his own…[29]

The comic subject's trust in the Other effects a positive coming-into-one's own, achieved through the objectification of trust. Zupančič explains: "…[T]rust always somehow precedes itself, [and] there is something objective or object-like about it."[30]

This objectification of trust in the Other is the material language of the clown. Clowns speak through objectified gesture, understood by Jacques Lecoq as a "corresponding circuit, revealing to us an aspect of the other, as well as a part of ourselves."[31] The objectified circuit that is gesture grants the clown the flexibility of movement that corresponds to the (comic) subject's naïve trust in trust that allows the subject to come into her own. The clown stands in for the happy subject whose naivety might "make it possible…to find some … unexpected, 'out-of-place' satisfaction," provided that the subject avoids being duped by his own delusion that he will *not* err, as Lacan counselled in his triple pun, "*les non-dupes errant*."[32] Relatedly, Lecoq noted that what emerged from his assignment to his students was that laughter was achieved not, as expected, by the intention to create laughter, but by the involuntary gesture of anguished defeat, when "the crest-fallen clown sat down, sheepishly." Thus, continues Lecoq, the teaching-method of "the flop" was discovered.[33]

Lecoq's paradigm of "the flop" [*bide*], which can also be understood as "la chute de blague" or "punch line,"[34] physicalises the impact of the unexpected. We often see physical gestures of frustration in cartoon characters such as Homer Simpson, who bellows "D'OH!" [35] when something terrible happens unexpectedly, even though his actions are the result of

constantly repeating that same action.[36] Homer is a clown, and we laugh at his stupid repetition and at his serialised reservoir of recovery. He keeps getting into similar disastrous situations over and over again, just as surprised every time. Homer's repetition, of both his actions and his surprise, make him comic, a model for the flexibly happy subject who proceeds through error.[37] We can put forward a proposition for an elasticity in the actions of the clown which enables him, and all of us, to reside "happily" within the propitiousness of what, due to external cause, *may* happen, unexpectedly, or what may not ever happen.

The psychic energy invested in expectation is immense, and it can be measured through the physical actions of the comic figure. Freud investigates the movement from psychical to physical energy in the comic figure. In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*,[38] he identifies expectation as the material of the comic. He offers two useful insights. First, that "expectation" involves psychic investment, or cathexes, and thus constitutes considerable "expenditure."[39] Second, that the psychic investment of expectation is imbricated with "motor preparations":

> …[in] a number of cases…motor preparations are what form the expression of expectation… If I am expecting to catch a ball which is being thrown to me, I put my body into tensions which will enable it to meet the impact of the ball; and, should the ball when it is caught turn out to be too light, my superfluous movements make me comic to the spectators. I have let myself be enticed by my expectation into an exaggerated expenditure of movement.[40]

The expenditure of physical movements quantifies the psychic investment, the superfluousness an index to the comic lack of success in intention itself. These movements have a momentum of their own which do not correlate to the heavy ball that is expected.

Even, and especially, the most determined, concentrated intention, that is, the letting of oneself being "enticed by …[one's] expectation," gets met with a lack of success. The displacement of movement while trying to catch the ball signifies the causal *mis*placement of intended movement. Both the misplacement and the displacement make us laugh, and this laughter, as Freud notes, is a helpful relief in that it "discharges" the expended psychic energy of expectation.[41]

For Freud, laughter discharges the discomfort of over-invested energy that is a result of misplaced expectation. For Henri Bergson, whose essay "Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic" [42] Freud is reading, expectation is comically thwarted by additional dynamics. Bergson discusses the "snowball effect," in which an effect "grows by arithmetical progression, so that the cause, insignificant at the outset, culminates by a necessary evolution in a result as important as it is unexpected."[43] A spiral reversibility of cause and effect, in, for example, a game or a children's story, would also subvert expectation to elicit laughter.[44] And finally, laughter can also, notes Bergson, be the result of expectation which encounters a void or suddenly ends in nothing.[45] We can summarise these three configurations of the "lack of proportion between cause and effect"[46] as follows: cause and unexpected effect; cause and reversible effect; and cause and no effect. Together, they point to an infelicity of expectation as psychic modality, a modality which will take on existential dimensions in Beckett's plays, for example. But Bergson's larger interest is what this lack of proportion between cause and effect indicates: "What we do laugh at is something that this lack of proportion may in certain cases disclose, namely a particular mechanical arrangement which it reveals to us … at the back of the series of effects and causes."[47]

The "series of effects and causes" comprises the background for Bergson's enquiry into laughter as the reaction to mechanisation. He proposes that laughter serves as a relief from the discomforting experience of seeing a character become a mechanical object. The comic

character exhibits an "inelasticity" of mind through stubborn, absentminded insistences. The character falls because of too much physical momentum, or because of too much rigidity or habitual repetition. Or, the character lives his daily life with such mathematical precision that he is flummoxed when "the objects around him…have all been tampered with by a mischievous wag."[48] Other examples of this sort of funny rigid automatism include characters who force what they encounter into ready-made frameworks so that they are inflexible in a new situation;[49]or whose traits, such as avarice in Molière's characters, come so automatically that they are detached from the character's emotions. The comic character imitates himself and is infinitely imitatable.[50]

Bergson notes the difference between the tragic play and the comic play indicated in a play's title: whereas the title of a tragedy tends to be the proper name of the protagonist, which integrates the character's individuality, the titles to comic plays, e.g. *l'Avare* and *le Joueur*, refer not to a specific individual, but to a "ready-made frame into which we are to step."[51] These ready-made characters exert a gravitational pull around which the other characters, "delight[ing] in dragging them down with [their] own weight and making them share in [their] tumbles." Further, the ready-made central character plays the other characters "as if they were an instrument or … puppets."[52] The counterpoint to the ready-made frame is the mobile soul which defies the gravity exerted by the character-frame and by the "needs of…the stupidly monotonous body" that "tease" the soul.[53]

Zupančič argues that Bergson's enquiry only goes one way when it should be going two ways: the comic character, she proposes, conjoins the ready-made material frame and the abstracted universal spirit: "movement" includes mechanical tendencies *and* elasticity.[54] Is not Bergson's *élan vital*, she challenges, also driven by, through, and within the obstinate repetition that perseveres through movement? This movement is not one of cause and effect but of cause and effect AND effect and cause, with "the mechanical and the living dovetailed

into each other."[55] Furthermore, in comedy, Zupančič proposes, the human spirit as elevated by Bergson (and by the character of himself) is *also and especially* subject to the pull of gravity, reversing the logic of the danger effected by physical falling. It is this notion of the downfall of a universal (abstract) ideal which makes something comic.[56]

In the comic object theatre of Label Brut's *Happy Endings,* the "clown with an American accent, Harry Holtzman" stages his own death by welcoming his audience to his funeral. He relates autobiographical stories that correspond to the everyday, "raw" objects occupying the stage.[57] (Figures 1, 2) These objects, manipulated through a complex *mise-en-scène*, materialise the life story of Harry, the clown who takes up residence amidst the objects. These objects are often attached to ropes that pull or release other objects. The pulleys, props, and Harry himself all move through the force of gravity. But they also signify gravity, bearing rich philosophical connotations. Bergson and others before him help to understand gravity as falling, particularly falling from "grace."[58] The flop of the crestfallen clown espoused by Lecoq joins this philosophical genealogy.

Along with the white ropes that traverse the stage are objects that stand alone, such as a microwave oven, in which brownies are baking, two black waste bins, a bathtub, a chair, balloons attached to little bodies, and a projection screen. Harry has a gray beard suggesting that he is at the end of his life, joining the continuum of dead bearded men whose images are projected onto the screen (for example, Allen Ginsburg, Freud, and Harry's father, who, he recounts, died from a brain tumour). In his adopted language of French, Harry tells the story of when he was a child, hiding in his house from his family, shouting, "I'm Dead!" No one arrived to find him. Like Winnie and Willie, Harry expects and waits for a larger force that never arrives. Is Harry "dead" if no one responds to him announcing his own death? More to the point, is Harry alive when no one responds? Harry the clown fortunately has Mikey the Tech guy who runs onto the stage when called, giving Harry recognition and response.[59]

Mikey's entrance as the intervening technical hand signifies the equivalence between Harry and the stage props. Harry becomes prop (Figure 3), "fading" into the object-world.[60]

"*I'm vraiment dead… À vous maintenant!"*, Harry exclaims, peppering his French with English emphasis. His bilingual words objectify his relation to language as material otherness. His exclamations syntactically join the piñata filled with coloured petals that will disperse when ropes are pulled (see figure 4); and the bobbing balloon-headed figures moving their weighted bodies downstage when a fan blows them, accompanied by music of the Mexican Day of the Dead. Harry's naked body, having emerged from his bathtub, painted black with white lines to look like a skeleton stands parallel to a balloon-headed effigy. (Figure 5) *Happy Endings* is melancholic in its incorporation of Harry's effigy-body. The melancholic tone is enhanced by the invocation of two figures: Hamlet, when Harry asks "To be or not to be…?", and Judy Garland, the icon of gay melancholia projected in a film clip singing voluptuously and yet plaintively, "Halleluyah, c'mon, get happy, get ready for the Judgement Day!" (Figure 6) Neither Hamlet nor Judy felt happy in themselves, and both melancholic figures can be read through a philosophy of happiness that places "getting happy" as the demand of the external other.

The melancholia that percolates through *Happy Endings* gathers loss: the loss of lives; the loss of the subject as vital life; the loss of a happy "self"; the loss of expected reward. Harry's recounted life presents a philosophy of the Encounter in which the clown, standing in for all subjects, flexibly affirms "an objective surplus of error which sticks to different protagonists at different moments."[61] Label Brut's dramaturgy of Harry's "life" through *les funérailles*[62] stages objects moving in relation to other objects on stage. Harry speaks in French with English exclamations, drawing attention to his relation to language that materialises the life/Happy Ending of "Harry Holtzman." He is the clown who moves, hapless or happy, through "the frothy evolution proposed in the voyage from one object to

the next."[63] Similarly, the subject in the Lacanian *mise-en-scène* moves in relation to another signifier, in syntactical relation to an object-network of signifiers. Likely to have embraced the comic clown-subject who "flops," Lacan's scenario also stages the unexpected yet fortuitous encounters in the object world.

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[1] From the Middle English *hap*, meaning chance or fortune.

[2] Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 2008), 86 et al.

[3] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 54.

[4] From the 1980s onwards, "object theatre" was widely understood as a particular theatrical tradition using a specific mode of performance. The World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts explains that "[i]n object theatre the untransformed 'thing' is explored, either in itself (to find its inherent movement/physical properties) or to use as a character/symbol in a story." ("Object Theatre," World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts, https://wepa.unima.org/en/object-theatre/.) One of the most well-known names associated with object theatre is the French director Philippe Genty, whose practice and philosophy stages "… the co-presence of live human performers with puppets, objects, and raw materials," as observed by Alissa Mello. See Alissa Mello, "Compagnie Philippe Genty: On Directing and Collaboration," *Puppetry International*, Issue 34 (Fall & Winter 2013): 4.

The difference between "giving life" and "movement/physical properties" may seem minimal, but I want to argue here that in fact, the difference is a substantial one of metaphysical implications. Object theatre, being a theatre based on co-present movement and not "life", allows us to see an exteriority of cause that lies outside of consciousness, intention and expectation, that is to say, outside of the phenomenological.

3 In Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981 [1973]), 53-67.

[4]As Lacan noted, his own use of the philosophical category of *automaton* is taken from Aristotle, who used this word in the context of movement: *automate*, meaning "self-moving." Admittedly, I am only touching upon the immense philosophical consideration of automaton as part of the definition of cause, starting with Aristotle. A more expanded version of my chapter would take into full consideration Joan Copjec's close analysis of cause, *automaton*, the Lacanian theorisation of pleasure and his intervention that happiness is "no longer defined as subjective, but as *objective*." See Copjec, Joan, "Cutting Up," Chapter 3 in her book *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (London & New York: Verso, 2015 [1994]), 40. Here, Copjec reads Lacan's radical revisioning of the construction of the Subject as a philosophical intervention which recognises happiness as a primary site of negotiation. Notably, she also considers the relevant theories of Freud, Bergson's essay on Laughter, Beckett's drama, and to a small extent, the speech-act theory of J.L. Austin, as they relate to the Lacanian proposition of the Subject. Also to be considered further would be Sara Ahmed's book *The Promise of Happiness*, in which she considers a similar constellation as I am here (the performativity of Happiness, happy objects, Austin, and in particular, "the apparent chanciness of happiness—the hap of what happens" and the "contingency of

happiness [that] suggests that happiness involves a way of being directed…" See Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham & London: 2010), 31; note 22, 236.
[7] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 54.
[8] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Jacques Lacan* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2001), 204.

[9] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 80.
[10] Jacques Lacan, *Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1988).
[11] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 13.
[12] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* 13. Lacan is referring here to Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*.
[13] Personal correspondence with Harry Holtzman, August 4, 2020.
[14] Austin's lectures on speech-act theory deem a linguistic utterance a "happy" performative if it accomplishes an act as a result of the very linguistic utterance. His philosophy of language actively pursues a radically non-metaphysical relation of the subject to language in which an action "happens" performatively through the utterance itself, not because of the subject's intention. See J.L. Austin, *How to do things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Maria Sbisa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975 [1962]).
[15] J.L. Austin, "ἀγαθόν [*Agathon*] and εὐδαιμονία [*Eudaimonia*] in the *Ethics* of Aristotle," in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979 [1961]).
[16] Austin is emphatic that Aristotle denotes "pleasure" not as *eudaemonia* but as *ηδονή* (*edoni*). Pleasure, or *ηδονή*, is still understood to be part of *eudaemonia*, but only in the way that *eudaemonia* is prosperity 'accompanied by pleasure or not without pleasure.'" See Austin, "ἀγαθόν [*Agathon*] and εὐδαιμονία [*Eudaimonia*] in the *Ethics* of Aristotle 8, n.2; et. al. Many thanks to my colleague Maria Christoforidou for her help in translating the nuances of the Greek terms as used by Austin in this essay.

[17] Austin, "ἀγαθόν [*Agathon*] and εὐδαιμονία [*Eudaimonia*] in the *Ethics* of Aristotle, 17.
[18] Austin, "ἀγαθόν [*Agathon*] and εὐδαιμονία [*Eudaimonia*] in the *Ethics* of Aristotle, 17, citing Aristotle, I.x.i;18.
[19] Austin, "ἀγαθόν [*Agathon*] and εὐδαιμονία [*Eudaimonia*] in the *Ethics* of Aristotle, 18.
[20] Similarly, in the same deconstructive imperative, Alenka Zupančič reads against contemporary rhetorics of "happiness" which insist upon "the rise of … a bio-morality… which promotes the following fundamental axiom: a person who feels good (and is happy) is a good person; a person who feels bad is a bad person." Zupančic, *The Odd One In*, 5.

[21] Only "happy" when it can relate to "itself" as object, a happy life is not coincident with itself but merged into its death. Alenka Zupančič relates this Aristotelian objectification of a "happy life" to that of the comic subject:
"Comedy is the moment in which substance, necessity, and essence all lose their immediate—and thus abstract—self-identity or coincidence with themselves…the substance becomes subject in the moment when, through a split in itself, it starts relating to itself… Could we not say that in comedy, one moment of the substance represents the subject for another moment of the substance?" Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 34.
[22] Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days: A play in two acts*. (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1961), 36.
[23] Beckett, *Happy Days*, 26.

[24] By "the present moment being staged" here I am inferring a metaphysical comprehension of "happiness" as subjective feeling or personal knowledge. In Beckett's play *Endgame*, for example, Hamm asks Clov: "did you ever have an instant of happiness?" to which Clov replies, "Not to my knowledge." And soon after this exchange, Hamm notes to Clov, "Absent, always. It all happened without me. I don't know what's happened. (*Pause.*) Do you know what's happened? (*Pause.*) Clov!" Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (London & Boston: 1958), 47.
[25] Beckett, *Happy Days*, 40.
[26] Beckett, *Happy Days*, 39-40.
[27] That Beckett's characters are always waiting for and naively expecting something to happen is remarked upon by Jacques Lecoq in the context of his theatre of movement and gesture. Lecoq recounts a story of Japanese Noh and Kabuki actors, the Kanze brothers, who, in 1972 decided to perform their first play by a modern author and chose Samuel Beckett, who, for Lecoq, "holds a very important position in the theatre of movement and gesture." When Lecoq asked the brothers why they chose *Waiting for Godot* to perform, they answered him: "'In Beckett's theatre, it is just like Noh, you're always waiting for something, be it to live or die.'" In David Bradby, editor, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 128.
[28] In her explication of the subject's repetition of the originary repression of the signifying dyad, Zupančič explains that the subject lives through endless objectified attempts to repeat the original split or differentiation within herself, living through an endless signifying chain as another objectified signifier herself: "…[W]hen the subject comes to exist, she exists only in the Other, through the signifying chain, which is to say as metonymic meanings(s) of the originally missing signifier. This is the level of interpretation (in analysis, as well as in general): since the subject emerges as pure difference in relation to her own being, she then strives to appropriate the latter by way of meaning constituted in the Other, and its endless metonymy. Interpretation leads us to and through different forms/meanings developed around the subject's singular lack of being." Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 166-167.
[29] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 84.
[30] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 86.
[31] Bradby, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, 206, 6.
[32] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 84-85. Zupančič is here citing Lacan's pun which phonetically sounds identical to "les noms du père." I have added the notion of the "tripled" pun because *les noms du père* also a homonym with "*le* non *du père*," because Lacan is also playing with the negative value attributable to the name of the father.
[33] Bradby, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, 115.
[34] Harry Holtzman, What's App communication, August 4, 2020.
[35] The exclamation "D'oh!", defined as "Expressing frustration at the realization that things have turned out badly or not as planned, or that one has just said or done something foolish" has recently been added to the Oxford Dictionary. (https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93098&page=1).

[36] Animated cartoon clown characters such as Homer Simpson, Scooby Doo, and Charlie Brown, because they are hand-drawn and not physically real, can show more graphically the falling and the physicalized vocal reactions that can only go so far in a live clown performance. The earnest expectations of these clown-like characters always seem to propel them into physical misadventures that always, as expressed by their falling, accompanied by such indexicalised exclamations as "AARGH!!!", "D'OH!!!" and "HUH? RUH RO…", but they are just as easily drawn to get up again after what repeatedly befalls them. I don't think

it is an accident that these three quintessentially physical clowns, Homer, Scooby Doo, and Charlie Brown, are all male; the otherwise powerful maleness is the signifier which best shows the great extent of the deflation of expectation.

[37] Zupančič expands upon the centrality of surprise and error as structural to the "(comic) subject"—noted as such in parenthesis because she is arguing that the comic subject *is* the subject, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis. In her discussion of comedy and its central core of "nonsense," Zupančič tells us that "we really encounter nonsense only when and where *a sense surprises us*. What comedy repeats (repeats, not reveals, since revelation is not the business of comedy) in a thousand more or less ingenious ways is the very operation in which sense is produced in a genuinely erratic manner. Things makes sense in a very erratic manner. Or, to put it even more directly: sense itself is an error, a product of error; sense has the structure of an error." Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 180-181.

[38] Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol VIII, trans. James Strachey (London: the Hogarth Press, 1905).

[39] Freud, *Jokes*, 197-99.

[40] Freud, *Jokes*, 197.

[41] Freud, *Jokes*, 209.

[42] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (København & Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1999 [1911]).

[43] Henri Bergson, *Laughter*, 76.

[44] Bergson, *Laughter*, 78. The effort made by a game player made by a "[circular] fatal interaction of cause and effect, [that] merely results in bringing it back to the same spot" is the English translation of the French "*engrenage* fatal de causes et d'effets" (my emphasis, Bergson, *Le rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991 [1940] 63-64).

[45] Bergson, *Laughter*, 80: "… according to [Spencer], laughter is the indication of an effort which suddenly encounters a void. Kant had already said something of the kind: 'Laughter is the result of an expectation which, of a sudden, ends in nothing.'"

[46] Bergson, *Laughter*, 80.

[47] Bergson, *Laughter*, 81.

[48] Bergson, *Laughter*, 14, in the original French, "*Seulement, les objets qui l'entourent ont été truqués par un mauvais plaisant.*" Bergson, *Le rire*, 7.

[49] Bergson presents the example of Don Quixote, whose head is so locked into certain immovable romantic frameworks that whatever object he happens to encounter will mould itself upon the same, unmovable idea that Quixote always has. He is rigid in his mindset, and does not possess the dynamic thinking nor the suppleness of spirit which ought to be the starting point, the very cause of his actions. Don Quixote is set on encountering a giant because a giant is what his formula for romantic adventure has established already, but in fact, he may very well be encountering a windmill. See Bergson, *Laughter*, 164-5.

[50] Bergson, 199, 128, et. al. Bergson notes that in its imitatability, "character" is in and of itself comic, in that "by character [we mean] the *ready-made* element in our personality, that mechanical element which resembles a piece of clockwork wound up once for all and capable of working automatically. It is, if you will, that which causes us to imitate ourselves. And it is also, for that very reason, that which enables others to imitate us. Every comic character is a type." Bergson, *Laughter*, 134.

[51] Bergson, *Laughter*, 19. Although the English version of Bergson infers this act of "insertion" into the comic framework, it is more clear in the original French: "*Mais le vice qui nous rendra comiques est au contraire celui qu'on nous apporte du dehors comme un*

cadre tout fait où nous nous insérerons." Bergson, *Le rire*, 11. Bergson's notions of "insertion" into a signifying framework becomes Roman Jakobson's notion of the indexical pronoun in language, a fundamental structuralist inspiration for Lacan's subject-in-language: the subject becomes subject by way of insertion into the Symbolic.

[52] Bergson, *Laughter*, 19- 20.

[53] Here, I paraphrase from the French "l'âme taquinée par les besoins du corps" (Bergson, *Le rire*), 38, 42, which I think is subtly mistranslated into English as the needs of the body "tantalizing" the soul. Bergson, *Laughter*, 50, 54.

[54] As Zupančič explains, mechanical movement does not reveal the automaton as lacking in vitality but as conjoined into it, with both terms "generated by their common structural point in the first place." Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 122; 114; 124-5. She is arguing that mechanical habit and pure fluid life are *both* "effects produced in this movement in which a life is referred back to itself, confronted (by means of imitation) with itself as seen from the outside." Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 118.

[55] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 114.

[56] In the comic universe, Zupančič proposes, "the abstract and the concrete have switched places at the very outset." (Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 29) What she means by this proposition is that movement itself—normally attributed to physical movement of objects, dictated by the laws gravity, moves: it moves both physical objects and abstract notions that are considered "universal," and this movement is a complex movement characterizable as a Möbius strip, subject to reversal, turning back and forth. See her explanation of the way in which comic characters always rebound from physical falls and catastrophes, impervious to the physical reality of gravity, but whose stumbling or downfall is one relating to something more abstract, that is, their own falsely elevated sense of self. (Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 28-30.

[57] Label Brut, an object-theatre company in France founded in 2006, distinguishes itself in its "rawness"—the *brut*—of its chosen objects, diverging from preceding object theatre such as that of Philippe Genty. Label Brut stages everyday objects that are consciously unglamourous, banal, unrefined. It is a theatre of "*l'objet détourné,"* and we are invited to see the strings, the manipulators, and the stage-hands which we would not see in the slick "*théâtre noir"* of Genty in which the manipulators would have been blacked out from the audience's view. In this chapter, I want to argue that this "raw" quality of Label Brut lends itself to a Lacanian reading: the *mise-en-scène* of lowly objects and the expletive-laden script performed by the clown, Harry, contribute to exploring a psychical economy in which the subject is visibly staged in relation to everyday objects.

[58] As Bergson expounds : "… a soul… is infinitely supple and perpetually in motion, subject to no law of gravitation, for it is not the earth that attracts it. The soul imparts a portion of its winged lightness to the body it animates : the immateriality which thus passes into matter is what is called gracefulness. Matter, however, is obstinate and resists." Bergson, 1999, 30. Similarly, Heinrich von Kleist's short essay "On the Marionette Theatre" compares a human dancer to a marionette, foregrounding gravity as a kind of vehicle for ideal grace which is difficult for humans to attain because self-consciousness usually overtakes it. His translator into English, Idris Parry, notes that Kleist is invoking, among other things, the story of the Fall of man in Genesis, the Fall here serving to signify both the acquisition of knowledge as well as from the centre of gravity in the body. See Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theatre," trans. Idris Parry, *TLS* (October 20, 1978 [1810]).

[59] Harry's shouting, "I'm Dead!" has its parallels in other exclamations in English in the otherwise French monologue, including "Oh my God!" and "Halleluyah!"

[60] Here, I want to suggest that the conjoining of Harry, as clown, into his object world, alienates him from a subjectively felt happy life in that he necessarily has to become a subject through the otherness of the objects surrounding him. This Lacanian notion of the subject's alienated predicament as such is known as "aphanisis" or "fading," and is caused by the alienation upon inevitable residence within language. Lacan presents the following explanation of "aphanisis": "… the subject appears first in the Other, in so far as the first signifier, the unary signifier, emerges in the field of the Other and represents the subject for another signifier, which other signifier has as its effect the *aphanisis* of the subject. Hence the division of the subject—when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as disappearance. There is, then, one might say, a matter of life and death between the unary signifier and the subject, *qua* binary signifier, cause of his disappearance." Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 218. For a helpful parallel to reading theatrical performance through Lacan's notion of the fading of the subject, see Alvise Sforza Tarabochia, "The *Aphanisis* of the Pirandellian Subject, in *Italian Studies* 68, No. 1 (March 2013), 123-137.

[61] Zupančič, *The Odd One In*, 92.

[62] Translingual reading highlights the objectification of Harry's funeral, which, in his adopted French, is translated as the less individualised *les funérailles*.

[63] Harry Holtzman, What's App communication, August 4, 2020. Henri Bergson similarly uses the metaphor of effervescent, yet scant, "froth" in his concluding paragraph of his essay *Laughter*: "Laughter…indicates a slight revolt on the surface of social life. It instantly adopts the changing forms of the disturbance. It, also, is gaiety itself. But the philosopher who gathers a handful to taste may find that the substance is scanty, and the after-taste bitter." (179)

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Figures:
Figure 1:

Courtesy of Harry Holtzman

Figure 2:

Courtesy of Harry Holtzman

Figure 3:

Courtesy Yvett Rottscheid

Figure 4:

Courtesy Harry Holtzman