

Alessandro Mercuri

Not now, not before
Is French socialism conceptual art?

"There are no absolutely certain empirical propositions.

It is only tautologies that are certain."

A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 1936

According to an urban legend (but is it really a legend?), in Italy, the Mafia once controlled some Antimafia Investigation Commissions. This is reminiscent of Epimenides' liar paradox as reported in the *Epistle to Titus* :
"One of themselves [the Cretans], even a prophet of their own [Epimenides the Cretan], said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." (I, 12)

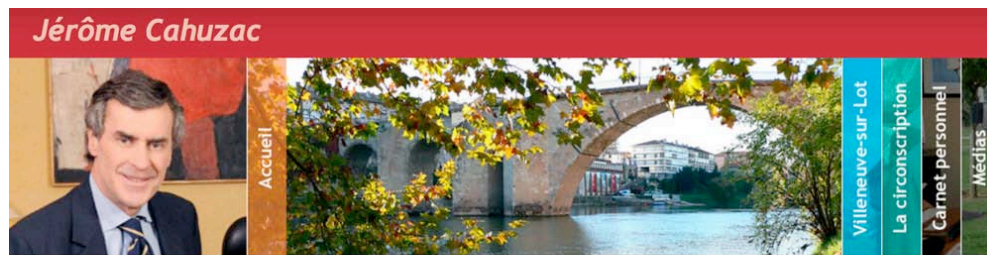
More than 2500 years after Epimenides, the liar paradox (*All the Cretans are liars*) still seems as relevant when politics defies the laws of logic.

Thus, Jérôme Cahuzac, French resigning Budget Minister at the *Ministry of the Economy, Finance, and External Trade* and full member of the *Council on Public Finances Guidance* acknowledges on his website www.jerome-

cahuzac.com to be guilty of tax evasion. He also implicitly admits lying to a number of people. Without exhaustiveness, we could cite: "The President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, his former colleagues in government, his parliamentary colleagues, constituents and the whole French population." It should be remembered that the former Minister for the Budget was also for two years, Chairman of the *Finance, General Economy and Budgetary Control Committee* in the National Assembly.



French Budget Minister Jérôme Cahuzac during a press conference, announcing the Government plan to fight tax evasion, Nanterre, November 20, 2012. picture © *Citizen Side*



Déclaration de Jérôme CAHUZAC

Par lettre du 26 mars 2013, j'ai demandé à Messieurs les Juges d'Instruction Roger Le Loire et Renaud Van Ruymbéke de bien vouloir me recevoir afin que, délivré des obligations de ma fonction, je puisse enfin donner les explications qui s'imposent au regard de la détention à l'étranger d'un compte bancaire dont je suis le bénéficiaire depuis une vingtaine d'années.

J'ai rencontré les deux juges aujourd'hui. Je leur ai confirmé l'existence de ce compte et je les ai informés de ce que j'avais d'ores et déjà donné les instructions nécessaires pour que l'intégralité des actifs déposés sur ce compte, qui n'a pas été abondé depuis une douzaine d'années, soit environ 600.000 €, soient rapatriés sur mon compte bancaire à Paris.

A Monsieur le Président de la République, au Premier Ministre, à mes anciens collègues du gouvernement, je demande pardon du dommage que je leur ai causé. A mes collègues parlementaires, à mes électeurs, aux Françaises et aux Français j'exprime mes sincères et plus profonds regrets. Je pense aussi à mes collaborateurs, à mes amis et à ma famille que j'ai tant déçus.

J'ai mené une lutte intérieure taraudante pour tenter de résoudre le conflit entre le devoir de vérité auquel j'ai manqué et le souci de remplir les missions qui m'ont été confiées et notamment la dernière que je n'ai pu mener à bien. J'ai été pris dans une spirale du mensonge et m'y suis fourvoyé. Je suis dévasté par le remords.

Penser que je pourrais éviter d'affronter un passé que je voulais considérer comme révolu était une faute inqualifiable. J'affronterai désormais cette réalité en toute transparence.

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Official statement of Jérôme Cahuzac on his website
pleading guilty on tax evasion, April 2 2013 :

Before his final confession, the denial of the one who was then still Minister was spreading throughout the media. Here are some examples found on his Twitter posts:

December 4 2012: *"I do not know what it is about. I've never had a bank account in Switzerland or elsewhere abroad. It's unbelievable 1/2"*

December 4 2012: *"I will pursue all those who will spread this defamatory slander which violates my honour. Including here! 2/2"*

December 11 2012: *"Those who are trying to smear my reputation will not be able to prove what does not exist. Legal action has been taken. #determination #probity #publicinterest"*



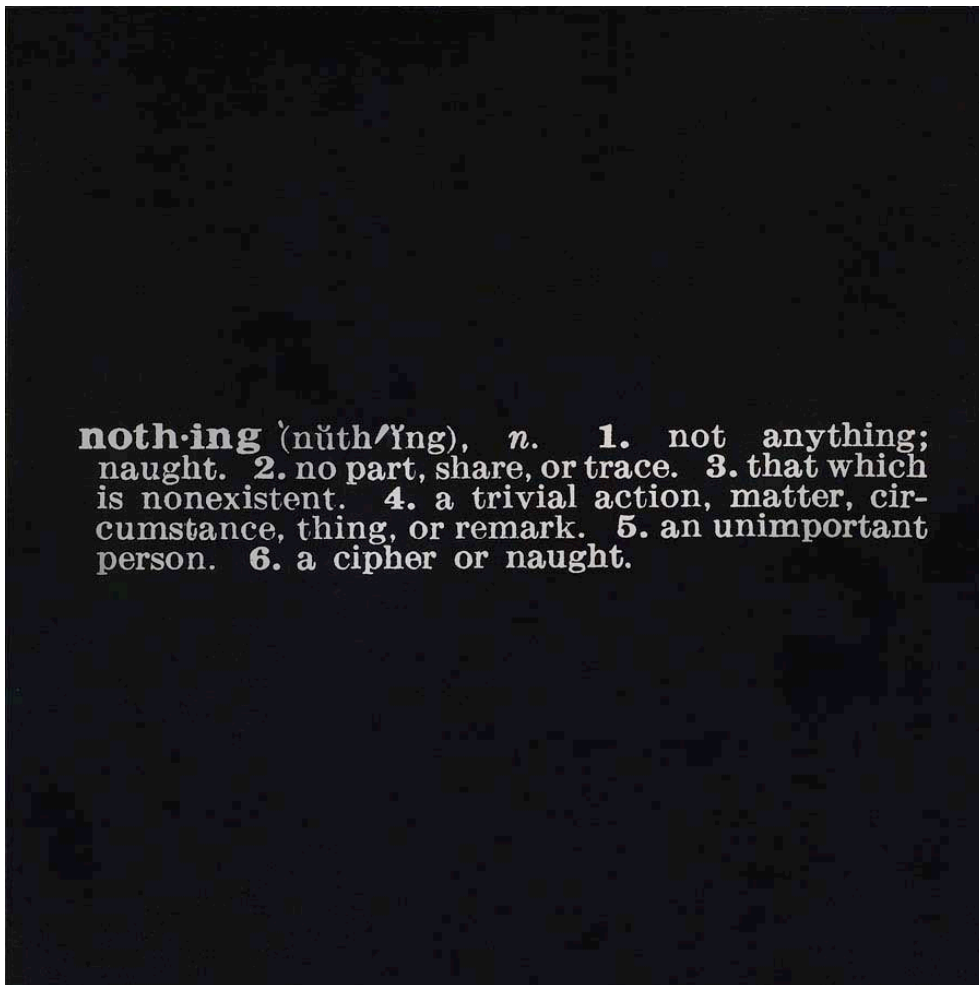
Jérôme Cahuzac at the French National Assembly - picture © Reuters - Charles Platiau

On December 5 2012, to the Members of the Parliament, Jérôme Cahuzac exclaimed: "I deny categorically these allegations. I do not have, I never had any bank account abroad. Not now, not before. "

Such enormity, such outrageous lies, reveal the deep chasm between art and politics as Federico Fellini reminds us when he said of himself: *"I am a born liar"* or *"For me, the things that are the most real are the ones I invented."*

One could also mention a well known film, which dates from the birth of cinema: *L'arroseur arrosé (The Sprinkler Sprinkled)* by Louis Lumière (1895). Such title would put us on the track of the tautology as artistic expression. Joseph Kosuth defines it in his essay *Art after Philosophy* (1969): *"A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art is art, which means, is a definition of art."*

Jérôme Cahuzac, as a tax evader, therefore protects France against tax evasion. Because who better than a Cretan to say that all Cretans are liars? Who better than a fraudster to detect fraud?



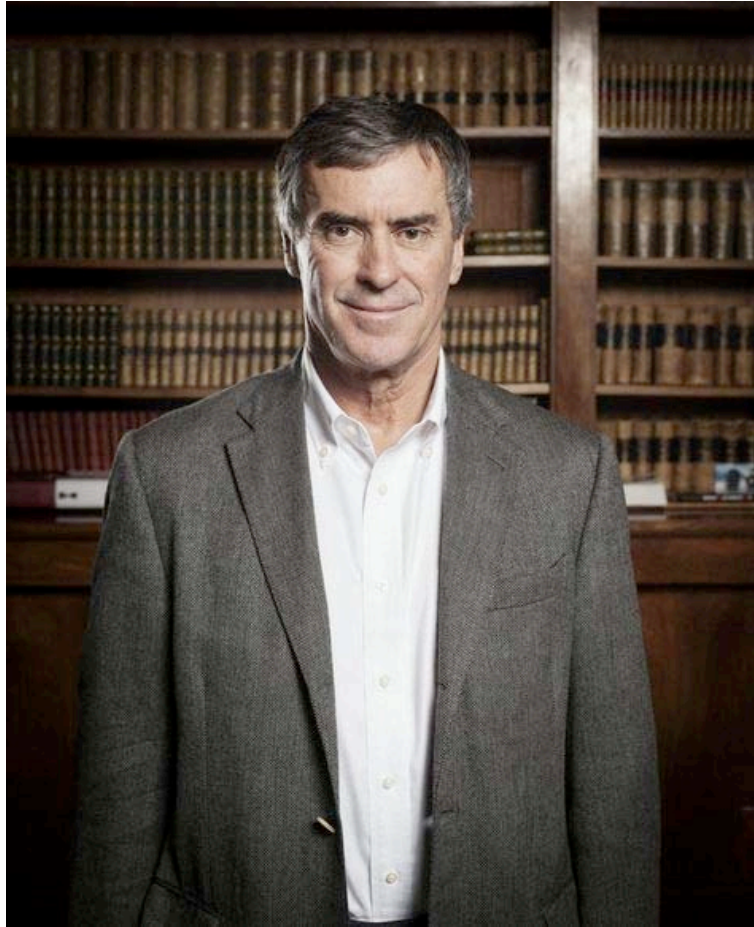
Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [Nothing] - Joseph Kosuth, 1968

vāl'ūe, n., & v.t. **1.** Worth, desirability, utility, qualities on which these depend, *as now learnt the ~ of fresh water, a friend, quinine, accuracy, regular exercise*; worth as estimated, valuation, *as sets a high ~ on his time; commercial, economic, exchange(able) ~, ~ in exchange*, purchasing power, power of a commodity to purchase others, amount of (pop.) money or (Pol. Econ.) other commodities for which thing can be exchanged in open market; **FACE**¹, **SURRENDER**, ~; *surplus ~*, surplus production of labour after subsistence of labourer & family; the equivalent of a thing, what represents or is represented by or may be substituted for a thing.

Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [Value] - Joseph Kosuth, 1968

blank [blæŋk] *adj. et s. blanc. Blank credit, crédit à découvert, sur notoriété. Blank form (U. S. blank), formule en blanc. Blank signature, blanc-seing. To leave blank, laisser en blanc.*

*Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [Blank] - Joseph Kosuth, 1968 -
Photography laminated wood panel - Almine Rech Gallery, Paris*



Jérôme Cahuzac - Paris, November 10, 2012.

Libération - Picture: Samuel Kirszenbaum

“One of the lessons to be learned about the art of our century, and Klein’s work shows this, is that if art is a game, it is about making rules, not following them.”

Joseph Kosuth on Yves Klein (1982)

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ?

read about "L'affaire Cahuzac" BEFORE & AFTER from *The Guardian*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/19/french-budget-minister-resigns>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/02/jerome-cahuzac-france-offshore-account>

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