

Futures of Critical Theory

Dreams of Difference

Edited by

Michael
Peters

Mark
Olsen

Colin
Lankshear

Futures of Critical Theory

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Futures of Critical Theory

Dreams of Difference

Edited by Michael Peters, Mark Olssen,
and Colin Lankshear

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowmanlittlefield.com

PO Box 317
Oxford
OX2 9RU, UK

Copyright © 2003 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Futures of critical theory : dreams of difference / edited by Michael Peters, Mark Olssen, and Colin Lankshear.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7425-2859-6 (Cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-7425-2860-X (Paper : alk. paper)

1. Sociology—Philosophy. 2. Critical theory. I. Peters, Michael (Michael A.), 1948– II. Olssen, Mark. III. Lankshear, Colin.

HM585 .F88 2003

301'.01—dc21

2003008568

∞™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Contents

Introduction: Futures of Critical Theory—Dreams of Difference <i>Michael Peters, Mark Olssen, and Colin Lankshear</i>	1
1 Nietzsche, Nihilism, and the Critique of Modernity <i>Michael Peters</i>	23
2 A Critical Theory of the Self: Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Foucault <i>James D. Marshall</i>	39
3 From the Question Concerning Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg <i>Iain Thomson</i>	59
4 Foucault and Critique: Kant, Humanism, and the Human Sciences <i>Mark Olssen</i>	73
5 Levinas's Ethicopolitical Order of Human Proximity: "The Quest for Justice" <i>Denise Egéa-Kuehne</i>	103
6 "Looking for Allies": Gilles Deleuze as Critical Theorist <i>John R. Morss</i>	127

7	Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction = Justice <i>Gert J. J. Biesta</i>	141
8	The Postmodern Condition: Lyotard's Futurology <i>Peter Pericles Trifonas</i>	155
9	Of Being-Two <i>Pheng Cheah</i>	169
10	Pierre Bourdieu: The Craft of Sociology <i>Roy Nash</i>	187
11	Slavoj Žizek's Naked Politics: Opting for the Impossible— A Secondary Elaboration <i>Peter McLaren</i>	197
12	Anthony Giddens—The Last Global Theorist <i>David Scott</i>	229
13	Cyberfeminism with a Difference <i>Rosi Braidotti</i>	239
14	Edward Said: The Locatedness of Theory <i>Bill Ashcroft</i>	261
15	"Antiglobalization" and Guattari's <i>The Three Ecologies</i> <i>Michael Peters</i>	275
	Index	289
	About the Contributors	293

Introduction: Futures of Critical Theory—Dreams of Difference

Michael Peters, Mark Olssen, and Colin Lankshear

To this, America, the America that I love, an America that has silenced all its opponents, risks becoming a fourth Rome, after Byzantium and Moscow. In this new economic order, America imposes a financial, economic, and cultural oligarchy under the label of liberalism, a liberalism that puts at risk an important dimension of human freedom.

—Julia Kristeva, “Europhilia, Europhobia” in Sylvere Lotringer and Sandy Cohen (Eds.) *French Theory in America*

FRENCH THEORY’S DOUBLE FATE

Today’s students of social science and the humanities often focus on the contemporary theorists of ‘postculture’ and, in particular, French theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, either as though there was no critical thought before them or as though their work can be treated in a hermetically sealed fashion as cut off from the tradition of critical philosophy. This lack of historical depth and misunderstanding is increasingly evident in much academic culture in the postmodern condition, which separates philosophers and their works from their traditions of thought and their local context to turn them into academic commodities and recirculate their ideas endlessly in the academic market. It is like a franchising arrangement for ‘fast ideas,’ which picks up its own momentum through a bogus culture of self-citation. Sometimes the signs of such intellectual fashion are obvious as, say, at a recent international conference on the work of Foucault in which the conference organizers promoted and

branded themselves through Foucault T-shirts and used an image of Foucault as a logo on letterhead paper and other conference memorabilia. At other times the process of reception takes place in terms of a model of criticism, which is reduced to a methodology of a few easy steps and sloganized in convenient words.

In *Negative Dialectics*, Theodor Adorno (1973: 206) writes:

No theory today escapes the marketplace. Each one is offered as a possibility among competing opinions; all are put up for a choice; all are swallowed. There are no blinders for thought to don against this, and the self-righteous conviction that my own theory is spared that fate will surely deteriorate into self-advertising. But neither need dialectics be muted by such rebuke, or by the concomitant charge of its superfluity, of being a method slapped on outwardly, at random. The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy.

As Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 99) argue, once the concept leaves its home in philosophy to become part of a marketing exercise the critical ethos is drained away. Nevertheless, like anything else, critique and critical theory in both its current guises and its traditional forms can easily become commodified. For example, it is currently fashionable to talk of “critique” in advertising and marketing studies. This indicates the cooptation of the methods of critical theory precisely because of its power of analysis, yet politics is left at the gate. Perhaps we do not expect such market penetration in academic culture itself, or expect that academics themselves should actively become part of the sales and promotion culture.

If “French theory” has often been appropriated in a form cut off from its roots and context and caricatured, methodologized, commodified as an intellectual fad and recirculated in the academic market without much historical consciousness, it has also been falsely maligned for being esoteric, imported, elitist, inaccessible, anti-Marxist, un-American, nihilist, relativist, and irrational. It has been attacked in America and the United Kingdom by Marxists and neo-Marxists, neo-pragmatists, feminists, cultural “conservatists” and analytic philosophers.¹ Unlike the Frankfurt school, French theory was regarded as “foreign” and it had to contend with an American left almost totally colonized by the Frankfurt school in an earlier generation (see Lotringer, 2001: 140).

As an American invention French theory has endured a double fate of total rejection, on one hand, and academic faddism, on the other. Despite warnings to the contrary by many so-called French theorists (concerning language and representation that made problematic the extraction of anything resembling a unified and all-embracing model of criticism), schol-

ars have proceeded as though representation was not contested. Lotringer and Cohen (2001: 4) suggest the synthetic point of French theory is “the *permanent suspension of representation*”, where “to present means to settle, answer, resolve, and control the represented.” Their full account of this thesis on French theory is worth quoting:

Where modern communication theory has incessantly postulated positive outcomes from its models (consensus, agreement), in essence promoting social reconciliation, French theory subsumed concepts of communication in notions of *signification* and *contestation*. As there are no metanarratives that can be appealed to without becoming ideological, the turn to signification and contestation involved analysis of society's modes of writing. (4)

They go on to advance a number of other theses about French theory and its American reception. They suggest that French theory, with its focus on philosophy of the subject and subjectivity, “broke apart the previous Americanization of German synthesis [of Freud and Marx], in which negation of the existing realities was to lead, through self-consciousness, to political import and sense” (p. 6). In relation to the notion of the subject they advance a third thesis concerning “negative schizophrenia as a general social condition” (p. 6). Finally, they advance a fourth thesis concerning “the reception of Nietzsche's texts in America, travelling on a French ticket” (p. 7). In one very clear sense, still focusing on the question of subjectivity and negation within the system, French thought substituted Nietzsche for Hegel. This substitution was to play a major role in the reorientation of a critical philosophy that was no longer boxed in by the overwhelming and exhaustive power of the Hegelian dialectic, which had defined a synthesis of opposites without residue and contested an account of subjectivity as simple ‘alienation’ or self as negation of other. The substitution was not a simple act or process, however. Rather, it took place only after and ‘through’ a lengthy renaissance of Hegelian thought at the hands of Kojève, Hyppolite, Wahl, and others. Is there a critical thought after Hegel? Is there a Nietzschean critical philosophy and what might it look like? Could we describe a contemporary incantation of critical theory as Deleuzian or Foucaultian or Derridean? As Michel Foucault (1971: 28) was to write: “Truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him.”

NIETZSCHE VERSUS HEGEL IN FRENCH THEORY²

The decisive philosophical event in France during the postwar years was the rediscovery of the Hegelian dialectic, which seemed to provide a link

between the escape from a crumbling bourgeois society and the utopian desire to rebuild society in the image of socialism. We should not forget that the Surrealists, under the influence of André Breton, based their revolutionary practice on an understanding of Hegel. Surrealism achieved a unique synthesis of Marx, Freud, and Rimbaud. This was, perhaps, the most important basis, along with Marxism itself, for the emergence of a postwar left culture in France. The Surrealists joined the French Communist Party in 1927 and demonstrated their adherence to dialectical materialism by embracing four key theses: “the primacy of matter over thought; adoption of the Hegelian dialectic as the science of the general laws of movement of the external world as well as of human thought; the materialist conception of history . . . ; necessity of social revolution as the resolution of the antagonism . . . between the material productive forces of society and the relations of existing production” (Breton, 1978: 147). Well before Reich or Marcuse attempted a productive synthesis of Marx and Freud, Breton had emphasized a *critical* psychoanalysis. The union of Surrealism with Marxism was possible precisely because of their common point of departure in Hegel. For Breton, the dialectic was the theoretical means for interpreting “the interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in a process of unification” which he, at one point at least, considered the “supreme aim of surrealism” (Breton, 1978: 116). Georges Bataille, whose *Sur Nietzsche* was published in 1945 (Bataille, 1992), had strong personal and historical links with members of the Surrealist movement. Bataille attempted to reclaim Nietzsche from what he saw as anti-Semitic falsifications. His Nietzsche became the basis for his philosophy of transgression, which was to influence Foucault and Hélène Cixous, among many others.

The return to Hegel began after 1930. It accompanied the revival of interest in Marxism and was most evident in the influence of Alexandre Kojève’s course on Hegel at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes over the period 1933–1939. This was attended by many of the most prominent thinkers of that generation, including Bataille and Breton as well as Raymond Aron, Alexandre Koyré, Pierre Klossowski, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Eric Weil. Kojève taught his students that the dialectic was to be understood both in existentialist terms as the process of self-transformation and in class terms as the absolute negation of the Masters’ world. This emphasis on the dialectic as alienation, a process whereby the self engages with an Other in a discursive struggle for mutual recognition, is also the essence of Hyppolite’s interpretation. Hyppolite, like Hegel himself, read the *Phenomenology* as the history of consciousness. He published the standard two volume translation of the *Phenomenology* in 1939–1941 and in 1947 brought out his own commen-

tary, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*. Both the translation and the commentary had an immense influence on Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Derrida, who attended his seminars at the Collège de France. Jean Wahl read the *Phenomenology* in existentialist terms as the progress of an "unhappy consciousness" based on the awareness that all human development and personal growth is a product of alienation of the subject from what it desires.

Thus Hegel was given an 'existentialist' reading. Hegel's dialectic of reason and history enabled Marxists to focus on the rationality of history in a conceptualization of advanced industrial society, which captured the existentialist emphasis on the temporal nature of human consciousness and reason. Existentialists stressed the subjective, individual experience of being in time and the active creation of the world in terms of subjective meanings. This meant that existential Marxism looked to *all* the relations of daily life, and not just to the relations of production in order to explain society, the intellectual's position within history, and her role in the elimination of society's alienating structures. Sartre's existentialism emphasized a philosophy of consciousness that made humanism consistent with Marxism and avoided the reductive and mechanical dialectical materialism (Lenin, Stalin), which in terms of the Gulags implied a suppression of individual human freedom according to the goal of establishing a socialist state (see Poster, 1975).

Sartre's existentialism, developed most fully in his early work *L'être et le néant*, published in France in 1943 and translated as *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1966), was construed as a kind of humanism. In *Existentialism and Humanism* (Sartre, 1973), delivered as a lecture in defense of existentialism in 1948, Sartre maintains that what all existentialisms—the Christian existentialism of Jaspers and Marcel as well as the atheistic existentialism of Heidegger—have in common "is simply the fact that they believe that existence comes before essence—or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective" (p. 26). Thus, the first principle of existentialism for Sartre is subjectivity: "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (p. 28). It is a principle that takes Sartre back to the beginning of modern philosophy with Descartes's subjective turn and his attempt to base all knowledge and value on the *cogito* in the famous dictum *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). It is this "absolute truth of consciousness" (p. 44) which is the basis for the discovery of the conditions of our own existence. When Sartre writes that existentialism is a *humanism* he does not mean a Kantian ethics that holds man as an end-in-itself and the supreme value. Rather, he means an existential humanism that emphasizes a "self-surpassing" (p. 55), a transcendence, which reminds us that there is no legislator besides us and

we have to decide for ourselves. It is the moral choices we make that have the capacity to shape us and this “seeking beyond ourselves” at one with liberation, is what can realize us as truly human.

Sartre’s existential humanism was strongly influenced by Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological study of being, *Being and Time*, first published in 1927. Yet Heidegger’s concept of human existence *Dasein*, literally “being-there,” was an attempt to overcome the Cartesian subjective turn. In his “Letter on Humanism” (1996), Heidegger responded to a letter from Jean Beaufret, written in 1946, that had presented Heidegger with three questions. These were: how to restore meaning to the term “humanism”? what is the relation between ethics and ontology? and, how to prevent philosophy from becoming “adventurist”? The subtext of Heidegger’s letter involves a double movement. The first was a move to distance himself from Sartre’s “humanist” existentialism. The second was a second move to reinterpret his own early work, especially *Being and Time* (orig. 1927), as a basis for understanding the history of humanism and Being. Heidegger says he wants to restore thoughtfulness to thought: that is, to move back beyond philosophy to another kind of thinking lying outside the philosophical tradition in which thought as ontological inquiry becomes coextensive with ethics. He also wants to restore meaning to language. His hope was that by accomplishing both tasks he would thereby retrieve and maintain the essence of humanity in relation to Being.

In the “Letter” Heidegger begins by questioning whether it is necessary to retain the word “humanism,” given the damage it has caused. He questions what it meant for “Man” to become “human” and suggests *humanitas* remains the concern of an originary thinking: “For this is humanism: meditating and caring, that man be human and not inhumane, ‘inhuman’, that is, outside his essence. But in what does the humanity of man consists? It lies in his essence” (p. 224). Then he takes us through a brief genealogy of the concept “humanism” beginning with the *first* humanism that is in essence *Roman*:

Humanitas, explicitly so called, was first considered and striven for in the age of the Roman Republic. *Homo humanas* was opposed to *homo barbarus*. *Homo humanas* here means the Romans, who exalted and honored Roman *virtus* through the ‘embodiment’ of the *paideia* [education] taken over from the Greeks. These were the Greeks of the Hellenistic age, whose culture was acquired in the schools of philosophy. It was concerned with *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes* [scholarship and training in good conduct]. *Paideia* thus understood was translated as humanities. The genuine *romanitas* of *homo romanus* consisted in such *humanitas*. We encounter the first humanism in Rome: it therefore remains in essence a specifically Roman phenomenon,

which emerges from the encounter of Roman civilization with the culture of late Greek civilization. (Heidegger, 1996: 224)

He argues that if we understand humanism in general as a concern for freedom, then humanism will differ according to the conception of "freedom" and "nature" of man one embraces. In this sense there have been many such conceptions. Heidegger mentions, specifically, Marx's humanism of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Sartre's existentialism, and Christianity. However different they might be in purpose and in principle, they all agree "the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole" (Heidegger, 1996: 225). Thus, according to Heidegger "Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one." In other words, every humanism to emerge since the first Roman humanism has presupposed the universal essence of man as *animal rationale* which, while not a false definition, is still metaphysical. And metaphysics, argues Heidegger, is unable to ask or answer the question of the truth of Being itself.

Heidegger thus exposed the ideological dimension of humanism, and he made a new generation suspicious of that claim under its name. His antihumanism struck a cord with the advent of new structuralist methods. Structuralism developed independently by Jacobson and Saussure in the first decades of the twentieth century and was imported into anthropology from structural linguistics by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the late 1950s. Structuralism soon displaced both existentialism and humanism, and its "scientific" search for underlying laws of the psyche, cultures, history, and knowledge revealed once and for all the ideological nature of liberalism and individualism. Structuralist methods quickly spread across the disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. As Dosse (1998: xxiii-xxiv) writes:

Scientific structuralism is represented in particular by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Algirdas Julian Greimas, and Jacques Lacan, and simultaneously involved anthropology, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. Contiguous with this search for the Law was a more simple, undulating, and shimmering structuralism to be found particularly in the work of Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and Michael Serres, and which we might call semiological structuralism. There is also, finally, a historized or epistemic structuralism. The work of Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and, more broadly, the third generation of the *Annales* falls into this group.

Louis Althusser is, perhaps, the best-known French Marxist structuralist to attempt to surpass philosophies of consciousness, with their humanist emphasis on the subject as the agent of history and social transformation. Althusser's theory of ideology was an attempt to provide Marxism with a philosophy without lending support to a liberal politics of bourgeois individualism. His (1970) "theoretical anti-humanism" rejected the status of the knowing human subject as nothing other than a bearer of structural relations. As he writes: "The structure of the relations of production determines the *places* and *functions* occupied by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places" (p. 180).

The rejection of the early Marx as ideology with its humanist or anthropological problematic is the source of Althusser's (1969: 224) theoretical antihumanist bias. On the basis of a "symptomatic" reading of Marx, Althusser argued that there is a clear epistemological break between the early Marx of the *Manuscripts* and the later Marx—a break representing a clear separation between a science (based on the concepts of historical materialism, the relations and forces of production), and its humanist ideological predecessor. For Althusser, the later Marx's greatest theoretical debt to Hegel is not a simple inversion of the dialectic but the notion of history as *a process without a subject*—one powered by its own internal contradictions. Thus, in the mode of production (or practice) of theory:

The whole process takes place in the dialectical crisis of the mutation of a theoretical structure in which "the subject" plays, not the part it believes it is playing, but the part which is assigned to it by the mechanism of the process. (Althusser, 1970: 27)

While humanism or anthropologism was the common ground of the various existentialisms, of the philosophy of values, of personalisms, and of Marxism in the classical style, Derrida (1982: 116) comments, "the history of the concept of man is never examined. Everything occurs as if the sign 'man' had no origin, no historical, cultural or linguistic limit." Humanism, as embodied in the transcendental ego, in the speaking subject, was the all-powerful motif of postwar French philosophy, an overriding motif which was authorized by anthropologicist readings of Hegel (Kojève, Hyppolite), Marx (especially the *Manuscripts*, rediscovered in the 1960s), Husserl, and Heidegger. Yet Derrida asserts and attempts to demonstrate how this anthropological reading was badly mistaken. It was based on serious misreadings of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Heidegger's *Being and Time*, (which was, self-consciously, antihumanist) and reflected the humanist-existential understandings of the (then) practicing French philosophers, rather than

adopting a more scholastic approach. The critique of humanism and anthropologism is, as Derrida (1982: 119) states, “one of the dominant and guiding motifs of current French thought.” Even so, such critique is more a product of an *amalgamation* of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger (as the source or warranty of critique) with the old metaphysical humanism than it is a central questioning of humanism.

Derrida challenges Hegel’s anthropological assumptions through a critique of the principle of identity, which in Hegel’s theory of the sign is able to effect a closure in the symbolic relationship of sign to signified. Hegel’s opposition of sign and signified is established as internally related features of a unified reality through a process of dialectics in which every concept is to be negated and raised up to a higher sphere where it is conserved. This preserves the unity of consciousness, projected and yet recovered, as self-presence. Yet for Derrida *différance* ruptures the relation between sign and signified. Reference to the signified is always displaced and the unity of the subject as self-presence is simply the fiction of linguistic practice. Derrida (1982: 20) writes:

Contrary to the metaphysical, dialectical ‘Hegelian’ interpretation of the economic movement of *différance*, we must conceive of a play in which whoever loses wins, and in which one loses and wins on every turn. If the displaced presentation remains definitively and implacably postponed, it is not that a certain present remains absent or hidden. Rather, *différance* maintains our relationship with that which we necessarily misconstrue, and which exceeds the alternative of presence and absence.

The alterity of the unconscious is not a *hidden* self-presence. It is a *trace*, which as Derrida expresses it, “differs from, and defers, itself.” As Gayatri Spivak (1976: xv) explains in his Preface to *Of Grammatology*, in French “trace” carries connotations of track, footprint, imprint. Spivak continues:

Something that carries within itself the trace of a perennial alterity: the structure of the psyche, the structure of the sign. To this structure Derrida gives the name ‘writing’. The sign cannot be taken as a homogenous unit bridging an origin (referent) and an end (meaning), as ‘semiology’, the study of signs, would have it. The sign must be studied ‘under erasure’, always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such. (Spivak, 1976: xxxix)

In the now classic early essay “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (often taken as one of the inaugurating moments of poststructuralism), Derrida (1978) questions the “structurality” of structure and the way in which conceptual resources for the “decentering” of

structure, of the transcendental signified, can be found in Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. He distinguishes two interpretations. One is Hegelian in origin and is exemplified in Lévi-Strauss's work. It "dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign" and seeks the "inspiration of a new humanism." The other—based on "Nietzschean *affirmation*, that is, the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, without origin which is offered to an active interpretation"—tries to pass beyond man and humanism (Derrida, 1978: 292). In "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" (an allusion to Hyppolite's interpretation), Derrida had already laid out major elements of his philosophical program. The essay is concerned with Husserl's treatment of the sign and there is an (early) attempt to develop a "deconstruction" of Western metaphysics by recognizing reason as the *logos* produced in history that has been determined as self-presence on the model of speech. From 1959, the date Derrida delivers his lecture on Husserl, to 1968 when he formulates the notion of *différance*, it has taken some nine years. In an interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta, Derrida (1981: 40) comments: "If there were a definition of *différance*, it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *relève* wherever it operates."

As Derrida makes clear in the interview, *relève* is his interpretation and translation of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Combining insights from Heidegger and Saussure that emphasize, respectively, a temporal and a spatial dimension, Derrida (1981: 8) arrives at the notion of *différance*. This, he says, is the most general structure of economy, in the sense established by Georges Bataille. In a reading of Bataille ("From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve"), Derrida (1978: 275) argues that the Hegelian *Aufhebung* "is produced entirely from within discourse, from within the system or the work of signification." Consequently, it remains within restricted economy. *Différance*, according to Derrida (1981: 8–9), "refers to the . . . movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving"; the movement of *différance* is "the common root of all the positional concepts that mark our language" and the production of those differences which is the condition for any signification. Finally, it is "the unfolding of difference," of the ontico-ontological difference, which Heidegger named as the difference between Being and beings.

Derrida's early text on "genesis and structure" in Husserl's phenomenology is published some three years before Deleuze's *Nietzsche et philosophie*. This introduces Nietzsche into the problematics of structure by interpreting dialectics as the negating thought of *ressentiment*. Deleuze's

interpretation of Nietzsche and his Nietzschean critique of Hegel serve as the conceptual grounding for poststructuralism. As one commentator has forcefully argued: "The political implications of all their work could even be argued to be directly rooted in their critiques of the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics" (Carroll, 1984: 79).

Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche occupies a special place in French poststructuralist philosophy. His interpretation, historically speaking, provides the philosophical and political means to displace the earlier preoccupations of postwar French philosophy, based around the Hegelian subject and the unquestioning acceptance of the dialectic, at one and the same time inventing a lineage of "counter-philosophy," reactivating the French tradition of vitalism going back to Bergson. Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, the reception of which reaches its highpoint in 1972 with the Cerisy-la-Salle colloquium on Nietzsche, effectively becomes a turning point for French philosophy, opening new spaces for philosophizing and providing the basis for an alternative mode of critical thought both inside France and beyond.

In his introduction to a translation of Sarah Kofmann's *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Duncan Large discusses the intensification of interest in Nietzsche in the dozen years following the publication of Heidegger's *Nietzsche* (in 1961) in terms of Deleuze's seminal work. He writes:

In tracing the emergence of the new Nietzsche, one would undoubtedly have to consider the contributions of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot, as well as of Jean Wahl, whose Sorbonne lectures series *La pensée philosophique de Nietzsche des années 1885–1888* was published in 1959, the same year as *Nietzsche devant ses contemporains*, edited by Genevieve Bianquis, the most outstanding Nietzsche translator and interpreter of the pre-war generation. Deleuze himself credits Pierre Klossowski with having rekindled interest in Nietzsche through two important essays, though it would be difficult to overestimate Deleuze's own definition of the new Nietzsche. (Large, 1993: x)

Deleuze's *Nietzsche et la Philosophie* was originally published in 1962. It represents one of the inaugurating moments of French poststructuralism. It is an interpretation of Nietzsche that highlights the play of difference, using it as the central underpinning of a polemic attack on the Hegelian dialectic. Deleuze (1983: 194–95) writes in summary form:

Three ideas define the dialectic: the idea of a power of the negative as a theoretical principle manifested in opposition and contradiction; the idea that suffering and sadness have value, the valorisation of the "sad passions", as a

practical principle manifested in splitting and tearing apart; the idea of positivity as a theoretical principle and practical product of negation itself. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy, in its polemic sense, is the attack on these three ideas.

Deleuze's radical questioning of the dialectic, its negative power, and its purely reactive predisposition—the positive is achieved only through the double negation, “the negation of negation”—is contrasted with the purely positive power of affirmation inherent in “difference” as the basis of a radical thought and philosophy which is not Hegelian or Marxist. In a forceful passage Deleuze encapsulates his interpretation:

The Hegelian dialectic is indeed a reflection on difference, but it inverts its image. For the affirmation of difference as such it substitutes the negation of that which differs; for the affirmation of the self it substitutes the negation of the other, and for the affirmation of affirmation it substitutes the famous negation of negation. (Deleuze, 1983: 194–95)

Judith Butler (1987) provides a lucid explanation of contemporary French theory as a series of reflections on Hegel. She begins her final chapter with the following interpretation:

The twentieth-century history of Hegelianism in France can be understood in terms of two constitutive moments: (1) the specification of the subject in terms of finitude, corporeal boundaries, and temporality and (2) the ‘splitting’ (Lacan), ‘displacement’ (Derrida), and eventual death (Foucault, Deleuze) of the Hegelian subject. (p. 175)

Butler (1987:183) comments that for both Derrida and Foucault “the Hegelian theme of relational opposition is radically challenged through a formulation of difference as a primary and irrefutable linguistic/historical constant.” The projection and recovery of the subject in Hegelian terms, thus, for Derrida and Foucault sets conditions for an exercise in self-deception. Butler (1987) plots the growing instability of the subject in the work of Kojève, Hyppolite, and Sartre, and he summarizes the progression in French thought as a series of reflections on Hegel's “anthropocentrism.”

While the subject in Hegel is projected and then recovered, in Sartre it is projected endlessly without recovery, but nevertheless *knows itself* in its estrangement and so remains a unitary consciousness, reflexively self-identical. In the psycho-analytic structuralism of Lacan and in the Nietzschean writings of Deleuze and Foucault, the subject is once again understood as a projected unity, but this projection *disguises* and falsifies the multiplicitous dis-

unity constitutive of experience, whether conceived as libidinal forces, the will-to-power, or the strategies of power/discourse. (p. 185)

In his seminal essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History," Foucault (1998) begins with Hegelian themes to suggest a radical departure. He questions the unilinearity of an implicit and progressive rationality, and the way in which the dialectical explanation of historical experience assumes a single origin and cause. Narratives of historical experience which draw on the theoretical fiction of an immanent rationality disguise and attempt to rationalize an original multiplicity of events and forces which resist the demands of a unifying dialectic.

Historiographers have masked and rationalized this original and radical heteronomy of events and forces through the "imposition of orderly theoretical forms." Butler (1987: 180) suggests that Foucault's analysis of modernity "attempts to show how the terms of dialectical opposition do not resolve into more synthetic and inclusive terms but tend instead to splinter off into a multiplicity of terms which expose the dialectic itself as a limited methodological tool." While Foucault professes not to understand the problem behind poststructuralism, he along with Derrida (and others) teaches us that the values of the modern era were essentially logocentric and homocentric illusions. Foucault's examination of "the philosophy" of the subject—by which he means a *problématique* dominating the modern episteme that privileges the subject as the foundation of all knowledge and signification—bears centrally on discussions of modernity. His genealogical analysis of modern power operates on the basis of a radical de-centering that denies an epistemic or historical privilege to either the traditional Cartesian notion of a "centered" subjectivity or the humanist ideal of a rational, autonomous, and responsible self. Foucault's method allows us to see power very broadly in the development of a plurality of incommensurable discursive regimes, each with its multiplicity of "micropractices," which ultimately directs us to study the "politics of everyday life" and suspends the problematic of legitimacy understood in terms of the standard modern liberal normative framework with its talk of rights grounded as it is in the "nature of persons."

It is certainly true that Foucault (along with Deleuze and Derrida) rejects both the normalizing and the totalizing tendencies of the Hegelian dialectic and their anthropological expression in foundational assumptions of the human subject.³ Foucault tells us that he began to study Nietzsche (outside the academy) as early as 1953, and that Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille enabled him to free himself from the confines of a French university education. In philosophy, this was "a Hegelianism

deeply penetrated by phenomenology and existentialism, which hinged on the theme of the ‘unhappy consciousness’” (Foucault, 1991: 45). Nietzsche represented for Foucault an “invitation” to call into question the category of the subject.

Foucault’s words in the preface to the English edition of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: xi–xiv) convey very strongly Nietzsche’s ultimate effect on his own construction of politics.

Do not demand of politics that it restore the “rights” of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization. Do not become enamoured of power.

In the translator’s introduction to Deleuze’s *Foucault* (1988), Séan Hand (1988: x) records the ultimate impact of a Nietzschean antirationalism in the work of Deleuze and Foucault, on Kantian philosophy as the “liberation of pure difference.” This, he suggests, “leads to the abandonment of dialectics and a move to an affirmative thought of disjunction and multiplicity.” Hand (1988: x) is noting the emergence of a new form of post-Kantian philosophy where, as Foucault comments in regard to Deleuze’s work, “thought is again possible.” It is primarily a philosophy which represents “the abandonment of categories and the move to an acategorical thought.” By this Hand means that Foucault and Deleuze have moved beyond the *concept* to a philosophy of the pure event; “to an ontology of the present that works against the dialectic.” In these terms, theory is no longer a totalizing force. It is a *practice* which resists all unitary thought to celebrate multiple potentialities. As Foucault himself expresses it in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*:

Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia. Develop action, thought and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization . . . Prefer what is positive and multiple: difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. (cited in Hand, 1986: vii)

DELEUZE AND CRITICAL THEORY

It may be tempting to see philosophy as an agreeable commerce of the mind, which, with the concept, would have its own commodity, or rather its ex-

change value—which, from the point of point of a lively, disinterested sociability of Western democratic conversation, is able to generate a consensus of opinion and provide communication with an ethic, as art would provide it with an aesthetic. If this is what is called philosophy, it is understandable why marketing appropriates the concept and advertising puts itself forward as the conceiver par excellence, as the poet and thinker

—Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*

Philosophy is not contemplation, reflection, or communication but, rather, “the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts” (p. 2). Thus argue Deleuze and Guattari (1994), echoing Nietzsche. Yet concepts need *conceptual personae* that activate and help define them. *Friend* is the concept defining such personae revealing the Greek origin of philo-sophy—the friend of wisdom. Philosophy, for Deleuze and Guattari, is defined as “knowledge through pure concepts” (p. 7). Yet this should not be taken to imply an opposition between knowledge through concepts and knowledge through experience. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari argue,

you will know nothing through concepts unless you first created them—that is, constructed them in an intuition specific to them: a field, a plane, and a ground that must not be confused with them but that shelters their seeds and the personae who cultivate them. (p. 7)

And if philosophy as the creation of concepts requires “the plane of immanence” in which it can be born and the personae who activate and sign them—“Aristotle’s substance, Descartes’s cogito, Leibniz’s monad, Kant’s condition, Schelling’s power, Bergson’s duration” (p. 7)—it also must be understood as geophilosophy, in terms of its *territories*: “*The role of conceptual personae is to show thought’s territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations*” (p. 69).

Writing in the spirit of Marx and drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) advance a poststructuralist basis for a renewal of materialist thought, charting the emergence of a new form of sovereignty they call *Empire*.⁴ They narrate a history of the passage from imperialism to Empire. This is a passage from a modernity dominated by the sovereignty of nation-states, and the imperialisms of European powers, to a postmodernity characterized by a single, though decentered, new logic of global rule. Hardt and Negri write: “Our basic hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire” (p. xii).

They use *Empire* not as a metaphor but as a concept that calls for a theoretical approach:

The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively compasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilized" world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity . . . Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside history. (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xiv–xv)

They suggest that the passage to Empire, with its processes of globalization, offers "new possibilities to the forces of liberation." Our political future will be determined by our capacity "not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends" (p. xv).

THE SCOPE OF CRITICAL THEORY

In this volume we explore the possibility and usefulness of enlarging the conventional use of the term "critical theory." We encompass what we consider to be work that is broadly critical in both a reflective and a reflexive manner belonging to the traditional of Western thought starting with Descartes and Kant—rather than confining our scope to thinkers who can demonstrate some historical or conceptual link to the founders of the Frankfurt school. By "critical" we certainly do not mean only those thinkers who begin with Hegel or Marx—although most of those discussed here acknowledge some connection to these philosophers, whether by way of acceptance or departure.

What is distinctive about critical philosophy is that it is largely based on what has come to be known as the "reflexive turn." In other words, prior to the acquisition of knowledge we must first inquire into and es-

tablish what may or may not count as knowledge. Based on the reflexive turn, critical philosophy offers a distinctive answer to the problem of rationality. It maintains that only through an inquiry into the nature and scope of human knowledge will we be able to determine what counts as knowledge. Implicit in this reflexive method is the assumption that such critical philosophy is both autonomous and neutral. This is to assume that the metalevel inquiry is above and beyond the normal structures that apply to human understanding and reason. Critical reason has been thought somehow to be exempt from the limitations on the legitimate use of reason it has made known.

Common to both Kant and Locke was the attempt to resolve certain philosophical questions that occasioned disagreement at the first-order level by inquiring at the second-order level into the nature and scope of our intellectual apparatus to deal with such logical problems. Such second-order inquiries led them to emphasize the limitations in the scope and nature of human reason in pursuit of these questions, but it was not thought that such limitations applied in any way to our ability to carry out the critical reflection or inquiry in the first place. Rather, it was assumed that whatever limitations operated at the first-order somehow evaporated, or did not exist, when it came to the second-order analysis. It was assumed that somehow this second-order "removal" from first-order questions ensured a privileged access to, and guaranteed a neutral standpoint for investigating those issues that precipitated initial disagreement among philosophers.

Critical inquiry is concerned with determining the nature and scope of our understanding in order to discover in what areas we can hope to attain knowledge, and in what areas we must be content with belief. It is seen as a necessary preliminary to answering substantive questions. Although it provides the means by which to differentiate the limits of knowledge there is no suggestion that those same limits will in any way impede the course of critical inquiry. Kant is motivated by similar concerns to Locke, and he adopts the same reflexive strategy. *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1929) can be read as a critical study of philosophical method in the sense that it is based on the assumption that before we can employ reason in the solution of any philosophical problem it is necessary first to examine its credentials. In the various *Prefaces* and the *Introduction* Kant castigates the dogmatism of traditional metaphysicians who use the faculty reason to come to general conclusions about God, freedom, and immortality "without any previous examination of the parity or incapacity of reason for so great an undertaking" (A3/B7, p. 46).

Now it does seem natural that, as soon as we have left the ground of experience, we should, through careful enquiries, assure ourselves as to the

foundations of any building we propose to erect, not making use of any knowledge that we possess without first determining whence it has come, and not trusting to principles without knowing their origin. It is natural, that is to say, that the question should first be considered, how the understanding can arrive at all this knowledge *a priori*, and what extent, validity, and worth it may have. (A3/B7, 46)

Later Kant tells us “we can regard a science of the mere examination of pure reason, of its sources and limits, as the *propaedeutic* to the system of pure reason.” As such it could properly be called a critique, and its utility lay in clarifying our reason—in keeping it “free from errors.” In other words, Kant believes that prior to examining first-order philosophical questions we must first answer a host of questions concerning philosophical method and, specifically, those that will determine for us what counts as genuine knowledge and what does not. Only by answering these crucial preliminary methodological questions are we entitled to believe that we have avoided the risk of error and, accordingly, avoided producing a philosophical view that is empty or nonsensical. But nowhere in the *Critique* does Kant address the question of how such critical inquiry *itself* is possible. A critical standpoint is established through the reflexive turn and is considered to be neutral, autonomous, and capable of attaining certainty. There is no suggestion that such a standpoint is, or should be, self-reflexive. Only those standpoints that are self-reflexively consistent—that meet the same standards, or tests for rationality laid down in the account—escape the dilemma facing traditional epistemological programs, and the skeptical challenge based on it. They can then be seen to be genuinely critical.

In its original sense “critical,” as it occurs in “critical theory,” was used to refer to social theory that was genuinely self-reflexive: that is, theory that could account for their own conditions of possibility and for their potentially transformative effects. The other features of critical theory have been seen to include its explanatory, normative, and practical dimensions: it must provide empirical and testable accounts of social conditions (focusing on the causes of oppression); it must aim toward change for the better, an alleviation of the human condition or “emancipation”; and it must do so by providing a better self-understanding of the social agents who aim at transformation. Certainly, critical theory does not remain simply at the level of description. Since its adoption by Horkheimer, as a revision of Marx, it has gained a wider acceptance as a term for describing *any* theoretical approach that is critical in this sense. These include feminism, psychoanalytic thought, a large body of cultural theory, the

various forms of structuralism and poststructuralism, "French theory," and postcolonial studies. We have used the term in this wider sense in relation to the chapters that follow.

The contributions to this collection fall into three groups. One group of chapters addresses a number of historically important philosophers whose work prefigures many of the major themes of contemporary philosophy and critical theory. These themes include the critique of modernity, the significance of technology, humanism and the problem of relativism, critical theory of self, and the ethics of the Other. Chapters falling within this group address Nietzsche (Michael Peters); Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Foucault (James D. Marshall); Heidegger (Iain Thomson); and Levinas (Denise Egéa-Kuehne).

A second group of chapters profiles and discusses the work of a range of preeminent poststructuralist thinkers. These chapters address Foucault (Mark Olssen), Deleuze (John R. Morss), Derrida (Gert J. J. Biesta), Irigaray (Pheng Cheah), Lyotard (Peter Pericles Trifonas), and Guattari (Peters).

Finally, the book also includes an eclectic set of chapters on Bourdieu (Roy Nash), Žižek (Peter McLaren), cyberfeminism (Rosi Braidotti), Giddens (David Scott), and Said (Bill Ashcroft).

NOTES

1. For a personal and, at times, bitter, account of the reception of French theory in America see Lotringer (2001), who as general editor of *Semiotext(e)* was responsible for introducing many French thinkers to an American audience for the first time. See also in the same collection essays by Derrida, Kristeva, Gaillard, Baudrillard, Genette, Roudinesco, and Deleuze.

2. This section draws on material from Peters (1996), especially chapter 1.

3. The attempt to escape Hegel is also clearly evident in the work of Jean-François Lyotard. In a relatively early essay, "Adorno as the Devil," Lyotard (1974) argues that negative dialectics suffers from a fatal weakness in that it is forced through negation to take on its adversary's position. Lyotard simply does not believe that a political, philosophical, or artistic position is abandoned because it is "sublated": it is not true, according to Lyotard, that the experience of a position means its inevitable exhaustion and necessary development into another position where it is both conserved and suppressed.

4. As they indicate in a footnote "Two interdisciplinary texts serve as models for us throughout the writing of this book: Marx's *Capital* and Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*" (fn. 4, p. 415). See also, Peters (2001), especially chapter 5 "Deleuze's 'Societies of Control': From Disciplinary Pedagogy to Perpetual Training in the Knowledge Economy"; and Holland (1997).

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. 1973. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton. New York: Seabury Press.
- Althusser, L. 1969. *For Marx*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Althusser, L., and E. Balibar. 1970. *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books.
- Bataille, G. 1992. *On Nietzsche*, trans. B. Boone and introduction by Sylvère Lotringer. London: Athlone Press.
- Breton, A. 1978. *What Is Surrealism?* edited and introduction by F. Rosemont. New York: Monad Press.
- Butler, J. 1987. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Carroll, D. 1984. "Rephrasing the Political with Kant and Lyotard: From Aesthetic to Political Judgements." *Diacritics* 14 (Fall): 74–89.
- Deleuze, G. 1983. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. H. Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1988. *Foucault*. London: Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. 1994. *What Is Philosophy?* trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson. London: Verso.
- . 1984. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane. London: Athlone Press.
- Derrida, J. 1978. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." In *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 278–94.
- . 1981. *Positions*, trans. and annotated A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1982. "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology." In *Marins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dosse, F. 1997. *History of Structuralism*. Volume 1: *The Rising Sign, 1945–1966*. Volume 2: *The Sign Sets, 1967–Present*, trans D. Glassman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. 1971. "Orders of Discourse," trans. R. Swyer, *Social Science Information*, 101: 1–30. Repr. in M. Shapiro (ed.) (1984), *Language and Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 108–38.
- . 1991. *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadari*, trans. R. Goldstein and J. Cascaito. New York: Semiotext(e).
- . 1998. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In Michel Foucault, vol. 2 *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, J. D. Faubion (ed.), trans. R. Hurley and others. New York: The New Press, 369–92.
- Hand, S. 1988. "Translator's Introduction." In G. Deleuze, *Foucault*. London: Athlone Press.
- Hardt, M., and A. Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- Heidegger, M. 1996. "Letter on Humanism." In *Basic Writings: From 'Being and Time' (1927) to 'The Task of Thinking' (1964)*, edited with general introduction by D. F. Krell. London: Routledge.
- Holland, E. 1997. "Marx and Poststructuralist Philosophies of Difference." In I. Buchanan (ed.), *A Deleuzian Century? Special Issue of The South Atlantic Quarterly* 96 (3).
- Kant, I. 1929. *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by N. K. Smith. London: MacMillan Press.
- Kristeva, J. 2001. "Europhilia, Europhobia." In S. Lotringer and S. Cohen (eds.), *French Theory in America*. New York: Routledge, 33–46.
- Large, D. 1993. "Translator's Introduction." In S. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*. London: Athlone Press, vii–xl.
- Lotringer, S. 2001. "Doing Theory." In S. Lotringer and S. Cohen (eds.), *French Theory in America*. New York: Routledge, 125–62.
- Lotringer, S., and S. Cohen, eds. 2001. *French Theory in America*. New York: Routledge.
- Liotard, J.-F. 1974. "Adorno as the Devil." *Telos* 19 (Spring): 128–37.
- Peters, M. 2001. *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalism: Between Theory and Politics*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Poster, M. 1975. *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Sartre, J-P. 1966. *Being and Nothingness*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.
- . 1973. *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. and introduction P. Mairet. London: Methuen.
- Spivak, G. C. 1976. "Translator's Preface." In J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, ix–lxxxvii.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Nietzsche, Nihilism, and the Critique of Modernity

Michael Peters

This chapter begins to examine Nietzsche's place in the Western philosophy curriculum and asks why Nietzsche was all but ignored by English-speaking philosophers until very recently. The question is pursued in relation to the so-called analytic/Continental divide. Nietzsche stands at the very heart of the separation of the two strands of contemporary philosophy and he serves to emphasize centrality of tradition and history for Continental philosophy. Through his concept of nihilism, Nietzsche continues the Kantian critique of metaphysics out of which Continental philosophy emerges, and it is this critique that points to Nietzsche's critique of Enlightenment humanism, modernity, and liberalism. The chapter accordingly focuses upon Nietzsche's critique of modernity as it is this thematic that still decisively separates the problematic of Continental philosophy from that of analytic philosophy and determines the style and content of a post-Nietzschean philosophy. The final section traces the post-Nietzschean discourse concerning the critique of modernity in the writings of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault.

NIETZSCHE AND THE ANALYTIC/CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

Simon Critchley (1997: 347) has considered stereotypical representations of the analytic-Continental divide and attempted to redraw the distinction by focusing upon a number of themes:

the centrality of tradition and history for Continental philosophy and the way it affects philosophical practices of argumentation and interpretation;

- the way in which the concept of Continental philosophy emerges out of the German idealist reception of the Kantian critique of metaphysics and the significant way this is continued in Nietzsche with his concept of nihilism;
- the centrality of the concepts of critique, emancipation, and praxis of the Continental tradition;
- the importance of the theme of crisis that runs through the Continental tradition;
- an explanation and justification of the pervasive antisecularism of the Continental tradition.

He concludes the abstract of his argument by “criticizing the professionalization of philosophy that has produced the analytic-Continental divide, insofar as this divide disguises a deeper possible debate about the identity of philosophy itself outside its professional confines” (p. 348).

For Critchley (1997) Nietzsche stands at the crossroads that defines the difference between analytic and Continental philosophy. Critchley’s (1997: 356) thesis at this point is worthy of brief summary. He suggests: “it is arguable that much of the difference between analytic and Continental philosophy simply turns on *how* one reads Kant and *how much* Kant one reads,” that is, whether one is solely concerned with the epistemological issues of the First Critique, or whether one is prepared to entertain the systematic ambitions, in addition, of the Third Critique, and consider worthy of study Kant’s attempt to bridge Understanding and Reason through a critique of Judgment—the reconciliation of freedom and necessity. For Critchley, Nietzsche provides the critical response through his concept of nihilism, which is decisive for a whole generation of critical thinkers from Heidegger and Adorno to Lacan, Derrida and Foucault, namely, that

the recognition of the subject’s freedom goes hand in hand with the collapse of moral certainty in the world, that the highest values have devalued themselves. Nihilism is the breakdown of the order of meaning, where all that was posited as a transcendent source of value in pre-Kantian metaphysics becomes null and void, where there are no cognitive skyhooks upon which to hang a meaning for life. All transcendent claims for a meaning to life have been reduced to mere values—in Kant the reduction of God and the immortality of the soul to the status of postulates of pure practical reason—and those values have become, for Nietzsche . . . standing in need of “transvaluation” or “revaluation.” (Critchley 1997: 357)

Critchley argues that it is the Christian *reactive* response to our human, all-too-human origin of our values in declaring existence or life meaning-

less that is the real source of nihilism. That is, once the transcendental guarantees of Christian morality and grand expectations based upon them have collapsed or been exposed for what they really are an active nihilism ensues. And yet the same genealogical critique, the loss of faith in the categories of reason, can also inspire a revolutionary demand for things to be different. Critchley retells the story of Continental philosophy by narratively crafting the importance of central notions of *practice*, *critique* of the present, the production of *crisis* (especially in relation to modernity), and *antis scientism* (as a modernist metanarrative) in defining a tradition that recognizes the essential historicity of philosophy and, therefore, also the radical finitude of the human subject and the contingent character of human experience.

Critchley redescription constitutes an important direction in post-Nietzschean philosophy: a philosophy based upon central notions of practice, critique, and an understanding of nihilism. Post-Nietzschean philosophy not only provides a critique of the rational, autonomous subject but also directs our attention to sources of normativity that are both historical and embedded in cultures. It provides, in other words, a path for moral reconstruction after the so-called death of God—a way forward and a positive response to the question of nihilism that demands the revaluation of values. Most important, post-Nietzschean philosophy belongs to the counter-Enlightenment tradition of thought that asserts the historicity of human reason and experience on the basis of a radical questioning of the transcendental guarantee and moral authority of God, and all possible substitutes for God—Reason, Man, Science. On that basis it is also fiercely antiscientist. Let us examine the notion of the philosopher further, in Nietzschean terms.

The philosopher, in Nietzschean terms, is the one who provides an “unprecedented *knowledge of the preconditions of culture* as a scientific standard for ecumenical goals” (*HATH*: 25). Acting as a cultural physician, the philosopher is not able to create culture, but acts as a “solvent” or a “destroyer.” Nietzsche was concerned to develop a knowledge of the conditions for the renewal of culture in the age of science and he wished to define the cultural significance of the philosopher. Above all, he wanted to signal the importance of the philosopher as a physician of culture, as one who could *prepare* the ground of culture, and in the figure of the future philosopher-artist, *create* new values. The philosopher of the future is “the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the overall development of man—this philosopher will make use of religions for his project of cultivation and education just as he will make use of whatever political and economic states

are at hand" (BGE, #61). Nietzsche talks of "genuine philosophers" in contrast to "philosophical laborers": "*Genuine philosophers, however, are commanders and legislators: they say, 'thus it shall be!'* . . . Their 'knowing' is *creating*, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is—*will to power*" (BGE, #211).

His "philosophy of the future" has essentially a de(con)structive task: to destroy dogmatism in all its forms—in religion and in science—and what he calls "blind secularism." In this role philosophy serves as the tribunal of education in an age without culture: schools must follow philosophy in destroying secularization and subduing the barbarizing effects of the knowledge drive. As part of secularization and with the promotion of a scientific worldview education had lost its ability to confer unifying values. Philosophy, in terms of its own self-critique, must overturn naive realism of science to undermine it from within, by mastering the knowledge drive. Yet it must also move beyond the purely negative moment of skepticism, if philosophy was to become an affirmative cultural force and philosophers were to become cultural legislators in the form of the philosopher-artist. Philosophy can pave the way or clear the ground for culture by showing the *anthropomorphic* character of all knowledge but also by recognizing the power and necessity of illusion.

NIETZSCHE AND THE CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY

A post-Nietzschean philosophy draws its intellectual sustenance from Nietzsche's critique of modernity and Enlightenment values, especially liberalism (its construction of democracy) and secular humanism. The method, in part, is genealogical in the sense that it follows Nietzsche's exposure of the perspective from which Enlightenment valuations are made by analyzing the constitution of moral systems. By responding with a cultural perspectivism—implying a pluralism of moral systems—Nietzsche is simultaneously deconstructing universalist pretensions claimed by adherents of one system or another, and indicating that 'truth' or 'right' is a discursive result of a system that produces 'right' or 'wrong,' 'true' or 'false' statements. He writes:

For one may doubt, first, whether there are any opposites at all, and, secondly whether these popular valuations and opposite values on which the metaphysicians put their seal, are not perhaps merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives, perhaps even from some nook, perhaps from below, frog perspectives, as it were, to borrow an expression painters use. (BGE, #2, 10)

In *Ecce Homo* (1992, orig. 1888), having told the story of Zarathustra in which he emphasizes the idea of eternal recurrence as the “highest formula of affirmation that can be attained” (p. 69), Nietzsche turns his attention to *Beyond Good and Evil*, which he says belongs to the “No-saying and No-doing part: the revaluation of existing values themselves”—“the work of destruction” (p. 82). He proceeds to comment:

This book (1886) [*Beyond Good and Evil*] is in all essentials a *critique of modernity*, the modern sciences, the modern arts, not even excluding modern politics, together with signposts to an antithetical type who is as little modern as possible, a noble, an affirmative type. In the latter sense the book is a *school for gentlemen*, that concept taken more spiritually and radically than it has ever been taken. (emphasis in the original, *EC*: 82)

In the *Genealogy of Morals* and *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche continues the work of critique, first, through exposing the psychology of Christianity, based upon the spirit of *ressentiment* in a preliminary study for the revaluation of all values, and, second, through an analysis of ‘modern ideas’—as he says, “the old truth is coming to an end” (p. 86). In the essay “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” (*Twilight of the Idols*) he writes a section entitled “*Criticism of Modernity*” beginning:

Our institutions are no longer fit for anything: everyone is unanimous about that. But the fault lies not with them but in *us*. Having lost all instincts out of which institutions grow, we are losing the institutions themselves, because *we* are no longer fit for them. . . . For institutions to exist there must exist the kind of will, instinct, imperative which is anti-liberal to the point of malice: the will to tradition, to authority, to centuries-long responsibility, to *solidarity* between succeeding generations backwards and forwards in *infinitum* . . . The entire West has lost those instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which the future grows: perhaps nothing goes so much against the grain of its “modern” spirit as this. One lives for today, one lives very fast—one lives very irresponsibly: it is precisely this which one calls “freedom.” (*TI*: 93–94)

The critique of modernity, for Nietzsche, then, involves a critique of ‘modern’ ideas and institutions: democracy, liberalism, humanism, ‘freedom,’ truth, equality, modern marriage, modern education and science. The critique of modernity above all involves crucially the critique of modern philosophy based on these concepts and its respect for their founding institutions. In opposition to modern philosophy Nietzsche advocates an overcoming of the concepts of the ‘will’ and the ‘soul’, and, ultimately, of the morality that presupposes such notions.

Nietzsche, in passages like the one above in *Twilight of the Idols*, and in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Will to Power*, identifies the break with tradition as the defining feature of modernity, and he underscores its accompanying recognition that the sources of its values can no longer be based upon appeals to the authority of the past. It is a situation which Nietzsche understands brings about a kind of value reversal to traditionalism: traditionalism is understood in terms of the veneration of things past, crudely speaking, “the older the better,” because the further back in time we go the closer we get to mystical first causes or origins and the closer we get to the sacred books of revelation in the religious tradition. By contrast, modernity understood as a break with the past—an aesthetic, moral, political, and epistemological break—encourages a self-consciousness of the present and an orientation to the future based on notions of change, progress, experiment, innovation, and newness. Most important, modernity involves that myth it constructs about itself that it is able to create its own values and normative orientations somehow out of its own historical force, movement, and trajectory. Nietzsche rejects any simple-minded opposition and refuses to embrace one option or the other unreservedly; rather, we might see him contemplating how and why “we moderns” want to draw up the historical stakes in terms of such an exhaustive dichotomy.

Alexander Nehamas (1966) first depicts the Nietzschean diagnosis of modernity as one that involves a kind of impasse that can be called *nihilism* and then suggests that nihilism, in Nietzsche’s hands, is brought about by a threefold realization. First, relinquishing the modernist belief in progressive historical change and the corresponding view that there is meaning to be found in events—“becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*.” Second, we come to understand that there is no coherent pattern for world history and no universal method or procedure for interpreting it. Third, we realize that the seemingly stable world of being to which we appeal in order to evaluate and judge the world of becoming is itself no more than a psychological concept constructed from our needs. Nehamas (1996: 228) cites Nietzsche’s remark in *The Will to Power* (12) “the categories ‘aim,’ ‘unity,’ ‘being,’ which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless*.”

It is clear that Nietzsche’s attitude to modernity is complex and cannot be identified with easy assessments as the have been provided by a variety of contemporary philosophers who focus upon one central feature of Nietzsche’s critique: rationality or truth or irony or relativism. Nehamas provides an interpretation of Nietzsche which disputes the readings offered by Heidegger, Habermas, Rorty, and MacIntyre. In the eyes of Nehamas, Nietzsche is not the “last metaphysician” or the irrationalist and nostalgic roman-

tic, or the playful ironist convinced of the contingency of our subjectivity and institutions, or, finally, a radical relativist. According to Nehamas's interpretation, Nietzsche is to be characterized as a postmodernist (see also Shapiro, 1991). By this he means that for Nietzsche modernity does designate a single thing, perhaps, not even a distinct cultural-historical period and certainly not something that "we moderns" can somehow appreciate, justify, or criticize *as a whole*. Yet this does not mean that specific institutions and values cannot be criticized or defended. Nietzsche entertains a complex and divided view of tradition as that which constitutes not only the past but also the present—a source of cultural continuity often underestimated by a reading of modernity characterized as essentially a break with and overcoming of tradition on the basis of radical progress in scientific understanding and socioeconomic change. Nietzsche's view, Nehamas argues, is more typical of what we now understand as modernism.

In Modernism we find both the love of innovation and the rejection of the authority of tradition, but also, and at the same time, a questioning of the value of progress, a critique of rationality, a sense that premodern civilization involved a wholeness and unity that have been irreparably fragmented (Nehamas, 1996: 224).

In politics as in other areas of philosophy Nietzsche, once considered marginal, has now become part of the canon and this change of status is, in part, as Mark Warren (1998: 90) confirms "a result of what it means to do political theory." His summary of Nietzsche's relevance to contemporary political theory is worth repeating here in lengthy form as it prefigures Nietzsche as a thinker who, on the basis of his critique of modernity, anticipates many contemporary theoretical moves.

Where . . . political theory is driven by a quest for epistemological certainty . . . Nietzsche questions not just whether epistemological certainty is possible, but whether it ought to be a goal of thinking at all. Where political theorists are captivated by philosophical approaches to life . . . Nietzsche injects aesthetic, psychological and pragmatic perspectives . . . Where political theory seeks universal principles or unitary designs, Nietzsche draws our attention to ways such principles and designs generate costly dismissals of the world with its plural possibilities . . . When political theorists understand power as external forms of coercion that are polar opposites of thought, reason, and discussion, Nietzsche reminds us that ideas and judgments, cultures and interpretations, have effects as well, that there is an important (and relevant) sense in which they, too, are power. Where political theorists take capacities for political judgment, agency, and responsibility for granted, Nietzsche asks how such capacities could come into existence and what makes

such individuals possible. And where political theorists become enamoured of language as the medium of public life, Nietzsche is there to show how language, however necessary, can also constrain and flatten the uniqueness, the extraordinariness, the particularity of individual experiences. (Warren, 1998: 91–92)

It is, perhaps, no wonder that Jürgen Habermas should identify Nietzsche's thinking as both the decisive point of entry into discussions of postmodernity and into the task of identifying what is necessary to reconstruct the philosophical discourse of modernity in order to preserve its emancipatory impulse. On Habermas's account Nietzsche's critique of modernity engulfs the very norms of autonomy and rationality that constitutively define political modernity and thereby undermines the very possibility of critique. Habermas's view has been very influential in shaping the debate during the 1980s and 1990s over the nature, scope, and conditions of possibility of postmodernity and he characterizes contemporary French philosophy, after Nietzsche, in a fierce polemic as an antimodern irrationalism instituting a total break with Enlightenment values. Both Habermas's interpretation of Nietzsche and of Nietzschean-inspired French philosophy are palpably false. Neither Nietzsche nor those contemporary French philosophers inspired by him seek a total break with the Enlightenment though this does not mean that they do not reject certain features of modernity or attempt to revalorize tradition, or, ultimately, inquire into the cultural conditions necessary for the creation of new values. On Warren's analysis we might picture Habermas as someone looking for a political solution to nihilism where there isn't one to be found; ultimately, in Nietzsche's view there are only cultural solutions to nihilism, to which politics should be subordinated (Warren, 1998: 93).

HABERMAS, NIETZSCHE, AND THE QUESTION OF POSTMODERNITY

In an early lecture—"Modernity versus Postmodernity"—delivered in 1980 as an acceptance speech for the Adorno Prize bestowed upon him by the city of Frankfurt, Jürgen Habermas (1981) casts himself as defender of what he calls "the project of modernity," which he traces back to Kant and Weber, against the "antimodern sentiments" of a variety of self-styled postmodernist thinkers. Habermas (1981) attributes the term "postmodernity" to the French current of thought, the tradition, as he says "running from Bataille to Derrida by way of Foucault" and he compares the critique of reason of these French philosophers to the "Young Con-

servatives" of the Weimar Republic, who "recapitulate the basic experience of aesthetic modernity" (Habermas, 1981: 13).

Habermas's typology distinguishes the "antimodernism" of the "Young Conservatives" from the "premodernism" of the "old conservatives" and from the "postmodernism" of the "neoconservatives" while hinting at a new ideological shift which focuses on an alliance of the postmodernists with premodernists. By contrast, Habermas (1981: 12) situates himself (and Adorno) in a relation to the "project of modernity" to learn "from the mistakes of these extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity."

The issue between Habermas and the poststructuralists, as Habermas sees it at least, concerns their respective evaluations of modernity. Habermas, locating himself in the tradition of Marxism social criticism reflected in the work of the Frankfurt school, argues that we should attempt to preserve the "emancipatory impulse" behind the Enlightenment which "aims at a differentiated relinking of modern culture with an everyday praxis" (Habermas, 1981: 21). In contrast, he sites so-called poststructuralist thinkers in a tradition of a line of thinkers intellectually indebted to Nietzsche and Heidegger, who allegedly wish for a total break with the Enlightenment by criticizing the very constitutive norms of modernity that together make critique possible.

Habermas sees his work as a continuation of a philosophy of history which arose in the eighteenth century with the work of Kant, Herder, Condorcet, and Hegel. French poststructuralism involves a rejection of the narrative of world history conceived of as the story of a single logical-temporal movement that is able to embrace and contain, without residue, all individual histories and cultural differences. This totalizing world narrative is seen by poststructuralist thinkers as inherently ideological, serving only to legitimate certain views and values at the expense of others. From the vantage point of poststructuralist thought this Hegelian philosophy of history, which has since the Enlightenment presented itself as the ultimate horizon of all interpretations, appears simply as *one* way of making sense of world events among others. It functions as myth to describe the progress of a universal subject and protects from criticism a specific set of cultural values that are deeply embedded in Western cultural modernity. From the viewpoint of poststructuralists the rejection of the grand narrative is by no means a flight from understanding world history but rather an important first step toward comprehending the historicity of our values and institutions. Lyotard, for instance, defines 'postmodern,' elliptically, as "incredulity toward metanarratives" by which he means to point to "the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation"

to which corresponds "the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution" (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv).

Lyotard's (1984) work, historically, challenges the two grand Hegelian metanarratives—the emancipation of humanity and the speculative unity of knowledge—which underlie the philosophical tradition to which Habermas belongs. Lyotard's indirect assault is against the concept of 'totality'—he elsewhere, announces "a war against totality"—and the notion of autonomy as it underlies the sovereign subject. His line of argument, therefore, is an apparent confrontation with Habermas's notion of a rational society modeled on communicational processes where so-called validity claims immanent in ordinary conversation can be discursively redeemed at the level of discourse. In this realm and vision of a "transparent" communicational society moral and practical claims are said to be resolved rationally and consensually without distortion or coercion—claims are said to be resolved through only the force of pure argumentation itself. For Lyotard, this conception represents the latest, perhaps last, attempt at building a "totalizing" philosophy. Lyotard considers this "totalizing," emancipatory vision of a "transparent" communication society, which rests on a quasitranscendentalism and the ideal of consensus, as both "terroristic" and exclusory.

Habermas's (1981) original and uncompromising stance as the defender of the radical traditions of the Enlightenment and as a fierce antagonist of poststructuralism has softened considerably as he (Habermas, 1987a) has reevaluated his position. While he is more charitable to Foucault than he is to Derrida (he does not mention Lyotard), there is clearly less of a desire on Habermas's part to define or to treat them together as "Young Conservatives" and more of an effort to recognize the differences that characterize their work. Habermas (1987a) might even appear to be encouraged by aspects of Foucault's work, paying tribute to him especially for his genealogical research on the subject and his account of power. In more recent work still Habermas (1987) openly acknowledges how his position and that of the poststructuralists are not as antithetical as they have often been commonly conceived. Other commentators (e.g., Lash and Boyne, 1990; White, 1988), by contrast, have emphasized the kinds of affinity that exist between Habermas and the poststructuralists, commenting on the way they share certain characteristics, particularly as regards their objects of criticism and their respective visions of viable contemporary political forms.

Some five years after the Adorno lecture, Habermas again turns to address *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987a) in a book originally published in German under title *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (1985, Frankfurt: Verlag). Habermas (1987a: 74) does not

merely wish to defend "the project of modernity" by explicating the concept of the subject and subjectivity in accordance with the model of unconstrained consensus formation in a communication community, he also wants to tell a story about the history of modern philosophy which suggests that "the discourse of modernity took the wrong turn at that first crossroads before which the young Marx stood once again when he criticized Hegel."

To tell the story in this way enables him to *agree* with the poststructuralists that the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted, but against the poststructuralists he attempts to preserve the impulse of the project of modernity by developing what he refers to as the 'paradigm of mutual understanding'—the intersubjectivist paradigm of communicative action which Habermas first moots in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971) and brings to fruition in his monumental, two-volume work, *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987b). This paradigm, like the Nietzsche-inspired critique of Western logos, can similarly emphasize the embodiedness of reason in history and language against its universalist and ahistorical pretensions. Yet it can do so *without* the allegedly destructive consequences which accompany Derrida's critique, that is, without undermining the capacity of reason to be critical.

There is a softening of Habermas's original position toward the post-structuralist critique. Certainly, Habermas emphasizes some common ground and agreement when he suggests that the paradigm of the Cartesian-Kantian philosophy of consciousness is exhausted. He also distinguishes more carefully between the work of Derrida and Foucault, treating them quite differently. Both paths of postmodernity lead out of Nietzsche: one leads through Heidegger to Derrida, the other leads through Bataille to Foucault.

Nietzsche's work is the decisive point of entry into discussions of postmodernity and into reconstructing the philosophical discourse of modernity. Habermas (1987a: 97) writes:

Nietzsche's critique of modernity has been continued along both paths. The sceptical scholar who wants to unmask the perversion of the will to power, the revolt of reactionary forces, and the emergence of a subject-centered reason by using anthropological, psychological, and historical methods has successors in Bataille, Lacan and Foucault; the initiate-critic of metaphysics who pretends to a unique kind of knowledge and pursues the rise of the philosophy of the subject back to its pre-Socratic beginnings has successors in Heidegger and Derrida.

The Nietzschean inspired critique of the Western logos proceeds destructively and eventually collapses in upon itself: "It demonstrates that

the embodied, speaking and acting subject is not master in its own house" (Habermas 1987a: 310). Habermas's (1987a: 311) maintains his own "less dramatic" but "testable" critique of subject-centered reason, proceeds without being prone to the same destructive consequences because it conceives of intersubjective understanding as the telos inscribed into communication in ordinary language.

Poststructuralists have difficulty in accepting Habermas's argument, based on a phenomenological notion of the lifeworld, that particular forms of life, which are heterogeneous and emerge in the plural, are connected in the sense that they exhibit universal structures common to lifeworlds in general. These universal structures, we are told, "are only stamped on particular life forms through the medium of action oriented to mutual understanding by which they have to be reproduced." The normative content of modernity, therefore, is to be justified from the rational potential inherent in everyday communicative practice.

In sum, then, Habermas returns to the counterdiscourse of modernity to examine the major crossroads. At the first crossroads, he returns to Hegel to reconsider the notion of ethical life, equipped with the paradigm of mutual understanding, and "to argue that the other of reason invoked by the post-Nietzscheans is not adequately rendered in their 'model of exclusion'" (Thomas McCarthy, 1987: xvi). At the next major crossroad he follows Marx's injunction for philosophy to be both practical and anchored in practice. Yet with the advances of the linguistic turn in philosophy this praxis is to be conceived not in terms of labor but rather in terms of communicative action, where universal validity claims transcend the local context to make possible the learnings that proceed from rational argumentation.

Yet Habermas's commitment to a universalistic perspective on rationality and ethics has become increasingly contestable as the decades of the 1980s and 1990s proceeded. Habermas, accordingly, has modified his position from assertions about what is implicit in speech actions of *all* actions to assertions about the intuition of competent members of *modern* societies. For Habermas, the displacement of humanism is the displacement of the individual knowing subject—the cogito—as the universal source of all authority, morality, and power. It is, however, not a complete rejection of humanism per se or the Enlightenment impulse, but rather an attempt to understand the subject in the wider linguistic, social, and cultural networks of intersubjectivity.

To seek to define the internal teleology of time and the direction in which the history of humanity is moving, Foucault (1984) argues, is essentially a *modern* preoccupation—"modern" in the Kantian sense. The

Kantian sense of “modern,” Foucault tells us, is derived from the question, *Was ist Aufklärung?* which is posed in terms of the difference “today” introduces with respect to “yesterday.” Foucault (1984: 21) asks: “What, then, is the event that is called the *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today?” We are informed that Kant defines Enlightenment in a negative way as the process that releases us from the status of immaturity. Enlightenment, then, is the moment we come of age in the use of reason, when there is no longer the need to subject ourselves to forms of traditional authority. The notion of critique is also required at exactly this point, for its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped. This reading of Kant’s text allows Foucault to characterize modernity as an attitude rather than an epoch (or a style) and to assert that the thread connecting us to the Enlightenment is not “faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era” (Foucault 1984: 42).

NOTE

A version of this chapter was presented at the 7th Biennial Conference, International Network of Philosophers of Education (INPE), *Philosophy of Education in the New Millenium*, the University of Sydney, Australia, Friday 18–Monday 21 August 2000. A revised version appears in Peters et al (2001).

REFERENCES

Nietzsche’s Works Cited

I have used the following abbreviations in the text for Nietzsche’s works:

BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
GM	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
HATH	<i>Human, All-Too-Human</i>
UM	<i>Untimely Meditations</i>
WP	<i>Will to Power</i>
Z	<i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i>

Beyond Good and Evil. Trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966.
Ecce Homo. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

- Michael Peters, James Marshall, and Paul Smeyers, eds. 2001. *Nietzsche's Legacy for Education: Past and Present Values*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. W. R. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Press, 1968. This volume also contains *Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann.
- Human, All-Too-Human*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. This volume also contains *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, and *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale.
- The Will to Power*. Trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Press, 1968.
- Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. W. Kaufmann. In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1954.
- Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. W. Kaufmann. In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1954.

Other References

- Critchley, Simon. 1997. "What Is Continental Philosophy?" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5 (3): 347–65.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984. "What Is Enlightenment?" In P. Rabinow, ed., *Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon.
- Frazer, Nancy. 1981. "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." *Praxis International* 1: 272–87.
- . 1983. "Foucault's Body-Language: A Post-Humanist Political Rhetoric?" *Salmagundi* 61: 55–70.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1981. "Modernity versus Postmodernity." *New German Critique* 22: 3–22.
- . 1984. *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1987a. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- . 1987b. *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, *System and Lifeworld: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 1990. "Remarks on the Discussion." *Theory, Culture and Society* 7: 127–32.
- Lash, Scott, with Roy Boyne. 1990. "Communicative Rationality and Desire." In S. Lash, ed., *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Liotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McCarthy, Thomas. 1987. "Introduction." In Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, vii–xvii.
- Nehamas, A. 1985. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1996. "Nietzsche, Modernity Aestheticism." In B. Magnus and K. Higgins, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 223–51.

- Peters, Michael, and James Marshall. 1999. "Nietzsche and Wittgenstein: Philosophers of the Future." In M. Peters and J. Marshall, *Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Postmodernism, Pedagogy*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 33–51.
- Schroeder, William. 1992. "Nietzschean Philosophers." *International Studies in Philosophy*, 24 (2): 112–13.
- Shapiro, Gary. 1991. "Nietzsche and the Future of the University." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 1: 15–28.
- Warren, Mark. 1998. "Political Readings of Nietzsche." *Political Theory* 26 (1): 90–111.
- Wellbery, David. 1985. "Postmodernism in Europe: On Recent German Writing." In S. Trachtenberg, ed. *The Postmodern Moment*. London: Greenwood Press, 229–50.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

A Critical Theory of the Self: Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Foucault

James D. Marshall

All philosophers have the common failing of starting out from man as he is now and thinking they can reach their goal through an analysis of him. They involuntarily think of 'man' as an aeterna veritas, as something that remains constant in the midst of all flux, as a sure measure of things. Everything that the philosopher has declared about man is, however, at bottom no more than a testimony as to the man of a very limited period of time. Lack of historical sense is the family failing of all philosophers . . . what is needed from now on is historical philosophizing, and with it the virtue of modesty.

—Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*

Critical thinking is normally considered as a version of informal logic which “examines the nature and function of arguments in natural language, stressing the craft rather than the formal reasoning.”¹ While then there is room for assessing the context in which assertions are made and conclusions are drawn, including the intrusion of emotions and personal attitudes, conceived in this manner it may still rest as an essentially neutral enterprise, like formal logic. Critical thinking then would lack the force of *critical* to be found, for example, in the writings of the Frankfurt school. In this latter sense of “critical” we encounter not merely skills of informal logic but also a theory of how to think critically which, starting from particular moral, social, and political premises, is no longer neutral.

It is this latter sense of “critical” which I wish to address in this chapter. Much has been written in the philosophy of education about critical thinking and, indeed, critical theory (especially on Habermas) but I wish to extend the notion of a theory of critical thinking to include a critical

theory of the self. It would be a theory which adopted Nietzsche's injunction to abandon the search for "man" as an *aeterna veritas* and instead to see "man" in a historical sense as a result of historical philosophizing.

I will attempt this by starting with traditional views of the self, including Schopenhauer's and Wittgenstein's 'mysterious' self, arguing that Foucault's account of the self, influenced by Nietzsche, goes beyond traditional approaches to the self, especially dualistic positions. Foucault's *problematizing* notion of the self² denies that the self is a substance (*aeterna veritas*), and in going beyond binary oppositions, is a positive life affirming account of the possibilities for human beings. To that extent, I would claim, it is worthy of being seen as critical, and thereby as contributing to critical thinking.

CONCEPTIONS OF CRITICAL THEORY

Nietzsche provided a totalizing critique of the Enlightenment but his critique culminated not just in a fusion of validity and power but also with a replacement of the will to truth with the will to power. This is the path to be taken by Foucault though, unlike Nietzsche, he (arguably) does not advance a theory of power. This is the path that Habermas thought was wrong.³ Habermas criticizes Horkheimer and Adorno (and implicitly, Nietzsche and Foucault) for being "so unappreciative of the rational content of cultural modernity that all they perceive everywhere is a binding of reason and domination, of power and validity."⁴ This comment would apply also to Foucault.

Some versions of critical theory depend upon specifically Marxist concepts such as the mode of production and domination (capitalist or socialist), or some version of ideology, or of alienation. In the case of the former, as Foucault points out, there are more forms of domination than economic domination. Indeed he shows how the discourses associated with the human sciences have produced forms of domination which are not the outcomes of capitalism but were instead needed by capitalism in its rapid expansion in the nineteenth century. Here we have a fusion of reason and domination, but there is a way out from domination for Foucault, which rests upon the self and the self's exercise of freedom.⁵ This was to be achieved, Foucault argued, by a certain notion of a critical self, a self which engaged in an ongoing critique. First, what did Foucault himself mean by "critique"?

Foucault⁶ had addressed the question "What is critique?" at the Société Française de Philosophie on 27 May 1978.⁷ In typical fashion he dissoci-

ates himself on this question from his distinguished philosophical forbears who used the term "critique" in the titles of their major works. In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the term "critique" is used to uncover what is masked or hidden as general assumptions: in Kant's case the necessary apriori assumptions of pure reason; and in Marx's case such things as the historically related conditions of the mode of production under capitalism which determined human relationships and class divisions. Nor did Foucault employ the term "critique" in the manner of the German theorists in their notion of *critical theory*.

According to Miller,⁸ in summarizing Foucault's position in this paper and his response to philosophers in his audience, Foucault saw critique as an attitude, or as "a virtue." Hence his preliminary definition was "the art of not being governed" or, because this art had to arise in a specific context, "the art of not being governed in a certain way and at a certain price" (ibid.). Foucault considers the genealogy of this notion from the Reformation to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and how it raised anew the "problem of certainty in the face of authority." Foucault summarized this long development of critique as "the movement by which the subject is given the right to discover the truth" by exercising "an art of voluntary insubordination, of thoughtful disobedience."

We should note the emphasis placed by Foucault upon the self's refusal to be subjected. But, given that power can only be exercised upon a free agent, and not upon a slave in chains, and that for Foucault freedom must be continuously exercised if it is not to be lost, then the liberty of the subject is an important presupposition of the exercise of freedom.⁹ Thereby one can see why refusing to be subjected or subordinated must be associated with attaining and maintaining liberty. But this requires the self to be reflective upon itself and to be constantly vigilant against ever dangerous forms of subjugation or domination of the self. In adopting forms of thoughtful disobedience against perceived dangers of domination, the self itself must change. I am proposing that the self cannot be taken as a fixed and immutable given, as in many traditional accounts of the self. Before turning to this theory of the self we will look at more traditional accounts.

TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS OF THE SELF

Descartes to Hume

Descartes can be accused of initiating a "bump" in philosophical discussions of the self. His emphasis on cognition in the famous dictum, 'cogito,

ergo sum,' entails that in so far as I exist then my identity depends and consists in the fact that I am a thinking *substance* or *being* (i.e., *individuated* object), and that there is a fundamental dualism between mind and body. This leads to a number of difficulties and problems. First, we will look briefly at Locke's and Hume's reactions to this Cartesian position.

Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,¹⁰ discusses several notions of identity, beginning his discussion by categorizing four types of identity. These are: identity of matter; identity of organized biological matter such as vegetables; identity of animals; and personal identity. Locke is not merely showing that 'identity' has several meanings, but rather that attention must be paid to differences in our understanding of identity. Thus Locke treats personal identity as an individuated substance and believes that the criteria of identity lie in consciousness: "it being the same consciousness . . . personal identity depends on that only." Thus Locke concludes his discussion of personal identity by asserting that if I who was Socrates am now the present Mayor of Queenborough then that is so. Thus the self is identified with consciousness, and the identity of the self depends upon the same consciousness, that is, an identity statement asserting the same consciousness over a time interval.

Hume says that identity is a *relation* which a thing has to itself, thus commencing with the logically pure schema " $a = a$," as properly representing the philosophical relation of identity. But he does have doubts about this philosophical notion, saying: "We cannot in any propriety of speech, say, that an object is the same with itself, unless we mean, that the object existent at one time is the same with itself existent at another."¹¹ Hence, in asserting a relation of identity, what we are trying to express is a proposition of form " $a = b$," but this is somehow inadequate. This is because a proposition of this contingent form, " $a = b$," does not have the logical purity of the proposition ' $a = a$.' The philosophical problem which now arises is that as we cannot *reason* from " $a = b$ " to " $a = a$," or indeed vice versa, then we cannot be *certain* of identity.

But if we cannot establish identity by reason, nor can we establish it from observation. If it were thought that at least continuous observation between time t_1 to time t_2 would establish a contingent identity statement Hume's response is that far from establishing a relation of identity this would only establish *unity*.¹² Thus Hume is led to conclude in typical "skeptical" fashion that identity "can never arise from reason, but must arise from the imagination."¹³ Thus on personal identity Hume ends by asserting that personal identity is merely a series or collection of impressions/ideas, without any substantial underpinning entity to provide any unity, and that the no-

tion of identity as a relation arises from the imagination. Therefore we cannot be *certain* about identity statements.

If, following these general discussions, my very being depends upon clear and distinct ideas in consciousness, and my identity depends upon memory, and I am in no way logically dependent upon my body, then perhaps I could change bodies. This contingently absurd but logical possibility is pursued extensively by Shoemaker.¹⁴ He talks of a mind/body operation in which two minds are removed from their accompanying bodies and inserted in the other body. It seems from the premises provided in the tradition that such an operation is logically possible and while this might be of considerable interest to neo-liberal neuro-surgeons such notions were dismissed by Wittgenstein somewhat scathingly.¹⁵ Certainly such thinking was indicative of people who didn't know their way about.¹⁶

Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein

Rousseau had made objections to this Cartesian notion of the self. Arguably, Rousseau is the first writer to bring a clearly defined notion of self, an ordinary self, and that of a largely atomistic and autonomous self above the threshold of visibility in Western thinking.¹⁷ Rousseau was concerned to draw limits to the domain of reason and its over evaluation. Instead, in his 'atomistic' self it is the emotions which provide the basis for individuality or the self. Rousseau did not believe that what we need to become better as individual human beings, is more reason and more rationally based learning, for that would presuppose some Cartesian notion of a self sufficiently transparent to be both made fully transparent by reason and also to be made better by reason. Instead of rationality laying bare the nature of the self by excluding all that belonged to the social through a harsh application of binary logic, the self does not become transparent for Rousseau, and rests as a muddle and a puzzle. It is certainly not logically simple. By rational standards it is therefore incomprehensible. Reason cannot penetrate this confusion and muddle. If muddle and confusion are not amenable to being penetrated and made clear by reason then it is difficult to see how the self can be made better by reason, for what aspects of the self could be identified in such muddle and confusion sufficiently well, if at all, in order for them to be made better?

Thus, early in *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*¹⁸ Rousseau says: "I felt before I thought." This is then not merely a rejection of the metaphysics of rationality being definitive of the self as is inherent in Descartes's *cogito* 'I think, therefore I am' nor a rejection of arid rationalism, especially materialistic and mechanistic interpretations of

human being, but instead an affirmative expression of the emotive life as the basis for the self.¹⁹ Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesianism was hardly original. It is most likely that Wittgenstein was made aware, and perhaps first made aware of these objections, in his early reading of Schopenhauer. Objections to the Cartesian notion of the self are also to be found in Nietzsche (and these were probably as influential upon Foucault as the antihumanist thrust of structuralism).

The early influences upon Schopenhauer's philosophy were Kantian,²⁰ but Schopenhauer also believed that metaphysics was possible. In arguing that experience can be a source of metaphysics he parted company with Kant.

For Schopenhauer we are not passive disembodied spectators of a world of objects. Instead we are essentially embodied and active. The world for Schopenhauer is *my* representation. By this he means that the world is only that which appears to the representing subject, that is, a world of objects, and the world is exhausted in its perceptability. The world of objects of which we have knowledge is a world of *appearance*, but for there to be objects there must also be subjects.

For Schopenhauer the self or the subject is never an object and therefore cannot be an appearance for the subject. Yet a subject is necessary for there to be objects. Thus the subject is not in space and time, but is like an eye, an eye which cannot see itself, yet which mirrors the world. But the eye which cannot be seen constitutes limits on what is seen, and on the world. It would be mistaken to argue from the fact that the subject does not exist in the objective world that it did not exist or was illusory or a mere nothing. The point made by the eye image of the 'I' is merely that the subject is not something which is to be found in the world of objects. As Janaway says:²¹ "No one with a Schopenhauerean background would think that the non-objective status of the subject entailed its illusoriness."

But the self is not merely a representer of the world because there is the *will*. First he distinguishes knowledge of objects from knowledge of our willed actions. The will for Schopenhauer is not to be distinguished or separated from action. We do not will and cause an action, nor do we make inferences from our observed actions to our willing those actions. Will *is* action. Instead of some mental act of willing issuing in some bodily movement, my will is expressed in action. My will is thus embodied. As I have knowledge of my will, in a form of immediate knowledge, I have access to the self, not provided to the I of the eye of representation. Willing thus has priority over the intellect in Schopenhauer's thought and this is used to launch an attack upon the rational and transparent self of Descartes et al. The will in us is also the will to life, an urge to live and to go on living.

However, because of the dictates of the will we are bound to be in an almost continual state of anguish and despair, tormented if not driven by desires and unseen forces that we can never fully comprehend, control or satisfy. Schopenhauer as metaphysician does not present us then with anything optimistic about either the human condition or the possibilities for the human condition (e.g., emancipation). Rather all such hope is misplaced. The minimal solution to this state of affairs is to restrict as far as possible the operation of the will, through such things as fasting and celibacy. Or we can escape from the will according to Schopenhauer through aesthetic experience, because we can be so involved in contemplation of the object that we cease to evaluate it in terms of our needs and desires and so we cease to will. Thus Schopenhauer sees us as becoming closest to reality through *aesthetic* experiences. This awareness cannot be communicated, however, and all that philosophy can do is bring us to the brink of such comprehension. As Schopenhauer says of philosophy:²²

Its theme must restrict itself to the world; to express from every aspect *what* the world *is*, what it *may be* in its innermost nature, is all that it can honestly achieve. . . . Now it is precisely here that the mystic proceeds positively, and therefore, from this point nothing is left but mysticism.

Wittgenstein was influenced by Schopenhauer, particularly on the notion that the self was not an individuated substance, and that 'I' did not refer to a substantive self. He does not, however, advance beyond a negative position on the self. According to Sluga²³ for Wittgenstein either 'I' referred to the body, which seems to be one interpretation of his comments on the 'I', or it referred to nothing, which is the other interpretation. However, if there is nothing in the world of objects that is referred to by 'I', nothing can be 'done' from cultural, social, and historical influences, essentially in the world of objects, to something not in the world of objects. This position on the self would permit a disengagement from a society seen as in an irreversible state of decay. This dark reading of Schopenhauer's theoretical position on the self is arguably adopted by Wittgenstein.²⁴

Thus in the *Notebooks*,²⁵ in a section clearly influenced by Schopenhauer: "The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists. . . . The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious. The I is not an object. I objectively confront every object. But not the I." And in the *Philosophical Investigations*:²⁶ "'I' is not the name of a person, nor 'here' of a place, and 'this' is not a name."

It would appear that 'I' does not *refer* to what we normally think of as a self, soul, subject, or person, given that to name is to refer. The 'I' is a mystery, and it is certainly not an object. Indeed there is an ongoing hostility

in Wittgenstein's writings to any notion of a substantive and individuated self. Yet late in his life he is to say: "But it is still false to say . . . I is a different person from LW."²⁷ These two quotations open up a possible paradox of the self in Wittgenstein's writings, for how can 'I' not refer to a self, but not be a different person from LW? This is the paradox which is resolved in Wittgenstein's later writings, if at all, only by his account of language and the notion of how first person statements *express* rather than describe things such as pain.

Whereas for Schopenhauer the eye (I) sets the limits of the world, for Wittgenstein it is language. In the *Philosophical Investigations*²⁸ he also said that 'I' explains a name. To understand this we must consider the conditions under which 'I' is learned and how 'I' is taught to children, for it can be argued from a broadly Wittgensteinian position that there is a kind of logical connection between the meaning of some concepts and the conditions under which they are taught and/or learned.²⁹ Wittgenstein's position is not that there are causal relations between a concept and the actual events or processes of teaching and learning, but rather a kind of logical relation between the *concepts* that are learned and the 'concepts' of teaching and learning. Thus certain general facts constitute a background situation against which particular concepts are learned. Thus the use of 'I' needs to be understood against the 'logical' background in which we acquire meaning for the concept 'I' and this has further bearing upon how we use 'I' in utterances such as 'I am LW'. Thus "I am in pain" does not describe a mental state held by someone referred to by 'I' but is, instead, a sophisticated *expression* of pain behavior.

According to Hans Sluga:³⁰ "To trace Wittgenstein's discussion of the self, means . . . to trace the complex web of connections between questions of mind and language" (1996). This complex tracking cannot be done here,³¹ but essentially Wittgenstein should be seen as holding an expressive view of identity utterances.³²

Nietzsche

The reading of Nietzsche that has influenced both Heidegger and Foucault, among others, is that of a cultural physician. Here there is an attempt to liberate us in a therapeutic manner from the need to ask, pursue, and theorize about the traditional and perennial philosophical questions. This notion of philosophy as therapy is also to be found in the later Wittgenstein who said:³³ "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" On this interpretation of philosophy as therapy, which can be traced to at least the ancient Greeks and, more recently, to

Hume, philosophy is therapeutic and calms, diverts, or rejects a great majority of the perennial philosophical questions and answers. For Wittgenstein traditional (academic) philosophy asks the wrong questions and provides misleading theoretical answers to them because, mistaking the apparent form of a proposition for its proper logical form by reference to its grammar, we end in a series of perennial puzzles. These puzzles are caused because language has gone on holiday. The therapy then is for the self not to be misled by such questions; it is not to attempt to solve them by pursuing academic philosophy for that may only lead to great anxiety for the self.

Nietzsche was strongly influenced and heavily indebted to Schopenhauer's (1819) *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.³⁴ Here Christopher Janaway³⁵ says that Nietzsche's most radical views can be traced to Schopenhauer's conception of the subject as both willing and knowing. A common view of Nietzsche is that he comes to abandon the Schopenhauerean pessimism that permeates *The Birth of Tragedy*³⁶ and to adopt a much more positive approach to life and culture. That is to interpret him as a positivist reconstructivist. However the extent to which Nietzsche abandons his earlier pessimism is not clear. Is his positive way forward merely a way of ameliorating the fundamentally impossible situation in which humans find themselves (according to Schopenhauer), or is it a way of liberating the self from those conditions?

A central criticism by Nietzsche of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, however, is that the self remains a riddle, an 'it,' to which Schopenhauer can only offer a guess—the will. The 'I,' as a thing in itself, is indefensible, according to Nietzsche, and cannot be predicated with the attributes which Schopenhauer wishes to attach to the will, because³⁷ (quoted in Janaway, 1989: 343):

A totally obscure, inconceivable x is draped with predicates, as with bright coloured clothes which are taken from a world alien to it, the world of appearance. Then the demand is that we should regard the surrounding clothes, that is the predicates, as the thing itself.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*³⁸ Nietzsche introduces Schopenhauer's distinction between the knowing subject as the eye, or pure representing subject, and the self as will through the distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. In Schopenhauer the individual self (will) is known through a relationship with the body for the body and the will are one. The movements of the body or will can be known immediately as they are expressions of the will. But for Nietzsche this is merely metaphysics and in its place we have the body, reunited with animals and the earth and the Dionysian frenzy rather than with the Apollonian reason and intellect.

FOUCAULT ON THE SELF

From 1979 Michel Foucault began to pursue questions of the self vigorously, particularly in his important article "What Is Enlightenment?"³⁹ (Foucault, 1984c). His question was: "who are we in the present, what is this fragile moment from which we can't detach our identity and which will carry that identity away with itself?" In Nietzschean fashion he was to answer this question by turning to experience, as opposed to starting from a committed and perhaps theoretical philosophical position, and ask questions about *how* we constitute the self. As he said:⁴⁰

What I rejected was the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject . . . What I wanted to try to show was how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another . . . it is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not always identical to itself . . . in each case one plays, one establishes a different relation to oneself.

His question of experience is a 'How?' question, and not the more traditional philosophical questions such as "What is a self?" and, "What are the criteria of identity for selves?" Rather, for Foucault, in order to grasp our experience one must stay close to the modern—to everyday events—and to experience them, be willing to be affected by them and to effect them. What mattered for the Foucault of post-1968 Vincennes and the 1970s was "experience *with* . . . rather than engagement *in*" (quoted in Rabinow 1997, p. xix [my emphasis]). "Who one was, Foucault wrote, emerges acutely out of the problems with which one struggles."⁴¹

But we should also note a shift in his approach away from looking at the philosophical history of concepts such as madness toward issues of problematization. Problematization is concerned with objects, specifically with how they are introduced into thought. In particular:⁴²

Problematization doesn't mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of the true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.).

His questions are concerned then with how one controls oneself, and how this control is integrated into practices with others. Thus his fundamental question is concerned with how one practices one's freedom, for that is the essence of ethics for Foucault.

Foucault is not interested in the mystical view of the 'I' that is to be found in Schopenhauer and in the earlier Wittgenstein. Nevertheless the

self is not something which is open to biological, sociological, and so forth, description. For Foucault the Man which is dead, and cannot serve as a posit of 'human' theory, is not just *the* Man of the human sciences, with all of the humanistic baggage that Man there carries. It is also the subject post Kant to which these attributes are accorded, which is not the mystical self of Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein.

Even so the self is not something which is a given. Instead he holds a Nietzschean position:⁴³ "Be yourself. You are none of the things you now do, think, desire." Miller says⁴⁴ that this was Schopenhauer's influence upon Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's upon Foucault. Furthermore for both Nietzsche and Foucault: "Our body is but a social structure"⁴⁵ and the self is contingent, and hanging because of shifting social and cultural forces.⁴⁶ They both reject the metaphysical 'I' of Schopenhauer, seeing the self as being constructed by customs, practices, and institutions in which we live and grow (cf. Wittgenstein on forms of life). As these are not ultimate givens, therefore *we* can change. Nietzsche thought that we had come to hate the body and its Dionysian untamed frenzies because of Christianity, and thus deeply immersed in social and cultural traditions it was difficult "to become what one is." For Nietzsche of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*⁴⁷ it begins with the discovery of the Dionysian frenzy of life by communing again with the world, and to transcend the self that appears as a given: for the later Foucault it is to care for the self. For both Nietzsche and Foucault: "Nobody can build you the bridge over which you must cross the river of life, nobody but you alone."⁴⁸

In his earlier writings on the constitution of the self,⁴⁹ Foucault had seen coercive forces and practices as dominating selves, as he treated power as *repressive*. Later he is to drop the concept of repression because "repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power . . . (and) this (repression) is a wholly negative, narrow skeletal conception of power,"⁵⁰ though warlike metaphors are retained as late as 1983. Like Nietzsche, power is productive, it creates or makes people, it can be positive and not merely negative and it is this latter positive notion of power which is to be found in his later writings.

Foucault claims that the Delphic maxim "to know yourself" has supplanted the other notion of Greek antiquity, "to take care of yourself." He argues that the "need to take care for oneself brought the Delphic maxim into operation" and that the latter was subordinated to the former. In modern Western culture, he claims, the notion of caring for oneself has come to be seen as narcissistic, as an immorality, and as a means of escape from rules and respect for law. Given further the Christian inheritance that the road to salvation lies through self-renunciation to know oneself seems

paradoxically the road to self-renunciation and salvation. Secondly, he argues, theoretical philosophy since Descartes has placed ever-increasing importance upon knowledge of the self as the first step in epistemology. His conclusion is that the order of priority of these two maxims has become reversed; "know thyself" has assumed priority over care for the self.

The self for Foucault is stated reasonably clearly:⁵¹ "it is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not always identical to itself . . . in each case one plays, one establishes a different relation to oneself." If the self is not an individuated object or substance, but is, rather, a form, or something conceptual, then our conceptualizing of ourselves at any particular time may take up differences, in a complex interplay of intellect, character, and action. A form here is like a category (the self) which may be filled in various ways. Thus you may not have the same relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject to speak at a meeting and as a father speaking to a daughter or son prior to the meeting. We cannot assert an identity relationship such as " $a = b$ " between these two forms because these two forms may not be identical. Put another way, his concern is with how the intellect, character, and action can be reconciled in living in the context of practical affairs in the present. The singularity of the present in its games of truth and practices of power may either require a certain form of the self or present the opportunity to constitute one's self actively in a form of transfiguration of other forms of the self. But these practices are not something entirely invented, as we are influenced by models. We are also influenced by mentors. All of these models must be subjected to historical and philosophical examination. Care for the self, in Foucault's hands, is to be a form of exercise upon the self and not a Schopenhauerean renunciation of the self, or a form of Wittgensteinian resignation that not much can be done.

This knowledge which one has of the forms that the self takes (*se connaître*) is active and highly political as it was for the Greeks. For the philosopher this becomes doubly so, "in terms of intensity, in the degree of zeal for the self, and consequently, also for others, the place of the philosopher is not that of just any free man."⁵² Here he was assigning a special role for the philosopher, one which Wittgenstein was reluctant to assign. But in Foucault's case it was a role which was academic for it was also scholarly, though it was philosophy not in the normal and more traditional academic sense but in a very overt sense of the political.

Care for the self is not to be seen as a form of *liberation* but as "an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being."⁵³ This mode of being is not that of the liberated or unalienated person as, in versions of Marxist the-

ory, it runs the risk of returning to some notion of human being or essence to which one can return by breaking repressive deadlocks. Indeed practicing freedom requires liberation but liberation per se does not define for us the practices of freedom (loc cit.), for freedom must be practised ethically: “for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom. Freedom is said to be “the ontological condition of ethics” but “ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection.”⁵⁴

Care of the self is ethical he argues not because it is care of others but because it is ethical *in itself*. It does however imply complex relationships with others “as this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others.”⁵⁵ It is not therefore merely self regarding or narcissistic. *Ethos* involves a relationship with others, which comes about because of the way in which the self and care of the self becomes known. Here Foucault argues one needs a guide or mentor who can speak truthfully to one, who will not be authoritarian or manipulative, and who will teach one. Thus relationships with others are built into the very conditions of the learning of, or the development of, the care of the self. To learn to care for the self is then at one and the same time to learn to care for others. Nevertheless: “Care for others then should not be put before the care of oneself. The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior.”⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

This is clearly a different view of problematization and critique from that of, for example, Marxism, where fundamental questions need to be asked about such things as relations of production, alienation, and the serving of interests. There a repressive aspect merely needs to be removed and problematization of a series of given and taken-for-granted assumptions is often the first step. Thus, for example, fundamental questions need to be asked about the adage “A fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” to expose capital. By changing the relations of production, repression, and alienation can be addressed in Marxist theory. But here we have binary oppositions in play between truth and falsity and good and evil—the bad is to be replaced by the good!

Foucault in his later life was developing a critique of neoliberalism. In modern neoliberalism there is the notion of a self as an autonomous chooser⁵⁷ or utility maximizer, that is, of an atomistic individual capable of choosing, wishing to choose independently, and able to discern issues of quality and self-interest in the choices offered in the free market. Matters

of welfare and justice become the unintended outcomes of the hidden hand of the market. Clearly there is a political and intellectual burden from the past in this notion of the autonomous chooser—in Adam Smith (and to Robert Nozick) rather than in Adam Ferguson. Part of a Foucauldean project of problematization would be to expose the forerunners and the opponents in eighteenth-century thought, and thus that the present state of affairs was not inevitable. But it would also be to identify and expose the discourses and practices at national and global levels that have permitted utility maximizers to be almost taken universally as givens or *the* individuals in current economic, management, welfare, and educational thought.

His position was not so much that individualism was wrong but that individualism needed an adequate account of the self, of relationships with Others, and of how one was to care for the self (and thereby Others) in the practice of freedom. On each of these parameters he has a critique of the autonomous chooser. His notion of the self as constituted forecloses on such things as self-interest being part of a human nature. On the contrary, the self is constituted in a *pedagogical* relationship with Others, and as one learns how to constitute and control the self one also learns about Others and care of others in the practices of freedom. There is a very complex interrelation of dependence between the self and others, which starts as a mentor relationship and continues with mentoring relationships. This *governance* of the self was therefore also *governance* of others. And he thought governance of the self could be accommodated within a wider political account of governance of populations.⁵⁸

But are we to call this a critical theory? Not much turns on a name, but in so far as Foucault's account tries, like Nietzsche, to advance beyond binary oppositions such as mind/body, I would see it that way. If emotions and personal attitudes can intrude into informal logic (and into critical thinking) then it is clear that a Foucauldean self, steeped in thoughtful disobedience, would not hold a neutral position in any discourse of natural language. Appraising the conclusions of critical thinking would therefore require one to have some conception of a self. In my view Foucault provides a powerful critical conception of the self for critical thinking within the liberal tradition.

NOTES

1. Ted Honderich, 1995, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 500).

2. Michel Foucault, 1984a, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Paul Rabinow, ed., 1997, *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth* (New York: The New Press), 281–301.
3. J. Habermas, 1987, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Polity Press, London), chapters 9–11.
4. Habermas, 1987, p. 121.
5. Michel Foucault, 1983, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press,) 208–26.
6. Michel Foucault, 1978, "Qu'est-ce-que la Critique," *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 84 (2), April–June 1984.
7. James Miller, 1993, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 301.
8. Miller, 1993, p. 302.
9. Foucault, 1983.
10. John Locke, 1924, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Oxford University Press [c1690]), Bk. II, XXVII, 3–10.
11. David Hume, 1888, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Oxford University Press), Bk. I, IV, ii, p. 201.
12. Hume, 1888, p. 201.
13. Hume, 1888, p. 209.
14. Sydney Shoemaker, 1963, *Self Knowledge and Self Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press).
15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1975, *Philosophical Remarks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), #60–66.
16. L. Wittgenstein, 1953, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), #123.
17. H. Gutman, 1988, "Rousseau's Confessions: A Technology of the Self," in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton, eds., 1988, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 99–120. Compare, C. Taylor, 1989, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press). (Taylor, however, places Rousseau in a "longer" theoretical tradition.)
18. J.-J. Rousseau, 1953, *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Harmondsworth: Penguin [c1781]).
19. Cf. the metaphysics of the self in Simone de Beauvoir's early novels: *She Came to Stay*, 1954 (Cleveland: World Publishing [c1943]); *The Blood of Others*, 1948 (New York: Knopf [c1945]).
20. S. J. Coppleston, 1965, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7 (II) (New York: Image Books), 28.
21. Christopher Janaway, 1989, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 328.
22. A. Schopenhauer, 1966, *The World as Will and Representation*. Trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover ([c1819]), vol. 2, 612.

23. Hans Sluga, 1996, "'Whose Home Is That?': Wittgenstein on the Self," in Hans Sluga, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 320–53.

24. Michael Peters and James Marshall, 1999, *Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Post-modernism, Pedagogy* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey), chapters 3 and 4.

25. Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1961, *Notebooks, 1914–1916* (Oxford: Blackwell), 80e.

26. Wittgenstein, 1953, #410.

27. Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1982, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman (Oxford: Blackwell), vol. II, 88.

28. Wittgenstein, 1953, #410.

29. See C. J. B. MacMillan, 1985, "Rational Teaching." *Teachers College Record* 86: 411–22, and L. P. McCarty and D. C. McCarty, 1995, "Wittgenstein on the Unreasonableness of Education: Connecting Teaching and Meaning." In P. Smeyers and J. D. Marshall, eds., 1995, *Philosophy and Education: Accepting Wittgenstein's Challenge* (Dordrecht: Kluwer), 63–76.

30. Sluga, 1996.

31. But see Peters and Marshall, 1999.

32. Robert J. Fogelin, 1996, "Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy," in Hans Sluga, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 34–58.

33. Wittgenstein, 1953, #123.

34. There were two major translations of this as *The World of Will and Idea* and *The World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer's preface to the original German edition is dated 1818 but it was probably published in 1819. The respective translations into English by Haldane and Kemp (1883) and Payne (1958) are somewhat different.

35. Janaway, 1989, p. 342.

36. F. Nietzsche, 1966a, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press).

37. Quoted in Janaway, 1989, p. 343.

38. Nietzsche, 1966a, #1.

39. Michel Foucault, 1984, "What Is Enlightenment?" in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon), 32–50.

40. Foucault, 1984, p. 290.

41. Quoted in Paul Rabinow, ed., 1997, *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth* (New York: The New Press), xix (my emphasis).

42. Michel Foucault, 1984, "The Concern for Truth," in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., 1988, *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture* (London: Routledge), 257.

43. F. Nietzsche, 1983, *Untimely Meditations*, trans R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 127.

44. Miller, 1993, p. 69.

45. F. Nietzsche, 1966b, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press), 19.

46. F. Nietzsche, 1968, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Press), 552.
47. F. Nietzsche, 1976, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 103–429.
48. Nietzsche, 1983, p. 129.
49. See e.g., Michel Foucault, 1979, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage).
50. Michel Foucault, 1977, "Truth and Power," in Colin Gordon, ed., 1980: *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Pantheon), 119.
51. Foucault, 1984a, p. 290.
52. Foucault, 1984a, p. 293.
53. Foucault, 1984a, p. 282.
54. Foucault, 1984a, p. 284.
55. Foucault, 1984a, p. 287.
56. Foucault, 1984a, p. 287.
57. James D. Marshall, 1996, "The Autonomous Chooser and 'Reforms' in Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 15 (1), 89–96.
58. Colin Gordon, 1991, "Introduction" in D. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 47.

REFERENCES

- Beauvoir, Simone de. 1954. *She Came to Stay*. Cleveland: World Publishing (c1943).
- . *The Blood of Others*. New York: Knopf (c1945).
- Coppleston, S. J. 1965. *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7 (II). New York: Image Books.
- Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Fogelin, Robert J. 1996. "Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy." In Hans Sluga, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. 1996a. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 34–58.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Truth and Power." In Colin Gordon, ed. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Pantheon, 109–33.
- . 1978. "Qu'est-ce-que la Critique." *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 84 (2), April–June, 1984.
- . 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.
- . 1983. "Afterword: The Subject and Power." In H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 208–26.
- . 1984a. "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom." In Paul Rabinow, ed. *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth*. 1997. New York: The New Press, 281–301.
- . 1984b. "The Concern for Truth." In Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed. 1988. *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. London: Routledge, 255–67.

- . 1984c. "What Is Enlightenment?" In Paul Rabinow, ed. 1984. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon, 32–50.
- Gordon, Colin. 1980. *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1991. "Introduction." In D. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1–52.
- Gutman, H. 1988. "Rousseau's Confessions: A Technology of the Self." In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton, ed. 1988. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 99–120.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. London: Polity Press.
- Henriques, J., et al. 1984. *Changing the Subject*. London: Methuen.
- Honderich, Ted. 1995. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hume David. 1888. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Janaway, Christopher. 1989. *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lankshear, C. J. 1982. *Freedom and Education: Toward a Non-rational Philosophy of Education*. Auckland: Milton Brookes.
- Locke John. 1924. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: Oxford University Press (c1690).
- Liotard, J-F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated G. Bennington and A. Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MacMillan, C. J. B. 1985. "Rational Teaching." *Teachers College Record* 86: 411–22.
- Marshall, James D. 1996a. "The Autonomous Chooser and 'Reforms' in Education." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 15 (1): 89–96.
- . 1996b. *Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- . 1998. "Simone de Beauvoir: The Self in the Metaphysical Novels." *Philosophical Studies in Education* 1997: 90–101.
- . 1999. "The Mode of Information and Education: Insights on Critical Theory from Michel Foucault." In Tom Popkewitz and Lynn Fendler, eds. 1999. *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 141–63.
- . 2000. "Nietzsche's New Philosopher: The Arts and the Self." In Michael Peters and James Marshall, eds. 2000. *Past and Present Values: Nietzsche's Legacy for Education*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey.
- McCarty, L. P., and D. C. McCarty. 1995. "Wittgenstein on the Unreasonableness of Education: Connecting Teaching and Meaning." In P. Smeyers and J. D. Marshall, eds. 1995. *Philosophy and Education: Accepting Wittgenstein's Challenge*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 63–76.
- Miller, James. 1993. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

- Nietzsche, F. 1966a. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press.
- . 1966b. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press.
- . 1968. *The Will to Power*. Trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Press.
- . 1976. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. In Walter Kaufmann, trans. and ed. 1976. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 103–429.
- . 1983. *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peters, Michael, and James Marshall. 1999. *Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Postmodernism, Pedagogy*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey.
- Popkewitz, Tom, and Lynn Fendler, eds. 1999. *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Poster, Mark. 1984. *Foucault, Marxism, History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 1989. *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- . 1993. *The Mode of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rabinow, Paul, ed. 1997. *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth*. New York: The New Press.
- Rousseau, J-J. 1953. *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (c1781).
- Russell, Bertrand. 1946. *A History of Western Philosophy*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Schopenhauer, A. 1883. *The World as Will and Idea*. Trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (c1819).
- . 1996. *The World as Will and Representation*. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover (c1819).
- Shoemaker, Sydney. 1963. *Self Knowledge and Self Identity*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Sluga, Hans. 1996a. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1996b. “‘Whose Home Is That?’: Wittgenstein on the Self.” In Hans Sluga, ed. 1996a. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 320–53.
- Taylor, C. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Usher, R., I. Bryant, and Rennie Johnston. 1997. *Adult Education and the Post-modern Challenge: Learning beyond the Limits*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Wellmer, A. 1985. “Reason, Utopia and the Dialectic of Enlightenment.” In R. J. Bernstein, ed. *Habermas and Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- . 1958. *The Blue and the Brown Books*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1961. *Notebooks, 1914–1916*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1971. *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . 1975. *Philosophical Remarks*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . 1982. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman. Oxford: Blackwell.

From the Question Concerning Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, Feenberg

Iain Thomson

Richard Wolin has remarked that “[t]he full story of Marcuse’s relation to Heidegger has yet to be written.”¹ Indeed, there are at least *two* stories to be told about the Marcuse-Heidegger relationship: the story of its historical past and the story of its philosophical future. Let us hope that intellectual historians like Wolin will continue to bring the past of this important relation to light; in the meantime, Andrew Feenberg has already begun writing the story of its philosophical future. The goal of his *Questioning Technology* is to articulate a critical theory capable of responding to “[t]he fundamental problem of democracy today,” namely, the question of how to “ensure the survival of agency in this increasingly technological universe” (p. 101).² To meet this challenge, Feenberg synthesizes and extends the critiques of technology developed by Heidegger and post-Heideggerian thinkers like Marcuse and Foucault. My approach will seek to situate Feenberg’s project within this historical perspective.

THE HISTORY BEHIND FEENBERG’S HEIDEGGER-MARCUSE DIALECTIC

Marcuse studied with Heidegger from 1928 to 1932, and Feenberg was a Marcuse student during the late 1960s.³ This, of course, makes Feenberg one of Heidegger’s intellectual grandchildren. Yet this is a genealogy fraught with political and philosophical tensions, tensions which occasionally make themselves felt in Feenberg’s interpretations and which point back to the fact that Marcuse himself broke with Heidegger bitterly—and

permanently—in 1948. To Marcuse, Heidegger's strong early support of National Socialism represented a fundamental betrayal of Heidegger's own "existential" philosophy, and thus an abandonment of "the greatest intellectual heritage of German history," and he said so at the time.⁴ In 1933 and 1934, while Heidegger was making political speeches on Hitler's behalf, Marcuse was fleeing Hitler's rise to power, first from Frankfurt to Geneva in 1933, then emigrating to New York in 1934, where he served as the philosophical specialist for the now exiled Frankfurt School. During this period, Marcuse wrote *Reason and Revolution*, defending Hegel's notion of the state—as "a social order built on the rational autonomy of the individual"—against the "pseudo-democratic ideology" characteristic of fascism, which pays lip service to the direct rule of the "people" [*Volk*] while in fact "the ruling groups control the rest of the population directly, without the mediation of . . . the state." Hitler had abolished all such democratic mediation, so Marcuse concludes *Reason and Revolution* by quoting Carl Schmitt's proclamation that on January 30th, 1933, "the day of Hitler's ascent to power, 'Hegel, so to speak, died.'"⁵

Marcuse's post-Heideggerian return to Hegel was of course also a return to Marx; he was elaborating the major philosophical sources of Frankfurt School critical theory. But around this time Max Horkheimer, who directed the Institute for Social Research and controlled its finances, began working closely with another philosopher, Theodore Adorno. Adorno, whose hatred for Heidegger apparently spilled over onto Marcuse, wrote to Horkheimer in 1935 to remind him of the "illusions" Marcuse had so recently had "of Herr Heidegger, whom he thanked all-too-heartily in the foreword to his [1932] Hegel book." Adorno went so far as to accuse Marcuse of being "hindered [only] by Judaism from being a fascist!"⁶ Whether or not Adorno's vicious intrigue succeeded, Marcuse soon found Institute funds in too short a supply to continue supporting him and his family. Thus it was that Marcuse, the philosopher now best remembered as the intellectual guru of the New Left (and thus the mentor of New Left philosophers like Feenberg, Angela Davis, and Douglas Kellner), found himself working for various American intelligence agencies from 1942 to 1951.⁷

This is less strange than it sounds. Marcuse actually spent the final years of the Second World War doing "de-Nazification studies" for the Office of Strategic Services. Here, with two other prominent members of the Frankfurt School (the legal scholar and economist Franz Neumann and the political theorist Otto Kirchheimer), Marcuse engaged in an intensive interdisciplinary effort to uncover and "eliminate the root causes that had produced fascism." Looking back in 1954, however, Marcuse would conclude that: "The defeat of Fascism and National Socialism has

not arrested the trend toward totalitarianism.”⁸ The fundamental political threat to democracy had not been rooted out; it had merely changed forms and continued to spread after the war. Marcuse called this new, postfascist form of totalitarianism “technocracy.” A technocracy is a political state in which “technical considerations of imperialistic efficiency and rationality supersede the traditional standards of profitability and general welfare.”⁹ For the rest of Marcuse’s long and fruitful career, his overriding question became: How can the increasingly global technocracy be subverted, that is, *democratized*? This is precisely the quest behind *Questioning Technology*, the project that Feenberg takes up—with Heidegger’s help.

Of course, Marcuse himself would not have looked to Heidegger for help. Marcuse was deeply dissatisfied by Heidegger’s private admission of a “political error”; he expected Heidegger to publicly announce his political change of “allegiance” (as Nazi opportunists like Schmitt and Alfred Bäumler had done right after the war, a disingenuous act that Heidegger, the thinker of authenticity, found simply “loathsome”).¹⁰ Marcuse presciently warned Heidegger that his refusal to make such an apology would be interpreted as a continuing “complicity” with Nazism, but Heidegger obstinately refused.¹¹ Thus a controversial stalemate was reached, and Marcuse and Heidegger would remain personally and professionally estranged for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately, as Feenberg shows, this mutual estrangement led them to neglect the important insights contained in each other’s work on technology. Feenberg brings out remarkable similarities between Marcuse’s critique of *technocracy*, the technologically mediated production and maintenance of a one-dimensional society, and Heidegger’s ontological critique of *enframing*, the technological understanding of being which turns everything it touches into a mere resource.¹² Indeed, Feenberg stages a forceful post-Marcusean return to Heidegger, and thus presents in absentia much of Marcuse and Heidegger’s missing interlocution on the essence of modern technology.

True to the philosophical spirit of Marcuse, Feenberg’s critique of Heidegger is thoroughly dialectical. Its negative or critical moment seeks to isolate Heidegger’s deepest insights into technology, preserving these insights from distortions Feenberg blames on Heidegger’s “techno-phobic” (p. 151) and “essentialist” (p. 3) understanding of technology. In the positive moment of his critique, Feenberg appropriates several of Heidegger’s insights, incorporating these in a powerful new way into his own critical theory of technology. In so doing, he demonstrates the continuing importance of the Heideggerian critique of technology while going beyond Heidegger—and Marcuse—in significant respects.

FEENBERG'S MARCUSEAN CRITIQUE OF HEIDEGGER

Feenberg argues that the four major types of theories of technology (determinism, instrumentalism, substantivism, and critical theory) can be differentiated by the answers they each give to two basic questions (p. 9). For Feenberg, Heidegger's first answer represents an unsurpassable historical advance beyond determinism and instrumentalism, but Heidegger's second response pinpoints where his "substantivist" view goes wrong and needs to be superseded by Feenberg's own critical theory. The first question is: Is technology neutral or is it value-laden? As Feenberg argues, Heidegger undermines once and for all the belief that technology is neutral by showing that the technological doer comes to be historically "transformed by its acts" (p. 206). Heidegger's understanding of technology thus overturns both traditional Marxist *determinism* (according to which technological advance will inevitably usher in the golden age of communism), and liberal *instrumentalism* (which understands technology merely as an instrument of progress, a set of tools which can be used transparently to achieve independently chosen ends). As Feenberg puts it, Heidegger shows that "technology is not merely the servant of some pre-defined social purpose; it is an environment within which a way of life is elaborated" (p. 127). And thus, "for good or ill, the human manner of inhabiting the environment can only be [an] ethical" question.¹³

Heidegger's answer to this ethical *question concerning technology* argues that technology has an ontological impact which is far from neutral. As technology colonizes the lifeworld, everything "sucked up" into its purview, including the modern subject, is reduced to the ontological status of a resource to be *optimized*. Within our current technological "constellation" of intelligibility, "[o]nly what is calculable in advance counts as being."¹⁴ This technological understanding of being produces a "calculative thinking" which quantifies all qualitative relations, reducing all entities to bivalent, programmable "information," digitized data which increasingly enters into what Baudrillard calls "a state of pure circulation."¹⁵ As this historical transformation of beings into resources becomes more pervasive, it increasingly eludes our critical gaze. Indeed, we come to treat even ourselves in the terms underlying our technological refashioning of the world: no longer as conscious subjects in an objective world but merely as resources to be optimized, ordered, and *enhanced* with maximal efficiency (whether cosmetically, psychopharmacologically, genetically, or cybernetically).¹⁶ For Heidegger, the "greatest danger" of our spreading technological understanding of Being is the possibility that we will lose the capacity to understand ourselves in any other way.

Feenberg seems to agree with Heidegger's basic diagnosis of technology's ontological impact, but thinks that Heidegger overstates the danger because he ignores resources internal to technological society capable of combating this ontological devastation. This brings us to the second question Feenberg uses to categorize the field of technological theories, the question which differentiates Feenberg from Heidegger: Can the historical impact of technology be humanly controlled, or does it operate according to its own autonomous logic? Is humanity capable of guiding the historical direction in which technology is taking us? No, Heidegger answers; what is most essential about technology, namely, the way in which it alters how reality shows up for us, cannot be controlled.¹⁷ As Heidegger writes: "No single man, no group of men, no commission of prominent statesmen, scientists, and technicians, no conference of leaders of commerce and industry, can brake or direct the progress of history in the atomic age."¹⁸ This answer reveals what Feenberg most fundamentally objects to in Heidegger's approach: Heidegger attributes an autonomous logic to technology. This fatalistic "substantivism" stems ultimately from Heidegger's essentialism, Feenberg contends (p. 17), and it leads Heidegger to advocate "liberation from [the technological order] rather than [its] reform" (p. 198).

But Feenberg's reading is never so hermeneutically violent as when he accuses Heidegger of being a technological "essentialist." Heidegger's paradoxical sounding claim that "the essence of technology is nothing technological" does not mean that technology leaves no room for "reflexivity" (p. 207). Heidegger is really expressing the paradox of the measure; height is not high, treeness is not itself a tree, and the essence of technology is nothing technological. To understand the "essence of technology," Heidegger says, we cannot think of "essence" the way we have been doing since Plato (as what "*permanently* endures"), for that makes it seem as if "by the [essence of] technology we mean some mythological abstraction." We need, rather, to think of "essence" as a verb, as the way in which things "essence" [*west*] or "remain in play" [*im Spiel bleibt*].¹⁹ "The essence of technology" thus means the way in which intelligibility *happens* for us these days, that is, as "enframing" (the historical "mode of revealing" in which things show up only as resources to be optimized). Heidegger's historical understanding of the "essence" of technology may actually put his position closer to the "constructivist" than the "essentialist" camp, and it becomes clear that Feenberg shares a similar view when he advocates "a historical concept of essence" in the book's concluding chapter (p. 201).

What Feenberg *really* objects to, it seems, is Heidegger's claim that the appropriate response to technology is best characterized by the comportment

toward phenomena Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit*, that is, releasement, equanimity, composure, or “letting-be” (p. 198)—not “resignation and passivity,” as Feenberg rather polemically translates the term at one point (p. 184). But Feenberg gives a more sympathetic treatment of the notion of *Gelassenheit* later, when he writes: “Heidegger’s undeniable insight is that every making must also include a letting-be, an *active* connection to the meanings that emerge with the thing and which we cannot ‘make’ but only release through our productive activity” (p. 198, my emphasis). If the “criteria for constructive reform” (p. 189) Feenberg seeks are to be found anywhere in Heidegger’s view, it is here. In fact, “*Gelassenheit*” is one of the main criteria that the Amish use when deciding for or against the integration of a new technological device into their community. To some this example may seem its own refutation, but the critical theorist of technology can learn much from the Amish, who are not “knee-jerk technophobes,” but rather “very adaptive techno-selectives who devise remarkable technologies that fit within their self-imposed limits.” The Amish may actually have achieved Heidegger’s ideal of a “free relation to technology,” according to which we should “affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and yet also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste to our nature.” Heidegger is not a Luddite, but rather advocates a *non-addicted* “proper use” of technical devices in which we keep ourselves “so free of them, that we may *let go* of them at any time.”²⁰ He says we should “let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside”; the Amish take this advice quite literally when they leave their cellular phones in the outhouse overnight so that phone calls will not interrupt the face-to-face communal relations they cherish. The Amish do not reject new devices like the cell phone out of hand, but live reflexively with them, sometimes for years, before deciding “what will build solidarity and what will pull them apart,” what can be adapted to fit the needs and values of their community (like high-tech electric barbecues) and what cannot (like cars), and in such adaptation they can be quite creative.²¹

But for Feenberg, Heidegger’s faith in *Gelassenheit* is too “nostalgic” (p. 199) and passive; Heidegger’s “fatalism” gives over too much human autonomy to the technological order. In fact, Feenberg’s fundamental objection appropriates Marcuse’s most powerful *political* criticism of Heidegger. As Marcuse put it, Heidegger succumbed to a “hopeless heteronomism,” that is, he lost faith in the Enlightenment’s understanding of freedom as the capacity for substantive rational self-determination, the ability to direct the *ends* as well as the means of human life. Feenberg expresses this Marcusean criticism in a Marxist register: Heidegger is a “technological fetishist” (p. viii). In the Marxist vocabulary, *fetishism* oc-

curs when a "social relation between men" assumes "the fantastic form of a relation between things."²² For a Marxist (and let us not forget that critical theory is post-Marxian Marxism), to fetishize something is to detach it from the human labor that produced it but to continue nevertheless to project human meanings upon it, mistaking these projections for an independent reality. The fetishist's anthropomorphic projection endows a humanly created entity with the magical appearance of possessing a telos independent of human ends. Heidegger's technological fetishism is visible in the fact that, in his view, "technology rigidifies into destiny" (p. 14). But just as Feenberg downplays the active element in *Gelassenheit*, so here he overlooks the fact that for Heidegger enframing is our "destiny," but it is not necessarily our "fate." As Hubert Dreyfus explains, "although our understanding of things and ourselves as resources to be ordered, enhanced, and used efficiently has been building up since Plato and dominates our practices, we are not stuck with it. It is not the way things have to be, but nothing more or less than our current cultural clearing." In fact, the critical force of Heidegger's "history of Being" comes from his hope for a new historical beginning in which we would *no longer* treat everything as resources to be optimized.²³

Feenberg argues, however, that Heidegger succumbs to the "deterministic illusion" because he fails to notice the "specific technical choices" which are in fact always involved in processes like "the deskilling of work, the debasement of mass culture, and the bureaucratization of society" (p. 11). If Heidegger "allows no room for a different technological future" (p. 16), a future which would avoid "the gloomy Heideggerian prediction of technocultural disaster" (p. 17), it is because he overlooks the specific choices that always go into the process of "technological design," and thus cannot envision the possibility that technologization could come to serve democratization. Again, I do not think Feenberg is right about Heidegger's supposed fatalism. This objection ignores Heidegger's hope for an "other beginning" to Western history (this is not surprising, since for Feenberg the political direction in which this hope led Heidegger disqualifies the hope itself). Second, it rests on Feenberg's polemical characterization of *Gelassenheit* as "Heidegger's outright rejection of agency" (p. 105), when in fact, as Feenberg recognizes subsequently, Heidegger's more balanced insistence on ontological receptivity is better understood as Heidegger's later "corrective to his overemphasis on the role of Dasein in disclosure" in his early work (p. 195). For Heidegger it is *crucial* that we recognize our ontological receptivity if we are to get beyond our "willful" technological ontology and envision an alternative future. Still, Feenberg's conclusion—that Heidegger's own suggestions about this alternative future leave no room for a democratization of technology—may be

right for another reason, namely, Heidegger's excessively dim view of democracy.

At any rate, Feenberg's critique of Heidegger becomes the springboard for his own alternative, which seeks to expand democratic control over the technological design process. Here Feenberg again draws his inspiration from Marcuse. Unlike Heidegger, Marcuse learned from Hitler's rise to power about the importance of maintaining strong democratic institutions capable of mediating the will of the people and ensuring that the national voice is as inclusive as possible. Still, Marcuse was deeply concerned that the technological colonization of these democratic institutions discouraged rational autonomy. As Marcuse looked around himself in 1941, he saw that "[i]ndividualistic rationality has developed into efficient compliance with the pre-given continuum of means and ends." Indeed, one revealing difference between Heidegger and Marcuse can be seen in Heidegger's interpretation of a massive highway interchange on the autobahn as a "thing" capable of putting us in touch with the meanings of the world it embodies.²⁴ *Pace* Feenberg, here Heidegger recognizes that: "Devices are things too" (p. 196), that is, he acknowledges that it is possible to attain a "reflexive relation" to technological devices (p. 207). Heidegger thus helps raise the question concerning the world of meanings opened and transformed by technological phenomena such as the "information superhighway," the Internet.²⁵ Unlike Heidegger, however, Marcuse thought that: "In manipulating the machine, man learns that obedience to the directions is the only way to get the desired results. . . . There is no room for autonomy." I think this shows that in fact Heidegger thought further in the direction of Feenberg's project than did Marcuse, even though this project is inspired by Marcuse's notion of a technological "democratization of functions"—the only development Marcuse could point to *within* Western democracies that seemed capable of reversing our slide toward a "totally-administered society."²⁶

FEENBERG'S ALTERNATIVE

Feenberg uses the work of Bruno Latour to uncover the way in which substantive political choices are embedded into technology during the design process. Think for example of the moral content locked into the "technical code" of the "speed-bump": rather than appealing to our rational autonomy through the imposition of speed-limits, the technical device simply decides for us and forces us to comply.²⁷ As Feenberg writes: "Design comes to reflect a heritage of . . . choices. . . . [I]n a very real sense

there is a technical historicity; technology is the bearer of a tradition that favors specific interests and specific ideas about the good life" (p. 139). In short, technological "design mirrors back the social order" (p. 87). Thus, against Heidegger's supposed "technological essentialism," Feenberg argues that we need to recognize the historical "malleability of technology" (p. 193), the possibility that technology could come to embody more democratic values. As an example of such technical historicity, Feenberg describes the struggle between IBM and Macintosh over text versus graphics user interfaces. Early on, the text-based interface nicely represented the values of computer users, who were mostly programmers. But as the democratization of computers spread computer use beyond programmers, the graphics interface came to better represent the values of the broader community of users.²⁸

Why is it then that when we look at today's computers, we see no sign of this struggle, which only recently ended? Feenberg's answer to this question explains why he thinks Heidegger missed what he missed. When the design process is complete, the value-laden choices that went into it are "black-boxed," sealed into "the technical code" (p. 88). This hard-wiring of specific cultural values into our technical devices obscures the fact that these values were *chosen*, and this reinforces a fatalistic attitude toward technology. Such an analysis leads Feenberg to suggest that Heidegger falls victim to the "deterministic illusion" technological "closure" produces (p. 87) because he "doesn't view modern technology from within" (p. 197). It is certainly true that Heidegger did not have much internal experience with technology (he did not own a television and wrote his more than one hundred book-length manuscripts all by hand; he would not even type, let alone "word-process," and it is not hard to imagine what he would have thought of the voice-recognition software Feenberg himself uses).²⁹ This becomes a decisive point for Feenberg, who concludes that Heidegger has unknowingly adopted the top-down "strategic standpoint of the systems manager" rather than the bottom-up "tactical standpoint of the human beings" enrolled within the technological network (p. 197).

Thus Feenberg responds to Heidegger with Foucault, supplementing the view from above with the "view from below," adding the perspective of the many "subjugated knowledges that arise in opposition to a dominating rationality" (p. 8). Every program has its "anti-program" (p. 119), Feenberg shows, because the dominating rational order only comes into existence in opposition to a subjugated group.³⁰ The hope for a democratization of technology is thus placed with such subjugated groups who, Feenberg convincingly argues, could increasingly come to intervene in the design

process. Of course, to do so they must overcome the technocratic inertia produced by the vested interests embodied in the technical code (which, like Foucault's Panopticon, eliminates the need for someone to actually occupy the dominant subject position). Can Feenberg tell us how we are to do this? He should be able to, since he is so critical of the fact that Heidegger "offers no criteria for constructive reform" (p. 189). In fact, there is a tension in Feenberg's positive view, which reflects the difference between the Marcusean and Heideggerian positions he has synthesized. He vacillates between an optimistic, Marcusean, May '68, "Progress will be what we want it to be" view which exalts the human capacity to control our future through strategic interventions in the design process (p. 22), and a more pessimistic Heideggerian view which suggests that while we cannot directly *control* the historical direction in which technology is taking us, we can nevertheless impact the future in small ways by learning to recognize, encourage, and support technological democratizations when they occur.

In the end, Feenberg's optimism wins out, and takes him beyond the alternatives envisioned by Marcuse and Heidegger. For Feenberg holds that "[w]hile the technocratic tendency of modern societies is no illusion, it is nowhere near as total as its adversaries once feared" (p. 104). The Birmingham School has taught him that the "power structure of advanced societies" is "a contestable 'hegemony' rather than a 'total administration'" (p. 106). Insofar as the technocracy is not totalizing (as both Marcuse and Heidegger thought it would be), resistance to it need not take the utopian form of trying to transform the entire system at once. So Feenberg replaces Heidegger's *epochal* view of revolutionary historical change with a progressivist, evolutionary model. Clearly Feenberg does not like Heidegger's idea that we must wait for "another God," that is, a radically transformative cultural event which would successfully realign our values in one fell swoop.³¹ Yet here I can't help wondering, isn't "May '68" the name for an event in which such a god seemed for a time to arrive? Feenberg's own project is certainly deeply motivated by the experiences of this event and the historical possibilities it revealed.

Feenberg nevertheless claims to be content to advocate an activism which is "far more modest in its ambitions" (p. 104). He does not follow Marcuse's emphasis on possible resistances to technocracy which come from "'without' (art, philosophical critique, the instincts, the Third World)" (p. 107); rather, he advocates a progressive reform which taps into the "radical political resources immanent to technologically advanced societies" (p. 108). Feenberg's goal is what he calls "deep democratization," that is, a short-circuiting of the administrative "suppression" of resistances which would "permanently open the strategic interiority to the flow of sub-

ordinates" initiatives" (p. 114). Feenberg does not rid himself of all revolutionary ambitions, however; as he calls for the establishment of this permanent democratic voice in the design process, he situates his project within the broader movement known as *radical democracy*.³² Feenberg's hope is that the proliferation of situated microstruggles will eventually lead to a "convergence" in which AIDS patients join together with environmentalists, Minitel hackers, progressive medical researchers, and the like in order to form a "counter-hegemony" capable of permanently democratizing technological design and so gaining some control over the historical impact of technology.³³ But if the goal is not simply democratic control for the sake of control, if, rather, this endeavor is "prefigurative," that is, if its goal is "to open up a possible future" other than enframing or technocracy (p. 108), then in the end Feenberg's powerful and important project remains closer to Heidegger than his Marcuseanism allows him to acknowledge.³⁴

NOTES

An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Society for Philosophy of Technology conference in San Jose, California, on 16 July 1999. I would like to thank Bert Dreyfus, Jerry Doppelt, Andy Feenberg, Wayne Martin, David Stump, and Richard Wolin for helpful comments and criticisms.

This chapter has been reprinted from "From the Question Concerning Technology to the Quest for a Democratic Technology: Heidegger, Marcuse, and Feenberg," *Inquiry* (www.tandf.no/inquiry) 43 (2000): 203–16, by permission of Taylor & Francis.

1. Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1991), p. 152.

2. Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 101. Unprefixed page references are to this work.

3. See Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 480–97; and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. M. Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 95–104.

4. Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State" (1934), *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. J. J. Shapiro (London: Free Association Books, 1988), p. 41.

5. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Humanities Press, 1954), p. 170; *ibid.*, p. 180; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942 and 1944), p. 470 (Marcuse clearly shared Neumann's view; see Kellner, "Technology, War, and Fascism: Marcuse in the 1940s,"

in Herbert Marcuse, *Technology, War, Fascism*, ed. Kellner, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 8; Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, p. 419 (Schmitt, of course, was celebrating rather than bemoaning this fact; see Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," p. 275, note 79).

6. Adorno's May 13, 1935, letter to Horkheimer is quoted by Kellner in "Technology, War, and Fascism," p. 16, note 22.

7. Kellner, "Technology, War, and Fascism," pp. 15-38; see also Wiggershaas, *The Frankfurt School*, pp. 292-302.

8. Kellner, "Technology, War, and Fascism," p. 21; Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, p. 433.

9. Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology" (1941), in Marcuse, *Technology, War, Fascism*, p. 41. Cf. Feenberg (p. 4).

10. Heidegger, January 20, 1948, letter to Marcuse (in Wolin, ed. and trans., *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 162); *ibid.*, p. 163. Marcuse indiscriminately associated Heidegger with Schmitt and Bäumler in "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State" (see pp. 31-42).

11. Marcuse, May 12, 1948, letter to Heidegger (in Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 164; I am reading Marcuse's self-reference as a displaced warning to his old mentor).

12. The irony of their estrangement is compounded by the fact that Heidegger understood his critique of technology as his philosophical repudiation of Nazism; see Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics," in C. Guignon, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

13. Augustin Berque, *Être Humains sur la Terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 81; quoted and translated by Feenberg (p. 165).

14. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 33; Martin Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language," trans. W. Gregory, *Journal of Philosophical Research* 23 (1998): p. 136.

15. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. J. Anderson and E. Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 46; Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language," p. 139; Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, trans. J. Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), p. 4. But cf. Feenberg (p. 204); and Albert Borgmann, *Holding on to Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 218-21.

16. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 17.

17. "Humanity does not have control over unconcealment itself" (Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 18). Indeed, the very attempt to control technology—"the will to mastery which becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control" (*ibid.*, p. 5)—is for Heidegger part of the problem; willful ontic attempts to control or manage technology risk reinforcing the Nietzschean onto-theology of eternally recurring will-to-power ultimately responsible for our technological epoch of "the atomic age." Heidegger himself advocated a specific type of education as the solution to this aporetic

impasse; see my "Heidegger on Ontological Education, or: How We Become What We Are," *Inquiry* 44:3 (2001): 243–68.

18. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 52.

19. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 4; *ibid.*, pp. 30–31; *ibid.*, p. 30.

20. Howard Rheingold, "Look Who's Talking," *Wired* (Jan. 1999), p. 161; *ibid.*, p. 131; Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54; *ibid.* (my emphasis). Here we have at least one of the Heideggerian "criteria" Feenberg seeks: to relate comportmentally to technological things with *Gelassenheit* means, minimally, to be able to *let them go*, to be able to live without the television, cell phone, pager, fax machine, Internet hook-up, etc. Of course, counterexamples like the pacemaker and hearing aid suggest that Heidegger's criterion needs further refinement.

21. Donald Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (quoted by Rheingold, "Look Who's Talking," p. 161).

22. Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," p. 39; Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. 1), in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., R. Tucker, ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 321.

23. Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology," p. 102. For a philosophical defense of Heidegger's hope for a "new beginning," see my "Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Metaphysics," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, 3 (2000): 297–327.

24. Marcuse, "Some Social Implication of Modern Technology," pp. 46–48; see Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 152–53.

25. If television has been the best "opiate of the people" since religion, the Internet has the potential to function more like a psychedelic, opening minds and increasing rather than diminishing the interaction between self and world. Feenberg himself steadfastly defends the democratic *potentials* emerging within recent forms of cyber-optimized political networking, paying less attention to the political dangers "lurking" here as well. For an insightful analysis of some of these dangers, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, *On the Internet* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

26. Marcuse, "Some Social Implication of Modern Technology," p. 46; *ibid.*, p. 55.

27. Thanks for this example go to John Senion.

28. Cf. Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores, and Hubert Dreyfus, *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 52–54.

29. Feenberg pokes fun at Heidegger's critique of typewriting (see Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 80–87. I find it remarkable, however, that in 1942 Heidegger already recognizes (in the replacement of handwriting by typewriting) a symptom of our ontological transformation toward enframing, a transformation which only becomes obvious once typewriting itself is replaced by word processing. For a convincing argument to this effect, see Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa,

"Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology," *Man and World* 30, 2 (1997). When Heidegger looked out at the highway interchange and the power plant on the Ister and found words which now seem to describe those developments we associate with the Internet, genetic research, and cloning, his was not what Auden called "The dazed uncomprehending stare / Of the Danubian despair."

30. Here Feenberg follows the Foucaultian thinker Michel de Certeau rather than "the final Foucault," who abandoned his own earlier focus on the power-resistance isomorphism in favor of an "aesthetics of the self," after his concrete genealogies taught him that such resistances are too often reinscribed into the system so as to expand and reinforce its rule. (For a particularly ironic example, we might think of the way in which the New left student movement inadvertently catapulted Reagan to power.)

31. For Heidegger, history does not flow in a smooth, uniform succession; the wheel of history turns in starts and stops, *revolutions* catalyzed by climactic events which set the tone for the epoch which follows; cf. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). On Heidegger's understanding of a new "god," see my "The Silence of the Limbs: Critiquing Culture from a Heideggerian Understanding of the Work of Art," *Enculturation* 2, 1 (1998).

32. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

33. One problem with staking the future of the New Left on the hope that local, situated micro-struggles will *converge* into a democratizing counterhegemony is the fact that our recent political history seems to demonstrate that egalitarian groups have great difficulty building and maintaining large-scale alliances. Leftist anti-authoritarianism and distaste for coercion often generate an insistence on communal unanimity which (especially when combined with the tendency toward radical self-critique) tends to splinter and divide egalitarian alliances. See Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 86–93.

34. For Heidegger, such democratization for the sake of control would be, at best, an attempt to roll *back* the wheel of history, reconstituting modern *subjects* out of postmodern *resources*. For a more sustained and detailed defense of Heidegger's ontological understanding of technology against Feenberg's objections, see my "What's Wrong with Being a Technological Essentialist? A Response to Feenberg," *Inquiry* 43, 4 (2000): 429–44.

Foucault and Critique: Kant, Humanism, and the Human Sciences

Mark Olssen

A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought, the practices that we accept rest. . . . Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as we believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practising criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult.

—Foucault, “Practicing Criticism,” *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*

Critique, for Foucault, aims at identifying and exposing the unrecognized forms of power in people’s lives, to expose and move beyond the forms in which we are entrapped in relation to the diverse ways that we act and think. In this sense, critique aims to free us from the historically transitory constraints of contemporary consciousness as realized in and through discursive practices. Such constraints impose limitations which have become so intimately a part of the way that people experience their lives that they no longer experience these systems as limitations but embrace them as the very structure of normal and natural human behavior. Within these limits, seen as both the limits of reason and the limits of nature, freedom is subordinated to reason, which is subordinated to nature, and it is against such a reduction of reason to nature that Foucault struggles. His commitment is to a form of “permanent criticism” which must be seen as linked to his broader program of freedom of thought. It is the freedom to think differently from what we already know. Thought and life achieve realization through an attitude of “permanent criticism” which does not have as its

aim an objective of absolute emancipation, or absolute enlightenment, but rather aims at limited and partial operations on the world as well as acts of aesthetic self-creation framed within a critical ontology of ourselves and supported by an ethics and aesthetics of existence. The three central thinkers in terms of whom Foucault's notion of critique takes form are Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, and it is in terms of these three thinkers that our consideration of Foucault's conception proceeds.

FOUCAULT AND KANT

Much of Foucault's approach to critique stems from his radicalization of the Kantian approach to critique. As James Miller (1994: 138) notes "Foucault never ceased to consider himself a kind of Kantian." In *The Order of Things* Foucault (1970: 384) tells us that Kantian critique forms an essential part of "the immediate space of our reflection. We think in that area." Further, as Miller (1993: 138) notes, in an essay completed shortly before his death for a French dictionary of philosophy,¹ Foucault also situates his own work within the critical tradition of Kant. This tradition, says Foucault, entails "an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject and object are formed or modified" and a demonstration of how such conditions "are constitutive of a possible knowledge" (cited in Miller, 1993: 138).²

In Foucault's view, Kant founded the two great critical traditions between which modern philosophy has been divided. On the one hand, Kant laid down and founded that critical tradition of philosophy which defines the conditions under which a true knowledge is possible, of which a whole area of modern philosophy since the nineteenth century has been presented and developed on that basis as an analytic of truth; on the other hand, he initiated a mode of critical interrogation that is immanent in the movement of the Enlightenment and which directs our attention to the present and asks 'what is the contemporary field of possible experience?' It is to this latter emphasis, starting with Hegel and leading through Nietzsche, Weber, and the Frankfurt school that Foucault locates his own work.

Foucault sees in Kant's essay "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?"³ of 1784 the origin of a critical ontology of the present. Foucault summarizes Kant's definition of the concept 'Enlightenment' as a measure of man's "release from his self-incurred tutelage" (Kant, 1992: 90). Kant defines Enlightenment, says Foucault (1984a: 34), "in an entirely negative way, as an *Ausgang*, an 'exit' or 'way out' . . . he is looking

for a difference: what difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?" In this, Foucault discovers Kant as "an archer," as Habermas (1986: 165) has put it, "who aims his arrow at the heart of the most actual features of the present and so opens the discourse of modernity." As Foucault puts it:

The question which seems to me to appear for the first time in this text by Kant is the question of the present, of the contemporary moment. What is happening today? What is happening now? And what is this "now" which we all inhabit, and which defines the moment in which I am writing? . . . Now it seems to me that the question Kant answers . . . has to do with what this present is . . . The question is: what is there in the present which can have contemporary meaning for philosophical reflection. (Foucault, 1986: 88–89)⁴

In considering the Enlightenment, what also must be taken into account, says Foucault (1986: 89) is that it was "the *Aufklärung* itself which named itself the *Aufklärung*." In this, it was "a cultural process of indubitably a very singular character, which came to self-awareness through the act of naming itself, situating itself in relation to its past and its future, and in prescribing the operation which it was required to effect within its own present." Thus, as Foucault (1984a: 34) summarizes it, Kant indicates in his essay that the "way out" that characterizes the Enlightenment is a process that releases us from the status of our own immaturity, an immaturity in which we accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for.

Kant links the process of release from immaturity to man himself. He notes that "man himself is responsible for his immature status . . . that he is able to escape from it by a change that he himself will bring about in himself." Hence Kant's motto for the Enlightenment: *aude sapere* (dare to know) (1984a: 34).

It is in this sense, says Foucault (1984a: 35), that the Enlightenment for Kant is both a *collective process* as well as an *act of personal courage*. As integral to the conditions for escape from immaturity, Kant seeks to distinguish the realm of obedience and reason. Hence one must obey as a condition of being able to reason freely (Kant gives the example of paying one's taxes while being free to reason about the system of taxation in operation). Thus central to the Enlightenment in Kant's view is the public use of reason which "must be free . . . [for] it alone can bring about enlightenment among men" (Kant, 1992: 92). To resolve the issue as to how the public use of free reason can coexist with obedience to the law, Kant proposes his famous contract with Frederick II. This, as Foucault puts it, "might be called the contract of rational despotism

with free reason: the public and free use of autonomous reason will be the best guarantee of obedience, on condition, however, that the political principle that must be obeyed itself be in conformity with universal reason" (Foucault, 1984a: 37).

There is a connection, in Foucault's view, between the brief article "What Is Enlightenment?" and Kant's three Critiques, for Kant describes the Enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority. It is precisely at this moment, however, that critique is necessary since, as Foucault (1984a: 37–38) puts it, "its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate. . . . The Critique is, in a sense, the handbook of reason that has grown up in the Enlightenment; and, conversely, the Enlightenment is the age of the Critique." Thus, Kant's short essay on the Enlightenment constitutes "a reflection . . . on the contemporary status of his own enterprise" (1984a: 37). It is in this sense, as Foucault maintains (1984a: 38), that "this little text is located . . . at the crossroads of critical reflection and reflection on history."

Foucault takes Kant's text as the point of emergence of the question of modernity. As he puts it:

the question of modernity has been posed in classical culture according to an axis with two poles, antiquity and modernity; it had been formulated either in terms of an authority to be accepted or rejected . . . or else in the form . . . of a comparative evaluation: are the Ancients superior to the Moderns? are we living in a period of decadence? and so forth. There now appears a new way of posing the question of modernity, no longer within a longitudinal relationship to the Ancients, but rather in what one might call a "sagittal" relation to one's own present-ness. Discourse has to take account of its own present-ness, in order to find its own place, to pronounce its meaning, and to specify the mode of action which it is capable of exercising within this present. What is my present? What is the meaning of this present? Such is, it seems to me, the substance of this new interrogation on modernity. (Foucault, 1986: 90)

Hence, for Foucault (1986: 89), Kant's essay introduces a new type of question into the field of philosophical reflection, one that sees philosophy "problematizing its own discursive present-ness" within the context of history. It is this historical contextualization that was Kant's reason for undertaking his work at the particular time, in the first place. In fact, the question he was addressing was one put to him and other *Aufklärer* by the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Fifteen years later Kant posed a similar question in response to the French Revolution of 1789. In his article "The Contest

of the Faculties,”⁵ Kant considers the question as to the nature of the French Revolution. What he was searching for was a ‘sign’ of progress of the human race. In order to judge progress, reasoned Kant, rather than seek to follow the threads of a “teleological fabric which would make progress possible” (1986: 92) Kant thought it necessary “to isolate and identify in history an event that will serve as a sign for progress.” Further, says Foucault (1986: 92):

The event that will be able to allow us to decide whether there is progress will be a sign, which is “*rememorativum, demonstrativum, prognosticom.*” It must be a sign that shows that it has already been thus (the rememorative sign), a sign that shows that things are at present happening thus (the demonstrative sign), a sign finally which shows that things will always be thus (the prognostic sign). We will then be sure that the cause which makes progress possible has not been operative only at a particular moment, but that it guarantees a general tendency of the whole human race to advance in the direction of progress. (Foucault, 1986: 92)

Is there such a sign? Kant’s answer was “the French Revolution” has such signifying value, although it is not the revolution as an event which constitutes the sign but rather “the way the Revolution operates as spectacle, the way it is generally received by spectators who did not take part in it but watch it, witness it and, for better or worse, allow themselves to be swept along by it” (1986: 93). It doesn’t even matter whether the Revolution succeed or fail. What constitutes the *sign of progress* is, as Kant expresses it, that the Revolution is surrounded by “a wishful participation that borders closely on enthusiasm” (cited in Foucault, 1986: 93).

Hence, for Kant, the enthusiasm for revolution “is the sign of a moral disposition of humanity” (Foucault, 1986: 93); it completes and continues the process of the Enlightenment, that event that denotes the long journey from humanity’s immaturity to maturity. In Foucault’s view, Kant’s two questions—“What is Enlightenment?” and “What is Revolution?”—are the two forms in which he poses the question of his own present. They are also the two questions “which have continued to haunt if not all modern philosophy since the nineteenth century, at least a great part of it.” For Kant, says Foucault, the Enlightenment constitutes both a “singular event inaugurating European modernity and as a permanent process manifesting itself in the history of reason” (1986: 95).

Foucault is less convinced than Kant that the Enlightenment is a long, slow, uphill pilgrimage based on the directing capacities of reason, and less convinced than Kant that the Revolution constitutes a sign of progress. For Foucault, rather than being a period or event based on

conviction and certainty in man's newfound, mature dependence on reason, the Enlightenment signifies uncertainty and the need for caution. Similarly, the Revolution is not an event marked by the passage of enthusiasm which serves as a sure sign of progress, but an event that is an ambiguous occurrence and always potentially dangerous: "liable to succeed or miscarry, or to succeed at unacceptable cost" (1986: 92). Hence, while Foucault respects Kant's argument, he finds it flawed on several grounds: "many things in our experience convince us that the historical event of the Enlightenment did not make us mature adults, and we have not reached that stage yet" (1984a: 49). The Revolution that Kant took to be a sign of progress, although "born of rationalism . . . one is entitled to ask what part is played in the effects of despotism in which that hope lost itself" (Foucault, 1980b: 54).

HUMANISM

Foucault's critique of humanism is consistent throughout his work. As he expressed it in a later essay, anthropological humanism takes various forms and can be seen evident in Christianity, Marxism, Existentialism, Phenomenology, even Nazism and Stalinism, says Foucault. In addition (1984a: 44):

Humanism is . . . a theme or rather set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions over time, in European societies; these themes, always tied to value judgements, have obviously varied greatly in their content, as well as in the values they have preserved. . . . From this we must not conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected, but that the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection. And it is a fact that, at least since the seventeenth century, what is called humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics. Humanism serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is, after all, obliged to take recourse.

In its more specific usage, however, humanism constitutes a condition of possibility of the Enlightenment episteme. It focuses on the study of Man placing the subject at the center of life. Kantianism sees man as transcendental arbiter of reason and as both subject and object of knowledge, leading in Foucault's view to the fundamental incompatibilities in the conception of what man is and in the nature of modernist knowledge that he analyzed in *The Order of Things* (1970: 316–22). For Foucault, man can-

not be seen as a foundation or origin or condition of possibility of discourse. Kant's attempt to do so was part of his search for an original foundation "that would make rationality the telos of mankind, and link the whole history of thought to the preservation of this rationality" (Foucault, 1972: 12–13). Although Kant's 'analytic of finitude' made possible the sciences of man, man is placed in an unstable position as both the subject and object of knowledge. Hence, man emerges in the 'analytic of finitude' introduced by Kant as a "strange empirico-transcendental doublet" because he is both the object of knowledge (that which knowledge seeks to know about) and the subject of knowledge (that which strives after such knowledge). Such a humanism introduces radical instabilities into the human sciences. As Hiley (1985: 72) puts it:

Humanism, as Foucault understood it, exhausts itself in an endless back and forth from one side to the other of man and his doubles: from man as the condition for the possibility of knowledge to man as himself an object in the empirical field; from man's attempt to become intelligible to himself by making accessible the unthought that always eludes him because it is that which makes thought possible; from man's curious relations with his history as historical and what makes history possible in which his origin always retreats. Humanism or the analytic of finitude, then, is 'warped and twisted forms of reflection,' and all those forms of reflection that take man as the starting point, that talk of man's liberation, that attempt to reach the truth about man are caught in the futility of the doubles.

Humanism, then, involves the claim that man, for Kant, exists at the center of the universe as a finite being who can reason within limits which he cannot go beyond. Such a notion generates insoluble contradictions for the human sciences because it is based on incompatible conceptions of what man, his history, and mind are. Foucault (1970: 312–13) traces the play of these contradictions as they have emerged alongside of the empirical human sciences. Hence on the one hand our knowledge must be limited, as man knows himself as a finite being, as an objective of nature; on the other hand, that finitude which establishes the limits of human understanding is claimed to be the condition that makes knowledge of this finitude possible (1970: 314–15). Hence, the possibility of knowledge is established on limits to reason which deny it (1970: 317–18).

Kant's transcendentalism is thus underpinned by an anthropological conception of the subject. Foucault opposes Kantian humanism in the same way he opposed the Cartesian conception of the atomized and disembodied *cogito* at the centre of the universe. For Foucault, the Cartesian conception of an autonomous and rational subject who is set apart from

history depends upon a distinction between mind and body setting up a dualism of inner/outer. In this model, while the body is subject to the determinations of the laws of nature, mind is autonomous unto itself. In such a conception, knowledge is seen as grounded upon an incorrigible and indubitable foundation. Following Heidegger and Nietzsche, humanism, for Foucault, has a specific meaning which refers to the philosophical centrality or priority of the subject whose rational capacities, which are asocial and ahistorical, serve as a foundation anchoring objectivity and truth. As Fraser (1994: 191) states, humanism 'is the project of making the subject pole triumph over the object pole' representing man as constitutor, as free, as all knowing, and as master of their fate and destiny. Foucault's conception of the subject, influenced by Nietzsche, sees it as having no 'unity,' 'essence,' or integral identity.

It is in defense of this philosophical antihumanism that Foucault presents his reading and adaptation of Kant. In his introductory commentary to Kant's *Anthropology* Foucault argues that this work is much more important to Kant's overall project than has commonly been represented.⁶ By 'anthropology' Kant meant the actual empirical study of the human being, and in his *Logic* Kant suggests that anthropology might be regarded as the fundamental issue in philosophy, as all of the questions that he was centrally concerned with stem from the more basic question "What is Man?" In his introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*⁷ Foucault suggests that Kant's own conception of the person's choice grows out of the network of social practices which constitute them. Yet in order to establish knowledge as secure Kant distinguished between the empirical and the transcendental, positing specific laws of cognition in order to ground objectivity against skeptical attack. Thus central to Kant's Copernican Revolution were (1) the establishment of lawful cognitive regularities to anchor objectivity, (2) the establishment of free will as a transcendental practice, and (3) the representation of human beings as constructing their moral and political worlds for themselves through the utilization of the capabilities of reason. Although Kant believed that such a constructivism, if carried out according to the dictates of reason, would vindicate the traditional Christian idea of God, in Foucault's view the consequences of his transcendental critique was to establish human beings as having much greater creative capabilities than Kant had supposed. Hence, for Foucault (1960: 17), as Miller (1993: 140) recounts, "the world appears as a city to be built, rather than as a cosmos already given." In Foucault's view, then, Kant had failed to confront the constructivist implications that his insight regarding the transcendental power of human beings revealed. As Miller (1993: 141) expresses the point:

Instead of exercising the power of free will and imagining "a city to be built," Kant in his *Anthropology* tried to vindicate a "normative understanding," not only by codifying the kind of savior faire acquired in the course of everyday life, but also of accusing of "high treason" anyone who regarded such know-how as counterfeit and illusory. As Foucault sums up the argument of his thesis in *The Order of Things*, Kant's philosophy produces, "sur-reptitiously and in advance, the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental," even though Kant had demonstrated the division between them.⁸

What Kant's *Anthropology* also reveals, in Foucault's view, is the contextual historical character of the categories which take root in, and develop in the social and historical customs and practices of a specific society. In this context, the role of the philosopher is to understand the historical nature of the a priori through a detailed examination of the social and historical practices (customs, language, habits, discourses, institutions, disciplines) from which a particular style of reasoning emerges and develops. It is in this sense, for Foucault, as Miller (1993: 140) puts it, Kant's *Anthropology*, far from being "a piece of crackpot pseudo science opens up an important new philosophical horizon." As Miller (1993: 140) continues:

Despite its apparent eccentricity, Kant's book underlines for Foucault the manifold ways in which "the self, by becoming an object" of regulated social practices, "takes its place in the field of experience and finds there a concrete system of belonging." This system is "immediate and imperative," no human being may escape it; it is transmitted in "the regulated element of language," organized "without the intervention of a force or authority," activated within each subject "purely and simply because he speaks."⁹

For Foucault, the unresolved tension of Kant's philosophical project is that he fails to appreciate the contingent and historically contextualized character of all truth-claims, that is, to advocate a notion of critique which claims to transcend specific historical conditions through the exercise of cognitive faculties (of understanding, reason, and judgment) deduced a priori as timeless structures. The transcendental character of Kant's argument resides in positing a priori categories which are deduced to constitute the consciousness of the human subject, as that which organizes perception as a timeless and universal structure. In this sense, Foucault rejects Kant's claims to have established the universal grounds for the conditions of possibility of human knowledge, and Kant's claims for transcendental reason are replaced for Foucault by a principle of permanent contingency. By extension, Foucault disputes Kant's claim to have established a secure foundation by which to differentiate different types of

knowledge claims, relating to science, practical reason, or aesthetics. The objective is to switch from a conception of critique as being transcendently grounded, to a conception of critique which conceives it as practical and as historically specific. Thus Foucault says:

Criticism is no longer going to be practised in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as an historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In this sense the criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. (Foucault, 1984a: 45–46)

Hence, on Foucault's account, concerning Kant's famous questions "What can I know?" "What ought I to do?" and "What may I hope for?" as James Bernauer (Foucault, 1991: 46) expresses it, Foucault would "denature" and "historicize" them:

Not "What can I know?," but rather, "How have my questions been produced? How has the path of my knowing been determined?" Not "What ought I to do," but rather, "How have I been situated to experience the real? How have exclusions operated in delineating the realm of obligation for me?" Not "What may I hope for?," but rather, "What are the struggles in which I am engaged? How have the parameters for my aspirations been defined?"

Foucault's genealogical project is then a critique of reason whereby he seeks to introduce, to use Thomas McCarthy's (1994: 249) phrase "a sociohistorical turn" into the practice of philosophy. In order to explore "the nature scope and limits of human reason" we have to understand:

the intrinsic impurity of what we call reason—its embeddedness in culture and society, its engagement with power and interest, the historical variability of its categories and criteria, the embodied, sensuous and practically engaged character of its bearers . . . and this calls for models of sociohistorical enquiry that go beyond the traditional bounds of philosophical analysis. The critique of reason as a non-foundationalist enterprise is concerned with structures and rules that transcend the individual consciousness. But what is supraindividual in this way is no longer understood as transcendental; it is sociocultural in origin. (McCarthy, 1994: 243–44)

Foucault thus adapts Kant to support his sociohistorical conception through which individuals are constituted in relation to a world of already

given practices of a determinate historical terrain. In drawing on Nietzsche's method of genealogy, institutions and practices are historically investigated in order to trace the forms of power and lines of opposition between and among them. For Nietzsche our habitual modes of action and thought have an historical origin and bare the marks of conflicting individual wills to power of people, groups, and classes in history. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche shows how our dominant moral codes emerged from the battle of classes and groups (e.g., Romans and Jews) in the past. Genealogy seeks to trace the lines of the battles that have gone into making the world as we know it in the present, natural. In this sense it contributes to problematizing our taken-for-granted beliefs and conceptions about the way the world is.

A further sense in which Foucault is antihumanist arises in the writings of the 1970s, specifically *Discipline and Punish*, the *History of Sexuality*, and in his writings on power (see Foucault, 1980a). In these works, Foucault is concerned with the role of the human sciences in the emergence and maintenance of normalization through disciplinary bio-power. Bio-power, as David Hiley (1985: 73) tells us, is a uniquely modern form of power/knowledge which includes "disciplinary techniques for optimizing administration of bodies with regulatory controls over biological processes for the management of life" (Hiley, 1985: 73; citing Foucault, 1978c: 139). It functions via normalization to colonize every aspect of life. As Hiley (1985: 73) continues:

It is productive rather than merely repressive; it is capillary, decentralized and omnipresent, it operates through coercion, surveillance and discipline at the level of micro-practices rather than merely through ideological distortion; it is intentional and strategically deployed but nonsubjective, i.e., it is strategies without strategists.¹⁰

LIBERAL FEARS OF ANTIHUMANISM

Following Nietzsche, Heidegger, Althusser, Lacan, the structuralists, Derrida, and Deleuze, Foucault's antihumanism is specifically a *philosophical* thesis which represents humanism as bolstering a 'philosophy of consciousness' as entailed in the foundationalist claims of Descartes and Kant. As a consequence, Foucault's antihumanism must be seen as undercutting only the *modernist* notion of the subject, and as such, much of the core of humanist values can be retained. As a philosophical thesis antihumanism questions the values of autonomy, subjectivity, and self-determination.

One can, on such a view, still oppose oppression and domination, as well as those values that could be represented as 'anti-humanity.' As well, one still tries to equalize power, to liberate. What Foucault is opposing essentially then, is the *modernist* conception of the subject, articulated in the philosophies of Descartes and Kant, and which took root in the period of the Enlightenment developing from a number of threads that can be traced from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. As Tony Davies (1997: 9) says "the word is of German coinage and . . . its credentials are Greek." Humanism was a term which centered on the development of the individual by such writers as Burckhardt, Vasari, Machiavelli, and Marlowe. It entails:

the myth of the essential universal man: essential, because humanity—humanity—is the inseparable and central essence, the defining quality, of human beings; universal, because that essential humanity is shared by all human beings of whatever time or place. (Davies, 1997: 24)

If fifteenth-century Italy is one source of humanism, then the revolutionary discourse on rights is another, says Davies. When Rousseau, in the *Social Contract* (1762) announces that "L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers," he distinguishes between abstract 'Man' and 'actual man' caught in their social position. Similarly, Thomas Paines *Rights of Man* (1792) or Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* (1776) all appeal to the abstract singularity and universality of Man (Davies, 1997: 24–32). Humanism, then, posits a "timeless and unlocalised" condition, which is "Frederich Nietzsche's radical insight." In *Human, All Too Human* (1880), says Davies, (1997: 32), Nietzsche wrote that:

All philosophers involuntarily think of 'man' as an *aeterna veritas* [eternal truth], as something that remains constant in the midst of all flux, as a sure measure of things. . . . Lack of historical sense is the family failing of all philosophers; many without being aware of it, even take the most recent manifestations of man, such as has arisen under the impress of certain religions, even certain political events, as the fixed form from which one has to start out. . . . But everything has become: there are no eternal facts, just as there are no absolute truths. (Davies, 1997: 33; citing Hollingdale, 1973: 60–61)

And Nietzsche's message would also be that of Foucault: what is needed from now on is "historical philosophising" and with it "the virtue of modesty" by which he meant "a healthy willingness to resist temptation to confuse our own dispositions and values with some universal and eternal 'human condition'" (Davies, 1997: 33; from Hollingdale, 1973: 65). At a

philosophical level, then, Foucault rejects the Kantian paradigm of critique as grounded in the idea of an autonomous, self-constituting, transcendental subject.

According to Nancy Fraser (1994: 196) the foundationalist warrant that humanism justifies is not only philosophical but also political and strategic, in that humanist values are utilized by liberals in opposing absolutist government, the use of torture, and the violation of rights. Here, however, while it is true that Foucault opposes humanism in this sense, he does not thereby support absolute government, or torture, or the violation of rights. Rather, what he argues is that such causes are not adequately supported or opposed by humanist liberal arguments. Humanism is a discursive myth, and notions of autonomy and self-determination are illusions of a liberal hegemony form of disciplinary government which fail to recognize the historical constitution of selfhood. Such a discourse is at odds with both reason and experience.

Fraser also claims that Foucault could be seen as rejecting humanism on normative grounds which would be to introduce a relativistic argument that humanism is (just another) form of disciplinary bio-power in a world where all forms of power are disciplinary, and equally arbitrary. I have already rejected such an interpretation of Foucault in my book *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education* (Olssen, 1999: chap. 7). Thus, expressed in terms of Fraser's language, my argument is that Foucault's antihumanism, like Althusser's, is exclusively conceptual or philosophical. It is, as Fraser (1994: 207) has put it, "the project of de-Cartesianizing humanism." This is to acknowledge the Heideggerian, as well as the Nietzschean, influence on Foucault. For it was Heidegger, in his attack upon Cartesianism, who argued that what modern philosophy posited as universal and ahistorical was in reality contingent and historically located.¹¹ Just as Heidegger theorizes the background system of beliefs and values that constitute *Being*, so Foucault sees humanism as a particular discourse of power/knowledge whose central figure is man. And, furthermore, "as the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end" (Foucault, 1970: 387).

Foucault's rejection of humanism cannot, thus, be seen as a relativistic rejection of ethics, freedom, or the possibilities of self-creation. Rather, Foucault explicitly advocates for a nonhumanist ethical paradigm, which can be extrapolated for him, from his later works on ethics, to answer the charge, in Fraser's (1994: 196) terms, of why we should challenge a fully panopticized society. Although for Foucault, as for Spinoza, "the body forgets nothing,"¹² in that it is subject to external determinations, as for Spinoza, it also has its own momentum or force for acting on the world.

In opposing humanism, Foucault is not thereby rejecting agency or freedom for, like Spinoza, he sees the subject as possessing both *passive* and *active* dimensions.¹³ It is not then that no humanist values are worthy of protection, but that modernist humanism radically misconceives them. If this argument is valid, then Foucault's rejection of modernity and its values is not a rejection *tout court*, but only of some aspects of it. Likewise, in rejecting humanism, he is rejecting a specific theoretical, philosophical discourse. The rejection of humanism, then, does not entail the rejection of *humane values*, despite historical associations between thinkers like Heidegger or Nietzsche with political movements like Nazism.¹⁴ Such documented associations make an additional comment important, however. The existence of support for fascist causes by a thinker such as Heidegger, or the appropriation of several Nietzschean themes for the support of Nazi policies, cannot be seen as undermining or discrediting the thinkers entire philosophical oeuvre. Nor can it suggest that themes such as genealogy, or the priority of the social over the individual, could be represented as lending support to such causes, directly or indirectly, despite the fact that Nietzsche (like Wagner) was appropriated to the Nazi campaign. In this sense, as Davies (1997: 34) states, it is:

worth stressing that what is at stake in the Nietzschean critique . . . is not the endorsement of some proto-fascist brutality and humiliation but the analysis of one of the central myths of nineteenth century civilization, its 'religion of humanity,' among whose monstrous offspring Nazism itself can be numbered.

Neither is it possible to see how Foucault's philosophical antihumanism could plausibly be linked to such themes. Rather, it denotes Foucault's attempt to expunge a metaphysical remnant from the Enlightenment. In this sense, then, it is a limited technical discourse which signifies his affinity with structuralism as it:

kicks away the twin pillars of humanism: the sovereignty of rational consciousness and the authenticity of individual speech. Thought and speech, which for the humanist had been the central substance of identity, are located elsewhere, and the self is a vacancy. 'I', as the poet Rimbauld put it, 'is an other.' (Davies, 1997: 60)

CRITIQUE AS A PERMANENT PHILOSOPHICAL ETHOS

For Foucault because the Enlightenment has not evacuated the problems and dangers of earlier periods in history, the implications of his criticisms

of Kant mean that the basis to critique must be as a form of permanent interrogative thinking:

The thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era. (Foucault, 1984a: 42)

In that the Enlightenment emphasizes 'permanent critique,' it emphasizes a form of philosophical interrogation which "simultaneously problematizes man's relation to the present, man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject," says Foucault (1984b: 42). Critique, then, defines an 'ethos' which has both a negative and a positive heuristic. In terms of its negative heuristic, Foucault identifies the need to refuse what he calls "the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment" (1984a: 42). This refers to the pressure to be either "for or against the Enlightenment," to "accept the Enlightenment and remain with the tradition of its rationalism . . . or [to] criticise the Enlightenment and then try to escape from its principles of rationality" (1984a: 43). Rather:

We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent by the Enlightenment. Such an analysis implies a series of historical inquiries that are as precise as possible; and these inquiries will not be orientated retrospectively toward the "essential kernel of rationality" that can be found in the Enlightenment and that would have to be preserved in any event; they will be orientated toward the 'contemporary limits of the necessary,' that is, toward what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects.

For Foucault, the Enlightenment comprises a set of events and complex historical processes located at a certain point in the development of European societies. This creates the necessity for a double conception of critique. On the one hand it must proceed genealogically under the influence of Nietzsche through an examination of the historical a prioris of all possible experience; on the other, it must seek to explore the possible limits to experience by exercising the transcendental freedom which Kant himself established as an essential foundation for critique. In this sense, the philosophical ethos of critique may be characterized as a *limit-attitude*, but in a different sense from that suggested by Kant:

Criticism indeed consists of analysing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge must abstain from transgressing it seems to me that the critical question today has to be

turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary or obligatory, what part is taken up by things which are actually singular, contingent, the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform critique conducted in the form of necessary limitations into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression. (Foucault, 1984a: 46)

Rather than accepting preestablished limits to reason based on Kant's transcendental analysis, the theoretical task becomes testing the limits which establish to what extent we can move beyond them. Foucault defines transgression as "an action which involves the limit . . . the experience of transgression brings to light this relationship of finitude to being, this moment of the limit which anthropological thought, since Kant, could only designate from the distance and from the exterior through the language of dialectics" (1977b: 33, 49).

Such transgressive behavior thus makes visible the limits to reason and in that it takes thought to its limit it serves as an arm in the critique of reason. As Miller (1993: 143) notes, for Foucault

transgression accomplishes a kind of post-Kantian 'critique' in "a three fold sense": "it brings to light the conceptual and historical *a priori*; it discerns the conditions in which (philosophical thought) can find or transcend its forms of stability; it ultimately passes judgement and makes a decision about its possibilities of existence."

Yet the limits to transgression are unsurpassable, as there is no neutral ground beyond power/knowledge from which critique could establish itself. As Foucault (1977b: 34) states:

Transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable.

CRITICISM AS PRACTICAL POLITICS

What criticism refers to for Foucault, in a concrete and practical sense, is an autonomous, noncentralized kind of theoretical production, one whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought. In this sense, criticism has a local character because the attempt to think in terms of totalizing strategies or models proves a

hindrance to effective action. Criticism thus involves the role of the 'specific intellectual' and is linked to the insurrection of subjugated knowledges. By subjugated knowledges, Foucault is referring to the historical contents of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated—naive knowledges that are defined as operating low down on the hierarchy of formal knowledge below an acceptable level of cognition or scientificity. But, Foucault does not mean by subjugated knowledge the unsuccessful paradigms of knowledge, but rather as Habermas (1994: 92) notes, he is thinking of:

the experiences of groups subordinated to power that have never advanced to the status of official knowledge, that have never been sufficiently articulated. It is a question of the implicit knowledge of 'the people' who form the bedrock in a system of power, who are the first to experience a technology of power with their own bodies, whether as the ones suffering or as the officials manning the machinery of suffering—for example, the knowledge of those who undergo psychiatric treatment, of orderlies, of delinquents and wardens, of the inmates of concentration camps and the guards, of blacks and homosexuals, of woman and of witches, of vagabonds, of children and dreamers.

For Foucault it is through the reemergence of these low-ranking subordinate knowledges that criticism performs its task. And as Habermas (1994: 93) has observed there is a parallel here between Foucault's conception and writers like Lukács who attributed an immanent potential to the perspectives of the working class.

By 'buried,' 'disqualified,' or 'subjugated' knowledges Foucault is also referring to the 'local' or 'regional' character of knowledge, for genealogy can only do its work "once the tyranny of globalizing discourses is eliminated" (Foucault, 1994: 22). In this, Foucault strives repeatedly to distance the task of critique from its traditional pairing with the notion of revolution, or indeed with any ideal conception of an imagined society in the future. In this sense, historicocritical attitude must be an experimental one. This is to say, it must reject "radical and global" forms of analysis, as "we know from experience," he says (1984a: 46), "that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led to the return of the most dangerous traditions." Thus, Foucault analyses "specific transformations," which are "always practical and local" (1984a: 46).

On these grounds, Foucault's conception of critique does not appeal to standards in the past, in the future, or in reason, yet it seeks to expose

unrecognized operation of power in social practices. This is why Foucault's conception of critique differs from that of marxism, the Frankfurt school, and Habermas. His aim is not the realization of a rational society, but more pragmatically orientated to revealing "the contemporary limits of the necessary." His critique, in that it is not Kantian, also does not share the faith of a future utopia of the sort advocated by Marxists or by the leading writers of the Frankfurt school such as Adorno, Horkheimer, or Habermas. As Rajchman (1985: 80) says, citing Geuss (1981), Foucault sees the model of an "inverted Enlightenment" as definitive of the very idea of the model of critical theory that has been developed within marxism, and most especially by the Frankfurt school. Such models presuppose, in Foucault's view, the revelation of some concealed emancipatory truth about our 'real' natures, just as much as they do about the real nature and limits to reason. It is the absence of some implicit or explicit ultimate measure or standard by which truth is assessed that explains why Foucault terms his own form of critical interrogation as 'practical.' In this sense, its most immediate and central concern is to sound a warning on the dangers of power, and this becomes the main function of philosophy. As Foucault (1991a: 20) states, "on the critical side . . . philosophy is precisely the challenging of all phenomena of domination at whatever level or whatever form they present themselves—political, economic, sexual, institutional, and so on."

For Habermas, critical theory has both Hegelian and Kantian moments in that it attempts to realize an ideal historical state as well as to maintain universal claims for truth and moral reasoning. In addition, Habermas's critical theory shares the Kantian theme of the unity of knowledge underpinned by a conception of anthropological interests. In Habermas's conception there are three 'interests' of humanity which correspond to the different relevant interests of inquiry. The first 'interest' corresponds to the natural sciences, yields instrumental 'means-ends' knowledge and is based on an interest in explaining; the second corresponds to the human sciences, yields interpretive knowledge and is based on an interest in understanding, and the third corresponds to critical knowledge and is based upon an interest in emancipation, or in becoming mature. For Habermas, knowledge acquired through these interests is rational to the extent that domination or oppression does not corrupt it, which is to say that communication is rational to the extent that it is unconstrained by force. Hence Habermas promotes a transhistorical and cross-cultural conception of rationality which locates it neither in the subject nor the world, but rather in the nature of *unconstrained communication*, as resolved through *argumentation* or *deliberation*. Presupposed in every speech act,

says Habermas, is the possibility of separating the 'strategic' from the 'communicative' uses of language, a circumstance that makes it possible to assess the validity of perspectives based on the *force of the better argument alone*.

Foucault sees Habermas's conception of critique as an idealist conception which traces the process of Enlightenment as the story of its movement toward its ideal realization or end-state. This is the Hegelian theme which links Habermas's idea of critique to the realization of history's ultimate goal, and which sees history as the self-realization of humanity. He also rejects Habermas's assumptions concerning the systematic unity of knowledge and of the interests of the human race, which ground for Habermas, following Kant and Fichte, the major divisions in the sciences of inquiry. This in Foucault's view is to ground one's form of critique on an analytic framework of anthropological interests which underpin both the Hegelian and Kantian moments. Hence, Foucault attempts to purge both the humanist as well as the idealist aims of critique as they occur in Habermas's project, replacing it, following Nietzsche, with a model of history as a continuous and never-ending process of changing practices.

Foucault thus opposes Habermas in terms of his Hegelianism and his Kantianism: he rejects his conception of history, his conception of anthropological interests, his conception of reason, as well as his 'utopianism' which together give rise to Habermas's notion of a rationality premised, as Jameson (1984: vii) has put it, on the idea of a "noise-free, transparent, fully communicational society" where "so-called validity claims immanent in ordinary conversation can be discursively redeemed at the level of discourse" (Peters, 1996: 40). As Foucault states, in relation to this issue:

[In Habermas's work] there is always something which causes me a problem. It is when he assigns a very important place to relations of communication and also to functions that I would call 'utopian.' The thought that there could be a state of communication which would be such that the games of truth could circulate freely, without obstacles, without constraint, and without coercive effects, seems to me to be Utopia. It is being blind to the fact that relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free oneself. I don't believe there can be a society without relations of power. . . . The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give oneself the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (Foucault, 1991: 18)

For Foucault, 'strategic' action, conceived broadly as politically or ideologically distorted dialogue, necessarily supervenes on 'communicative' action. It is always the question of maintaining the correct 'balance of power' relations in the present rather than seeking to exclude all forms of power from the world in the search for a different order of society. Hence Foucault rejects the idea, which he sees in Habermas, marxism, and the frankfurt School, of conceiving history as a single rational trajectory along which humanity fulfills its essential nature. For Foucault, power is more ubiquitous, diffuse, and corporeal; it infiltrates the fine textures of social existence as well as self-identity, and hence it is impossible to know one's true humanity apart from power's distorting effects (Foucault, 1980c: 96, 101).

In that the task of criticism is not linked to the objective of absolute emancipation, the commitment is part of a broader program of freedom of the thinker which involves an ascetical moment of self-creation. In this sense, critique for Foucault involves both work on oneself and responding to one's time. In relation to the former, Foucault developed new forms of relating to the self, most clearly expressed in his ethical theories designed to resist the constraints of normalization in an "ecstatic transcendence of any history which asserts its necessity" (Bernauer, 1991: 70). As a modern example of work on oneself, Foucault points to Baudelaire whose "consciousness of modernity is widely recognised as one of the most acute in the nineteenth century" (Foucault, 1984a: 39). Baudelaire defines modernity as "the will to 'heroize' the present." Modern man is the man who tries to invent himself through an ascetic elaboration of self. For Baudelaire this can be produced only through art. In *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*, however, Foucault recognizes various forms of self-creation drawing variously on the Greeks, the Romans, the Renaissance (Burckhart), as well as contemporary models.

In that it is linked to the specific struggles of subordinated groups, the role of critique does not only function in relation to ethical and aesthetic self-creation of individuals and groups but also in the *transformation of the real-world structures*. "Criticism," says Foucault (1988a: 155):

is absolutely indispensable for any transformation. . . . (A) transformation that remains within the same mode of thought, a transformation that is only a way of adjusting the same thought more closely to the reality of things can merely be a superficial transformation . . . as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult, and quite possible.

So criticism is integrally related to transformation and change, which, says Foucault, can be carried out only in a free atmosphere. This gives a

programmatic role for the 'specific intellectual' and for 'thought.' His role, since he works specifically in the realm of thought, is to see how far the liberation of thought can make these transformations urgent enough for people to want to carry them out:

Out of these conflicts, these confrontations, a new power relation must emerge, whose first, temporary expression will be a reform. If at the base there has not been the work of thought upon itself and if, in fact, modes of thought, that is to say modes of action, have not been altered, whatever the project of reform, we know that it will be swamped, digested by modes of behaviour and institutions that will always be the same. (1988a: 156)

Thought, then, is a crucial factor in the process of criticism. Thought exists independently of systems and structures of discourse. It is something which is often hidden but which always animates everyday behavior (1988a: 154–55). A critique is not a question of criticizing things as not being right as they are. Rather, says Foucault (1988a: 154) "it is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. . . . Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such (1988a: 154).

Critique, then, is practical, in that it is through the arm of critique that Foucault wants to change our world, not simply our idea of it. As an intellectual he was opposed to the Enlightenment emphasis on unity and normality, the lack of toleration for diversity as evidenced in the technocratic ways our cultures deal with sickness, insanity, crime, and sexuality. The homogenizing and totalizing forms of culture work in and through the apparatuses of education in conjunction with the Enlightenment project based on the sciences of Man. The role of the intellectual in this process is to challenge power. As Foucault (1977b: 208) explains to Gilles Deleuze:

The intellectuals role is no longer to place himself somewhat ahead and to the side in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of knowledge, truth, consciousness, and discourse. In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional as you said and not totalizing. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. It is not to awaken consciousness that we struggle but to sap power, to take power; it

is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination.

Critique, for Foucault, is the basis of his own conception of maturity. Whereas Kant sees maturity as the rule of self by self through reason, Foucault sees it as an attitude toward ourselves and the present through a historical analysis of the limits, and the possibility of transgression, of going beyond. Critique is thus a permanent interrogation of the limits, an escape from normalization, and a facing-up to the challenges of self-creation while seeking to effect changes in social structures on specific regional issues of concern.

SCIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, RELATIVISM: COMPARING FOUCAULT TO MARTHA NUSSBAUM

I would like to conclude this chapter by relating critique to the central epistemological issues of relativism and essentialism. If genealogy is a method of critique that seeks to trace the history of a discourse, what is its own method of procedure? While as a method it searches for a buried and disqualified knowledge of struggles, Foucault does not believe that such a method proceeds through a more careful or accurate empiricism. Rather than being the handmaiden of the genealogical approach, in Foucault's view, the human sciences constitute a central object of its critical method. Neither genealogy nor archaeology thus has anything to do with a more rigorous approach to the assemblage of facts, and neither are they concerned with excluding metaphysical knowledge from empirical investigation. Hence, it is not through a more systematic empiricism, nor through a more forthright positivism, that Foucault's methods work. What they seek to do, rather, is question science and accepted models of knowledge. As Foucault (1980c: 83–84) states:

Genealogies are not therefore positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti-sciences. Not that they vindicate a lyrical right to ignorance or non-knowledge: it is not that they are concerned to deny knowledge or that they esteem the virtues of direct cognition and base their practice upon an immediate experience that escapes encapsulation in knowledge. . . . We are concerned rather with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralizing powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse within a society such as ours . . . it is really against the effects of the power

of a discourse that is considered to be scientific that the genealogy must wage its struggle.

For Foucault, the human sciences arose in institutional settings that were structured by hierarchical relations of power. It was as a consequence of such relations that the sciences began to function as new disciplinary forms of power, replacing the coercion of violence which characterized the Ancien with the gentler coercion of administration by scientific experts that characterized the Enlightenment. In as much as Foucault's critical genealogical method traces the *effects* of the sciences, the discursive content of the sciences becomes part of archaeologies critical focus. In this, as Miller (1993: 152) puts it, Foucault's method:

is an archaeology that smashes its idols. The sciences of man are not sciences at all; in the pages of his book [*The Order of Things*]; nineteenth century linguistics, economics, and zoology are systematically treated as a type of fiction, parochial, transient, confining. Even Marxism, which Sartre just six years before had declared to be unsurpassable, Foucault gleefully dismisses as a kind of useless antique.

In his treatment of the sciences, however, it is clear that Foucault sees a certain discontinuity between the natural and the social sciences (see Habermas, 1994: 71). While he sees the natural sciences as having achieved a certain autonomy, and as having developed mature epistemological apparatuses, the human sciences have remained enmeshed in the microphysics of power, and became inseparably linked and controlled by the anthropological turn ushered in and justified in the humanistic philosophies of Descartes and Kant. As Habermas (1994: 72) has put it:

A perspective arose in which *the human being* was perceived as a *speaking* and *laboring* creature. The human sciences made use of this perspective; they analyzed the human being as the being that relates itself to objectifications engineered by itself, the speaking and laboring creature. Inasmuch as psychology, sociology, and political science on the one hand, and the cultural sciences and humanities on the other, got involved with object domains for which subjectivity (in the sense of the relation to self of experiencing, acting, and speaking human beings) is constitutive, they found themselves in the wake of the will to knowledge, on the escape route of a boundless productive increase in knowledge.

Richard Bernstein (1994: 220) notes Jürgen Habermas's criticism that when critique is totalized it is caught in a contradiction as it has no standard. In this sense, as Habermas (1987: 275–76) has put it, genealogy “is overtaken

by a fate similar to that which Foucault had seen in the human sciences." Yet Bernstein seeks to defend Foucault's position by relating critique to the exigencies of the environment, not in terms of truth, but in terms of the ever-present dangers in which people in history face. What is dangerous is that "everything becomes a target for normalisation."¹⁵ Furthermore, Foucault's "archaeological-genealogical analyses of problematiques are intended to specify the changing constellation of dangers" (Bernstein, 1994: 227). And, of course, for Foucault (1984d: 343), "everything is dangerous" and "if everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do." As Bernstein (1994: 230) argues, this makes Foucault "the great skeptic of our times . . . skeptical about dogmatic unities and philosophical anthropologies" as well as about the verities and axioms of the human sciences.

Bernstein's point that Foucault is a skeptic enables us to clarify a number of issues in relation to relativism, realism, and essentialism. Although Foucault is frequently charged with a strong form of epistemological relativism it is important to establish the connections precisely in order not to misrepresent him. While he rejects strong versions of metaphysical realism, which seek to posit a transcendent, ahistorical foundation, he may not necessarily disagree with the broad thrust of Martha Nussbaum's soft version of Aristotelian essentialism which involves some version of appeal to a "determinate account of the human being, human functioning, and human flourishing" (Nussbaum, 1995: 450).¹⁶ This is not to accept particular essential ahistorical characteristics of human beings, but rather to accept an "essentialism of a kind: for a historically sensitive account of the basic human needs and human functions" (Nussbaum, 1995: 451). Nussbaum's account is an "historically grounded empirical essentialism" which she calls "internalist essentialism." This specifies *formal* characteristics or "the most important functions of human beings in terms of which human life is defined" (456) Such a conception of the good is concerned "with ends, and with the overall shape and content of the human form of life" (456). Such a conception, she says, is "vague, and this is deliberately so . . . for it admits of much multiple specification in accordance with varied local and personal conceptions. The idea is that it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong" (456). Such a conception is not metaphysical in that it does not claim to derive from a source exterior to human beings in history. Rather, it is as "universal as possible" and aims at "mapping out the general shape of the human form of life, those features that constitute life as human wherever it is" (457). Nussbaum calls this her "thick, vague conception . . . of the human form of life" (457). Hence, her list of factors constitutes a formal list without substantive content, allowing for difference or variation within

each category. Among the factors are (1) mortality: all human beings face death; (2) various invariant features of the human body, such as "nutritional, and other related requirements" regarding hunger, thirst, the need for food and drink and shelter; (3) cognitive: "all human beings have sense perception . . . the ability to think"; (4) early development; (5) practical reason; (6) sexual desire; (7) affiliation with other human beings; and (8) relatedness to other species and to nature (457–60).

As a list of purely formal factors or generic species characteristics, which can admit to cultural and historical variation, Foucault, in my view, could agree with the general tenor of Nussbaum's list, although he may wish to enter qualifications or caveats on specific features (sexual desire?). Foucault himself says that universal forms may well exist. In "What Is Enlightenment?" (Foucault, 1984a: 47–48) he suggests there may possibly be universalizing tendencies at the root of Western civilization, which include such things as "the acquisition of capabilities and the struggle for freedom," as "permanent elements." Again, more directly, in the Preface to the *History of Sexuality*, Volume II (Foucault, 1984b: 335), he says that he is not denying the possibility of universal structures:

Singular forms of experience may very well harbour *universal structures*: they may well not be independent from the concrete determination of social existence . . . (t)his thought has a historicity which is proper to it. That it should have this historicity does not mean that it is deprived of all *universal form* but instead the putting into play of these universal forms is itself historical.

Like Nussbaum, the factors he recognizes as invariant do not derive from any "extrahistorical metaphysical conception" (460). Also, Foucault's conception is very much in keeping with Nussbaum's "thick, vague conception of the good" (456) in that it is concerned to identify "components that are fundamental to any human life" (461). It is crucial, of course, that the recognized features of human life are *formal* and not *substantive*, otherwise the form of essentialism is unacceptable. He would be skeptical that the *essential substantial* properties of a human being can be distinguished from the *accidental* properties, in that the human being is historically constituted in the process of history.

Beyond this, Foucault does not deny that there is some form of determinate structure to the way things are, but he would argue that such a structure would be shaped and modified in the process of history. He could accept, no doubt, as well, that while human species characteristics may be transformed or modified in history, the process of change would occur at a different (i.e., slower) rate than most discursive or cultural phenomena, thus

enabling comparisons between older and newer institutions and discourses. While in this sense there are still no foundations or invariant structures outside of the flux of history, this need not lead, as hard metaphysical realists sometimes claim, to a quagmire of relativism in terms of which there is no ground on which to stand. As Nussbaum (1995: 455) claims, for instance:

When we get rid of the hope of a transcendent metaphysical grounding for . . . judgements—about the human being as about anything else—we are not left with the abyss. We have everything that we always had all along: the exchange of reasons and arguments by human beings within history, in which, for reasons that are historical and human but not the worse for that, we hold some things to be good and others bad, some arguments to be sound and others not sound. Why indeed should the relativist conclude that the absence of a transcendent basis for judgement—a basis that, according to them, was never there anyway—should make us despair of doing as we have done all along, distinguishing persuasion from manipulation.

Foucault does not deny that there is some way the world is. He is a skeptic who is a metaphysical realist of sorts. By this I mean he sees reality as having a material embodiment. But he also sees the power of our discourses as being able to construct realities and of realities as being filtered through the lens of our discourses. The chief difficulty, then, is in grasping reality, as every attempt to give an account of the real bears the imprint of the historical *a priori*. Hence, historically elaborated discursive systems both facilitate and distort our ability to see the real. In the human sciences, Foucault questions what sort of truth is available to us, and the sense in which the discursive apparatus of disciplines like psychiatry construct rather than unravel the real. Because there are no foundations in reason or fact to compare claims to, science is brought inside history, and can be subjected to critical scrutiny like anything else.

NOTES

1. "Michel Foucault," in Denis Huisman, ed., *Dictionnaire des philosophes* (Paris, 1984), 941. Foucault used the pseudonym 'Maurice Florence' on this article.

2. His interest in Kant is continuous throughout his academic career, and begins with his translation of Kant's *Anthropology from a Practical Point of View* into French in 1960 as his *thèse complémentaire* – a smaller supplement to his major thesis of publishable quality, *Madness and Civilization*. Foucault submitted his translation of Kant's *Anthropology* to the Sorbonne jury in 1960 along with a commentary of 128 typescript pages (see Foucault, 1960). Kant is also considered in depth in *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1970) as the introducer of humanism to the human

sciences. Again, Kant is considered in "Qu'est-ce-que la critique?" (Foucault, 1978), translated as "What Is Critique?" (Foucault, 1996); in the 1983 essay "What Is Enlightenment?" (Foucault, 1984a); in 1984 in "Un Cours Inedit" in *Magazine Littéraire* (see Foucault, 1984), translated by Colin Gordon as "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution" in *Economy and Society* (Foucault, 1986). In addition, Foucault gives a brief discussion on Kant in his introduction to the English translation of Georges Canguilhem *The Normal and the Pathological* (see Foucault, 1978b); in his interview with Gérard Raulet "How Much Does It Cost for Reason to Tell the Truth?" published in *Foucault Live* (see Foucault, 1989: 240–43) and in his essay "The Subject and Power," printed as an afterword in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (1983: 215–16), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Also, as Hacking (1986: 238–39) notes, Foucault read Kant at the Sorbonne under the Heidegger scholar Jean Beufret. He also comments that the discussion of Kant in *The Order of Things* had its origin in Foucault's doctoral thesis.

3. See Kant, 1970.

4. A different translation of the same article appears in Foucault, 1988c.

5. *The Contest of the Faculties* is a collection of three dissertations on the relations between the different faculties that make up the university. The second dissertation concerns the conflict between Law and Philosophy and concerned the question "is there such a thing as constant progress for mankind?" Kant raised the issue of the French Revolution in seeking an answer to this question.

6. Foucault translated this work into French for the first time in 1960 (see Foucault, 1960). It was only translated into English in 1978. The work has traditionally been seen either as crackpot or marginal to Kant's central philosophical enterprise.

7. My own analysis and interpretation of Kant's *Anthropology* has been substantially influenced by that of James Miller (1993).

8. Miller is citing Foucault from his article *Preface à la transgression*. See Foucault (1963) or Foucault (1977).

9. Citations are from Foucault (1960: 72, 142, 100, 101)

10. See Foucault (1977a: 26–27 and 176–77; 1978c: 93–94; 1980b: 96–101).

11. See Martin Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics" in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, 1973) 84–110.

12. The phrase is taken from Michèle Bertrand (1983: 66) who applies it to Spinoza.

13. Spinoza's conception of *conatus* incorporates the notion that our bodies, as well as being shaped by external determinants, also have a force or momentum of a positive sort. See Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part III "On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions" (Spinoza, 1960).

14. Nietzsche did not give any direct support to the Nazis, although as Davies (1997: 33) states, his sister Elizabeth became in her later years an enthusiastic disciple of the Führer. It is also true that the Nazis appropriated a number of Nietzschean themes and tropes—the *Übermensch*, or 'blond beast' into their own repertoire. It is also now well documented that Martin Heidegger committed himself to Nazism and also wrote approvingly about Nietzsche.

15. He is citing David Hiley (1988: 103).

16. Of course, in that Nussbaum claims to be influenced by Aristotle, there is a clear difference from Foucault, who was more influenced by Nietzsche. Thus Foucault would reject the essentialist teleological conception of the subject as "realizing" their *ends* or *destiny*, in preference for a more Nietzschean emphasis on "self-creation." But beyond this, it can be claimed that self-creation presupposes certain "capabilities" in the way Nussbaum claims. Also, the models of social relations, and specifically of the ontological priority of the social to the individual are similar in both traditions. It should also be noted that Nussbaum has been challenged on her dependence on Aristotle (see Arneson, 2000; Mulgan, 2000). In her defense of locating herself in an Aristotelian tradition, she maintains that she is inspired by the basic ontological postulates, but not the detailed arguments, of Aristotle, and she admits that her identification as "Aristotelian" has a great deal to do with her own biography and early philosophical commitments and training. (See Nussbaum, 2000.)

REFERENCES

- Arneson, R. J. 2000. "Perfectionism and Politics." *Ethics* 111 (1): 37–63.
- Bernstein, R. J. 1994. "Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos." In M. Kelly ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Bertrand, M. 1983. *Spinoza et l'imaginaire*. Paris: PUF.
- Davies, T. 1997. *Humanism*. London: Routledge.
- Dreyfus, H. L., and P. Rabinow. 1983. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd edition, with an afterword and interview with Michel Foucault). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. 1960. *Introduction à l'anthropologie de Kant. (thèse complémentaire)*, typescript available in the Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin; in the Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, and photocopy available in the Centre Michel Foucault, Paris).
- . 1963. "Preface a la transgression." *Critique* (August–September): 195–1296.
- . 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Routledge.
- . 1977a. *Discipline and Punish* Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1977b. "A Preface to Transgression." In Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- . 1978a. "Qu'est-ce-que la critique [Critique et Aufklärung]," *Compte rendu de la séance du 27 mai 1978*, *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 84 (1990): 35–63. For translation see Foucault (1996).
- . 1978b. "Introduction" to the English edition of Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*. Trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett with Robert S. Cohen, 1989.

- . 1978c. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.
- . 1980a. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Ed. C. Gordon. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- . 1980b. “Georges Canguilhem: Philosopher of Error.” Trans. G. Burchell. *Ideology & Consciousness* 7 (autumn): 51–62.
- . 1980c. Two lectures. Trans. K. Soper. In C. Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (pp. 78–108). Brighton: Harvester Press.
- . 1984. “Michel Foucault” (written under pseudonym Maurice Florence). In Denis Huisman, ed., *Dictionnaire des philosophies*. Paris.
- . 1984a. “What Is Enlightenment?” Trans. C. Porter. In P. Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (pp. 31–50). New York: Pantheon.
- . 1984b. “Preface to the History of Sexuality, Volume II.” In P. Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1984c. “Un Cours Inedit.” *Magazine littéraire*, no. 207, pp. 35–39. Translated by Colin Gordon as “Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution” (see Foucault, 1986).
- . 1984d. “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress.” In P. Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1986. “Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution” (trans. Colin Gordon). *Economy and Society* 15 (1) (February): 88–96.
- . 1988a. “Practicing Criticism” Trans. A. Sheridan, et al. In L. D. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (pp. 152–58). New York: Routledge.
- . 1988b. “(Auto)biography: Michel Foucault 1926–1984.” Trans. Jackie Ur-sala. *History of the Present* 4 (spring).
- . 1988c. “The Art of Telling the Truth.” Trans. A. Sheridan. In L. D. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (pp. 86–95). New York: Routledge.
- . 1989. *Foucault Live*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. John Johnson. New York: Semiotext(e).
- . 1991. “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview.” Trans. J. D. Gauthier. In J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen, *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- . 1996. “What Is Critique?” In J. Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers to Twentieth Century Questions*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fraser, N. 1994. “Michel Foucault: A ‘Young Conservative?’” In Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 185–210.
- Guess, R. 1981. *The Idea of a Critical Theory*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Habermas, J. 1986. “Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present.” In D. Couzens Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (pp. 103–8). Oxford: Blackwell.

- . 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- . 1994. "Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again." In M. Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Hacking, I. 1996. "Self-Improvement." In D. Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hiley, D. R. 1985. "Foucault and the Question of Enlightenment." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 11: 63–83.
- Hiley, D. 1988. *Philosophy in Question: Essays on a Pyrrhonian Theme*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hollingdale, R. J. 1973. *Nietzsche*. London: Routledge.
- Jameson, F. 1984. "Foreword." In J-F. Lyotard, ed., *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kant, I. 1970. "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" In *Kant's Political Writings*. Trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Hans Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 54–60.
- . 1992. "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" In P. Waugh, ed., *Postmodernism: A Reader*. London: Edward Arnold (orig. 1784).
- McCarthy, T. 1994. "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School." In Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (243–82). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Miller, J. 1993. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. London: Flamingo.
- Mulgan, R. 2000. "Was Aristotle an 'Aristotelian Social Democrat'?" *Ethics* 111 (1): 79–101.
- Nussbaum, M. 1995. "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism." In Douglas Tallack, ed., *Critical Theory: A Reader*. New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.
- . 2000. "Aristotle, Politics, and Human Capabilities: A Response to Antony, Arneson, Charleworth and Mulgan." *Ethics* 111 (1): 102–40.
- Olssen, M. 1999. *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Peters, M. 1996. "Habermas, Poststructuralism and the Question of Postmodernity." In M. Peters, W. Hope, J. Marshall, and S. Webster, eds., *Critical Theory, Poststructuralism and the Social Context*. Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Rajchman, J. 1985. *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Spinoza, B. 1960 [1677]. "The Ethics." In *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz* (pp. 179–405). Trans. R. H. M. Elwes. New York: Anchor/Doubleday.

Levinas's Ethicopolitical Order of Human Proximity: "The Quest for Justice"¹

Denise Egéa-Kuehne

In the past decades, all aspects of tradition have come under attack, and ideologies have undergone an unprecedented shakedown.² New models of thinking have become necessary, and ethics, morality,³ and politics have generated considerable interest, in all fields; for when ideologies wane, ethicopolitical theorization generally regains vitality. At the same time, an increase of renewed activity in spiritual thought has turned to religious texts—be it Christian, Jewish, or Islamic⁴—in an attempt to (re)establish a hermeneutic foundation to our culture. Today, an ethicopolitical reflection appears a necessary factor in any analysis of contemporary civilization.

The focus of this chapter is on Emmanuel Levinas's concepts of ethics and justice in the context of current ethicopolitical issues. A Jewish scholar born in Lithuania in 1906 and naturalized French citizen in 1930, Levinas's work has profoundly marked contemporary thought, and offers a rich field of possibilities for ethicopolitical reflection.⁵ Although his texts are deemed difficult, "resist[ing] any quick or facile understanding,"⁶ requiring careful and thoughtful reading and a knowledge of the authors whose writings he analyzes and refers to, Levinas's works have been the object of increasing attention on the part of Anglophone intellectuals, especially as more of his texts are being translated. First, I briefly recall how the increase in ethicopolitical concern has been seen as a consequence of the loss of our axiological markers, especially in the latter part of the twentieth century, and has prompted a renewed interest in contemporary religious thought. Levinas's reflection on ethics and justice precisely developed in this context.

THE LOSS OF AXIOLOGICAL MARKERS

With the death of God announced by Nietzsche, the absurd, nihilism, and the loss or exhaustion of rational meaning, Western thinkers have stepped back from, or rejected altogether, what the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century had established. The theology and teleology of history have been dismissed, so has the utopic hope for a realm of "pure justice." The end of communism—at least of what was commonly designated under that name—and the realization that totalitarian phenomena can actually materialize are part of this dislocation, of this disintegration, of this irreversible shift to another state of being and thinking. Not everything has been rejected just yet though, or can be rejected, or should, for example, there remain the Greek model of virtue and that of the Kantian ethics. However, they must be "brought up to date," their "spirit" must be reactualized, they must be redefined into norms for action, right in the crux of the crisis of modernity.⁷

Furthermore, especially since the middle of this past century, sciences and the techniques and technology they produce have experienced an unprecedented powerful rise and hegemony in all existing areas, while new ones emerged and grew very rapidly. They seemed to expand the boundaries of our knowledge, while pushing back the limits of what we could not control, leading the (Western) world to believe that, perhaps, they could free humanity of all boundaries and limits forever. Had they not enabled us, for example, to organize labor, production, and consumption as well as communication much more efficiently, while allowing us to control sex and reproduction, aging and youth, illnesses and diseases as well as to prevent or to propagate, that is, life and death on both the individual/local and the collective/global levels? In his book *Le Principe responsabilité*, Jonas⁸ develops the thesis that "the promise of modern technology has reverted to threat," with no previous experience of such powers on such a scale. He explains how not only are we treading new grounds in ethical theory but we are also facing a vacuum created by the relativization of values. He writes:

Prometheus, finally unchained—to whom science confers forces never yet known, and economy its unbridled impulsion—demands an ethics which, thanks to freely accepted fetters, prevents the power of man to become a "malediction" for him.⁹

Previously, our decisions, choices, and actions were guided by the distinction we had learned to make between not just what was deemed to be "right and wrong" but also what we were responsible for, and what we

were not responsible for, what we could control, and what we could not control. Sciences and techniques erased this distinction and by the same token the necessity of this "wisdom," and not even the sky is the limit any longer—for the most privileged in the rich Western nations anyway. Now we find ourselves "masters of what precisely used to control us,"¹⁰ and we hope to eventually gain control of literally the totality of the world—even the universe and beyond, its origins included. No longer is there any limit to what we can do, including blowing up the planet and destroying humanity, in more than one way of course. Born in 1930 (the year Levinas acquired French citizenship), Serres belongs to the generation of men and women who were thoroughly educated in science, and who witnessed, if not participated in, the profound changes which worked through all its areas. He offers a sharp analysis of their consequences, including the new ethical needs: "The history of Western humanity, so advanced in its scientific and cultural achievements, had probably never gone so far into abomination."¹¹ While the scientific fields grew exponentially, just as many questions of ethics were becoming increasingly pressing.

Another striking paradox in the face of the development of sciences and its prevalence in education notes Serres is that "no other moment in history, perhaps, has had so many losers and so few winners as the present time," a time in which, as sciences advance, the number of losers is "exponentially increased," and the "club" of the privileged is more exclusive and inaccessible than ever.¹² Parallel to the apparent triumph of the sciences, we can witness a regression and/or degradation of education and culture, and a proliferation of ignorance, prejudices, illiteracy, and "alternative" beliefs.¹³

In the past, wisdom helped us endure or put up with the inevitable hardships then considered a consequence of the limits to our knowledge and an intrinsic part of life in this world, conditions for which we were not responsible. Serres reminds us that in those days, "wisdom [was] a survival technique" which the advances of science, by pushing back the limits of necessity, "rendered superfluous, almost obsolete."¹⁴ "Traditional morality" became useless, and moreover, incomprehensible. However, that was nothing but an illusion, the dizzying and blinding effect of the lightning speed at which sciences had advanced and of their recent successes. Somewhere along, we lost our ability to make the distinction between the things we can control and those we cannot. In fact, Serres points out, we forget that while science seems to hold "all the powers, all the knowledge, all the reason, all the rights too,"¹⁵ or perhaps because it does, it also carries all the problems and the responsibilities. Before dying, Jacques Monod, for

example, posed the question of scientific responsibility in the face of science rapid advances,¹⁶ so rapid that epistemology could not keep up.

With science now stripped of its halo of certitudes, doubt and insecurity have also invested the everyday realm, the sphere of axiology, and political reflection. To the diverse ideologies, to the myth of the “happy city,” are substituted pragmatic realism and doubts. Especially after the 1960s, the metadiscourses which encompassed knowledge and founded ethics finally disintegrated. Thus justice and the law which referred to these unifying narratives have ceased to be integrated to a philosophy of history. In 1979 Jean-Francois Lyotard could write:

Today, what enables us to say that a law is just . . . ? We have had the meta-narratives, the emancipation of the citizen, the realization of the Mind, the classless society. The modern age referred to them to legitimize or criticize its knowledge and its actions. The postmodern man no longer believes in them.¹⁷

A new problematic is needed, so is a new ethics. What can the new markers be? Amid the shake-up of established foundations, how can the ethical edifice be repaired? How are we to respond to the urgency of a new ethics? Several new ethical theories have been proposed. Some explored a “wisdom of immanence” devoid of religious references and still attached to the earth and the body (e.g., Deleuze, Misrahi, Rosset); others oriented themselves around the Greek and Latin heritage (Foucault, Hadot), or were organized by the responsibility principle (Jonas) or communication (Habermas). For Levinas, they took the form of a response to the call of transcendence and infinity, guided by the “grace of God” or the “phenomenology of the face.”

RESURGENCE OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

As diagnosed by Nietzsche, a historical fracture occurred as the phenomenon of nihilism appeared, marked by the death of the Christian God and of suprasensible ideals and by a progressive shift to a “relativist” perspective. Following up on Nietzsche’s analyses, historians and researchers¹⁸ described a regression, even an eclipse, experienced by the religious and the sacred in Western industrial countries as well as under the communist regime. However, after 1975, Kepel—who analyzed the exhaustion of certitudes linked to technology and science, and of communism and marxism—noted that a reaffirmation of religion ties “God’s return” to the collapse of diverse ideologies.

The Christian, Jewish or Islamic movements we have observed are inscribed in this dual perspective: first, they endeavor to name the confusion and disorder of the world as perceived by their adepts through the revitalization of a vocabulary and categories of religious thought, applied to the contemporary world. Next they elaborate projects to transform the social order and make it conform to the injunctions and values of the Bible, the Koran, or the Evangelists, for they only, according to their interpretation, can guarantee the coming of a world of Justice and Truth.¹⁹

All three religious traditions have much in common, besides their historical presence. They all reject a secularization which goes back to the Enlightenment, and they hold the arrogant emancipation of reason from religious faith as primarily responsible for the subsequent ills of the twentieth century, which directly led to Nazi or Stalinian totalitarianisms. The new generations see no contradiction between the knowledge of science and technology they seek and their submission to a religious faith which eludes logic and reason. With Branover, they see their life as representative of the fact that a "God fearing Jew" may also be a "great scientist." Although they all agree that a fundamental transformation of the organization of society is needed in order for the sacred texts to be again an inspiration for the City of the future, Christians, Jews, and Muslims disagree as to its content. Each of these religious cultures has elaborated specific truths which, by reaffirming their respective identities, make them mutually exclusive. Kepel points out: "Ecumenism ends with the disqualification of secularism; beyond that, projects for a society diverge then become deeply antagonistic, with a potential for merciless conflicts in which no doctrine of Truth can allow any compromise."²⁰

The rebirth of a vital hermeneutics which interrogates Christian spirituality but also the Islamic domain and the Hebraic field marks our time and its mutations in philosophical thinking. Even though atheists may choose to ignore this shift, the religious and its influence nevertheless cannot be dismissed. This reversal to religious thought in the Western culture feeds into modern needs for ethics and marks our contemporary societies where the Old and the New Testaments become ethical sources.

The Bible, the Talmud, as well as such works as Rosenzweig's and Buber's appear as the roots of this contemporary Jewish thought renewed by Levinas who finds his sources in the word of the Bible and the texts of the Talmud. Often identified as "philosopher of the ethics," Levinas develops a phenomenology of the face, not as a plastic form but as a presence signifying an interdiction of violence, through the infinity of which it is a trace and a sign—the face signifies Infinity.²¹ For Levinas, this ethical plenitude is linked to the Hebraic tradition and to the wisdom of the Eternal. In *Totality and Infinity*

and *Ethics and Infinity*, Levinas exposes theses with obvious biblical and Talmudic references. It is recognized that Levinas's thinking is essentially philosophical and phenomenological yet the biblical message is also important. According to Levinas, it lays the foundations of the thought of the Other. Even though it cannot provide any proof, it gives a measure of the Spirit. In *Ethics and Infinity*, in his dialogue with Philippe Nemo, Levinas stresses the importance of this ethical source:

This feeling that the Bible is the Book of books where the most important things are said, those which *should* be said in order for the human life to make sense, and that they are said in a form which opens the very dimensions of depth to the commentators, was not mere substitution of a literary judgment for the conscience of the "sacred." It is this extraordinary presence of its characters, it is this ethical plenitude and these mysterious possibilities of the exegesis which, for me, originally signified transcendence.²² [original emphasis]

The Talmudic source is also of major importance in Levinas's thought, since the Talmud offers an ethics articulated around the Other. For Levinas, the Bible and the Talmud are the foundation of ethics and the law. The movement of his reflection is particularly striking in *Difficult Freedom*,²³ a long meditation on Judaism and its essence. In that text, Levinas elucidates what he sees as the true meaning of the Jewish monotheism, devoid of all idolatry and rejecting the idea of a sacred power fettering human freedom. Moreover, Levinas discusses how Judaism carries the risk of atheism—"a beautiful risk" according to Levinas, where humans can find God, even while they deny it.

The rigorous affirmation of human independence, of its intelligent presence to an intelligible reality, the destruction of the numinous concept of the sacred, carry the risk of atheism. [A risk which] must be taken. . . . The difficult path of monotheism intersects the road to the Western world. Indeed, one may wonder whether the Western spirit, whether philosophy, is not in the last resort the position of a humanity which accepts the risk of atheism, [a risk] which must be taken but overcome, as a ransom of its majority.²⁴

Some scholars have looked at Levinas's body of work as a "dyptich," distinguishing between the two panels of his "philosophical/Greek" and "religious/Jewish" writings.²⁵ Although Levinas declares himself "in favor of the Greek heritage," he believes that "both moments," religion and philosophical discourse, are "necessary" albeit not "on the same level."²⁶ Many a time, Levinas has confirmed the importance that reading of the Bible has played in his "manner of thinking philosophically, that is to say thinking while, and by, addressing all human beings."²⁷

However, although he acknowledges the deep influence of his biblical and Talmudic sources, he has often stressed the importance he places on his being a philosopher, not a theologian: "My point of departure is absolutely non-theological. This is very important to me; it is not theology which I do, but philosophy."²⁸ In his eyes, at no point in time did the Western philosophical tradition lose its "right to the last word." Yet if, on the one hand, he recognizes its "right to the last word," on the other hand he questions whether it is "the locus of the first meaning of beings, the locus where meaning begins."²⁹ In any case, Levinas is one of the contemporary thinkers who is considered to have rejuvenated philosophy by going back to the word of the Bible and the texts of the Talmud.

THE FACE OF ETHICS

Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1906 of Jewish parents, Levinas and his family fled to escape the Nazis. He chose to become a French citizen in 1930, the year he also exposed Husserl's fundamental concepts on phenomenology in one of the first books to bring Husserl's philosophy to France.³⁰ Professor of philosophy at the University of Paris-Nanterre (1967), then at La Sorbonne (1973), director of the École Normale Israélite Orientale for many years, his main interests were metaphysics and ethics, especially as relating to the religious experience. One of his major books, probably the one best known in the Anglophone context, *Totality and Infinity*³¹—very succinctly put—opposes to the Hegelian rigidity of totalitarianism and closed systems the notion of infinity linked to the idea of God, which he sees as "moral." In this book, Levinas questions Hegel's unifying notion. Once we reject the (closed) Totality, we can gain the conscience of the divine infinity through the space of intersubjectivity. In *Ethics and Infinity* Levinas writes:

The whole movement of Western philosophy leads to Hegel's philosophy, which, probably rightly so, appears like the outcome of philosophy itself. Everywhere in Western philosophy, where the spiritual and the rational always reside in knowledge, one can see this nostalgia for totality. As if totality had been lost, and that that loss might be the sin of the spirit. Then it is the panoramic vision of the real which is the truth and which gives all its satisfaction to the spirit.³²

For Levinas, what he calls "the face of the other"³³ means the first relation to ethics. In the face-to-face encounter, he sees, beyond all knowledge, an "elevation" of the ethical order, an indirect encounter with a

transcendental God, a relation to Infinity: "Infinity comes to mind in the significance of the face. The face *signifies* Infinity. [The face] never appears as a theme, but in this very ethical significance."³⁴ In his model, "[t]he relation to the face is a priori ethical,"³⁵ that is the relation to the other immediately outlines ethics: "ethics is what is human as human." Ethics is born in the encounter with, in the relation of proximity to, the Other:³⁶ "The term ethics always signifies for me the fact of the encounter, of the relation of an I to the Other. . . . Transcendence and proximity."³⁷ It is before the Other and the face of the Other that one can have the pure experience of the other which Levinas sees as one and the same with ethics, in as much as one is aware that one is responsible for the other, that the existence of the other is more important than one's own. It is summed up in these words: "To perceive that we come after an other whoever he may be—that is ethics."³⁸

On this point, Levinas shows to be no more receptive to Heidegger's ontology than he is accepting of Hegel's dialectics. He notes that "the first statements of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, then promised new philosophical possibilities."³⁹ While Heidegger talks about *Sein* (Being) and *Seiendes* (being), Levinas prefers to use the terms *existence* (existing) and *existant* (existent) rather than the usual *être* and *étant*, making clear that one must not see any "specific existentialist meaning" in those words.⁴⁰ Heidegger makes a distinction between subjects and objects, those who are, *Seiendes*, *l'étant* or *l'existant*, beings, and their actions, "their very work of being," what they accomplish, *Sein*, *l'essence*, *l'existence*, Being. Levinas recognizes that this Heideggerian distinction is for him "the most profound thing about *Being and Time*."⁴¹ However, it does not satisfy Levinas, who does not favor the ontological relation (what he sees as an "abstract" relation to Being), and places ethics and religion before speculative ontology. For him, it is not a simple matter of going from Being (*Sein*, *de l'existence*), to being (*Seiendes*, *à l'existant*).⁴² Being is the human being (what he calls "man") says Levinas, and it is as "a face" that a human being is accessible. It is the ethical significance of the other which is primordial. In Levinas's view, "[t]here is sainthood in someone's face, but most of all, there is sainthood or ethics toward oneself in a stance which encounters a face as face."⁴³ What Levinas does not accept, is that in Heidegger, "there is a distinction, not a separation."⁴⁴ The term *Jemeinigkeit*⁴⁵ used by Heidegger underscores "the fact that existing is always possessed by someone."⁴⁶ However, in his notion of *Geworfenheit*,⁴⁷ usually translated by "dereliction" or "desertion," appears the possibility of an existing which might occur independently of a subject, without existents who, when "thrown" into existence, could never master it.

Then how is it possible, wonders Levinas, to encounter “an existing without existents”? What happens if everything disappears? What is left, he says, is the *il y a*, the fact that “there is,” what Levinas also calls “the murmur of silence.”⁴⁸ And it is by “a vigilance without possible recourse to sleep” that Levinas is precisely going to characterize this *il y a*, there is, and “the way that existing is affirmed in its own annihilation.”⁴⁹ Levinas describes this “vigilance” as what makes it impossible to retreat in slumber, to fall asleep, to take refuge in the “unconsciousness/ inconstance,” the nonconscious/nonconstance. This is where the notion of “consciousness/conscience” appears. He notes that it may be a paradox also to “characterize the *there is* by vigilance, as if the pure event of existing were endowed with a consciousness.”⁵⁰ Yet he also wonders whether

vigilance defines consciousness, or if consciousness is not indeed rather the possibility of tearing itself away from vigilance, if the proper meaning of consciousness does not consist in being a vigilance backed against a possibility of sleep. . . . In fact,

adds Levinas,

consciousness already participates in vigilance. But what characterizes it particularly is its always retaining the possibility of withdrawing “behind” to sleep. Consciousness is the power to sleep.⁵¹

Levinas sees this escape as “the very paradox of consciousness.”⁵² The dual meaning of “conscience,” in French and in English—moral conscience and consciousness in the sense of awareness—merge in this notion.⁵³ In order to develop a moral conscience and a moral awareness, one must remain vigilant, aware, not succumb to slumber or take refuge in sleep.

In Levinas's understanding of ethics, it is connected to this notion of vigilance in the experience of the Other, of the relation with/to the Other, the “conscience,” the awareness, the evidence that one is unavoidably responsible for this other. With Levinas, the relationship to the Other enters a new dimension: “The relationship with alterity is neither spatial nor conceptual.”⁵⁴ Within this relation with the Other, “alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship.”⁵⁵ In other terms, unlike the reciprocity Buber finds in the I-Thou relation, what Levinas calls the space of intersubjectivity is not symmetrical.⁵⁶ The Other is experienced as other not only as *alter ego*, but it is other because “the Other is what I myself am not.”⁵⁷ This intersubjective relation cannot be synthesized, no totality can integrate it. Through this interaction and the sense, the “conscience” and the

awareness of this interaction, Levinas sees the compelling and inescapable emergence of implication, of interconnection, of the responsibility to/for the Other. It is in this "phenomenology of the face" that the idea of Infinity signifies itself, in the proximity of the Other.

The Other (*Autrui*) who can sovereignly tell me "No," offers itself . . . to the bullet of my gun and all the unshakable resilience of his/her "self" with this intractable "No" which he/she opposes to the bullet which tears the ventricles . . . of his/her heart. . . . There, there is a relation, not one with a very serious resistance, but with something absolutely *Other*: the resistance of what has no resistance—the ethical resistance. . . . Infinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance which paralyzes my powers, and rises harsh and absolute from the depth of defenseless eyes in its nudity and its destitution. Understanding this destitution and this hunger establishes the very proximity of the Other.⁵⁸

Levinas shows how consciousness and moral conscience are developed through the encounter face-to-face with the other, through an interpersonal relation, through the responsibility and the respect one must develop for the other as other.

TOWARD JUSTICE

One of Levinas's declared "fundamental themes" which he developed in *Totality and Infinity*, is precisely this interpersonal, non-symmetrical "intersubjective relation." Levinas considers it as "essential"⁵⁹ and insists that "I am responsible for the Other without expecting any reciprocity on his/her part, should it cost me my own life."⁶⁰ In support, Levinas often cites Dostoïevsky's sentence: "We are all responsible for everything and for everyone before everyone, but I more than any other."⁶¹ This is also in keeping with the ancient Talmudic expression: "All in Israel are responsible for one another."⁶² Levinas argues that this responsibility is "total" in as much as it includes the responsibility *for*, "it responds for all the others, and for everything in the others, even for their own responsibility."⁶³ In that sense, since the "I" is always responsible even *for* the responsibility of the Other, "[t]he I always has *one more* responsibility than all the others."⁶⁴

This is where the individual's right-to-be begins to become problematic.⁶⁵ Levinas argues that just being (*être*), existing, raises a question: Am I taking someone else's place in the world? Is my life usurping someone else's life? Do I have a right to be (*être*)? In *Alterity and Transcendence*, Lev-

inas stresses the importance of this line of questioning—"I have written a lot on this theme" but "now, it is my main theme."⁶⁶ Levinas explains repeatedly that he means *être* in its verbal form, following up on Heidegger for whom the "verbality" of the word *être* "awakened," containing the event, what "occurs" in "*être*."⁶⁷ Levinas underscores its dynamic meaning as "processus of being or event of being or adventure of being."⁶⁸ Thus absorbed in its intent to be, its "insistence to be," the individual, sustained by its "instinct of preservation," perseveres in its "adventure to be" as if it were what it is meant to be, as if it were "its meaning."⁶⁹ In this argument, Levinas is led to challenge Spinoza's Hellenic endorsement of the *conatus essendi*⁷⁰ which refers to this perseverance to be "in spite and against everything and everyone," this "obstination to be-there" (the *Da*-in *Dasein*, "the there of my being-there"⁷¹), the *intéressement* of the being, "its primordial essence."⁷² But "being-there" may also mean occupying, "usurping" someone else's place in the world. This is where "[t]he *Da* of *Da-sein* is already an ethical problem" for Levinas.⁷³ In this insistence, in this "concern" to be, he sees a violence, even a "savagery" in this struggle to affirm oneself "without regard, without care" for the Other.⁷⁴ He cites Pascal as often as he cites Dostoïevsky, and placed this sentence in exergue of *Otherwise than Being*: "'That is my place in the sun.' That is how the usurpation of the whole world began."⁷⁵

Earlier we saw that it is before the Other and the face of the Other that the individual can have the pure experience of the other which Levinas sees as one and the same with ethics, in as much as one is aware that one is responsible for the other, that the existence of the other is more important than one's own. According to Levinas, this approach to ethics, this concern for the other-than-I, the nonindifference to the Other constitute the trigger which could release the obstinacy of the individual in his/her perseverance, his/her insistence to be. This obligation to, and responsibility for, the Other is unlimited: "In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own."⁷⁶ This call to responsibility through the encounter with the Other would be "the release of this ontological contraction said by the verb *être*, the *dés-intér-essement* opening the order of the human, the grace, and the sacrifice."⁷⁷ Levinas developed this notion of *dés-intér-essement*, and presented his concept of *il y a* as a trace of the "necessary" "trial of *dés-intér-essement*."⁷⁸ To emerge from the *il y a*, the individual must depose the sovereignty of his/her "I." Furthermore, "[t]his deposition of the sovereignty by the 'I' is the social relation with the Other, the dis-interest-ed relation."⁷⁹ Levinas split this term in three segments to underscore "the uprooting of being"⁸⁰ which, according to him, it signifies. He distinguished this coming out of being through the

encounter with the face of the other from that made possible through knowledge, and called it "sociality": "Sociality will be a means of coming out of being otherwise than through knowledge."⁸¹ *Dés-intér-essement* characterizes the human being parting with, discarding his/her condition of being which Levinas discussed at length in *Otherwise than Being*, arguing that it does not merely mean "to be otherwise," since to be otherwise is still to be. In "Ideology and Idealism," he goes as far as using the term *dés-intér-essement* in the sense of "a suspension of essence."⁸² With this concept of dis-interst-edness, "the responsibility for the Other, the being-for-the-Other," which appear to him as what could "interrupt the anonymous and meaningless rustling of being,"⁸³ Levinas explores the first level of disruption of being in his move toward justice.

Indeed, Levinas's movement toward justice involves two major disruptions. The first is this "ethical event" discussed above, in which the "encounter" (distinct from "experience") with the "face of the other" constitutes a call out of oneself into conscience and awareness of the Other, into an ethical relation to the Other; a relation to which Levinas refers as "discourse" or in later texts as "proximity." In his response to Kearney, in *Face to Face*, Levinas declares:

I become a responsible or ethical "I" to the extent that I agree to depose or dethrone myself—to abdicate my position of centrality—in favor of the vulnerable other. . . . The ethical "I" is a being who asks if he has a right to be!—who excuses himself to the other for his own existence.⁸⁴

It is in this rupture of indifference, this concern for the other, that ethics emerges, that surges the ethical event. There, the emergence of ethics disrupts, pierces, breaks through the shell of being and essence, as "the otherwise than being and beyond essence." In this sense, "[t]he forgetting of self moves justice."⁸⁵

The second disruption is brought about by a third party, *le tiers*. The above discussion is based on an encounter face-to-face with *one* Other, through an interpersonal relation eliciting the responsibility and the respect called for by the Other for the other as other. However, going back to some arguments developed in *Totality and Infinity*, in *Otherwise than Being* Levinas established that humanity cannot be reduced to two individuals, because there is always *un tiers*, a third party—the reality of society—who disrupts, upsets the simplicity of this one-on-one encounter with the emergence of this third party next to the Other. "Indeed," responded Levinas during the discussion which followed a presentation of "Ideology and Idealism" in 1972, "if there were only two of us in the world, I and one other, there would be no problem. The other would be completely

my responsibility. But in the real world, there are many others.”⁸⁶ With him/her, the third party brings “the proximity of a human plurality.”⁸⁷ This third party is also a neighbor, and a neighbor of the neighbor, other than this neighbor, each being unique; and with each *tiers* entering the scene, problems arise.

For Levinas, this situation raises several questions: In this plurality, which one comes before the other in my responsibility? What are they, then, the other and the third party, in relation to one another? and so on. Ultimately, he sees “the first question in the inter-human” as the “inevitable” question of justice, when it is necessary to “weigh, think, judge” within a relation of proximity, where everything is owed to *each* and *every* other, demanding the impossible—“a comparison among incomparables.”⁸⁸ Thus the movement from ethics to justice is triggered by the entrance of the third on the scene of the intersubjective relation. Levinas writes: “This is the fact of the multiplicity of human beings, the presence of a third party next to the Other, which conditions the laws and establishes justice.”⁸⁹ This is where Levinas sees “the quest for justice” as going back to the face of the other, “the source of my obligation toward other men,”⁹⁰ the source of responsibility and ethics. For him, it is “[t]hat initial obligation, before the multiplicity of human beings, [which] becomes justice.”⁹¹ The individual’s choice to acknowledge the Other as other is an ethical decision, and it is this acknowledgment which Levinas calls justice.⁹² Thus his concept of justice appears to be conceived in a biblical sense, as a synthesis of moral behaviors.⁹³ This is also where Levinas sees—were one to forget the uniqueness and primacy of the other—the possible risk of “transforming the sublime and difficult work of justice into a purely political calculation.”⁹⁴

However, it is important to note that this move from ethics to justice may not be linear if one reads the role of responsibility differently.⁹⁵ In *Otherwise than Being*, Jeffrey Dudiack stresses that Levinas claims repeatedly that the arrival of the third party on the scene of the intersubjective relation between I and the Other “is not an empirical fact,” but an essential structure of the other.⁹⁶ In Levinas’s words, “[i]t is not that the entry of the third party would be an empirical fact, and that my responsibility for the other finds itself constrained to a calculus by the ‘force of things.’”⁹⁷ The sharing of responsibility is not affixed to the arrival of the third, but is already part and parcel of one’s responsibility to the Other. In Levinas’s model, “[i]n the proximity of the Other, all the others than the Other obsess me, and already obsession cries out for justice, demands measure and knowing, is consciousness.”⁹⁸ Moreover, in *Totality and Infinity* (“The Other and the Others”) Levinas argues that the other already

carries "a third," that is to say another Other: "The third regards me in the eyes of the Other." In the face-to-face with the Other, the other Other (*le tiers*) is already there, or manifests itself simultaneously. In this sense, Levinas can write: "The others concern me from the first," in a "fraternity" which is not based, however, on genus, but on responsibility.⁹⁹ This concept of "fraternity" renders justice accessible to all, which is the essence of justice—if justice is to be just—in the fact that "I am another for the Other. . . . the reciprocal relationship binds me to the other man in the trace of transcendence, in illeity."¹⁰⁰ A few pages down, Levinas confirms that "justice can be established only if I, always evaded from the concept of the ego, always desituated and divested of being, always in non-reciprocable relationship with the other, always for the other, can become an other like the others."¹⁰¹ The importance for justice of this "fraternity" cannot be overlooked since it is thanks to this fraternity that there can also be justice for "I." Later, in an interview with Raoul Mortley,¹⁰² Levinas acknowledges that "there is a sense in which another is in conflict with my relationship with a third party," which precludes "liv[ing] in society on the basis of this one-to-one responsibility alone."¹⁰³ Levinas sees there a relationship of "pity" through which "we enter into knowledge, judgment and justice."

CONCLUSION: THE IDEA OF A POSSIBILITY

Levinas's concepts of ethics and justice have raised several questions.¹⁰⁴ The most salient and most frequently voiced concerns his writings about an ideal deemed impossible to achieve in "an age of dis-aster—an age without a guiding star,"¹⁰⁵ in a world which has lost its markers and has gone awry, in which "[t]here [is] no longer any measure to contain monstrosities."¹⁰⁶ How realistic is his call for a responsibility to the Other in a world where the persistent focus on self-interest appears to be at the antipodes of what he advocates in his notions of dis-interest-edness and primacy of the Other. In his response to Philippe Nemo, Levinas explains: "My task does not consist in constructing an ethics; I only try to figure out its meaning."¹⁰⁷ Unlike Husserl, Levinas does not believe that philosophy should necessarily develop a program. Although he is aware that one might be able to construct one on the basis of his theories, it is nevertheless not his specific aim. In the discussion which followed his presentation of "Ideology and Idealism," he was questioned on his lack of concern with "concrete reality," and his ability "to solve actual ethical problems." He asserted again that it was not his "purpose to moralize or to improve the

conduct of our generation." In his view, the interpersonal relation he discusses in his works "stands behind practical morality," as a relation of responsibility, no matter how poorly or weakly this responsibility is perceived or acted upon, "even when it takes the form of politics or warfare." In any case, one cannot claim "no concern," for whether one chooses it or not, "it is always and inescapably my concern."¹⁰⁸ In *The Intrigue of Ethics*, Jeffrey Dudiack addresses this issue. For example, he recalls Robert John Sheffler Manning's claim to Levinas's "description of an ideal situation," and stresses that in his own reading of Levinas's work, Dudiack understands Levinas's "descriptions of the ethical . . . not at all of an ideal, of something that might be realized," but "of the conditions of possibility, the 'inspiration,' of every realized situation."¹⁰⁹ Dudiack explains that Levinas's discourse "is justified only to the extent that it . . . be taken as 'prophetic'" rather than prescriptive or legislative.¹¹⁰

Levinas was convinced of the paramount importance of justice, and situated it at the core of first philosophy—that is, ethics—as it is at the core of the Talmud, one of his main sources. He also saw demanding justice for the Other as a return to a profound morality which defies ideology. Positing the problem of fundamental justice through the arrival of a third party in the intersubjective relation led him to raise the question of rights, which in this context is always necessarily "the rights of the other."¹¹¹ We saw that in his model of ethics and justice, he argues that responsibility to the Other implies responsibility to all others, which for him leads to responsibility for social justice and worldwide peace. His later work up to 1995 increasingly turned to issues of human rights and peace. Although his task was obviously left incomplete, he nevertheless left some rich, robust, and moving reflections on the possibilities of a dialogue toward peace. Recalling the episode of Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince asking for the drawing of a sheep—a Little Prince who is satisfied only with the sketch of a box where he is told a sheep he cannot see is asleep—Levinas confesses: "I do not know how to draw the solution to insoluble problems. . . . I have no idea other than the idea of the idea that one should have. . . . I have the idea of a possibility in which the impossible may be sleeping."¹¹²

It may be that at the core of the concept of justice (and the akin concepts of right and peace) there is a promise, that of an ideal of justice. Here, Derrida's notion of "to-come" (*à venir*)¹¹³ is very helpful to better understand the profound meaning of justice and its "promise" and the "possibility" Levinas writes about. For Derrida, the notion of "to-come" entails "some openness to the future, and . . . openness to the other."¹¹⁴ That is why speaking of something-to-come is referring to something experienced as always possible. In this case, it does not mean that justice will

realize itself only in a future time, nor does it refer to a "regulatory idea in the Kantian sense, nor a utopia."¹¹⁵ Extending Derrida's concept of "to-come" to justice, it can be understood "as the concept of a promise" which can manifest itself only where there is disruption and upheaval, when there exists a gap between the present state of justice, in this case, and the possibility of an ideal of justice. In fact, it is in this very gap that justice would be shaped, and Derrida's following words can aptly apply here:

between an infinite promise (always untenable because it at least calls for an infinite respect of the infinite singularity and the infinite alterity of the other as much as for the calculable, subjectable equalities among these anonymous singularities) and the specific, necessary, but necessarily ill fitting forms which must measure themselves against that promise.¹¹⁶

It is in this gap that heterogeneity must be preserved, "as the only chance of an affirmed, or rather re-affirmed future."¹¹⁷ Without this gap, without this disjunction, justice may simply believe, in all good conscience, that it has succeeded, that "its duty is accomplished," and therefore it may "miss its chance for the future, for the promise or the call . . . (in other words, for its very possibility)."¹¹⁸ Levinas sees there a possibility in which "the impossible may be sleeping," but, writes Derrida, "there is no responsibility that is not the experience and experiment of the impossible."¹¹⁹

Derrida defines responsibility as "a certain experience and experiment of the possibility of the impossible: the testing of the aporia from which one may invent the only possible invention, the impossible invention."¹²⁰ Derrida has described and discussed extensively, in several of his texts, how ambiguities and dilemmas are inherent to his concept of responsibility, and are, in fact, *the very condition* of its possibility. For "at a certain point, the promise and the decision, that is to say the responsibility, owe their possibility to the test of undecidability which will always remain their condition."¹²¹ He stresses repeatedly that, if there is an easy decision to make, there is, in fact, no decision to be made, no possibility of decision, therefore no responsibility to be taken, only a set of rules to follow, a program to implement. He links this concept—this condition of responsibility as being dependent on the simultaneous necessity of a condition of impossibility—to a notion of "messianism," to the experience of the promise. It is by opening a space for the affirmation of this promise, of the "messianic and emancipatory promise," of the impossible event as a promise, that it will preserve its capital of possibilities, of dynamic ideal of justice in-the-making, to-come.

NOTES

Citations from French publications translated by Denise Egéa-Kuehne.

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 170.
2. E.g., the "canon wars" on the one hand, and on the other hand, the Communist block collapse, the "new world" syndrome, the so-called death of history, and large-scale violence. See such texts as Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, trans. P. Kamuf, Routledge (1994) (including his commentary of Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Morrow, William & Co, 1993) and *The Other Heading. Reflections on Today's Europe*, with "Call It a Day for Democracy," trans. P. A. Brault and M. B. Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
3. Although there is no consensus on this point, "ethics" is often understood as leaning toward theory and "morality" toward a more concrete expression. In a conversation with Richard Kearney ("Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in Richard A. Cohen, ed., *Face to Face with Levinas* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986]), Levinas insisted on how important *he* considers the distinction between "the ethical and the moral." He explained: "By morality I mean a series of rules relating to social behavior and civic duty. But while morality thus operates in the socio-political order of organizing and improving our human survival, it is ultimately founded on an ethical responsibility toward the other. As *prima philosophia*, ethics cannot itself legislate for society or produce rules of conduct whereby society might be revolutionalized or transformed" (29–30).
4. E.g., in Europe—Chrétien, Girard, Henry, Marion (Christian); Lévinas, Sidorosky, Weiss (Jewish); Corbin, Jambet (Islam).
5. Seán Hand, "Preface," *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford, England: Blackwell 1989). His first sentence is "Emmanuel Levinas is one of the most profound, exacting and original philosophers of twentieth-century Europe."
6. Adriaan Peperzak, ed., "Preface," *To the Other* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press 1993), ix.
7. For example, Derrida has done a rereading of Marx, pointing out that not only it may be impossible to dismiss the legacy and traces of Marxism, but indeed it may not even be advisable. See *Specters of Marx*.
8. Hans Jonas, *Le Principe responsabilité* (Paris: Edition du Cerf, 1979–1990).
9. Jonas, *Principe*, 13.
10. Michel Serres, *Eclaircissements—Michel Serres* (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 1992), 247.
11. Serres, *Eclaircissements*, 13.
12. Serres, *Eclaircissements*, 268–69.
13. E.g., see the success of programs and books on "non-rational events," including angels, extraterrestrial occurrences and characters, magic practices, and so on.
14. Bruno Latour, in Serres, *Eclaircissements*, 247.
15. Serres, *Eclaircissements*, 131.

16. Jacques Monod (a long-time friend of Serres's) confided in him on the eve of his death: "For a long time, I laughed at the physicists and their troubled consciences; because I was a biologist at the Pasteur Institute [founded in 1888, Paris, leader in biological research]; by creating and proposing remedies, I had always worked with a clear conscience, whereas the physicists might have drifted toward arm manufacturing, violence, and war; however, I now see clearly how the demographic wave of the Third World could not have built up without our intervention; therefore I ask myself as many questions as the physicists about the atomic bomb; the demographic bomb will perhaps be even more dangerous" (quoted in Serres, *Eclaircissements*, 31).

17. Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmodern* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979).

18. See Marcel Gauchet, *Le Désenchantement du monde* (Paris: NFR-Gallimard, 1985), Gauchet's title being borrowed from Max Weber's famous phrase. See also Weber's *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (New York: Scribner's, 1958) which had a profound influence on all contemporary thinkers.

19. Gilles Kepel, *La Revanche de Dieu* (Paris: Points Actuels-Seuil, 1991), 259–60.

20. Kepel, *La Revanche*.

21. Much has been written on Levinas's use of "the face" to articulate his notion of ethics. However, biblical connotations to "the face" must be kept in mind when reading Levinas, as well as in Rozenzweig's writings, especially in *The Star of Redemption* (*Der Stern der Erlösung*), first published in 1921 and translated by William W. Hallo, Boston (1972). Levinas was very familiar with Rosenzweig's work (e.g., *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith, London: The Athlone Press, 1993, xxii–xxiii and 49–66) and *The Star* in particular. He wrote a "Foreword" for Stéphane Mosès's analysis of Rozenzweig's book in *Système et révélation: La Philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1982), trans. Catherine Tihanyi, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), in which Mosès discusses Rosenzweig's use of "the human face" as "the way the transcendence of the other is revealed to me," harking back to "the face of God" and "Truth" (284–86). In his introduction to *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford and Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), Seán Hand recalls that, in *Totality and Infinity* already, "[t]he term 'face' . . . denotes the way in which the presentation of the other to me exceeds all idea of the other in me" (5). In his introduction to his translation of *Alterity and Transcendence*, Michael B. Smith writes: "The face of the other is the locus of transcendence in that it calls into question the *I* in its existence as a being for itself" (xiv). See also Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993), 20, and Max Picard's works and Levinas's "Max Picard and the Face," *Proper Names* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 94–98.

22. Emmanuel Levinas, *Éthique et Infini* (Paris: Fayard, 1982); trans. Richard A. Cohen, *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), [17–18].

23. Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficile liberté, essais sur le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963, 1976); trans. Seán Hand, *Difficult Freedom* (London: The Athlone Press, 1990).

24. Levinas, *Difficile liberté*, 29.

25. David Banon, "Une Herméneutique de la sollicitation," in *Emmanuel Levinas, Les Cahiers de la Nuit Surveillée* 3 (1984): 99–115.

26. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 177.

27. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 19.

28. Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendance et hauteur," in *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 56/3 (1962): 110. See also a conversation of May 20, 1975, upon receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Leiden, Netherlands: "I have never even thought that I was doing theology. Whatever my experiences and pre-philosophic sources may have been, I have always had this idea (a bit mad perhaps) that I was doing or endeavoring to do philosophy, even in commenting on the biblical text which called this forth." "Questions et réponses," in *De Dieu Qui Vient à l'Idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 128–57.

29. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 20.

30. Emmanuel Levinas, *La Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), Paris: Vrin, 1963, 1970, 1978, 1984); trans. André Orianne, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

31. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1974, 1980); trans. Alphonso Lingis, *Totality and Infinity* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969).

32. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 80–81.

33. See note 20.

34. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 111.

35. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 91. Levinas often reiterates this statement in so many words throughout his writings and interviews.

36. I have tried to follow accepted conventions in my use of "Other" and "other"; see Cohen in Levinas, *Time and the Other*: "I have always translated *autrui* as the 'Other,' with an uppercase 'O,' and *autre* as 'other,' with a lower case 'o'" (30 note 3, and viii), thus distinguishing *autrui/autre* as the personal other, from *autre* the otherness in general, alterity.

37. Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement que savoir* (Paris: Editions Osiris, 1988), 28.

38. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 167.

39. Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1979); trans. Richard A. Cohen, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 34 [12].

40. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 44 [24]. See also Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79–153.

41. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 44 [24].

42. See Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant* (Paris: Fontaine, 1947), (Paris: Vrin, 1973, 1978); trans. Alphonso Lingis, *Existence and Existents* (The

Hague: Nijhoff, 1978); and Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993) 5. Note the shift between the French and the English titles, from a movement between, to a juxtaposition of, the two terms: *existence* and *exista(e)nt*.

43. Levinas, in François Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas, qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 95.

44. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 45 [24]. Richard A. Cohen notes: "The notion of *separation* is of the utmost epistemological and ontological importance in Levinas's philosophy," and points out Rosenzweig's influence on Levinas (45 [24] note 9).

45. "Mineness," Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68 and 284.

46. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 45 [24].

47. English translators of Heidegger's *Being and Time* have used the term "thrownness" to translate *Geworfenheit*. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174, 223, 330–33.

48. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 46 [25]. See also *Existence and Existents*, 57–58, and *Totality and Infinity*, where it is also termed "the elemental."

49. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 48 [27].

50. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 51 [29].

51. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 51 [30]. See also *Existence and Existents*, 65–71, and "God and Philosophy," *Le Nouveau Commerce*, n. 30/31 (1975), trans. R. Cohen and A. Lingis, in A. Lingis, ed., *The Collected Philosophical Papers of Emmanuel Levinas* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1986).

52. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 51 [30]

53. Fairly consistently, most English texts translate the French word *conscience* with "consciousness." The reader must keep in mind that the term "consciousness" is generally perceived to mean "awareness" more readily than "moral conscience" (in fact, some American dictionaries—e.g., *World Encyclopedia*—make no mention of the potential "moral" connotations of this term) and that, in the English translation, the "moral" semantic connotations might be left out of Levinas's text or overlooked.

54. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 84 [75].

55. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 83 [75].

56. See also "The Asymmetry of the Interpersonal," *Totality and Infinity*, 215–16, and 251 and *passim*.

57. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 83 [75]. See also "Transcendence is Not Negativity," *Totality and Infinity*, 40–42.

58. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 217 sq.

59. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 85.

60. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 105.

61. Alyosha Karamazov's words in Dostoïevsky, *Les Frères Karamazov* (Paris: La Pléiade), 310.

62. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shevuot, 39a. In this expression, Israel is understood as "humanity." See also "The Pact," in Seán Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, especially 224–26.

63. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 105. Levinas develops this theme numerous times. See in particular his response to Kearney in Cohen's (ed.) *Face to Face*, 31.

64. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 105.

65. See in particular "The Meaning of Meanings," in Levinas, trans. Michael B. Smith, *Outside the Subject*, a text which challenges Heidegger's position on meaning as derived from Being, and in which Levinas asks: "Is it just to be?" 90–95.

66. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 178.

67. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 34.

68. Levinas, *Entre nous*, 9. See also *Time and the Other*, "The existing that I am trying to approach is the very work of being, which cannot be expressed by a substantive but is verbal." 48 [27].

69. Levinas, *Entre nous*, 10.

70. However, it must be noted that in his preface to *Éthique comme philosophie première* (Paris: Editions Payot et Rivages, 1998), Jacques Rolland believes that Levinas took some liberty in his use of Spinoza's text as well as that of Heidegger's. He acknowledges that, for Levinas, the essence of the "I" is not in "a formidable centripetal force which would be specific to it," but it would refer to Spinoza's *conatus essendi—conatus in suum esse perseverandi—(la persévérance de l'être)*, as it would refer to the Heideggerian doctrine of "the existence which exists in such a way that the very existence of this existence is at stake," again loosely translated. Rolland writes: "Levinas confuses—and no doubt deliberately—Spinoza's text as well as that of Heidegger with the famous Spanish inn where, as everyone knows, one never finds but what one brings—in this case, his own research, his own questioning" (55–56).

71. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 179.

72. Levinas, *Entre nous*, 10, then again 258. See also *Outside the Subject*, 47–48.

73. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, 48. Also in *Éthique comme philosophie première*, 105.

74. Levinas, *Entre nous*, 10.

75. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 295, 451. A quotation Levinas uses often; see, for example, *Face to Face*, 24, *Éthique et infini*, 131, *Entre nous*, 261, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 32.

76. Levinas, in Cohen, ed., *Face to Face*, 24.

77. Levinas, *Entre nous*, 238.

78. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 51.

79. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 51.

80. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, 36.

81. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 62.

82. Levinas, in Seán Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, 242.

83. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 62.

84. Levinas, in Cohen, ed., *Face to Face*, 27.

85. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159 [203]; see also Jeffrey Dudiack, *The Intrigue of Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001) 243–45.

86. Levinas, "Ideology and Idealism," in Marvin Fox, ed., *Modern Jewish Ethics* (Columbus: Ohio University State Press, 1975), 121–38, 137. See also *Otherwise than Being*, 158 [201].

87. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 101.
88. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 142 and 170. See also *Otherwise than Being*, 16 [20], 158 [201–22].
89. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 94.
90. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 170.
91. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 175–76.
92. Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, 188–90.
93. Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, 188–89.
94. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 170.
95. Dudiack, *The Intrigue of Ethics*.
96. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158 [201]; see also 159 [203], 160 [204].
97. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159 [203], 160 [204].
98. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158 [201].
99. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159 [202].
100. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158 [201–202].
101. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 187, n.8 [13].
102. Levinas, in Raoul Mortley, *Conversation* (London: Routledge, 1991) 11–23.
103. Levinas, *Conversation*, 18.
104. Questions which would take us further than the limits of this essay. See for example Dudiack, *The Intrigue of Ethics*, and Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1993), especially 167–84. Questions on the Other as thief or murderer and practical applications of Levinas's concepts are also among questions which have been raised. See for example Fox, *Modern Jewish Ethics*, especially 147–50.
105. Richard A. Cohen, "Translator's Introduction," in Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 26.
106. Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996) (originating publisher of English edition: the Athlone Press, London, 1996), 120.
107. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, 95–96.
108. And preceding quotes on Q/A session. In Seán Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, 247.
109. Dudiack, *The Intrigue of Ethics*, 259, n45.
110. Dudiack, *Intrigue*, 163. See also chapter 7.
111. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 102.
112. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 89.
113. Especially as developed around the theme of "democracy-to-come," a concept clearly linked to justice.
114. Jacques Derrida, "Talking Liberties," in G. J. J. Biesta and D. Egéa-Kuehne, eds., *Derrida & Education* (London: Routledge, 2001).
115. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 64.
116. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 65.

117. Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 68.
118. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 56.
119. Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 45.
120. Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 41.
121. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 126.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

“Looking for Allies”: Gilles Deleuze as Critical Theorist

John R. Morss

You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed.

—Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

The power to exist has been transformed into an internal variable of the capitalist supersystem.

—Massumi, “Requiem for Our
Prospective Dead,” *Deleuze and Guattari*

Is Deleuze a critical theorist? This question is perhaps asked less often than “is Deleuze a postmodernist?” although perhaps is of greater significance. Both questions will be addressed here in a tentative and exploratory way with the intention of opening up the Deleuzian corpus to a range of interrogations. Needless to say, the answer to neither question is monosyllabic. But some headway may be made and it is possible that a contribution may thus be made to wider questions concerning Critical Theory and its rivals, including the delineation of distinctions between those alternatives. If we are indeed moving into the century *after* the Deleuzian one (as implied by the Foucauldian cliché: Buchanan, 1999) then perhaps we can cautiously begin the task of appropriating Deleuze: of becoming post-Deleuzian (Goodchild, 1996; Kaufman and Heller, 1998; Patton, 1996; Stivale, 1998).

“French theorists” such as Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, Lacan, and Deleuze—even if they share little more than a putatively common first language—seem to pose overlapping, substantial problems to

the taxonomist of sociophilosophical orientation. Who goes with whom, who is most distinct from whom? Who straddles the boundaries, however finely we delineate them? Are any of them poststructuralists, postmodernists, pragmatists, materialists? Yet their significance is undeniable even if difficult to fully articulate. Arguably the most traditionally “philosophical” of this fuzzy set (although his interests in Kafka, in painting, and in cinema disrupt that label), Gilles Deleuze may perhaps prove susceptible to interrogation on these kinds of question. As well as suggesting some possible relationships between Deleuze and these various movements, the interrogation will open up some other aspects of his work, including some of special relevance to educationists.

The second question asked above—the postmodernism question—is I think less difficult to answer than the critical theory question, although the answer still needs some qualification. Postmodernism is itself of course an awkward beast to define at the best of times (Holzman and Morss, 2000; Morss, 2000a). There seems to me little in common between Deleuze and most of the postmodernists, except for some communalities that are also shared more widely. Thus Deleuze’s attention to Nietzsche, a “postmodernly correct” author, is far from unique, and is accompanied by his attention to the less fashionable Hume, Spinoza, and Bergson. Also, Deleuze unfashionably talks of concepts rather than of language, and his discussion (with Felix Guattari) of the “minor language,” in a short book on Kafka first published in 1975 (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986), is much more politically charged than garden variety postmodernism. And while Deleuze shared with Lyotard (presumptively the most “postmodern” of the six French theorists named above) many interests and attitudes, the vocabulary of “grand narratives” could only seem foreign, if not a little superficial, on Deleuze’s lips.

More generally, Deleuze strongly resists enlisting as a “social constructionist,” however elastic that term may be (Deleuze, 1995: 139; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Wherever the ground for topically defined debate seems to be, Deleuze seems to take his stance elsewhere, looking obliquely down on the skirmish in an avuncular kind of way—in Badiou’s phrase, “penseur joyeux de la *confusion* du monde” (Badiou, 1998:18). But Deleuze was no Baudrillard, firing off snappy one-liners and then bouncing off to another topic. Deleuze’s “elsewhere” has a way of blooming and unfolding, broadening out and recontextualising the debates it surrounds. Deleuze continually generates new ways of articulating the human condition (as it used to be called), and reflecting it back like some virtual reality apparatus. The result is frequently dazzling but just as frequently illuminating.

Deleuze's approach brings together, in a remarkable and unique way, visual-spatial and conceptual modes of analysis. Perhaps no philosopher since Leibniz has had so mathematically creative a vision, but neither mathematics nor the physical sciences have had much recent impact on social theory (except through chaos theory and complexity theory, traces of which have been detected in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari; also see Protevi's forthcoming *Political Physics*). The conceptualist approach is emphatic. In *What Is Philosophy?*—the final earthly collaboration of Deleuze and Guattari—the title question is answered quite directly: philosophy is “the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 2). However—and unlike in any previous conceptualist philosophy—these concepts must not pretend to be in any way universal, either as objective contemplation, subjective reflection, or intersubjective communication. The last of these options—communicative rationality—is memorably dismissed as the “Western democratic, popular conception of philosophy as providing pleasant or aggressive dinner conversations at Mr Rorty's” (144). By implication, Deleuze rejects the Habermasian liberalism in such a position. Rather, concepts are singularities, and philosophy “does not link concepts together . . . Concepts do form a wall, but it is a dry-stone wall, and everything holds together only along diverging lines.” Concepts, thus, are connective and not hierarchical but linking.

Some other aspects of Deleuze's position vis-à-vis his predecessors can be expressed straightforwardly. He has little time for Hegel, and seems to have only slightly more for Marx. He rejects phenomenology. The Heideggerian influence, so marked in Derrida, seems largely absent: not for Deleuze a tramp in the woods or the contemplation of a hammer and nail. The Heideggerian residue is found, if anywhere, only in the spatializing impulse, converging with Heidegger's language of “clearings” and detours (Derrida's *par les quatre chemins*: see Morss, 1999). Consistent with those three rejections, he does not discuss Sartre. Writers strongly influenced by marxism rarely feature in his books and his most well-known accounts of marxism are, like his accounts of Freudism, extravagantly hostile. Yet he could not write what he does without those “effects.” The desiring-machines of the *Anti-Oedipus* are unavoidably post-Marxist in their articulation of the political economy of desire—indeed Paul Patton has described Deleuze as someone who “never ceased becoming Marxist” (cited by Marks, 1998: 163)—as well as unavoidably post-Freudian. Relatedly, “a materialist psychiatry is one that brings production into desire on the one hand and desire into production on the other” (Deleuze, 1995: 17–18).

Perhaps above all, Deleuze is always a most strategic writer even when writing at most length. His emphasis on spatiality, territory, and movement recalls a military mode of thought even when military imagery is not being deployed, and this provides a more than stylistic bond with the activist wings of Critical Theory. *Anti-Oedipus*, for example, was very much a call to arms as well as a *jeu d'esprit*. As Deleuze and Guattari later remarked:

[T]he only question is how anything works, with its intensities, flows, processes, partial objects. . . . We feel the same way about our book. What matters is whether it works, and how it works, and who it works for. . . . We're writing for unconsciousnesses that have had enough. We're looking for allies. We need allies. (Deleuze 1995, 22)

DELEUZE AND NIETZSCHE

Deleuze had always been on the lookout for allies. He constructed his own kind of intellectual nomadism, self-consciously aligning himself with a congeries of marginal or unfashionable thinkers through the history of philosophy. This is in itself emblematic of his attitude to philosophy as a matter of creativity rather than of the institution: one chooses one's forebears and then accepts the consequences. The Deleuzian pantheon is an eclectic one, including Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Nietzsche, and Bergson.

Deleuze maintained the pursuit of some specific goals as he traversed the writings of Hume, Nietzsche, and many others in his early work. Most generally, Deleuze's own positive commitments are to a kind of empiricism and to a recognition of the role of creativity in a world that is in some ways unpredictable. It is perhaps this insistence on creativity that represents Deleuze's most significant contribution to our thinking—about education, social life, and politics.

Deleuze's first two major books focused on Hume and on Nietzsche. According to Deleuze, both Hume and Nietzsche in effect rejected dialectics and rationalism—the guises of the transcendental—in favor of a respect for the particular and hence for difference. Both set intellectual functions firmly within a context of human life, particularly in an ethical context (as indeed did Spinoza). Hence Deleuze could argue that “philosophy must constitute itself as the theory of what we are doing, not as a theory of what there is” (Deleuze 1991: 133).

The rejection of orthodox rationalism (also evidenced in his admiration for Bergson) sets Deleuze apart from French intellectual mainstreams even more than the rejection of the dialectic. Deleuze disavowed the con-

tinental concern with subjectivity—carried through from existentialism even into poststructuralist thought by Foucault and others. The subject is radically exteriorized in Deleuze—portrayed as the contingent, accidental effect of the play of surfaces. This in itself represents one point of contact with empiricism, a line of work which would seem to concern itself with exteriors. Certainly, empiricism can be seen as opposed to interpretation. As Deleuze put it: “Never interpret: experience, experiment” (Deleuze, 1995: 87).

Process, flux, events—“the Heraclitean fire machine” (Deleuze, 1983:30)—form Deleuze’s cosmology and in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze endorses Nietzsche’s affirmative, joyous account of science, devoted to the realm of “action” rather than “reaction.” It celebrates thinking as creation. This creativity means that not only is philosophy not directed to the eternal, as in a Platonic idealism, but it is also not directed to the “historical” as if this is somehow a surrogate for the ideal. Philosophy is neither eternal nor historical but “untimely.” Deleuze contrasts genealogy with evolutionism, which tends to set change within fixed patterns and even teleological structures, describing evolutionism as “the reactive image of genealogy.” This notion of genealogy was subsequently adopted by Foucault, together with several other key elements of Deleuze’s Nietzsche (such as the analysis of power). Foucault, however, employed what seems, by comparison with Deleuze, a somewhat restricted sense of genealogy particularly in focusing on structures of knowledge. For Deleuze, in contrast, it is in the realm of ethics that genealogy is of most significance. Values for Nietzsche, argues Deleuze, are to be seen neither as absolute nor as relative to some cultural base.

At times Deleuze’s anti-Hegelism is almost Popperian in its vehemence. To a considerable extent Deleuze was reacting against the lionizing of Hegel in modern French philosophy (through Kojève) and the associated monolithic status of Hegel as having singlehandedly created phenomenology, existentialism, the dialectic, and the analysis of class struggle. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze was paving the way for his subsequent (and also vociferous) critique of lack as negativity in the Hegelian-inspired works of Lacan. Nietzsche, for Deleuze, is above all a philosopher of ethical action in the world, where ethical action is to be distinguished from the taking of responsibility, which involves guilt and hence falls into the trap of “interiority.” As Foucault himself might have said, “As for being responsible or irresponsible, we don’t recognise those notions, they’re for policemen and courtroom psychiatrists” (Deleuze 1995:24). Deleuze’s ethics, drawn from Nietzsche and Spinoza, is itself (perhaps in a rather aestheticised sense) a contribution to Critical Theory.

GIVING REPRESSION THE FINGER: THE ANTI-OEDIPUS

Deleuze's most well-known book remains his collaboration with Felix Guattari of the late 1960s, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia I*. The attitude to the psychoanalysis of postwar France is almost uniformly negative, the most back-handed of compliments. Although some general elements of Freud's project are salvaged, chiefly a notion of the libidinal economy, the book as a whole is a celebration of what Freud defined as the most primitive of libidinal regimes: the "polymorphous perversity" of the baby, revelling in the exotic pleasures of its body and of the bodies it encounters. Freud's sequestration of this bacchanalian carnival is entirely rejected. Repression, as a process, is rejected in this glorious "up yours" to psychoanalysis.

The critique is not of psychoanalytic concepts as such. Deleuze stated when the book was published that "What we're attacking isn't some supposed ideology behind psychoanalysis. It's the practice and theory of psychoanalysis itself" (Deleuze, 1995: 17). In the Oedipus complex Deleuze and Guattari see the crystallization of a whole set of assemblages, functioning to attribute blame and guilt to individuals and to specific domestic arrangements of the modern family. Lacan, for whom Oedipal processes were condensed with subjectivity and language-use, is a major target. Lacan's "negative" approach to desire—his Hegelian notion of desire as lack, and his notion of jouissance as connoting the master's triumph over the slave—is swept aside in a torrent of affirmation. Lacan's approach is made to seem timid and guilty by comparison.

Throughout *Anti-Oedipus* there is an extravagant concern with the production and the productivity of desire—with abundance, excess, and the overflowing of limits. There are surrealist underminings of the structuralist tropes of circulation and investment (and here Lacan, the surrealist psychiatrist and sometime structuralist, is hoist with his own petard). Instead of a careful system of erogenous zones, relocating around the body according to a strict schedule, and giving rise to an orderly developmental progression of the ego, we have desiring-machines and the psychotic Body without Organs. The latter is a nonorganized monolith, a nondifferentiated plenum, like a body so obscenely fat that it totally occupies its spatial dimensions in a perfect cube (or perhaps so obscenely anorexic or emaciated that it disappears entirely). Order, schedules, the territorialization of the body—and indeed the psychoanalytic fear and loathing of the panlibidinal body surface of the baby, and perhaps of the woman—are treated as fascist. This conceptual fascism is, if anything is, the expression of the neuroticism described (or rather, inscribed) by psy-

choanalysis itself. In defining the anal character, as if by virtue of its professional expertise, psychoanalysis merely projects itself.

The language is direct: instead of coy discussions about “the anal” we are confronted, on page one, with the stinking brown stuff itself. The earthiness of expression extends to sex; an earthiness that contrasts with the prudishness of Freud’s language and the voyeurism of Lacan’s. For Deleuze and Guattari, coupling is a key process in the functioning of the social machinery of which we are a part. Intercourse and interpenetration are symbolic as well as actual. Two authors interpenetrate each other’s brains, cutting and rejoining neural connections to neural tissue and to the world in a bizarre combination of neurosurgery and performance art.

Among other couplings, the long-awaited Freud-Marx synthesis is one that plays a background or perhaps off-stage role in *Anti-Oedipus*. Contemporary capitalism is treated as of immense strength and fluid power—with a protean facility to re-group, to de- and re-differentiate, to assimilate its enemies and to recruit every aspect of contemporary culture to its advantage. This is as non-Utopian a post-marxism as one might ever encounter. It is implied that the future vision offered by communist theory is cognate with the supposed promises of the psychoanalyst. If there is any hope, it lies not in the “proles” or in the clinic, but in the inchoate puissance of desire. Of all the previous couplings of Freud and Marx, it is perhaps closest to that of Reich (Deleuze 1995:18).

MAKING SPACE FOR RESISTANCE: *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS*

We’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.

—Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Deleuze and Guattari collaborated on several subsequent projects, with the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* appearing in 1980. A *Moby Dick* of a book, *A Thousand Plateaus* is measured and extensive in style. Its “plateaus”—a term derived from Gregory Bateson—are junctures or resting places, metastable locations like tectonic plates on the earth’s surface; or like the tracks on a CD between which one can jump. Many of the plateaus are associated, sometimes cryptically, with specific,

significant dates in history. But the sequence is anything but a linear account of evolutionary progress. Some of the most striking of the images discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus* relate to the concept of the rhizome, and to the concepts of territorialization and of different kinds of space. An attempt will be made to explicate these concepts all of which bear on resistance. Some comments will also be made here on postmodernism since in many ways *A Thousand Plateaus* looks like a postmodernist work.

The rhizome is presented as a model of communication and of proliferation, especially by contrast with the arborescent (tree) model. The rhizome—apparently exemplified in conventional botany by some ferns and rhododendrons—is defined as a “prostrate or subterranean root-like stem” that builds up a network of interconnections with no central organization. It lies upon or slightly under the surface, ready to produce a vertical stem when the opportunity arises. In contrast, the tree has a well-defined and stable root system below ground, and an equally well-defined stem system above ground. It is ordered, where the rhizome exemplifies distribution. (Elsewhere it is noted that “the rhizome is an anti-genealogy”). The rhizome is to be differentiated both from root and from radicle—it exhibits neither “genetic axis” (on the basis of which developmental stages might be built) nor “deep structure” (as in structuralist anthropology, or the “competence” model of Chomskyan linguistics).

For Deleuze and Guattari a rhizomic *book* (like their own) contrasts with the lineal order of a more traditional, “root-like” book. However, and more important perhaps, the rhizomic book contrasts with a book that exemplifies a “radicle” system: one that is “merely” multiple or “merely” fragmented, while remaining unified or controlled at some higher level (an edited book perhaps!—although the example indicated is Joyce’s *Ulysses*, with its masterly orchestration of diverse styles and genres). For fragmentation is not enough: “it is not enough to say ‘Long live the multiple.’” A pluralistic attention to the multiple (for example, in some forms of contemporary postmodernism) might be termed liberal—as it were “Anything goes (as long as it’s not inappropriate)”. However, Deleuze and Guattari call this model “fascicular” (that is, bundled), and it is clearly no accident that the word “fascist” derives from the same image. Deleuze and Guattari may be telling us that postmodernism (at least in popular forms) will not offer an alternative to humanism but rather a recuperation of it. More broadly, there is surely an explicitly emancipatory impulse at work. “Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities!” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 24).

The discussion of rhizomes introduces and foreshadows the concepts of space, of territorialization, and of the “war machine.” The kind of space defined by the tree or by psychoanalytic control is a “striated” space to be contrasted with the “smooth” or nomadic space inhabited by the rhizome. The comparison is well illustrated by the contrast of the game-space of chess and the game-space of go. Chess pieces are defined in terms of specific kinds of moves they can make. The meaning-system of the board is highly structured (the game of chess was almost, as it were, designed for a computer to play). In contrast the go board is bare (it does not even have squares, only intersections) and every go piece is identical in its functions. The aim of chess is to defeat an opponent by simultaneously piercing the king’s body from several angles at once (“checkmate”: the king is dead), with each trajectory precisely calculated from a distance. Go, by contrast, involves the proximal occupation and definition of territory.

This contrast of striated and smooth space is employed by Deleuze and Guattari to explore a number of issues. Striated space is directly linked with the State, and (in terms of territorialization) is used to re-describe the post-Marxist history of capitalism as previously given in *Anti-Oedipus*. Smooth space is celebrated, and its icon is the nomad. The nomadic tribe is perceived as occupying a surface (sometimes termed a “desert”) without filling it up—living as it were in two dimensions or perhaps four, but not the conventional three. The notion of mobility is not just related to the geographical peripatetics of the nomad (indeed one does not have to keep moving to be nomad). The machinic language of *Anti-Oedipus* is still in evidence and although the State is credited with the construction of the most powerful of machines—State war machines—the nomads are seen to have responded in kind (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 24). The difficult notion of the (anti-State) nomad war machine is one of the most challenging in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It seems almost deliberately designed to undermine any romanticism in their resistance imagery. Remaining largely undefined, this nomad war machine represents the rhizomic assemblies by which resistance is put together on an ad hoc basis, forming temporary coalitions, tentative alliances, and even strategic co-options of root-like or striated elements. *A Thousand Plateaus* bears more than a passing resemblance to the Taoist *Art of War*.

Direct links are made with the *Anti-Oedipus* even though psychoanalysis is not the only method of the territorialization of desire. “In the case of the child, gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems regain their freedom and extricate themselves from . . . the dominant competence of the teacher’s language—a microscopic event upsets the

local balance of power.” Deliberately adopting a (child-like?) defiant-resistant style, and again out-Reiching Reich, Deleuze and Guattari declaim:

Strike the pose or follow the axis, genetic stage or structural destiny—one way or the other, your rhizome will be broken. Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it’s all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. . . . Look at what happened to Little Hans already, an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept on **BREAKING HIS RHIZOME** and **BLOTCHING HIS MAP**, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him . . . You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 14)

DELEUZE AS CRITICAL THEORIST

We set against [the] fascism of power[,] active, positive lines of flight . . . and the organization of a social field of desire: it’s not a matter of escaping “personally”, from oneself, but of allowing something to escape, like bursting a pipe or a boil.

—Felix Guattari in Deleuze, *Negotiations*

As noted above, Deleuze distanced himself from dialectics and indeed from Hegelianism in general, immensely influential in postwar French philosophy; and he removed himself from the orthodox rationalist tradition in French thought, a tradition reaching back to Descartes, while exploring its boundaries in the work of Leibniz (indeed Badiou, 1998 describes Deleuze’s program as a new baroque). In rejecting these mainstream traditions he did not move toward phenomenology or any of the hermeneutic traditions. Nor did he embrace psychoanalysis with its “royal road to the subconscious.” He distrusted royal roads. Psychoanalysis appears to recognize the irrational, but does so in the context of a controlling practice which again, for Deleuze, identifies it as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

As observed throughout this chapter, then, Deleuze was at least hovering around the periphery of Critical Theory; can he be said to have contributed to it? Foucault appears to have thought so; he described *Anti-Oedipus* (in his preface) as an “introduction to the non-fascist life,” a pursuit of “the slightest traces of fascism in the body . . . the tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround

and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives.” There was much common ground between Foucault and Deleuze over the latter’s descriptions of “societies of control” (Deleuze, 1995: 177ff; also see Edwards and Usher, 2000: 42, 72). For Deleuze, the films of Alfred Hitchcock seem to have represented a high point of the disciplinary phase in Western society as described by Foucault (*Rear Window* is of course splendidly panoptical). Looking to the future of the school in the society of control, Deleuze saw “permanent training” (also known as lifelong learning, we presume), which “will no longer necessarily imply the regrouping of school children in a structure of confinement” (Deleuze, 1998: 18)—as with highways, where “you don’t enclose people but instead multiply the means of control.”

Relationships between control and childhood are also discussed elsewhere. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, the “assemblage” (machine) of the “becoming-child” is described as being rich “in suppleness and proliferation . . . the childish mannerisms in Kafka seem to have a function of escape or deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 87; on applications of Deleuze and Guattari in critical psychology, see Brown and Lunt, 2001; Morss 2000b; Teo 2000). The Kafka book discusses the important notion of “minority,” as indexed by Kafka’s language in relation to his political and cultural position (the status of the German, Czech, and Yiddish languages, and so on). Minority, as a status, comes to be of resistant value in itself, a proposal also explored in *A Thousand Plateaus* alongside the high-risk concept of “becoming-woman” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 291). Critical Theory is said (Pensky, 1998) to be in some ways best represented in the contemporary intellectual landscape by certain kinds of feminism, so that some attention to the contested issue of feminism in Deleuze is certainly appropriate at this point (Braidotti, 1994; Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000).

In brief, the “becomings” are minority-status entities (women, children, animals, plants) which in being withdrawn from the majority or normative standard (rational white adult male: Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 292), achieve a status necessary if not sufficient for some kind of resistance. “Even blacks, as the Black Panthers said, must become-black.” “Becoming-woman” is, however, unique in its relation to the standard in which “man is majoritarian par excellence.” Flirting with a romantic image, these becomings are described as a manifestation of nature in opposing its power to “the roar of factories and bombers” (p. 309). Natural and man-made worlds are vertiginously intertwined throughout the Deleuzian corpus, and the status of woman sometimes seems as overdetermined as that of a Hitchcock heroine. Every twist of the Byzantine plot of

Deleuze's writing seems to set more shackles on the subject, yet a sudden cut or zoom—or suddenly noticing Hitchcock himself in the scene, winding a clock or boarding a bus—will throw the whole drama into some new perspective. (Remember, Hitchcock thought *Psycho* was a comedy). Deleuze's recipe for emancipation is designed for a cinema-going audience: even in Hoyt's or the Odeon there will be allies.

For Brian Massumi, translator of and commentator on Deleuze and Guattari (and the latter's contribution on activist dimensions of the collaborative work should not be underestimated—Attias, 1998), their writings tell us that:

Resistance, if it is still at all possible . . . will take a different, most likely posthuman, route. . . . This is an argument for the additivity of political strategies on the part of those who desire to change the capitalist supersystem, to match the additivity of capitalism itself. (Massumi, 1998: 56)

And as Deleuze and Guattari remind us:

Be quick, even when standing still! . . . [but] Don't bring out the General in you! (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 24–25)

REFERENCES

- Attias, B. 1998. To each its own sexes? (pp. 96–111), in E. Kaufman and K. Heller (eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Badiou, A. 1998. *Deleuze: La Clameur de l'Etre*. Paris: Hachette.
- Braidotti, R. 1994. Toward a new nomadism: Feminist Deleuzian tracks; or, metaphysics and metabolism, in C. Boundas and D. Olkowski (eds.), *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Brown, S., and P. Lunt. 2001. The Tajfel effect (pp. 83–93), in J. R. Morss, N. Stephenson, and H. van Rappard (eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Psychology*. Norwell, Mass.: Kluwer.
- Buchanan, I. 1999. *A Deleuzian Century*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Buchanan, I., and C. Colebrook (eds). 2000. *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1983. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. London: The Athlone Press.
- . 1995. *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1998. Having an idea in cinema (pp. 14–19), in E. Kaufman and K. Heller (eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia I*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- . 1986. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1994. *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Edwards, E., and R. Usher. 2000. *Globalisation and Pedagogy: Space, Place and Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. 1983. Preface, in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia I*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goodchild, P. 1996. *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire*. London: Sage.
- Holzman, L., and J. R. Morss (eds.). 2000. *Postmodern Psychologies, Societal Practice, and Political Life*. London: Routledge.
- Kaufman, E., and K. J. Heller (eds.). 1998. *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marks, J. 1998. *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity*. London: Pluto Press.
- Massumi, B. 1998. Requiem for our prospective dead (toward a participatory critique of capitalist power) (pp. 40–64), in E. Kaufman and K. Heller (eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Morss, J. R. 1999. In the presence of Derrida: “Derrida down under” at Auckland, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 34/2: 359–61.
- . 2000a. Psychology (pp. 320–24), in V. Taylor and C. Winkler (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- . 2000b. Connecting with difference: Being critical in a postmodern world (pp. 103–11), in T. Sloan (ed.), *Critical Psychology: Voices for Change*. London: Macmillan.
- Patton, P., (ed). 1996. *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pensky, M. 1998. Third generation critical theory (pp. 407–13), in S. Critchley and W. Schroeder (eds.), *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Protevi, J. (forthcoming). *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politic*. London: Athlone Press.
- Stivale, C. J. 1998. *The Two-fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Teo, T. 2000. To overturn all circumstances . . . (pp. 159–70), in T. Sloan (ed.), *Critical Psychology: Voices for Change*. London: Macmillan.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction = Justice

Gert J. J. Biesta

EWALD: Is there a philosophy of Jacques Derrida?

DERRIDA: No.

EWALD: Therefore there is no message?

DERRIDA: No message.

EWALD: Is there anything normative?

DERRIDA: Of course there is, there is nothing but.

—Derrida and Ewald, “A Certain ‘Madness’
Must Watch over Thinking,” *Derrida and Education*

The Algerian-born philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–) has since the early 1960s created a highly unconventional and highly controversial philosophical oeuvre. His many articles and books have evoked strong reactions, most often of a negative kind. It is not uncommon, as John Caputo writes,

to portray Derrida as the devil himself, a street-corner anarchist, a relativist, or subjectivist, or nihilist, out to destroy traditions and institutions, our beliefs and values, to mock philosophy and truth itself, to undo everything the Enlightenment has done—and to replace all this with wild nonsense and irresponsible play. (Caputo, 1997, p. 36)

Although many people have an opinion about Derrida, far less have taken the time and effort to actually engage with his writings. There is a remarkable degree of illiteracy about his work; an illiteracy which verges on irresponsibility. I do not want to hide the fact that reading Derrida often requires considerable and sustained effort. But this is not because, as his

critics have suggested, he is a philosophical “Dadaist” (see Derrida, 1995, p. 420). It is because of the complexity of the ‘project’ he is engaged in, and also because of the commitment and rigor of his scholarship. In this chapter I want to argue that Derrida’s oeuvre is anything but an irresponsible play with words, but that ethical and political issues are at the very center of what his writing is about. In order to make this clear, I will focus on one of the most fascinating claims to be found in Derrida’s work, namely, his contention that “deconstruction is justice” (Derrida, 1992a, p. 35, original emphasis). Explaining this claim will not only allow me to reveal the ‘hyper-political’ character of deconstruction (see Derrida, 1996, p. 85) but will also allow me to show in what way and to what extent deconstruction can be seen as a form of critical philosophy and hence as a ‘member’—although a very special one—of the critical tradition.

FROM CRITIQUE TO DECONSTRUCTION

In 1991 the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas wrote the following about Derrida:

May not Derrida’s work cut into the development of Western thinking with a line of demarcation similar to that of Kantianism, which separated dogmatic philosophy from critical philosophy? Are we again at the end of a naïveté, of an unsuspected dogmatism which slumbered at the base of that which we took for critical spirit? (Levinas, 1991, p. 3)

Levinas’s observations are a good place to start, for they suggest that ‘deconstruction’—the (not completely correct; see below) name under which Derrida’s work has become known—occupies a special place in the tradition of critical philosophy. One could, of course, argue that *all* Western philosophy is critical philosophy. Socrates was, without doubt, a critical philosopher. Although Plato was much more a system-builder, his intentions were clearly critical in that he wanted to make a distinction between opinion (*doxa*) and knowledge (*episteme*). We shouldn’t forget that Plato’s work was also an attempt to provide a justification for the superior position of philosophers in the Greek polis, because it was the philosophers who, through their knowledge of an *ultimate* reality (the world of Ideas), were in the possession of a *criterion* so that *krinein*—distinction, separation, decision, disputation, judgment—became possible. But the ‘point’ of philosophy, ever since it inaugurated a specific style of thinking and doing in Western culture, has always been one of not simply accepting what is the case.

In the history of Western philosophy this culminated perhaps most clearly in Kant's three *Critiques*, which still stand as a major attempt to articulate what it could mean for philosophy to be critical. Kant had high ambitions for philosophy—and for intellectual work more generally—when he claimed that his age was “the true age of critique, a critique to which everything must be subjected” (Kant quoted in Röttgers, 1990, p. 892). Yet his idea of critique as a tribunal of reason was soon to be challenged by Hegel and Marx from a perspective in which a much more historical orientation came to the fore. Both traditions, reason and history, have continued to play a central role in the critical work of twentieth-century philosophy (e.g., in Popper's critical rationalism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, respectively).

Where does Derrida/deconstruction fit into this picture? In a general sense it can be said that deconstruction has a clear critical ‘agenda.’ But deconstruction stands out both with respect to the *object* of its critique and with respect to its *method*.

Deconstruction is first of all special in that its critical work is aimed at the very possibility of critique itself. Derrida emphasizes that deconstruction is *not* a critique “in a general or Kantian sense,” but that “the instance of *krinein* or of *krisis* (decision, choice, judgment, discernment) is itself . . . one of the essential ‘themes’ or ‘objects’ of deconstruction” (Derrida, 1991, p. 273). Deconstruction, Derrida writes, “always aims at the trust confided in the critical, critico-theoretical agency, that is, the deciding agency,” for which reason he concludes that “deconstruction is deconstruction of critical dogmatism” (Derrida, 1995, p. 54). This means that the critical ‘agenda’ of deconstruction is first of all aimed at critical philosophy—or philosophy as critique—itself. Derrida indeed maintains that the central question of his writing is the question as to “from what site or non-site (*non-lieu*) philosophy [can] as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner” (Derrida, 1984, p. 108).

But *if* deconstruction is aimed at the very possibility of critique and at the very way(s) in which the philosophical tradition has tried to be critical, then this immediately has repercussions for the critical activity of deconstruction itself. A critique-of-critique can, after all, not make use of the critical style it wants to criticize. If it wants to be an effective critique it has to find a way to be critical and self-critical at the very same time. It may seem, then, that what deconstruction wants to achieve is simply impossible because it has no ground to stand on and no place to begin from. Rather than opening up the field of critique, it seems that deconstruction implies the end of critique and hence, as, for example, Jürgen Habermas has argued, the beginning of conservatism—in this case a ‘new conservatism’ (Habermas, 1987). But this

is not how Derrida would see it. To acknowledge that there is no safe place to stand on, that there is no absolute beginning, no simple point of departure, is not a weakness of deconstruction but rather its strength. Derrida stresses again and again that what lies at the basis of our decisions and judgments is a radical *undecidability* which cannot be closed off by our decisions or judgments, but “continues to inhabit the decision” (Derrida, 1996, p. 87). Derrida acknowledges that this is an aporia—but “we must not hide it from ourselves” (Derrida, 1992b, p. 41).

I will even venture to say that ethics, politics, and responsibility, *if there are any*, will only ever have begun with the experience and experiment of the aporia. When the path is clear and given, when a certain knowledge opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that there is none to make; irresponsibly, and in good conscience, one simply applies or implements a program. (Derrida, 1992b, p. 41)

Before I want to look at this intriguing line of thought in more detail, I want to emphasize that we shouldn't confuse deconstruction with other traditions in which it is argued that we can never be absolutely sure about what we say, claim, or criticize. Isn't this, one could ask, the message that we got from antifoundationalists like the pragmatists and neopragmatists? Hasn't Karl Popper been saying throughout his career that our knowledge is always fallible and that we can never know whether we have arrived at 'the truth'? Isn't it, in a sense, simply 'good philosophy' to always keep on asking questions? Let's say that the answer to these questions has to be both yes and no. Yes, deconstruction shares its critical spirit with many of these traditions. But, no, deconstruction is different in that it raises the question how this critique is itself possible; how, in other words, antifoundationalists, Popperians, and other critical philosophers are able (or not) to say what they say.¹

DECONSTRUCTION AND THE 'METAPHYSICS OF PRESENCE'

The theme that runs through Derrida's writing right from the beginning is the theme of the *origin*. Or, to be more precise: the theme of the thought of the origin, the theme of the philosophy of the origin, the theme of *metaphysics*. Derrida argues that the history of Western philosophy can be seen as a continuous attempt to locate a fundamental ground, a fixed center, an Archimedean point, which serves both as an absolute beginning and as a center from which everything originating from it can be mastered and controlled (see Derrida, 1978, p. 279). Since Plato this origin has always been defined in terms of *presence*. The origin is thought

of as fully present to itself and as self-sufficient. Derrida sees the “determination of Being as *presence*” as the “matrix” of the history of metaphysics, which, so he adds, coincides with the history of the West in general (see Derrida, 1978, p. 279). “It could be shown,” he argues, “that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence” (ibid.) Here we should not only think of such apparent fundamentals as God or nature. Any attempt to present something as original, fundamental and self-sufficient is an example of the “metaphysics of presence” (Derrida, 1978, p. 281). It includes, for example, both the idea of consciousness as a self-present origin (an idea that can be found in Descartes’s *cogito*), and the idea that everything is a social construction (where ‘the social’ functions as a self-sufficient presence).

It is important to notice that the “metaphysics of presence” includes more than just the determination of the meaning of Being as presence. The metaphysical gesture of Western philosophy also entails a *hierarchical axiology* in which the origin is designated as pure, simple, normal, standard, self-sufficient, and self-identical, in order *then* to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, and so forth.

Derrida wants to put the metaphysical gesture of Western philosophy into question—and in a moment I will discuss why he wants to do this. He acknowledges that he is not the first to do so. Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger have all in their own way exposed and criticized the metaphysical desire of Western thought, the desire for fixed, self-present origins (see Derrida, 1978, p. 280). But there is a crucial difference between Nietzsche’s “demolition” or Heidegger’s “destruction” (*Destruktion* or *Abbau*) of metaphysics and the work Derrida is engaged in (see Derrida, 1991, pp. 270–71). Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and all the other “destructive discourses” wanted to make a total break with the metaphysical tradition. They wanted to end and to overcome metaphysics. Derrida tells us, however, that such a rupture is not a real possibility.

There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We . . . can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (Derrida, 1978, p. 280)

While Derrida wants to ‘shake’ metaphysics, he acknowledges that this cannot be done from some neutral and innocent place ‘outside’ of metaphysics. He acknowledges that we cannot step outside of the tradition, since that would leave us without any tools, without even a language to investigate, criticize, and ‘shake’ metaphysics. What is more to the point,

therefore, is to say—to put it simply—that Derrida wants to shake metaphysics by showing that it is itself always already ‘shaking,’ by showing, in other words, the impossibility of any of its attempts to fix or immobilize being through the presentation of a self-sufficient, self-identical presence.

It is here that the word ‘deconstruction’ comes into play, but it is important to see what it is and what it is not. Deconstruction, to put it simply, is *not* the activity of revealing the impossibility of metaphysics. It is not something that Derrida does or other philosophers can do. Derrida explains that

‘deconstructions,’ which I prefer to say in the plural . . . is one of the possible names to designate . . . what occurs [*ce qui arrive*], or cannot manage to occur [*ce qui n’arrive pas à arriver*], namely a certain dislocation, which in effect reiterates itself regularly—and wherever there is something rather than nothing. (Derrida and Ewald, 2001, p. 67)

Deconstruction, therefore, is “not a method and cannot be transformed into one” (Derrida, 1991, p. 273). What philosophers can do, and what Derrida has done many times in his writings, is to show, to reveal, perhaps even to witness *metaphysics-in-deconstruction* (see Bennington, 2000, p. 11). But basically all deconstruction is ‘auto-deconstruction’ (see Derrida, 1997, p. 9).

What would metaphysics-in-deconstruction look like? If it has to do with the fact that any attempt to ‘be metaphysical’ at the very same time disrupts itself, that, as Bennington (2000, p. 15) puts it, we are always “in a *tension* between metaphysics and its undoing,” then we could say that deconstruction becomes visible in those situations in which what makes something possible (a condition of possibility) makes it at the same time impossible (a condition of impossibility)² One example is the relationship between presence and absence, where Derrida argues that ‘presence’ is only possible because of what is not present, namely, ‘absence.’ Let’s look at this example and its implications in more detail.

DECONSTRUCTION AND DIFFERENCE

One way in which Derrida hints at the occurrence of metaphysics-in-deconstruction is with—to be very precise—something that is written as *différance*. Derrida develops his ideas about *différance* in the context of a discussion of the structuralist theory of signs, meaning, and language of Ferdinand de Saussure (see Derrida, 1982, pp. 1–28). Central to de Saussure’s theory is the rejection of the idea that language is es-

entially a naming process, attaching words to things. According to de Saussure language should be understood as a system or a structure in which any individual element is only meaningful because it differs from other elements. In language, he holds, there are only *differences*. But these differences are *not* differences between positive terms, that is between terms that in and by themselves refer to objects or things outside of the system and derive their meaning from that. De Saussure argues that in language there are only differences *without* positive terms.

A good example of this is a dictionary. If we look up the meaning of a word in a dictionary we will be referred to other words. We can look up their meaning but will again only be referred to still other words. Each word in the dictionary has, so to speak, a semantic place, a position relative to and different from other words. Going through the dictionary will bring us from one word to another and so on ad infinitum. What we will never find is a word that relates to something outside the dictionary which gives the word its meaning. The difference between the words, then, is not the effect of their reference. Reference rather should be understood as a function of difference.

De Saussure's ideas already bring us one step into the direction of the 'point' of deconstruction. Derrida argues that if there are only differences *without* positive terms, then this means that the "movement of signification" is possible only if each element "appearing on the scene of presence, is relating to something other than itself" (Derrida, 1982, p. 13). What is called 'the present' is therefore constituted "by means of this very relation to what it is not" (Derrida, 1982, p. 13). This 'contamination' is a *necessary* contamination: for the present to be itself and present itself as self-sufficient, it needs what is other than itself. This puts the nonpresent in a double position. On the one hand it is the nonpresent which makes the presence of what is present possible (which at the same time means that it makes the presence of what is present impossible). Yet, it can only make this presence possible by means of its own exclusion. What is excluded thereby in a sense returns to sign the act of its own exclusion which, as Bennington (1993, pp. 217–18) observes, immediately "outplays the legality of the decision to exclude" (see also Derrida, 1981, pp. 41–42).

If this is what can become visible when we show metaphysics-in-deconstruction, we can already get an idea of the critical potential of doing so, since at the heart of it we find a concern for what could be called the "constitutive outside" of what presents itself as self-sufficient. We can then think of Derrida's writing as an attempt to dismantle our pre-conceived understanding of identity as self-sufficient presence, in order to expose us to the challenge of a hitherto concealed, excluded, and

suppressed otherness; an otherness which has been ignored in order to preserve the illusion of identity as self-sufficient presence. Derrida's writing aims to reveal that the otherness which is excluded and suppressed in order to maintain the myth of pure and uncontaminated original presence is actually *constitutive* of that which presents itself as such. What the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence brings into view is that "identity *presupposes* alterity" (Derrida, 1984, p. 117).

This already suggests that the point of deconstruction is not negative or destructive but first and foremost *affirmative* (see Derrida, 1997, p. 5). It is an affirmation, so we could say, of what is excluded and forgotten; an affirmation of what is *other* (see Gasché, 1994)—or, to be more precise, an affirmation of the *otherness* of what is other (see below).

THE DIFFERENCE OF *DIFFÉRANCE*

There is, however, a complication which has to do with the question how deconstruction can bring what is excluded into view. The problem is this: if it is indeed the case that in language there are only differences without positive terms, then we have to concede that it is not possible to articulate the differential character of language itself by means of a positive term (such as, e.g., differentiation). Difference without positive terms implies that this 'dimension' must itself always remain unperceived. Strictly speaking, it is unconceptualizable. Derrida indeed concludes that "the play of difference, which, as Saussure reminded us, is the condition for the possibility and functioning of every sign, is in itself a silent play" (Derrida, 1982, p. 5).

If, however, we would want to articulate that which doesn't let itself be articulated and yet is the condition for the possibility of all articulation—which we may want to do in order to prevent metaphysics from reentering the scene—we must first of all acknowledge that there can never be a word or a concept to represent this silent play. We must also acknowledge that this play cannot simply be exposed, for "one can expose only that which at a certain moment can become *present*" (Derrida, 1982, p. 5). And we must finally acknowledge that there is nowhere to begin, "for what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure" (Derrida, 1982, p. 6). All this, and more, is acknowledged in the new word or concept "which is neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida, 1982, p. 7) but a "neographism" (Derrida, 1982, p. 13)—of *différance*. (In French the difference between 'différance' and 'différence' is itself inaudible, which makes it an ideal candidate for indicating the silent play of language.)

The reason why Derrida introduces that “what is written as *différance*” (Derrida, 1982, p. 11) is not too difficult to grasp. For although the play of difference is identified as the condition of possibility of all conceptuality, we should not make the mistake to think that we have finally found the real and ultimate origin of conceptuality.³ Because we are talking about the condition of possibility of all conceptuality, this condition itself cannot belong to what it makes possible. It has to come *before* language. Yet, the only way in which we can articulate this condition of possibility is in terms of the system that is made possible by it. We are, therefore, always already too late to articulate the condition of possibility of all articulation—which implies that what we identify as the condition of possibility of language is at the same time its condition of impossibility (see Gasché, 1986, pp. 316–17).

Différance, then, is not a new metaphysics. It is not an attempt to identify a new, self-sufficient origin. Rather it is an attempt to indicate that when we want to become metaphysical, we will not find a stable, self-sufficient point of departure, but we will find ourselves engaged in what might best be described as a ‘movement.’ After all, any attempt to articulate what makes a system possible (which has to come ‘before’ the system and hence be ‘outside’ of it) already has to operate within the confines of the system made possible by it (and therefore has to be ‘inside’ at the very same time). It is for this reason that any attempt to fix conditions of possibility is bound to fail—or to be more precise: that the system is never totally delimited by its conditions of possibility since these conditions are always already part of the system. This is why Caputo calls *différance* a “quasi-condition of possibility” which “does not describe fixed boundaries that delimit what can happen and what not, but points a mute, Buddhist finger at the moon of uncontainable effects” (Caputo, 1997, p. 102).

We can now in a sense say more confidently and with more precision what we concluded before, namely, that the point of deconstruction is to open up the system—any system, not only the system(s) of language—in the name of what cannot be thought of in terms of the system and yet makes the system possible. This reveals that deconstruction is not simply an affirmation of what is already *known* to be excluded by the system. Deconstruction is an affirmation of what is wholly other (*tout autre*), of what is unforeseeable from the present. It is, as Derrida puts it, an affirmation of an otherness that is always to come, as an event which “as event, exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipations” (Derrida, 1992a, p. 27). In this sense it is not simply an affirmation of who or what is other, but rather of the otherness of who or what is other. Deconstruction is an opening and an openness toward an *unforeseeable* in-coming of the other

(see Caputo, 1997, p. 42). This is what Derrida calls 'the impossible'; it is not what is impossible but what cannot be foreseen as a possible.

TO SUM UP

This, then, is what goes on under the name of 'deconstruction.' The 'object' of deconstruction is the metaphysics of presence—and we have seen that this metaphysics of presence can be present in many different forms and under many different guises. The 'point' of deconstruction is not simply to do away with the metaphysics of presence, because that is how we talk and how we live or lives, but rather to open up the metaphysics of presence, to show that the condition of possibility of metaphysics of presence is at the very same time its condition of impossibility. The point of deconstruction, in other words, is to show that presence is only possible because of its relation to absence and identity is only possible because of alterity. But Derrida cannot do all this by introducing a new metaphysics, such as the metaphysics of differentiation, because that would immediately close off what he wants to open up. The only 'lesson' to learn from deconstruction, so we could say, is that we always should be vigilant, that we always should be on the lookout for traces of the metaphysics of presence, for attempts to close off instead of to open up—both in language and in life, that is, in human institutions and practices. This is not an easy task. It is hard work which never will come to an end. The only support Derrida can give is *différance*—the silent play which can never be present but should be in its place in order to prevent metaphysics from entering again. And all this because deconstruction wants to be affirmative, because it wants to be welcoming to what is other than what can be conceived.

DECONSTRUCTION = JUSTICE

What looked like quite a gap at the beginning of this chapter may have become a little less of a jump now that we have seen in more detail what deconstruction is about. There are all kind of technical philosophical issues involved in deconstruction, and the problem of articulating a critique of critique which neither is dogmatic nor self-contradictory proved to be quite complex. But not only do I hope to have shown that there is some sense in deconstruction—and I venture to say that there is far more sense than what many of its critics believe. I hope also to have shown that the point of deconstruction is not a technical one, that it is not even only about language,

but that deconstruction (or showing metaphysics-in-deconstruction) is thoroughly motivated by ethical concerns.

The critique of the metaphysics of presence is, after all, not aimed at metaphysics as such, but is motivated by the fact that any suggestion of presence and originality is only possible because that what makes presence possible is itself made invisible. It is like the situation where the King is highly visible but where what makes the visibility of the King possible—the work of many of his subjects—remains impossible. Or it is like the relationship between ‘upstairs’ and ‘downstairs’ where those who live upstairs can only lead there life of independence and self-sufficiency because of all the work that is being done downstairs. The point of deconstruction is not only to give recognition to all the work that is being done behind the scenes in order to make the illusion of self-sufficiency upstairs possible. It goes one step further in that it wants to open up, or at least keep the door open, for that which we cannot even know to be going on behind the scenes. In this respect we can say that deconstruction—showing metaphysics-in-deconstruction—is motivated by a wish to do justice to what is excluded and out of sight—or perhaps we should say to do justice to *who* is excluded and out of sight.

For Derrida ‘justice’ is not some kind of general principle or a criterion that we simply have to apply to the situations we are in. For Derrida ‘justice’ is closely related to our relation to the other. He even goes as far as to say, quoting Levinas, that justice *is* our relation to the other (see Derrida, 1997, p. 17). This relation cuts right across principles, criteria, and even laws. Derrida argues that once we relate to the other something ‘incalculable’ (see Biesta, 2001a) comes onto the scene, something which cannot be reduced to concepts, principles, laws, or even histories, but is always more—or can always be more.

That is what gives deconstruction its movement, that is, constantly to suspect, to criticize the given determination of culture, of institutions, of legal systems, not in order to destroy them or simply to cancel them, but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice. (Derrida, 1997, p. 18)

Justice then implies that we *always* have to be willing to think again, think differently, about the other, to be willing to be taken by surprise, rather than only trying to know and define who the other is. Here, again, we can find deconstruction because to know who the other is, means that the other is no longer completely other, yet if the other is totally other, we would not be able to recognize her, which suggest that justice has itself a deconstructive ‘nature’.

Just as we can say that it is justice which gives deconstruction its movement and meaning, we can also say that it is deconstruction which gives

justice its meaning. Derrida makes a distinction between justice and the law. Laws are important because they make justice possible. Without laws there would be chaos, we would have to begin again and again. But laws are not identical to justice. Laws are historical, social, and can therefore always be deconstructed. This is good news because it means that they can be improved. It is this improvement which takes place 'in the name' of justice. Justice is therefore not reducible to the law, to a given system of legal structures. Justice is, as Derrida puts it, to come or, to be more precise, it is *always* to come. It can never be present. Or to be more precise: we should at least keep the possibility open that what looks like justice or a just situation can always turn out to be not so just. We should therefore think of justice as something which can never be present, not even in some kind of utopia if, that is, we would claim that we could know *now* what that utopian situation would look like. That is what we can learn from deconstruction as well. Deconstruction radicalizes the idea of justice. And just as deconstruction will never stop, so justice will never come to an end, will never reach its final conclusion. That's why deconstruction, the ongoing un-settling, the ongoing opening-up, is justice.

CONCLUSION

There are many more questions to be asked about deconstruction. But let me, in conclusion, just ask one: Isn't deconstruction in a sense a luxury? The point is, that one could well argue that there are many urgent needs in the world and that, with respect to those needs, it is simply clear what has to be done: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and so forth. It is only after all that has been done, that we may find time to look for metaphysics-in-deconstruction. This is also true. But we should always keep asking ourselves whether it might be the case that in the very name of justice we are doing injustice. We should, in other words, always entertain the possibility of the injustice brought about by good intentions and clear conscience—also in our attempts to be critical, ethical, and political. This is the critical question which deconstruction in a sense puts to us. It is up to us to respond.

NOTES

1. Deconstruction differs both from more traditional approaches to critique and from transcendental critique. I have discussed this in more detail in Biesta and Stams (2001) and Biesta (2001b).

2. For a deconstructive reading of human communication, politics, and the process of education see Vanderstraeten and Biesta (2001); Biesta (2001c).

3. Precisely at this point Derrida goes 'beyond' de Saussure in that he rejects de Saussure's suggestion that what is most original and makes language and meaning possible is 'structure' (see Derrida, 1976, p. 39). At this point we could say that Derrida becomes poststructural, although we should be aware that in deconstruction there is never a simple 'before' nor a simple 'after.'

REFERENCES

- Bennington, G. 1993. Derridabase. In G. Bennington and J. Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. G. Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2000. *Interrupting Derrida*. London: Routledge.
- Biesta, G. J. J. 2001a. "Preparing for the Incalculable." Deconstruction, Justice and the Question of Education. In G. J. J. Biesta and D. Egéa-Kuehne (eds.), *Derrida & Education* (pp. 32–54). London: Routledge.
- . 2001b. How Can Philosophy of Education Be Critical? How Critical Can Philosophy of Education Be? Deconstructive Reflections on Children's Rights. In F. Heyting, J. White and D. Lenzen (eds.), *Methods in Philosophy of Education* (pp. 125–43). London: Routledge.
- . 2001c. How Difficult Should Education Be? *Educational Theory* 51 (4): 385–400.
- Biesta, G. J. J., and G. J. J. M. Stams. 2001. Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique. Some Lessons from Deconstruction. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 20 (1): 57–74.
- Caputo, J. D., ed. 1997. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1976. *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- . 1978. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1981. *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1982. *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1984. Deconstruction and the Other. An Interview with Jacques Derrida. In R. Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (pp. 105–26). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- . 1991. Letter to a Japanese Friend. In P. Kamuf (ed.), *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (pp. 270–76). New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1992a. Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority." In D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld, and D. Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (pp. 3–67). New York: Routledge.
- . 1992b. *The Other Heading. Reflections on Today's Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 1995. *Points . . . Interviews, 1994*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

- . 1996. Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism. In Ch. Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (pp. 77–88). London: Routledge.
- . 1997. The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida. In J. D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (pp. 3–28). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Derrida, J., and F. Ewald. 2001. “A Certain ‘Madness’ Must Watch over Thinking.” Jacques Derrida’s interview with François Ewald, trans. Denise Egéa-Kuehne. In G. J. J. Biesta and D. Egéa-Kuehne (eds.), *Derrida and Education* (pp. 55–76). London: Routledge.
- Gasché, R. 1986. *The Tain of the Mirror. Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1994. *Inventions of Difference. On Jacques Derrida*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Levinas, E. 1991. ‘Wholly Otherwise,’ trans. S. Critchley. In R. Bernasconi and S. Critchley (eds.), *Re-reading Levinas*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Röttgers, K. 1990. ‘Kritik.’ In J. J. Sandkühler (ed), *Europäische Enzyklopädie zur Philosophie und Wissenschaften. Band 2* (pp. 889–98). Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Vanderstraeten, R., and G. J. J. Biesta. 2001. How Is Education Possible? *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 33 (1): 7–21.

The Postmodern Condition: Lyotard's Futurology

Peter Pericles Trifonas

... we know that it is unwise to put too much faith in futurology.¹

—Jean-François Lyotard

Published in 1979, Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* has left an indelible imprint on the humanities, social sciences, and the "science of research" in general. The epistemological trajectory of disciplinary fields such as sociology, philosophy, applied ethics, linguistics, political science, history, "literary studies," and education, to name but a few, was forever altered by the appearance of this text and the self-proclaimed mission of its writer to reexamine the "condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies" (*PC*, xxiii). As Fredric Jameson notes in the "Foreword," *The Postmodern Condition* can be considered a polemic against the Habermasian notion of a "*legitimation crisis*" that takes into account the negative "consequences of the new views of scientific research and its paradigms, opened up by theorists such as Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend" (*PC*, vii). What is unique about Lyotard's rendering of the postmodern is the openness of the critical vision of the legitimacy of knowledge structures in the postindustrial era that is presented. Its scope is synoptic and yet not totalizing. Perhaps, because, Lyotard explains with respect to the authority of his vision in *The Postmodern Condition*,

the author of the report is a philosopher, not an expert. The latter knows what he knows and what he does not know: the former does not. One concludes,

the other questions—two very different language games. I combine them here with the result that neither quite succeeds. (PC, xxv)

This revelation of authorial intentions regarding his method of thinking and writing, including the motivation behind its production, will guide my reading of the text. I will characterize Lyotard's philosophical perspective in *The Postmodern Condition* as a type of "futurology"—or a speculative discourse of the imagination concerned with engaging the empirical manifestations of present knowledges as forms or being or becoming—but also projecting the shadowy dimensions of their unimaginable ethical effects in *a time-yet-to-come*.

A little more than twenty years after the appearance of *The Postmodern Condition*, we are coursing through the vicissitudes of a new millennium where epistemological certainty is no longer taken for granted, and yet, we must still have some empirical and conceptual foundations upon which to build knowledge. These knowledge structures of science as "moments of learning" are the minimal parameters of *what we know* that legitimize knowledge as research. Their institution within the material expression and social trappings of consciousness signals the public degree of their acceptance and forms the relative foundations of *what we think we know* at a basic level of understanding and representation. Fundamental knowledge is not complete in itself. Rather, articulated within its incompleteness is an ethical obligation, a right and a responsibility, to question the fruits of research and its intellectual and physical labor. Science demands horizons of open accountability to an other unforeseeable limit whose boundaries are never ending, never in sight. It is therefore not so surprising that the pursuit of research as the status bearer of knowledge is the main topic of *The Postmodern Condition*. But, as I have explained above, Lyotard opens up the text of his report to the question of the future in order to put its validity to the test. And it is only fair that we read it within this light, now, when much of what is discussed in the text has come to pass, thus affecting both the status of science and the course of learning. It is in this moment of questioning and epistemological doubt—arising out of the transitions from past to present knowledges—that I wish to begin to engage *The Postmodern Condition*. Specifically, to analyze how Lyotard's report invokes a call to a heightened sense of academic responsibility within the practices of scientific inquiry. *The Postmodern Condition* will be read as a philosophical meditation that looks toward a future *yet-to-come* and settles around the problem of *what it means to know* through the research act in relation to the epistemological field of technology, the crisis of legitimation after modernism, and the rule of language games.

KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNO-EPISTEMOLOGY

Postindustrial society exhibits signs of postmodern culture, Lyotard explains. Not only because the reality of a temporal disjunction engenders liminal perspectives on knowledge but because the nature of episteme becomes redefined in accordance with the "problems of translation" (*PC*, 3) between repositories of knowledge and their technologies of archiving. A question we must ask is: Can truth be reduced to an archive? Is it possible? Yes. Knowledge is nothing if it is not grounded upon the possibility of a permanent record of physical data that can then be used to establish "laws of science" as the demonstrable evidence of the self-certainty of the truth of research. Culture depends upon the feasibility of referring to relative archives of meaning to endow expressions of understanding with the evidence of empirical value and predictive power. The failings of conscious memory require the continuing, demonstrable proof of a past and a future to secure the possibility of a genealogical rendering of human experience.

Language intervenes nevertheless to question the validity of laws as denotative statements based on the power of the archive to stabilize the ground of meaning-making. The signs of knowledge thus exteriorized are transformed into the more general category of "information"—its "use-value" notwithstanding the effects of representation that mediate for the limitations of human understanding by giving way to the instrumentality of technological reason. Lyotard states that "Scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse" (*PC*, 3). A postmodern proclamation. Knowledge is not a technology in itself. The *a posteriori* of practice is lacking. Knowledge as discourse need not be instrumental. Commands can be disobeyed and disavowed, consciously or unconsciously. We must consider the significance of Lyotard's statement regarding scientific knowledge with respect to language and technology—the two sides of a postmodern techno-epistemological understanding of real-world phenomena through information and communications media (e.g., the computer).

Postmodern epistemological doubt settles in between the apparatus used for the technical manipulation of information and its archival containment of data as signs of understanding. The need for a techno-epistemology—or a view of knowledge that takes into account the influences of technological mediation upon the sources of its production and perception—arises out of the lack of faith in the truth of science. Representation deforms, denatures, and supplements the originary eidetic structures of conceptual formations. Technology redeems a postmodern epistemological doubt by quelling it in

the practice of facilitating pragmatic ends through the supplementation of human weakness. Despite ineptitude, Lyotard isolates the origins of technology in prosthetics, or devices which are “aids for the human organs or as physiological systems whose function it is to receive data or condition the context” (PC, 44). Such a post-Darwinian supplementation of nature readily follows the “principle of optimal performance” (PC, 44), whereby God-given deficiencies are minimized and one purposeful action “expends less energy than another” (PC, 44). Technology presupposes the need for the proof of the efficacy of research “as the pragmatics of scientific knowledge replaces traditional knowledge or knowledge based on revelation” (PC, 44). The concreteness of its manifest structures and operations objectify the union of thought and action. Instrumental reason is born when the root of technology becomes competence rather than invention or *poiesis*, utility rather than creativity or art. Lyotard refers to the fact that after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but especially during the industrial revolution, the quest for “technical apparatus require[d] an investment” (PC, 45) of capital and energy predicated on the promise of optimizing efficiency for greater productivity, which in turn gave it a “surplus-value derived from this improved performance” (PC, 45).

The economizing of reason as “instrumental,” of course, has commercial implications for the production of knowledge by promoting the logic of end-oriented research. The point is to add to the cultural archive of information for social profit. A lack of ecological and intellectual altruism directs the reason of technology toward capital incentives rather than educational imperatives, putting it to use for the benefit of private interests that guide the progress of science and the production of knowledge regardless of the public good. We do not need to give examples; we live them and know them. However, Lyotard does:

Capitalism solves the scientific problem of research funding in its own way: directly financing research departments in private companies, in which the demands for performativity and recommercialization orient research first and foremost toward technological “applications”; and directly by creating private, state, and or mixed-sector research foundations that grant program subsidies to university departments, research laboratories, and independent research groups with no expectation of an immediate return on the results of the work—this is done on the theory that research must be financed at a loss for certain length of time in order to increase the probability of its yielding a decisive, and therefore highly profitable, innovation.

The dubious talent of *homo faber* as researcher is revealed in how the raw materiality of the human world can be used as “standing-reserve” (*Be-*

stand) for material production. That is, a resource always present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) and ready to be used for the artificiality of a ready-made "techno-ecology," whereby nature is brought to a standstill by the en-framing (*Gestell*) of a prefabricated world picture (*Weltbild*). For Heidegger, like Lyotard, techno-science contributes to a postmodern spirit of pessimism caused by feelings of alienation and homelessness (*Unheimlichkeit*).²

Technology and capital can coexist; and they do, one supporting the other and vice versa through collaborations and partnerships. However, the epistemological legitimacy of knowledge suffers when the ethics of research are compromised for a "learning circulating along the same lines as money" (PC, 6). And research becomes tied to funding and science to capital for specific outcomes related to application. The economic terms of the exchange then result in what Lyotard calls "payment knowledge" and "investment knowledge" (PC, 6), whose first priority is not ideological or "communicational transparency" (PC, 6). The philosophical and ethical disinterestedness of "higher learning" that Kant champions becomes redundant relative to the economic viability of sustaining publicly supported educational institutions.³ A new academic responsibility toward the production of applied knowledge is thus consecrated in the context of the university's total subjugation to the technologies of informatization or data creation. A cross-contamination occurs between the "instrumental" and the "*poietic*" aims of research, where and when the specificity of the goals or purposes of knowledge is blurred by economic interests. The university cannot but become the site of modern TECHNO-SCIENCE, Lyotard tells us, although not without a cost to basic research. The amenability of reason to technology is the characterizing feature of the institutional evolution of knowledge from "philosophy" to "science," from theory to practice, and the necessity for the empirical justification of knowledge. The epistemological trailblazing of the early Greeks (not the pre-Socratics) stimulates the onto-genesis of modern TECHNO-science without which there would be no contemporary university. The application of reason as the structure and end of research is not, nor could it ever be, outside the scope of a critical questioning of the grounding of the foundation of the institutional frameworking of knowledge. For Lyotard, the metaphysical assumptions behind the attempts made at an objective setting of the values of truth are reductive, autarchical, and protective of the practical modality of a teleological thinking. Reason and the use of technologies of Reason in the process of research cannot be legitimated without interest—without the power of a subjective ground of logic—an ideologically grounded grounding that withdraws, refracts, is concealed by the self-sustaining logic of a closed

system exemplified by the University and its epistemological hierarchy of disciplines. In this articulation is reflected the arbitrary structure of social interests actualized via the institutional hierarchy of the disciplines as the practice of knowledge generation gets worked out through the “crossing-over” of science from *theoria* to *praxis*. Normative criteria come to govern the optimal performance of “ideas in action” for the purpose of subordinating the quality of information to the augmenting effects of technological performativity. Lyotard calls this accretion of the power of truth—its principle of reinforcing reality through a supplementation of the deficiencies of reality—“the best possible input/output equation” (*PC*, 46). This techno-epistemological cultivation of efficient representations of phenomena both prefigures and supports the existence of metanarratives of academic responsibility that appeal to narrowly defined ethical standards of research for the purpose of authenticating and legitimating the means used for the production of practical knowledge. Technology propels the work of science toward the facilitation of an instrumental rationality outside the scope and interests of intellectual inquiry *in* and *of* itself. According to Lyotard, the “rising complexity” of proof becomes the goal for the axiomatic demonstration of truth. Techno-epistemological claims to knowledge require the mysticism of an “other” language of science reconcilable only to the binary logic of its own expression of decidability. The limits of truth are programmatic and incommensurable to the presence of otherness within the interpretative frameworking of a system that constructs meaning according to the “principle of a universal meta-language” (*PC*, 43). Techno-epistemology facilitates the proof of science by modeling the laws of reality as a simulation of real phenomena. It produces a simulacrum of experience faithful to the conceptual structures of experience. Reality is heightened by the virtual expression of empirical knowledge. Technology, it can be said, is more than just to the principle of verification required for the legitimacy of research. Scientific proof has power through the performativity of “good verdicts” (*PC*, 47) that concretely represent the meaning of experience. Technology “reinforces” science, Lyotard maintains, because “one’s chances of being just and right [about a knowledge of reality] increase accordingly” (*PC*, 47) through efficient research applications. There is another side to it nevertheless.

Technology cannot bridge the difference between reality and experience because it is predicated on principles of practice governing the consistent production of instrumental reason that mimics verisimilitude. And yet, technology also functions as a difference engine, creating “a plurality of formal and axiomatic systems capable of arguing the truth of denotative statements” (*PC*, 43), but unable to show how empirical proofs support

the logic of conclusions. Techno-epistemology illustrates the postmodern paradox of science as applied research when the status of reality is questioned and academic responsibility is at stake. For Lyotard, "proof is problematical since proof needs to be proven" (*PC*, 44). Technology does not compute (for) interpretative alterity, and so, unwittingly augments the unlikely probability of its commensurability or the conceptual reduction of difference via a paradigmatic rendering of the full presence of the other within the possibility of a mechanized reproduction of the same. Ironically, the result of techno-epistemology is a crisis of legitimation in the postmodern age of science. The rapid proliferation of paradoxical theorems and conflicting findings undermine the power of the grand master narratives to persuade research communities to reach a consensus of meaning. The principles of techno-epistemology create a performativity of simulations that offer a substitute for empirical proof. For the purposes of legitimation, the outcomes of applied research practices come to determine the effectivity of scientific inquiry. Technology, however, exacerbates the postmodern condition of incommensurability between the metanarratives of science because it "cannot fail to influence the truth criterion" (*PC*, 46). The paradoxes of techno-epistemology are produced by the proliferation of competing interpretations that threaten the credibility and legitimacy of claims to knowledge. Science surrenders to paralogy: the game of language played from within the axiological framework of a system of meaning-making to undermine the self-certain truth of research.

LEGITIMATION CRISIS AND LANGUAGE GAMES

It is not difficult to ascertain why Lyotard cautions against adopting the principles of techno-epistemology without reservation. He believes that the instrumental aims of corporate and government funding of research for the purpose of orienting the efficiency of scientific performativity "subordinate the institutions of higher learning to the existing powers" (*PC*, 50). The pursuit of a techno-epistemological justification of knowledge is not necessarily a "bad" thing. That is, if it is just one more available method of testing, among others, to query the validity of scientific protocol. The desire to implement a system of research based on the logic of performativity is, however, misguided. An "imperative of performance" placed upon the "task of science" to generate usable information supports the "'organic' connection between technology and profit" (*PC*, 45). This is true. Although to be fair, the application of knowledge can be ethical

whether it is originally directed or not. Free will is involved. And Lyotard does leave room for the power of the imagination and aesthetic inspiration to shape scientific discovery as an intangible influence upon the limitations of instrumental reason. But if the point of research is to improve the performance of the social system through a techno-epistemological rendering of science, then what can learning be tied to other than the creation of "skills that are indispensable to that system"? (*PC*, 48).

Here again in Lyotard's postmodern futurology are echoes of our contemporary dilemma, especially in the higher echelons of the education machine. Now more than ever, the surplus-value of knowledge is molded though the use-value of technology because global competition requires the citizen to be capable of supporting the economic mission of the nation-state on an international scale. On the one hand, Lyotard predicts that there will therefore be a "growth in demand for experts and high and middle management executives" (*PC*, 48) in "any discipline with applicability to training in 'telematics' (computer scientists, cyberneticists, linguists, mathematicians, logicians. . .)" (*PC*, 48). We most certainly have seen this to be the case with the explosion of the World Wide Web and the Internet and the rapid rise of a new global economy of virtual proportions. The architecture of technology itself is not the obstacle to intellectual and economic self-actualization now as much as accessibility to it is. On the other hand, Lyotard sees the deligitimization of liberal education and a discrediting of its "emancipation narrative" (*PC*, 48) that has informed the disciplinary construction of knowledge within institutions of higher learning since the beginnings of the modern university in Prussia under the guidance of Wilhelm von Humboldt. The need to create citizen subjects "with the skills [to fulfill] society's own needs" (*PC*, 48) diminishes the necessity for dabbling in philosophical ideals, so there are only

so many doctors, so many teachers in a given discipline, so many engineers, so many administrators, etc. The transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation toward its emancipation, but to supply the system with with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions. (*PC*, 48)

Learning in the postindustrial age promotes the development of skills, for competence and productivity, not the value of speculation, for invention and discovery. No interest is taken in science for its own sake. The principles of "liberal humanism" no longer ground the model of an emancipatory education through which autonomous self-actualization is attainable. Occupational horizons and careerism do. Consequently, the

professionalization of work is informed by the ethical imperative of gathering the situational knowledge needed to perform and excel at a job skill as opposed to engaging in the speculative production of knowledge for general inquiry. Functionalism overtakes learning. But this could not happen without the delegitimation of philosophy and science in light of the distinction between theory and practice that collapses under the weight of an interdisciplinary questioning the universal premises of truth. Postmodernism can be held accountable here, if it is as Lyotard states, "an incredulity toward metanarratives" (*PC*, xxiv) or legitimating stories that seek to explain the meaning of experience. To quell epistemological doubt and control the transmission of established knowledges, didactics takes over learning after the ground of certainty has disappeared under it.⁴ Method supercedes for the reproduction of a cultural archive and its paradigmatic and self-conscious teachings. The result after postmodernism is that philosophy and science are no more capable of extrapolating truth than any other disciplines, since the decline of the grand narrative, "whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation" (*PC*, 37), reduces knowledge to a method of language games.

It is crucial to recognize the semantic elision that Lyotard makes—but does not specifically state—between the archiving of knowledge and the constitutive means and methods of doing so, that deligitimize grand narratives and create a crisis of meaning. The paradigmatic shift from discourse to technology changes the social and epistemological definitions of research and truth. Not to mention the cognitive and affective preconditions of teaching and learning. The speculative dimension of reason comes into question after the instrumental push of technology to recode human experience according to its own nature is made. And yet, teaching and learning requires creativity and imagination. It is moved forward by epistemological curiosity—the quest for infinite human progress—and not the inculcation of procedural outcomes that render subjectivity as the products of coded instructions performed via electronic commands. Lyotard is enamoured neither by the prospects of a "cyborg subjectivity"—and the potential it foresees for a new information society of techno-automatons—nor by the vision of a learning culture that prioritizes the ethical value of the digital enterprising of knowledge. He details how research in such a techno-epistemological milieu will begin to be legitimated according to the power of information as a commodity to be used by nation-states "in the world wide competition for power" (*PC*, 5). Lyotard's predictions about the future of knowledge in an economic globalization here are uncanny—"the breakdown of the hegemony of American capitalism, the decline of the socialist alternative, a probable opening of

the Chinese market" (PC, 6). Furthermore, he envisions the influence of the digital age on higher education. He anticipates the miniaturization of technology and the increase in computing power through which "learning is translated into quantities of information" (PC, 4). These "bytes of knowledge"—channeled by finite systems of translation with discreet programmable languages—will produce highly directed areas of inquiry. Consequently, the legitimacy of research is determined in accordance with its potential viability to serve "industrial and commercial strategies on the one hand, and the political and military strategies on the other" (PC, 5). The field of scientific inquiry narrows drastically when it is tied to the circulation of capital. Basic or fundamental research becomes shaped in relation to the interests of multinational corporations and nation-states vying for control of information.

In a postindustrial, postmodern age, where knowledge is reinterpreted as information—and its value is determined by the capacity to incite profitable exchanges between social actors—Lyotard explains how learning is also commodified in the public sphere. Education no longer becomes the sole "purview of the State" (PC, 5), but is determined through the socio-economic and ideologico-political forces that structure and mercantile knowledge. An information society and its "new economy" is predicated to grow through the open exchange of information on a global scale. Lyotard was perhaps the first modern philosopher after Martin Heidegger to predict the future impact of technology on knowledge without referring to more recent inventions such as the World Wide Web and the Internet. The need for the flow of information supercedes and overrides the necessity to censor the quality of the information made available. *All information is created equal*. That is the motto of the new information age and its pseudo-intellectual economy. Lyotard outlines the implications of what this contemporary perspective proselytizes. The hidden significance of information is posed as a future problem of equitable access to data: "who will know?" (PC, 6). Ideology is now joined to the question of the status of knowledge. Another more personal question arises: "Why should I know?" Quite simply, because the telematic system of communication and its open exchanging of messages that techno-epistemology has effectualized now obliges a citizenry to be responsible for the dissemination and growth of information. And of course, the obligation extends to the direction of the language games of science that are played in the public sphere. Ignorance of technology no longer constitutes an excuse when the stakes for a way of life and living are high.

Language is the foundation of technology and of science. Narrative constitutes the source of subjectivity. Postmodern doubt complicates the

self-certainty of identity from which the empirical value of science as a discourse of truthful knowledge is constructed vis-à-vis the Greek logos. Lyotard appropriates the Wittgensteinian concept of "language games"—the rules of expression governing the constative and performative instances of utterance within the field of communication—to articulate the paradoxical essence of knowledge under the influence of a postindustrial techno-epistemology. Narration is antagonistic to "hard science" because it exposes data to an interpretative modality of analysis that in effect cannot be controlled. For Lyotard, narrative creates an *agonistics*, whereby a community of truth is transformed into a community of dissensus through *paralogy*, or the proliferation of paradoxical discourses that contradict meaning though the games played with the rules of science via language. At least, this is Lyotard's hypothesis. The problem with language games—and all "games theory" in general—is the supposition that each "move" both incites and merits a "countermove" to offset the structure of the system, to keep it in balance. The binary modality of the logic is totalizing as well as simplistic: if there are no rules, there is no game; if there is a move, it requires a response. This is not necessarily the case. Sometimes a game only has one player who knows the game is being played. Technology renders the use-value of knowledge incalculable as new information is produced, publicly archived, and made accessible at a faster rate than ever before in history. Interpretability is open. Information can be recoded into existing systems of knowledge and can be used to build new structures and frameworks of understanding. Language enables the constant changing of rules that characterize the validity of a denotative or prescriptive statement referring to a state of knowledge or knowing. So it is essential for those in the private and public domains who may well benefit from it the most to attempt to stimulate the circulation of messages that are "rich in information and easy to decode" (PC, 5). Technology allows a future manipulation of research to occur with subtlety under the capitalistic guise of sustaining democracy.

THE FUTURE? AFTER POSTMODERNISM

Expanding the question of the status of knowledge to include a generalized overview of postindustrial, postmodern learning environments brings to light how the location and the nature of learning are being integrated with the practices of everyday life. Lyotard does not address the consequences of intellectual engagement as a cultural practice. He prefers to concentrate on the use-value of knowledge in relation to its performative

commodification through technology. The “computerization of society” (PC, 7) instantiates a “legitimation crisis” according to Lyotard, although not in the Habermasian sense of a community reacting to iconoclastic attitudes that question the validity of scientific truths.⁵ Rather, in *The Post-modern Condition* Lyotard presents the hypothesis of a digitally driven information society to expose the relation of knowledge to power and the ideological underpinnings of claims to reason. He looks to narrative to flesh out the implications of the vision. The linguistic turn is expected. It is not original as much as a nod to the poststructural constitution of post-modernity as a critique of the principle of reason that governs the philosophical genealogy of the Western epistemological tradition and its privileging of a naïve concept of representation.⁶ What distinguishes Lyotard’s vision of a computerized information society is his recognition of the ethico-political dimension of knowledge that a technological rendering of science and research diminishes. The archiving of information is not benign but subject to the governance of the means of representation by external forces, mechanical and ideological, though ultimately grounded in the logic of cultural practices. The translatability of messages and other sensory data (visual, auditory, haptic) permeating the public sphere remains greatly under the power of controlling forces who shape their form according to the reason of exposition. But given that the field of interpretation may be open to aberrant codings and responses, the power of information is undecidable. Intentionality is factored into representation, but cannot control it. Signs are not autogenic. Responsibility is involved in representation. For Lyotard the desire for technological determinism characterizes the reason of “the most highly developed societies” (PC, 7). Cybernetics becomes the terrain for the struggle over knowledge that manifests itself according to the Occidental passion for decidability and appropriation. Justice is not an issue when nature is fixed as experience. A community of science grows from a commensurability of perspectives wherein truth is qualified by the adherence to traditions of inquiry. Certain discourses are accepted while others are not. Censorship comes by way of a paradigmatic modality of knowledge and the masternarratives generated to support the ideology of the system of representation. A question arises: What of Lyotard’s hypothesis? Is it not also a metanarrative? An overriding explanation responsible only to and commensurable with the reason of itself and for itself? We must answer in the affirmative to all of the above. Lyotard foresees the complaint and cautions against the “strong credibility” (PC, 7) of the totalizing vision he has presented as a hypothesis of “the real”—its reason posed as a condition of possibility, a “what if.” He also extends the challenge of understanding the implication

of this "what if" toward the conditions of impossibility which the hypothesis does not inhere in relation to knowledge and science. The fact that not all knowledge is scientific knowledge is crucial to the argument put forward about the challenge of defining postmodernity within culture and sets the stage for the method of language games Lyotard is willing to promote and to play in the name of excavating the truth of reason.

At the end of the main text of *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard makes one observation that is worth noting about the ethics of techno-epistemology and the democratic status of science in the information age after postmodernism. We will leave the last words to him:

The line to follow for computerization . . . is, in principle, quite simple: give the public free access to the memory and data banks. Language games would then be games of perfect information at any given moment. But they would also be non-zero-sum games, and by the virtue of that fact discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes. For the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge—language's reserve of possible utterances—is inexhaustible. (PC, 67)

NOTES

1. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Originally published in France in 1979. All further reference to this work in the text are to the English translation by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

2. See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977) for the discussion of technology as a mode of *aletheuein*, revealing—the essence of technology being nothing "technological" but *poietic*. Also Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). We can follow the trail that leads from the transformation of the pre-Socratic notion of Being as *physis* and *aletheia* into the conception of Being as *eidos* and *idea* from Plato to Being as humanity's idea to technology.

3. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1956) and Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties/Der Streit der Fakultäten*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979). See also Jacques Derrida, "Mochlos; or, The Conflict of the Faculties," trans. Richard Rand and Amy Wygant, in *Logomachia: The Conflict of the Faculties*, ed. Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

4. See Jacques Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," trans. John P. Leavey Jr., in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel*

Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 117–71.

5. See Jürgen Habermas, “The Idea of the University—Learning Processes,” trans. John R. Blazek, *New German Critique* 41 (Spring–Summer 1987): 3–22.

6. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988) gives an excellent rendering of the crisis of meaning after the questioning of representation.

Of Being-Two

Pheng Cheah

The decade or so spanning the later 1970s to the mid-1980s witnessed the growing importance of “sexual difference” in Anglo-American academic discourse in the humanities and the “soft” social sciences. Both as an interpretive principle in textual criticism and literary theory and as a critical framework for the analysis of social and political structures and cultural formations, sexual difference provided a fertile conceptual ground from which the disinterested universalism claimed by patriarchal and phallogocentric knowledges could be put into question. However, in the past decade, the primacy of sexual difference as a critical principle has itself been called into question for eliding other collective forms of difference such as race, class, and sexuality.

In a sense, this fracturing or fissuring of the conceptual ground of feminist theory can be seen as a logical outcome of the concept of “difference” itself, which endlessly proliferates into a multiplicity of sometimes conflictual forms. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the fissuring of “sexual difference” within academic discourse also reflects and expresses (albeit a little belatedly) broader sociological and political events: the rise in the 1970s of what sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein has described as new antisystemic movements or “new social movements.”

By the 1970s one began to speak in the plural of the “new social movements.” The shift from the grammatical singular to the plural provides a crucial clue to the nature of the process. For the “movement,” if it was ever organizationally singular, soon became multiple, if not necessarily fractionated. That is to say, there emerged a whole series of movements, each organized around a specific theme or focus—movements of “ethnic minorities” or “immigrants,” women’s

movements, ecology movements, antiwar movements, gay and lesbian movements, movements of the handicapped and of the aged (or pensioners). . . . The key theme of the new movements in the West was the forgotten people—the ethnic underclasses, the women, the gays, the aged, et cetera.¹

Due caution should, of course, be exercised concerning the many mediations between theory and practice. Nevertheless, this connection between the fissuring of sexual difference in academic theoretical critique and the pluralized nature of the new social movements that emerged in the 1970s necessarily raises the question of whether the contemporary political world has become too complex for sexual difference to serve as a primary critical-analytical and practical principle. Put another way, does sexual difference have a continuing pertinence as an effective mechanism and/or ideal horizon for ethical and political transformation? What political future(s), if any, does sexual difference have?

These questions about the political future of sexual difference are indissociable from the writings of Luce Irigaray, who is arguably one of the most intriguing and original of the present generation of European philosophers. The initial posing of the question of sexual difference in the Anglo-American academy coincided with, and was given added impetus by, the translation of Irigaray's early works into English as part of the corpus of writings that became known as "French feminism."² Irigaray has continued to insist on the fundamental nature, and, indeed, the infrastructural status of sexual difference to human existence as a whole. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, originally published in 1984, Irigaray suggests that sexual difference is the fundamental ethical question of the contemporary era:

Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our "salvation" if we thought it through. But, whether I turn to philosophy, to science, or to religion, I find this underlying issue still cries out in vain for our attention.³

In subsequent, more politically oriented texts, Irigaray has not only reaffirmed this initial suggestion. She has made the even more controversial claim that other forms of difference are secondary to sexual difference. In *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, Irigaray argues that

Without doubt, the most appropriate content for the universal is sexual difference. . . . Sexual difference is an immediate natural given and it is a real

and irreducible component of the universal. The whole of human kind is composed of women and men and of nothing else. The problem of race is, in fact, a secondary problem—except from a geographical point of view—. . . and the same goes for other cultural diversities—religious, economic, and political ones.

Sexual difference probably represents the most universal question we can address. Our era is faced with the task of dealing with this issue, because, across the whole world, there are, there are only, men and women.⁴

It may be the case that Irigaray is guilty of reducing all modes of alterity to the model of the heterosexual couple. Alternatively, her conception of sexual difference may also be more enigmatic and complex than received understandings of sexual difference. This much at the very least is suggested by her comment that the recognition of the alterity of the other across sexual difference can offer a concrete model and a substantive practical logic for respecting all other forms of alterity.

Carrying out this revolution, which goes from affirming the self as other to recognizing man as other, is a gesture which will then permit all the various forms of alterity to be respected without authority or hierarchy, whether one is dealing with race, age, culture, religion etc.

Substituting the *two* for the *one* in sexual difference corresponds, then, to a decisive philosophical and political gesture, one which renounces being *one* or *many* [*l'être un ou pluriel*] in favour of *being-two* [*l'être deux*] as the necessary foundation of a new ontology, a new ethics, and a new politics in which the other is recognized as other and not as the same: greater, smaller, at best equal to me.⁵

In any event, Irigaray's provocative theoretical suggestions and exhortations should be thoroughly engaged with and openly debated instead of being dismissed because she has developed a series of concrete proposals and principles about current affairs and the civic structuring of everyday life that need to be seriously addressed. She has insisted again and again that the questions she has raised about the deepest and most pervasive underlying structures of patriarchal and phallogocentric containment of women and femininity are not simply issues directed to the constrained field of philosophy or contained within the academy. They concern the basis of the most insistent issues occupying both the lives of individuals and the public and institutional life of nations. She is probably the only living feminist philosopher today who has articulated an elaborate program for concrete sociocultural, legal, and political transformation, "a political ethics that refuses to sacrifice desire for death, power, or money" (*ILTY*, 33).

Unfortunately, Irigaray's contributions to political theory have largely been overlooked. This is partly the result of the disciplinary division of labor in contemporary knowledge production. The curious formation "theory," where Irigaray is mostly read, is a subfield within the humanities and the soft social sciences. Political science, or government, one of the "hard" social sciences, is either conservative in its theoretical orientations, which are mainly liberal and positivist, or largely atheoretical. But the relative obscurity of Irigaray's later and explicitly political writings is also symptomatic of the way she has been received theoretically. Generally speaking, Irigaray's work seems to have suffered a curious atrophy in its translation across the Atlantic.⁶ Most commentators regard her as primarily a thinker of subjectivity, identity, sexuality, and desire, and rarely consider her as a political theorist or an analyst of social and cultural life. Thus, even the most sympathetic readers have tended to extract the social and political implications of her work from her earlier and primarily psychoanalytic texts, which are then taken as so emblematic of her work that her later writings are rarely read, let alone discussed. Consequently, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One* have effectively functioned as synecdoches of her entire oeuvre. These are clearly important feminist texts, but they do not represent the entirety of her work, which has developed, refined itself, and undergone many inflections, reorientations, and differences of emphases since her earliest publications nearly twenty-five years ago. This, of course, is hardly surprising: it marks the history and maturation, the development and elaboration of the political and intellectual work of a lifetime. Although her more recent writings have attracted a little attention, their implications for various disciplines and knowledges—philosophy, feminist theory, queer theory, but also economics, politics, geography, and urban and regional studies—have yet to be worked through or even seriously considered.

What then is Irigaray's understanding of sexual difference; its political stakes and its future? It is widely accepted that Irigaray's critique of phallogocentrism involves an exposure of the violent logic of the one, a Platonic monologic that reduces the other to a pale copy or deficient version of the same. It is correctly noted that Irigaray regards this logic of sameness as the theoretical underpinning of a variety of historical patriarchal social and cultural structures as well as phallogocentric discourses on femininity and feminine sexuality, including the monosexual discourse of psychoanalysis. However, on the basis of a certain reading of her work in the 1970s (such as "When Our Lips Speak Together"), Irigaray is then characterized as a champion of multiplicity, which is enacted in/as *écriture féminine* or *parler-femme*. It will therefore be somewhat of a surprise to many

of her readers that Irigaray regards multiplicity as complicit with the logic of the one because in her view the multiple is the one in its self-willed dispersal into unrelated atomistic singularities, many others of the same. The alternative model she offers is the paradigm of the two, a mode of original relationality or being-with-the-other in which the otherness of the other is respected. In her own words,

Even in the reversal which the privilege of the many over the one represents, a contemporary reversal in the name, amongst other things, of democracy, even in the privileging of the other over the subject, that of the *thou* with respect to the *I* (I am thinking . . . of a part of Lévinas's work . . .), we remain subjected to a blind model of the one and the many, of the one and the same, a model on which a singular subject imposes one sense rather than an other. Similarly, granting precedence to concrete singularity over ideal singularity is inadequate in challenging the authority of a universal valid for all men and all women. In reality, no concrete singularity can designate an ideal valid for all men and all women, and to ensure the coexistence of subjects, particularly on the civil level, a minimum of universality is necessary.

If we are to get away from the omnipotent model of the one and the many, we have to move on to the *two*, a two which is not two times one itself, not even a bigger or a smaller one, but which would be made up of *two* which are really different.[. . .]

My first theoretical gesture was thus to *free the two from the one*, the two from the many, the other from the same, and to do this in a horizontal way by suspending the authority of the One: of man, of the father, of the leader, of the one god, of the unique truth, etc. It was a question of releasing the other from the same, of refusing to be reduced to the other of the same, to an other (male) or an other (female) of the one, not becoming him, or like him, but by constituting myself as an autonomous and different subject.

Obviously this gesture challenges our entire theoretical and practical tradition, and particularly Platonism, but without such a gesture we cannot speak of women's liberation, nor of ethical behaviour with regard to the other, nor of democracy. (QO, 128–30)

For Irigaray, the ethicophilosophical importance of sexual difference lies in the fact that it is the only concrete or sensuous example of being-two available to us that is inscribed with the capacity for ethical universality. As she explains, "the paradigm of this two is to be found in sexual difference. Why here? Because it implies two subjects who should not be situated in either a hierarchical or a genealogical relationship, and that these two subjects have the duty of preserving the human species and of developing its culture, while respecting their differences" (QO, 129). To grasp why sexual difference can be an efficient motor for radical sociocultural, legal, and political

transformation, we need to first understand the historical narrative that Irigaray plots.

According to Irigaray, the violent logic of the one that leads to the establishment of patriarchy and the repression of sexual difference is historically coextensive with the human subject's disavowal of his indebtedness to nature and his loss of respect for the nature in himself. She argues that the identification of the mother with nature; the reduction of child-bearing to a function of the genealogy of the husband/father; and the alienation of the daughter from her mother as a result of the sundering of woman's genealogy occurs alongside the replacement of a cosmological view of nature as fertile life-giving earth with an instrumentalist view of nature as brute matter to be conquered and transcended by the human subject, and shaped in accordance with the human will.⁷ Indeed, Irigaray regards the uncontrollable forms of alienation and abstraction in the Marxist account of the development of global capital—the genesis of the money-form and of commodity fetishism—as inevitable effects of the sacrifice of natural fertility.⁸ She suggests that the crisis of the contemporary era—wars, starvation, destruction—is the logical historical destiny of all sacrificial technocratic societies which have been “set up and managed by men alone.”⁹

But how can the crisis of our age be overcome? For Irigaray, the fecund couple of sexual difference can open up a future beyond the destruction we now face because it is the site for the formulation, cultivation, and dissemination of values that respect the generative difference of living nature. As finite beings, we owe our present and continuing existence to this generative principle within nature. Thus, sexual difference is nothing less than the possibility of the future as such. Herein lies its redemptive dimension, which is opposed to the eternal return of the same that motivates sacrificial societies.

In *I Love to You*, Irigaray explicitly situates the futurity of sexual difference in sociological and political-institutional space through a critical analysis of the place of the family in Hegel's political philosophy. Hegel's account of the family as the immediate stage of modern ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and objective spirit is, she argues, exemplary of the disavowal of natural generativity and sexual difference by the monological subject that underpins contemporary sociocultural and political life. In the first place, Hegel defines spirit as the process of rational-purposive work or the labor of the concept, understood as a movement of negation. For Hegel, nature is finite, immediate, and devoid of universal life. However, rational consciousness can invest nature with universal life by negating what is immediate in nature. It does this by imbuing brute matter with

rational-purposive form. Spiritual work is both the activity by which the rational subject negates, sublates, and transcends natural facticity and the objects produced by this activity.

Irigaray argues that this divorce of nature and spirit is replicated in Hegel's exemplary account of the family in a hierarchical organization of gender roles that consigns women to the realm of natural immediacy without the possibility of entry into the spiritual realm of culture *as a woman*. Now, for Hegel, the patriarchal family is an intermediate institution, the elementary social community that links each person to civil society. Civil society is formed by the aggregation of families represented by their heads.¹⁰ Within the patriarchal family, the generic woman's ethical duty is that of wife (of the man) and mother (of his children) in the abstract. This generic definition of woman, Irigaray points out, deprives her of universality, which is seen as the privilege of man *qua* representative of the human species, as well as her singularity:

The woman is wife and mother. But for her, this role is a function of an abstract duty. So she is not *this* woman, irreducible in her singularity, wife of *this* man, who is himself also irreducible, any more than she is *this* mother of *this* child or *these* children. . . . She must love man and child as generic representatives of the human species dominated by the male gender. She must love them as those who are able to realize the infinity of humankind (unconsciously assimilated to the masculine), at the expense of her own gender and her own relationship to infinity. In other words, a woman's love is defined as familial and civil duty. She has no right to singular love nor to love for herself. She is thus unable to love but is to be subjugated to love and reproduction. She has to be sacrificed and to sacrifice herself to this task, at the same time disappearing as this or that woman who is alive at the present time. And she must disappear as desire, too, unless it is abstract: the desire to be wife and mother. This self-effacement in a family-related role is her civil task. (*ILTY*, 21–22)

Now, because spirit is the unity or reconciliation of singularity and universality, any form of gendering that deprives women of singularity and universality turns them a priori into unspiritual beings who are imprisoned within the realm of nature and barred from entry into the spiritual realm of culture. The division between the realm of nature and the spiritual world subtends the related sociological distinctions between private and public spheres, the life of the individual and social-collective life. Hence, from a sociological and political point of view, women are also denied a civil or public identity. It is important to stress that Irigaray's point here is not that the institution of the patriarchal family (both in Hegel's

exemplary philosophical account and in general) completely denies women access to civic life or the public sphere. Her point is that this institution denies women access to the public realm *as women*. The issue is therefore not that of the *equal* access of both sexes to civil rights that are sexually neutral in substance but the sexually different access of each sex to civil rights that express and enable each person to fulfill his or her existence as a sexuate being. Irigaray makes the more radical claim that it is *sexual difference* per se that is quarantined within natural immediacy and barred from entering the realm of spirit and civil society: even though men have been the historical model for citizenship and they can participate in civic life with greater ease than women, they still cannot do so without disavowing some aspect of their sexuate being.¹¹

But then we would be greatly mistaken if we understood Irigaray to be arguing that sexual difference ought to be affirmed as an artificial but material cultural construction in the manner of most feminist appropriations of poststructuralism that are currently in vogue such as varieties of post-modern social or discursive constructionism or even theories of gender performativity. She emphasizes that sexual difference is a natural phenomenon. However, this does not make sexual difference an immediate substance. Irigaray points out that the very idea of nature as an immediate substance devoid of spirituality is based on the anthropocentric conception of nature as a brute object to be overcome and dominated by the monological human subject. This foundational axiom of Western philosophy leads Hegel to characterize dialectical development as the estrangement of the individual from natural, sensible immediacy for the sake of spiritual becoming. The repression of sexual difference in the contemporary world is a function of this anthropocentric conception of nature. Sexual difference, Irigaray suggests, cannot be expressed within anthropocentric conceptions of nature precisely because it is an originary nonanthropocentric form of negativity that issues from nature itself. Sexual difference undoes the binary opposition between nature and spirit because it is nothing other than the internal natural means by which nature becomes spiritualized.

Before the question of the need to surpass nature arises, it has to be made apparent that it is *two*. This *two* inscribes finitude in the natural itself. No one nature can claim to correspond to the whole of the natural. There is no "Nature" as a singular entity. In this sense, a kind of negative does exist in the natural. The negative is not a process of consciousness of which only man is capable. More to the point, if man does not take account of the limit inscribed in nature, his opposition to the natural does not accomplish the labor of the negative. (*ILTY*, 35–36)¹²

The natural, aside from the diversity of its incarnations or ways of appearing, is at least *two*: male and female. This division is not secondary nor unique to human kind. It cuts across all realms of the living which, without it, would not exist. Without sexual difference, there would be no life on earth. It is the manifestation of and the condition for the production and reproduction of life. Air and sexual difference may be the two dimensions vital for/to life. Not taking them into account would be deadly business. (*ILTY*, 37)

Irigaray argues that any spiritual world, that is to say, any culture, society, or political community built on the negation/disavowal of nature inevitably becomes totalitarian and sacrificial. It leads to totalitarianism because any project of the subject that denies its debt to nature also denies the fact that existence is necessarily two. The subject thereby sets himself up as an exhaustive whole or totality, repressing all that is different from himself. The neutral subject who possesses abstract individual rights is the most pervasive example of monological totality in modern political life. But more important, such spiritual projects can establish societies of death only because they are cut off from the generativity of nature. Instead of spiritualizing the body and incarnating itself, universal spirit becomes sundered from the earth, corporeality, and flesh. Irigaray offers many historical examples to support her claim: the symbolic, psychological, and physical forms of violence suffered by women in patriarchal society; alienation from nature, enslavement to property and to the money-form in global capitalism, and so on.

For present purposes, the important point is that for Irigaray, the recognition of sexual difference in the spiritual world becomes the effective mechanism that can bring an end to the domination characterizing contemporary culture and politics because it can rejoin spirit and flesh. As Irigaray puts it, sexual difference

constitutes a living universal. It is a universal related to our real person, to his or her needs, abilities and desires. . . . Thus, respecting the difference between woman and man is itself culture. It goes beyond natural immediacy. . . . If man and woman respect each other as those two halves of the universe that they represent, then by recognizing the other they overcome their immediate instincts and drives. They are spiritual humans from the fact of recognizing that they do not represent the whole of the person and that the other cannot belong to them as their own property. In sexual difference, the negative as limit is present from the very fact of respecting natural reality as constitutive of the subject.

Sexual difference is, as it were, the most powerful motor of a dialectic without masters or slaves. (*ILTY*, 50–51)

But from a sociological point of view, how can this dialectic be put into motion? It is important to stress here that sexual difference is not a metaphysical principle of causality and creation. It supplies the basis for a practical ethics the agent of which is a concrete subject who inhabits a specific social location. Irigaray argues that we can affirm sexual difference *qua* the condition of becoming only if the couple and not the patriarchal family is taken as the elementary social community that mediates between individual needs and desires and universal culture. In other words, the couple is the only collective agent that can enable individuals to make the transition from nature to culture without sacrificing their sexuate nature. This makes the couple the operative site for the diffusion of ethical responsibility in the face of otherness and difference in general throughout a given society and, indeed, the entire world. This ethicopolitical task of radically transforming and rebuilding the spiritual realm of culture or the Symbolic order (to use a Lacanian term employed by the early Irigaray) by regrounding it in the couple as the paradigmatic example of the two of sexuate nature may seem strange to readers who have celebrated Irigaray as a champion of forces that disrupt the Symbolic order. Likewise, readers who have found in Irigaray an intellectual guerrilla who persistently undermines the Symbolic law by pointing to that which escapes and resists symbolic mediation will be puzzled by her repeated insistence that new socio-cultural norms, linguistic structures, and, more important, a reinvented civil law can play a crucial role in the formation and cultivation of a civil and individual subject that is not sexually neutral.¹³ In her own words,

what is needed is a full-scale rethinking of the law's duty to offer justice to two genders that differ in their needs, their desires, their properties. . . . If the rights of the couple were indeed written into the legal code, this would serve to convert individual morality into collective ethics, to transform the relations of the genders within the family or its substitute into rights and duties that involve the culture as a whole. (*SG*, 5)

Yet, it is this aspect of Irigaray's recent work—the emphasis on the necessity of various objective mediating devices that connect the individual and the collective in a manner conducive to the sexual identity of all women and relations between men and women—that seems to hold the most promise for social and political transformation that is both radical and feasible in a world that consists of both men and women. For instance, her proposal of sexuate rights, which are the cornerstone of a new civil law, is an attempt to provide the necessary institutional framework within which women can affirm and protect their identity as women civil subjects so that they can participate fully in civil life.

In summary, then, we can isolate three important concerns of Irigaray's recent work on the ethical and political significance of sexual difference: (1) the critique of the construction of the generic woman within the institution of the patriarchal family as a function of the same antinatural monologic of transcendence that leads to commodification, human enslavement by the money-form, and the crisis of the contemporary era; (2) sexual difference as the opening of futurity; and (3) the sociological location of the subject or collective agent of sexual ethics in the couple as the basic social community that mediates between the individual and civil society, and the importance of law in the formation of this collective agent. However, at least two critical questions also need to be raised. First, if, as Irigaray argues, the respect for real differences is the fundamental principle for all ethics and morality, is her proposal that sexual difference provides "the most particular and the most universal model" for this principle (*ILTY*, 52) a form of heterosexism either at the deeper level of the argument that nature is at least two, male and female, or at the subsequent level in which the couple is sociologically determined as the collective agent of ethics? Second, and more difficult still, is Irigaray's suggestion that sexual difference can provide a solution to the crises of the contemporary world a utopian proposal that is too idealistic to take into account the violence and vicissitudes of contemporary globalization?

As I noted from the outset, it can never be clear in advance how much Irigaray's work on sexual difference will prove of relevance to other struggles for self-affirmation. In dealing with a figure as enigmatic and complex, as subtle and difficult to decipher as Irigaray, it is both healthy and rewarding to generate open controversy and discussion: too often, various words have muttered around Irigaray's writings—words like 'essentialist' or 'homophobic'—without being thoroughly and openly debated. In the spirit of furthering discussion, it would be fruitful to briefly indicate some of the implications of Irigaray's ethical paradigm of sexual difference for the affirmation of queer desire.

In the first place, Irigaray's proposition that nature consists of two sexes and that this two is the condition of possibility of existence, which is always a being-two, cannot be reduced to a simplistic elevation of heterosexuality into an ethical norm. The argument is not about individual sexual preference or the choice of sexual lifestyles. It is instead an ontological argument about the condition of possibility of all forms of living being. Irigaray's proposition cannot be disputed since with the exception of asexual life-forms, all naturally occurring life-forms are engendered from two sexes or the genetic material from two sexes. Consequently, the criticism that her ethics of sexual difference installs a heteronormativity and replicates the

conventional heterosexist regime of sexuality may be plausibly directed only at the stage in her argument where the couple is taken as the paradigmatic subject of ethical social relations.

Yet, even here, several cautionary points need to be made. First, Irigaray's trenchant critique of the patriarchal family and the generic woman's role as wife and mother within it should alert us to the fact that she is critical of the reduction of the fecundity of sexual love to heterosexual reproductive genitality (see, for instance, *ILTY*, 30). Moreover, whereas contemporary queer theory generally regards the heterosexual norm as a construction of social power that structures all existing gender identity, for Irigaray, heterosexual relations do not yet have a social existence because sexual difference has always been repressed or repudiated in the *via negativa* from nature to culture. Indeed, because she considers the sexual dimension of existence in general to have been disavowed in the realm of spirit or civil society, one might even say that no sexual relations, whether they are between woman and woman, man and man, or woman and man, have been granted social significance. What she calls homosociality is precisely a non- or even anticarnal sociality, a form of social intercourse that is devoid of sexuality, in the generative sense that she gives to the word, because it is monological.

Nevertheless, the question that still remains is whether her suggestion that the carnal couple is the social figure of sexuate existence leads her to implicitly conflate the model of the one with same-sex desire and the model of the couple with heterosexuality. What exactly is the couple? As a figure of being-two, the couple as an ethical paradigm demands a certain fidelity to the half of humankind to which any individual belongs and a respect for the alterity of the other half. This argument involves a respect for nature, but it is not thereby a biological or anatomical determinism. Irigaray makes a distinction between physiological or natural sex and sexual identity, which is not quite the same as the sex/gender distinction in Anglophone feminism. One's sex is a fact of nature. To be natural is to be sexuate and to be sexuate means to be of two. For Irigaray, sexual identity, which is cultural and related to linguistic-grammatical *genre*, is based on biological sex. However, sexual identity is neither an immutable facticity nor the artificial sociological construct that Gayle Rubin has described as "the straightjacket of gender." In Rubin's exemplary account, gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. The common equation of gender with obligatory or compulsory heterosexuality occurs in Rubin's suggestion that "gender is not only an identification with one sex; it also entails that sexual desire be directed toward the other sex." In contradistinction, Irigaray suggests that although one's sex is naturally given, apart from the minimal natural determination that sex is two,

sexual identity is paradoxically without content because it is also formed by the spiritual work that occurs through one's *respect for* the other sex and the collective nurturing of cultural values that are faithful to one's own sex (see *ILTY*, 144-45). Neither *respect for* the other sex nor *fidelity to* one's own sex necessarily implies an obligatory *desire for* the other sex.

Irigaray's critique of Simone de Beauvoir is pertinent here for, unlike Beauvoir, Irigaray argues that although sex is natural, sexual identity is not grasped in the same way that one grasps a factual truth by standing outside one's sex as an objective fact. Instead, one's natural sex needs to be actualized and spiritualized through the development of sexual identity.

I am a sexed ontological or ontic being, hence assigned to a gender, to a generic identity, one which I am not necessarily in/through my sensible immediacy. And so to be born a girl in a male-dominated culture is not necessarily to be born with a sensibility appropriate to my gender. No doubt female physiology is present but not identity, which remains to be constructed. Of course, there is no question of its being constructed in repudiation of one's physiology. It is a matter of demanding a culture, of wanting and elaborating a spirituality, a subjectivity and an alterity appropriate to this gender: the female. It's not as Simone de Beauvoir said: one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman (through culture), but rather: I am born a woman, but I must still become this woman that I am by nature. (*ILTY*, 107)

This minimal definition of sexual identity does not militate against queer forms of desire because it is oddly contentless and permits great room for singularity and variability. As Irigaray writes, the couple is "where sensible desire must become potentially universal culture, where the gender of the man and of the woman may become the model of male human kind or of female human kind *while keeping to the singular task of being this man or this woman*. (*ILTY*, 28, my emphasis).¹⁴ Same-sex desire is part of "the singular task of the being of this man or this woman." The question that Irigaray implicitly poses is 'what would same-sex desire be like if it were based on the ethical acknowledgment of sexual difference?' More generally, her definition of sexual identity is critical of the tendency to obliterate sexual difference in extreme theoretical uses of the psychoanalytical concept of identification. She regards any disavowal of the facts that nature is at least two and that, by and large, society consists of both men and women as a form of monological transcendence: the transcendence of the natural finitude of sexuate bodily existence. Thus, she writes,

Between man and woman, there really is otherness: biological, morphological, relational. To be able to have a child constitutes a difference, but also

being born a girl or a boy of a woman, who is of the same or the other gender as oneself, as well as to be or to appear corporeally with differing properties and qualities. Some of our prosperous or naive contemporaries, women and men, would like to wipe out this difference by resorting to monosexuality, to the unisex and to what is called identification: even if I am bodily a man or woman, I can identify with, and so be, the other sex. This new opium of the people annihilates the other in the illusion of a reduction to identity, equality and sameness, especially between man and woman, the ultimate anchorage of real alterity. The dream of dissolving material, corporeal or social identity leads to a whole set of delusions, to endless and unresolvable conflicts, to a war of images or reflections and to powers being accredited to somebody or other more for imaginary or narcissistic reasons than for their actual abilities. (*ILTY*, 61–62)

One can see why the disavowal of sexual difference constitutes such a grave danger for Irigaray. Insofar as we exist in a world where two sexes are the necessary condition of human existence, it is difficult to see how attempts to develop nonviolent and universal forms of political community, as opposed to particularistic, sectarian, or divisive political projects, can be concretely feasible or practicable if they are not based on the acknowledgment of being-two. This is why Irigaray is also wary of celebrating pre-Oedipal sexuality as a liberation from the norm of genital sexuality. This “entails all the caprice and immaturity of desire exercised to the detriment of becoming human as a genus, as two genders” (*ILTY*, 27). Indeed, she suggests that a critique of patriarchy can be saved from nihilism only if it is grounded in the universality of sexual difference (see *ILTY*, 39).

But then is Irigaray's universal ethical project too idealistic or fragile in the face of the forces of contemporary neocolonial globalization? The universal reach of her project is not in question here. Irigaray's sexual ethics clearly entails not only a revisioning of the relations between and among the sexes but also a reconceptualization of what both thinking and politics are, and the ways in which individuals, men and women, as well as social organizations, the city, the nation, and the entire world must be reconfigured if they are to acknowledge and accept the viable existence of two sexes. Indeed, Irigaray insists that her ethics are not confined to a particular culture or territorial political community. She has in mind a practical ethics generalizable to all classes and cultures where both women and men become productive agents in the shaping of their future world: “There is one chance left for the human race to stop this process of dispersion and destruction: to think and practice a sexualized ethic” (*SG*, 143). In a more concrete register, she insists that the rights of the couple, men and women, together or singularly, are not restricted

to social rights within a nation-state but are instead an integral part of world development. Thus, she writes that "the objectivity of women's civil rights should be established on a national level, but should also be covered by international agreements. I do not think that local or national ghettos meet the needs of today's world. . . . That does not mean that a nation cannot be the first one to make changes in the civil order. It means that reforms regarding sexual identity must potentially be worldwide in scope" (*TD*, 84).

The central issue she raises in her critique of the model of one is certainly among the most gripping questions of our time, not only for feminists but for all those invested in the struggle for the articulation of differences, whether racial, sexual, religious, geographical, or cultural: if social systems, such as those in the West or the North, or in much of the East or the South, are built on the presumption of the singularity and value of a single group or ideal, how is justice possible? The question is whether in contemporary globalization, these systems can also be rendered more just, more ethical, more open to other forms of difference if they can be made more open to sexual difference. The answer partly turns on the relationship between the exploitation of women and the global spread of neocolonial capital.

As we have seen, Irigaray herself offers a somewhat ecological view of the globalization of capital. She suggests that the global spread of abstract capital is the macrological consequence of the suppression of nature by the monological subject and that the exploitation of women is a necessary and continuing stage in the suppression of nature. This view is not dissimilar to that of ecofeminists from the postcolonial South such as Vandana Shiva's work on biodiversity.¹⁵ In view of the plurality of antisystemic, popular, social movements in the contemporary world, theorists of the global system such as Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein have suggested that the revolutionary process itself needs to be transformed so that it is no longer understood in terms of a world revolution centered around a totalizing universal subject. Irigaray proposes an alternative universal ground for global transformation that is always already internally marked by the alterity of being-two. Her ethics of sexual difference may not be an immaculate theoretical blueprint for the solution of all political or economic problems throughout the world. However, under post-Fordist international subcontracting, the neocolonial global capitalist system largely thrives on the sweated labor of women and homeworking in the postcolonial South. This fact strongly resonates with Irigaray's claim that "no social body can be constituted, developed, or renewed without female labor" (*SG*, 86). Within

the context of the commodification and superexploitation of women's labor in the postcolonial South as a result of neocolonial globalization, Irigaray's critique of the self-sacrifice that follows from women's assumption of the roles and duties of the generic woman offers a concrete starting point for change. As Gayatri Spivak observes,

internalized gendering by women, perceived as ethical choice, accepts exploitation as it accepts sexism in the name of a willing conviction that this is how one is good as a woman, even ethical as a woman. We must fight to pass laws, and be vigilant that they are implemented. But the real force of the struggle comes from the actual players' contemplating the possibility that to organize against homeworking is not to stop being a good woman, a responsible woman, a real woman (therefore with husband and home), a woman . . . : that there are more ways than one of being a good woman.¹⁶

In the neocolonial global theater at least, sexual difference has an enduring political future as an efficient mechanism toward *peaceful* social and political revolution.

NOTES

This chapter is a significantly revised version of Pheng Cheah and Elizabeth Grosz, "Of Being-Two: Introduction," *Diacritics* 28:1 (1998): 3–18. © The Johns Hopkins University Press.

1. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Anti-Systemic Movements: History and Dilemmas," in *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World System*, ed. Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 13–53, 41–42.

2. As is well known, Irigaray's writings were first introduced to a wider English readership with the translation of some of her essays in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.), *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980). In 1985, Cornell University Press published English translations of *This Sex Which Is Not One* and *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

3. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Gillian Gill and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5. Hereafter *ESD*.

4. *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1996), 47. Hereafter *ILTY*.

5. Irigaray, "The Question of the Other," *Democracy Begins between Two*, trans. Kirsteen Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 141. Hereafter *OQ*.

6. The dearth of thorough analyses of Irigaray have been partially rectified by the careful introductory material in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford

(London: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Margaret Whitford's book, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991); and the more recent collection of essays, *Engaging with Irigaray*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press., 1994). For Irigaray's own take on the way she has been received in translation in German, French, Italian, and English-speaking countries, see "The Other: Woman," *ILTY*, 59–68.

7. See, for instance, "Each Sex Must Have Its Own Rights," in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 3: "When women are forced to bear children within the genealogy of the husband, this historically marks the beginning of a *failure of respect for nature*. A new notion or concept of nature is set up, which takes the place of earth's fertility, abandons its religious quality, its link to the divinity of women and to the mother-daughter relation." Hereafter SG.

8. "Women, the Sacred and Money," SG, 80: "*Could it be that the sacrifice of natural fertility is the original sacrifice?* It leads to an economic superstructure (falsely labelled infrastructure) that has no respect for the natural infrastructure of natural fertility. In accordance with this system, many economic aberrations occur: certain lands are not cultivated, a proportion of products are thrown away, one part of the population goes hungry, even in industrialized countries."

9. SG, 80–81: "Everytime man or men seek to build an economic order at the expense of the earth, that order becomes sterile, repressive, and destructive. . . . Whether consciously or not, sacrificial societies perpetuate the unconsidered destruction of the products of the earth and their possible reproduction. And yet, ultimately these and not advanced weaponry and sophisticated techniques are the only guarantees of exchange value. What, in fact, is the point of setting up powerful nations when their populations are dying of hunger and have no more habitable space?" Cf. 5: "Wars break out when peoples move too far from their natural possibilities, when abstract energy builds up so much that it can no longer be controlled by subjects or reduced to one or more concrete possibilities. Collective madness, then, is the name we give to the concrete, sacrificial goal we set in order to reduce the rising tide of abstraction."

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), § 181, 122.

11. "There are still no civil rights proper to women and to men. This is particularly true for women, since existing law is better suited to men than women inasmuch as men have been the model for citizenship for centuries, the adult female citizen being poorly defined by rights to equality that do not meet her needs. Strictly speaking, there is still no civil law in our era that makes human persons of men and women. As sexed persons, they remain in natural immediacy. And this means that real persons still have no rights, since there are only men and women; there are no neuter individuals" (*ILTY*, 21).

12. Cf. *ILTY*, 41: "Hegel, like most people, forgets that natural immediacy is not, in a certain sense, absolute nor simple immediacy. In nature itself, nature meets its limit. This limit is indeed found in *generation*, but it is also, horizontally, in the *difference* between female and male. Besides, these two dimensions come together."

13. On the importance of objective mediations between the individual and the collective, see, for instance, Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, trans. Karin Montin (New York: Routledge, 1994), 40–41. Hereafter *TD*. On the importance of law in particular and of sexuate rights, see, for instance, *ILTY*, 3, 51–53, *OQ*, 130–34, *TD*, ix–xi, 59–63.

14. The same indeterminacy or room for self-determination within the bounds of natural sex is indicated in the following quote: “being born a woman requires a culture particular to this sex and this gender, which it is important for the woman to realize without renouncing her natural identity. She should not comply with a model of identity imposed upon her by anyone, neither her parents, her lover, her children, the State, religion or culture in general. That does not mean she can lapse into capriciousness, dispersion, the multiplicity of her desires, or a loss of identity. She should, quite the contrary, gather herself within herself in order to accomplish her gender’s perfection for herself, for the man she loves, for her children, but equally for civil society, for the world of culture, for a definition of the universal corresponding to reality” (*ILTY*, 27).

15. See Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Biodiversity, Biotechnology and the Third World* (Penang: Third World Network, 1993).

16. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace: Revisiting the ‘Global Village,’” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 329–48, 342–43.

Pierre Bourdieu: The Craft of Sociology

Roy Nash

Shall we approach Pierre Bourdieu through his biography: son of a village postman, anthropologist, sociologist, professor at the Collège de France, and one of the most influential social theorists? Or perhaps through the concepts that have become his own: field, *habitus*, cultural capital, social strategy, symbolic violence, misrecognition, and so on? Or perhaps, again, through his interests and thematic concerns: the struggle for distinction, social inheritance, the School, and, in total, the suffering of those who bear the weight of the world on their shoulders? Let us try to bring all this together: what does Bourdieu know about the social world that he thinks *we* should know? What he has to offer is a way of knowing it—a method—and the best way to learn from him is to read his sociology and learn how he does it. A sociologist of the real world, as Bourdieu can properly be called, must engage directly with society; and Bourdieu, through the interview, through the analysis of its products, especially its cultural texts and images, and through an investigation of its structures of provision, housing, employment, education, and so on is constantly involved in that critical work. The discussion of Bourdieu, especially in the English-speaking academic community, is dominated by concerns with his concepts, which analytical critics never think to be defined as precisely as they would like, but it is actually the substantive work of social criticism that supports Bourdieu's reputation. *The Weight of the World* (*La Misère du Monde*) is one of the most impressive sociological documents of the late twentieth century. As Agee and Walker's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and Studs Terkel's *Hard Times* have stood as memorable records of the American depression of the 1930s, so surely

will *The Weight of the World* serve to document now and for long into the future the effects of the neoliberal economic restructuring that swept through Western democracies in the two final decades of the century. The abdication of the state, the celebration of the market, the glorification of profit, and the emergence of new political slogans ("there is no alternative"), have brought insidious changes to economic, social, and cultural life. Those who lived as adults through this period know that they have seen the rise of a new "state nobility," the technocrats who owe no allegiance to anything but their careers; the marginalization of those found to have no place in the new order, the redundant worker, the unemployed youth, the sole mother isolated in the tower-block, and so on; and a social upheaval in its way as dramatic as that of any period in the twentieth century. In the *Weight of the World* men and women who have suffered as the victims of these processes, and witnessed the suffering of others, tell their stories to Bourdieu and his coworkers. They read, these narratives of how people experience society, like short stories; and brought together—school girls, young men out of work, social workers, teachers in "difficult" schools, workers, farmers with "uneconomic" units—these voices provide multiple perspectives, corresponding to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view that make the "discourse" of modern society so complex.

It goes without saying that Bourdieu does more than record these narratives, which in itself is no "mere" thing, he comments on them, offers interpretations, makes connections, and provides explanations. The sociological work is to take these stories "about the most 'personal' difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions of the social world and their contradictions" (ibid., p. 511), and show how they "frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and their contradictions" (ibid., p. 511). There are three component elements in any sociological explanation, seen in this way, of social events. There is the level of structure, the level of disposition, and the level of practice. In Bourdieu's substantive accounts of events in the social world these elements are always included. It is almost as simple as this: social structures, or social positions, generate socialized dispositions, and socialized dispositions generate practices (and those practices have the effect of *reproducing* social structures). The central, pivotal, term in this set is disposition. Bourdieu's word is *habitus*. Concepts perform work: and the work performed by *habitus* makes it the Swiss army knife of the sociological toolkit. *Habitus* is the embodiment of social structure: *habitus* provides the grounds for agency, within a limited arena of choice, and hence a theoretical escape from structuralist determinism; *habitus* enables individual trajectories to be

studied, for *habitus* unites the past and the present because, as the product of early experience, it is subject also to the transformations brought about by subsequent experiences; *habitus* thus enables Bourdieu to transcend the dichotomy of objectivism and subjectivism; and, finally, *habitus* is also a method, for it directs investigation to the level of social practice. These are interesting claims, and even those who have been able to open all the blades—a task many have given up in frustration—have not always accepted them.

There may be no irony in noting that Bourdieu seems determined by his own practice to demonstrate the general truth of his thesis that people are engaged in a struggle for distinction within a social field. It may help to explain why Bourdieu spends more theoretical labor specifying what his sociology is not (marxism, structuralism, existentialism, and so on) than what it is. Indeed, what it is *not* defines what it *is*. It is not structuralism, because it recognizes human agency, and it is not existentialism, because it recognizes that human agency is constrained by the social. In Bourdieu's account, *habitus* provides a "middle ground," a form of "soft determinism," in which the oppositions of objectivism and subjectivism, the polarities marked by structural determinism and existential freedom, are transcended. People are not bound by "unconscious rules," but have a "feel for the game," and are so able to make choices within the limits of what is made possible by the *habitus*. This is a sort of habit theory, and students familiar with Dewey, Mead, and the American tradition of social enquiry (which is not part of Bourdieu's intellectual background) are more than half way to making sense of *habitus*. Let Bourdieu explain things in his own words:

Why did I revive that old word? Because with the notion of *habitus* you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The *habitus*, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to essentialist modes of thought (like the notion of competence which is part of the Chomskian lexis). Moreover, by *habitus* the Scholastics also meant something like a property, a capital. And, indeed, the *habitus* is a capital, but one which, because it is embodied, appears innate. (1983: p. 86)

This is as lucid an account as we can expect. Habits must also be "durably incorporated," but that is not necessarily a formal element of the definition of habit, and Bourdieu's term is a constant reminder that we are

to think in this way. Habits have a history, too, in that they are acquired, but for Bourdieu "history" refers to the specific practices of groups, particularly social classes, and thus insists on the need for historically informed ethnographic studies in order to look for these origins. In this respect, moreover, our dispositions to act have an individual, as well as a social, line of development, they are genetic, in the Piagetian sense, rather than built-in, and given, like Chomsky's innate generative grammar. Finally, Bourdieu points to the way in which the medieval Church fathers constructed *habitus* as a property, something people possessed, and this is very much how the concept operates in his own theory. It is here that the central distinction between the concepts of 'habit' and '*habitus*' in sociological theory is to be found: *habitus* is necessarily linked to the idea that every act, or every cultural act, is regulated by a distinct principle (and in Bourdieu's thought principles of practice always retain their structuralist connotations), whereas habit is not.

Bourdieu, needless to say, is a product of the European, and in particular the French, intellectual field. As an anthropologist by training his intellectual formation is recognizably a product of the structuralism and phenomenology that struggled for dominance in the middle of the twentieth century. It seems that Bourdieu has wanted to reconcile this tension ever since. The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss's (1978) anthropology attempted to analyze the cultural productions of societies, their kinship relations, mythological beliefs, culinary practices, and so on, by identifying the forms that lay behind their generation. One could model cultures as a complex, but ordered, set of principles that worked like a code to express the central meanings of the community and to regulate its most important social practices. Lévi-Strauss and those who adopted his approach to social behavior sought to reveal the homologies between different social and linguistic features, which could be taken as evidence of a code or grammar, regulating the whole order of life within that society. Lévi-Strauss thought this form of analysis could explain, for example, marital selection, governed by rules not necessarily available to those most intimately concerned, but was quite unable to suggest a mechanism by which specific social rules, as opposed to a general and universal structure of the unconscious, could be treated as built in to the individual. This is exactly what the concept of *habitus* is intended to provide. *Habitus* is conceived as a generative schema in which the forms of elemental social structures come, through the process of socialization, to be embodied in individuals with the result that people necessarily act in such a way that the underlying structures are reproduced and given effect.

The fundamental aim of Bourdieu's approach to cultural studies is to disclose the structure of principles from which agents' produce regulated practices, for that structure of principles determines the objective character of culture itself. The *habitus* may be understood as a system of schemes of perception and discrimination embodied as durable dispositions reflecting the entire history of the group and acquired through the formative experiences of childhood. The structural code of the culture is inscribed as the *habitus* and generates the production of social practice. Social practice may then be analyzed to reveal the nature of the *habitus* through the relations of homology observed between the various elements that constitute the unity of the culture. This system of dispositions inculcated by objective structural conditions develops a history and generates its practices, for some period of time, even after the original material conditions which gave rise to it have disappeared. The internalized principles of the *habitus* are the principles which structure the culture. In this sense *habitus* is internalized structure and the physical embodiment of objective structure. As with two sides of a coin, the *habitus* is organized by principles of the structure, in some way that could be represented as a code, and practices are organized by these so structured principles of the *habitus*. We may thus say that as a result of their socialization members of a social group come to acquire a set of dispositions which reflect the central structural elements (political instability, kinship rules, and so on) of their society, and therefore behave in ways which necessarily reproduce those structural elements, although in a modified form.

This is a faculty theory of socialization within a structuralist theory of culture. The fundamental theoretical role of *habitus* is to provide the mediation Lévi-Strauss so transparently failed to provide between structure and agency and to this end Bourdieu has de-universalized, and culturally particularized, these active embodied forms. In this respect Bourdieu may be regarded as a sociological Kantian. Whereas Lévi-Strauss left obscure the question of the causal effectiveness of cultural structures, Bourdieu with the concept of *habitus* has provided a generative mechanism of structured social practice. His breakthrough, if such it is, has been to name the culturally structured and embodied forms of classification, perception, and discrimination and to give the faculty so named a central role in the explanation of social practice. It is a heady idea: but if the structuralist paradigm is flawed, this solution to its problem may not be necessary, and a growing number of critics have begun to see the weaknesses in the role sometimes given to *habitus* in sociological explanations.

Following Bourdieu's method can be more useful than accepting (or arguing against) formalist versions of his theory. It is one thing to recognize

the importance of human dispositions, their psychological structure, and the conditions of their origin, but it is quite another to construct explanations in which nonspecified dispositions carry the explanatory load. Suppose we say that working-class children fail at school because of their working class *habitus*, and suppose we then say that the evidence for the existence of such a *habitus*, and the proof of the whole argument, is revealed by the fact of their collective failure. This "theory of educational inequality" is not only circular but quite empty of substantive meaning. Nevertheless, there are serious attempts to ground it in Bourdieu's work and treat it as a substantive theory. If 5 percent of working-class children succeed in the educational system then a *habitus* which makes that possible will be present in working-class culture. Bourdieu thus constructs a "statistical mode" of class reproduction in which, by some profoundly inexplicable mechanism, those brought up within the class are supposed to have internalized a *habitus* with the objective chances of that class built in to it. This provides a pseudostatistical argument for the reproduction of a class as a whole with no reference to what happens to particular individuals, which is then regarded as just a matter of chance. In other words, in this model, all working-class school students share a generalized class *habitus* giving them a one in twenty chance of reaching university, or whatever it might be, and there can be no explanation of why this rather than that individual is included among the successful (or for that matter among the unsuccessful) or why that is so, because the explanation is of group access not individual access. It is a dubious argument and the defense of it is no less so. Bourdieu's position on knowledge and truth is anti-positivist, but it is also antirealist, and a characteristic phrase often gives him away. "It is as if . . ." he will say, leaving open whether he is describing an actual social processes as a mechanism or one that if it did exist would explain the events observed. When Bourdieu (1991: p. 64) argues "the coherence of the constructed system of intelligible facts is itself its own proof," *it is as if*, to adopt his usage, he understands that this theory of the internalization of objective chances cannot be supported by any empirical observation, other than the distribution of class access to education that it attempts to explain, and for that reason moves to undermine the 'epistemological' foundations of a demand for such supporting evidence. For the substantive argument to work, it would have to be shown that individuals possessed a learned ability to estimate the probability of those "like themselves" to achieve any relevant future state and that their actions were shaped in accordance with that knowledge. That has not been done and it is difficult to imagine how it could be done. People may have specific dispositions to act, but they almost certainly do not have *that*

kind of disposition and it is *unrealistic* to suppose that they do in order to maintain a form of “statistical” explanation. Explanations in terms of *habitus* cannot be “promissory” notes, as if we could discover what the nature of the disposition was, but in order to be plausible must already be specified not only as the principle that generates the act (by definition) but detailed in terms of its real and thus demonstrable principle. It is in exactly this area, where the importance of *habit* in the explanation of human behavior is so crucial, that Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* has become pivotal. The human capacity to act depends on knowledge and skills embodied in the form of a *habitus*, and to the extent that such dispositions are demonstrable, which requires exactly the attention to people given in *The Weight of the World*, they have a place in the explanation of social events.

Bourdieu’s argument with marxism is subtle. He rejects the economism, the historicism, and the politics of revolution, associated with classical marxism, but not the general and fundamental critique of capitalism developed by Marx himself. Students who know their way around critical theory will recognize, especially in *The Weight of the World*, a reengagement with some of its central concerns. If the critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer achieved anything, it was to bring the conceptual apparatus of Marxian and Freudian thought to the analysis of human practice in the “mass society” of capitalism. It is extremely interesting to see Bourdieu take up some of these themes:

Sociology does not claim to substitute its mode of explanation for that of psychoanalysis; it is concerned only to construct differently certain givens that psychoanalysis takes as its object, and to do so by focusing on aspects of reality that psychoanalysis pushes aside as secondary or insignificant, or else treats as defenses that have to be breached to get to the essential element (for example, as academic or professional disappointments, job conflicts, etc.). In fact, these defenses can contain information that is relevant to things that psychoanalysis also considers.

The critical sociologist must answer a series of questions. First, what is going on here? What, in other words, are the *practices* that people are engaged in? Second, what do those practices do? What, in other words, are the effects of what people are doing? Third, where does the generative *habitus* come from? In other words, what is the sociogenesis of the dispositions that constitute the *habitus*? These are the questions of social reproduction which have always dominated Bourdieu’s attention. This is why the School, as Bourdieu writes, is so important. Before the rise of the modern school the family itself was responsible for the transfer of cultural and social capital from one generation to the next. But the school has now

asserted an almost total control over the processes of social inheritance so that *its* judgments and values, and not those of the family, are the ones that count. Bourdieu is acutely aware of the suffering caused by this function of the School:

The altogether decisive contributions to identity construction made by these judgements no doubt explains why we so often find school at the core of the suffering of the interviewees, who have been disappointed either in their own plans or in their plans for their children or by the ways the job market has reneged on the promises and guarantees made by the educational system. (ibid., 507)

The school has stripped away this traditional power of the family, and more particularly of the father, leaving it embedded in a matrix of contradictions and double binds in which the verdict of the school is sometimes accepted with fatalism but perhaps quite as often rejected, thus, almost paradoxically, allowing the desire of the father to grow without limit, and for the child to be faced with impossible demands. "A great many people," Bourdieu notes, "are *long-term* sufferers from the gap between their accomplishments and the parental expectations they can neither satisfy nor repudiate" (ibid., p. 508). In this social context "failure" at school is a matter of not reaching the level predicted by the family's status, and creates intense disappointment:

If they turn indiscriminately against school and against the family, it is because they have every reason to perceive the complicity that unites these two institutions despite their apparent opposition and shows up in the *disappointment* of which they are both cause and object. Having crushed the father's expectations and hopes, these individuals have no choice other than to give in to self-despair, which means accepting the totally negative image sent back to them by the two allied institutions, or symbolically to kill the parental "project" in its very principle by rebelling against everything the family stands for—like the teenage son of a leftist engineer who signs up for the crassest work of right-wing political activism. (ibid., 509)

The integration of the sociological and the psychological, an aspiration critical theory never abandoned, is an integral part of Bourdieu's sociological method. Integral because it recognizes the level of disposition, which is also the level of the psychological, but acquired in a society with a given structure, and so reflecting its problems and its strategies for their solution.

Bourdieu argues that human practices, which, in their collective effect, generate the social events sociologists are concerned to explain, should be

understood as the products of individuals "following the rules of the game" in accordance with deeply internalized habitual actions. It is not surprising, then, to find Bourdieu should maintain a theoretical struggle with decision-making or rational choice theory. Bourdieu's own stance can be expressed, as by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 24) citing Bourdieu (1986, p. 205), declare their position:

Bourdieu does not deny that agents face options, exert initiative, and make decisions. What he disputes is that they do so in the conscious, systematic, and intentional (in short, intentionalist) manner expostulated by rational-choice theorists. He insists to the contrary that deliberate decision making or rule-following "is never but a makeshift aimed at covering up the mistimings of the *habitus*."

Do the functional operations of the *habitus* provide all the explanation of social practices and the social events and processes of various kinds that result from them necessary for sociology? This is another way of asking: What is to count as a sociological explanation? Bourdieu maintains that there is no sociology unless the causes of social events and processes are given in terms of effective social structures. Of course, there is a "trivial" sense in which whatever occurs does so as the result of human actions and is not explained unless those actions are understood, but that is a mere way station, a necessary given, it does not of itself constitute a sociological explanation, for what is needed for that is an account of how those actions, or practices, were shaped by social structures. Rational action theory may be a theory of human practice, and in its unelaborated forms an unrealistic and narrow one, but it is not sufficient in any form as a sociological theory, or to the generation of sociological explanations. Yet, Bourdieu's argument that deliberate decision-making is never more than a cover for the "mistimings of the *habitus*," may be a plea not for sociology but for the functionalism built into his theory of sociological explanation. Is this not, after all, an application in the field of sociology of the psychoanalytic manoeuvre which transforms all reasons of the ego into rationalizations of the id? The substantive point must be open to empirical test and if it cannot be—if the insistence is merely dogmatic—then we are not dealing with science at all. The work put into constructing sociological models of social conduct that privilege either habitual practices or rationally chosen actions is pointless when anyone can see that humans sometimes act rationally, often simply follow the accepted routines of their community without much reflection (and most probably without a thought for the long-term consequences of the collective effects of their actions), and more often than

not behave in a way that is rather difficult to identify as either purely rational or purely habitual.

An introduction to any serious thinker in so short a compass is nearly impossible to accomplish without misrepresentation at some level. The criticisms that have been expressed here are made in a context of appreciation and academic respect. In fact, it is more than likely that Bourdieu would agree with the reservations expressed about the global use of *habitus* in certain arguments: in that great substantive work *The Weight of the World*, the formal concept of *habitus* is almost invisible. Bourdieu is not a determinist, he does not think that people have no choices to make, but he sees so clearly—and so do the people he interviews—how they are constrained by the structures of the social world and their own habits of understanding and response. It is the work of any critical social enquiry to uncover the real structures that limit our individual and collective capacity to act in our most human interests.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. 1986. *Distinction*. London: Routledge.
- . 1991. *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 1993. *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., et al. 1999. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., and J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1978. *Structural Anthropology*, Vols. 1 and 2. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Slavoj Zizek's Naked Politics: Opting for the Impossible—A Secondary Elaboration

Peter McLaren

Having been granted limited space, and given directions from the editors to extend the conversation rather than offer up a formal point-counterpoint response to Slavoj Zizek's vertiginous pronouncements (on just about everything, it seems), I have restricted my engagement to select themes touched upon in the *JAC* interview. In doing so I pay close attention to Zizek's overall political project which he defines as decidedly "anticapitalist." In particular, I examine his treatment of concepts such as ideology, capitalism, class struggle—many of which betray a lineage that can be traced directly to Marx—in the context of current attempts to rethink Marxist revolutionary praxis. Many of the issues and much of the terminology exercised by Zizek enjoyed some critical currency among progressive educators in the early years of the 1980s but until recently had been re-traversed by post-Marxist critics and pronounced as largely 'empty terms' that had outgrown their utility and explanatory power. When they were not glaringly absent in discussions pertaining to educational reform, they were employed in vulgarized, domesticated, and watered-down fashion. In recent years, however, they have become more visible in an emerging new Marxist educational literature. In fact, as educators attempt to rethink educational transformation in the context of discussions over the globalization of capitalism (McLaren, 2000; Allman, 2000; 2001; Rikowski, 2000; Mayo, 2000; Hill, McLaren, Cole, and Rikowski, 1999; Cole, Hill, McLaren, and Rikowski, 2000; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2000a; 2001b), classical Marxist terminology is slowly arching its way back into the lexicon of the progressive educational critic.

The reappearance in educational criticism of analyses inspired by the old bearded devil—marking a Marxian *risorgimento* of sorts—can be explained in part by the current crisis of capitalism and the growing dissatisfaction among educators with the decade-long fashion of left postmodernist educational critique. Our smug ‘victory’ as Cold War warriors over the evil empires—widely understood to have been spawned by Mr. Marx and his legion of renegade idealists and opportunists—has blinded many educational critics to the fact that we have not yet left the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a stage is marked by that reified totality of barbaric acts expanded into a world-system that Lenin referred to as imperialism, where almost the entire globe has been drawn into the capitalist system. Today the idea of freedom wobbles precariously on the shaking foundations of the current ‘hurrah capitalism’, on a scaffold of empty bourgeois dreams premised on the illusion that an era of post-scarcity is just around the corner, if only we could make the most of the latest available stock market options. The standard view of history long debunked by Marxists—that takes capitalism for granted as the outcome of transhistorical processes (the expansion of trade and technological progress)—has now become so naturalized in the cultural logic of the developed countries of the West, even the most *soi-disant* postmodern critics tend to ignore it. In fact, postmodernists like to blame the destructive effects that should be ascribed to capitalism on the Enlightenment project’s commitment to universal human emancipation (Meiksins Wood, 1994, 33). We are now a moist breath away from the monstrous eventuality when the commodity-form penetrates every corner of the social world. The more universal capital becomes, the more difficult it is to see. We increasingly need noncapitalist eyes to recognize it, and with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, those are no longer being produced on the grand scale or with the ceaseless regularity that they used to be.

Globalization today means the universalization of the imposition of the economic logic of capitalism—a capitalist ‘logic of process’ in all aspects of social life or what Marx called the “crude cash nexus”—such as the imperatives of accumulation, competition, commodification, and profit-maximization that brings about the steady immiseration of those who continue to be crushed by debt, austerity programs, and environmental and health catastrophies (Meiksins Wood, 1994, 33). It also means capitalism’s continued efforts to drive the living standards of the world’s workers—those whose struggles history has shown to be the most effective in preventing the worst tendencies of capitalism from being implemented—to the barest minimum in order to maximize profits.

According to Slavoj Zizek, this massified capitalist logic has created the background against which a generalized economy can thrive. But it has not placed an unsurmountable limit on anticapitalist struggle. Capitalism has entered an era where no rival systems exist, but no exit routes, either. The neoliberalism that has emerged with the collapse of state demand-management and the Keynesian welfare state is a particular species of imperialism, one in which the inner contradictions have become exacerbated beyond imagination. The record-breaking profit growth we hear so much about in the boomspeak of the nightly newscasters typically fosters the belief that capitalism is in the process of retooling itself for the elimination of poverty. While corporations continue to argue that the solution to poverty is to stimulate growth and create wealth, there is little evidence that increased wealth actually alleviates poverty, provoking David Korten to offer the stinging retort: "What the Gross National Product (GNP) measures is the rate at which the economically powerful are expropriating the resources of the economically weak in order to convert them into products that quickly become the garbage of the rich" (cited in Ellwood, 68). We only need to witness the continuing 'epidemics of overproduction' and the explosion in the industrial reserve army of the dispossessed that stake themselves out on the streets of our urban metropolitan centers. Capital's ability to migrate overseas in search of low wages follows deindustrialization and the mass displacement of workers (primarily workers of color). It is becoming increasingly clearer that the quality of life in capitalist nations such as the United States is implicated in the absence of freedom in less developed countries. Corporate Overworlders profiteering from human suffering and armed with a vision of transforming the environment into Planet Mall are bent upon reaping short-term profits at the expense of ecological health and human dignity and are drawing ever more of existence within their expanding domain, cannibalizing life as a whole. We are experiencing a re-feudalization of capitalism, as it refuels itself with the more barbarous characteristics of its past through the global arbitrage of corporate carpetbaggers. While in the developed Western economies wages have not yet been pushed down to subsistence levels as Marx predicted, he was frighteningly accurate in his predictions that oligopolistic corporations would swallow the globe and that industry would become dominated by new technologies. In a value-producing society such as ours (one that disavows the basic principle of its own functioning—that it is premised upon the exploitative extraction of surplus value from living labor) the worker is always a 'producer of overproduction' because the means of consumption cannot be bigger than the needs of capital for labor power. In this sense, the current global casino of

advanced capitalism is perhaps best understood as a universal quest to produce value. Any empirical nonrealization of capital—such as the proliferation of skid row conditions throughout the metropolitan centers of the developed Western nations—has to be explained away not as exceptions or rude aberrations but as part of the necessary condition for what Žizek has described as the “universal structural principle of capitalism.” To be sure, the universal structural principle of capitalism admits certain aberrations (the economic abjection of millions of people; real sites of resistance) but Žizek emphasizes the logical interdependence of these exceptions and the rule.

Capital as the central force structuring social relations is systematically obscured by poststructuralist and antifoundational conceptions of power as diffuse, variegated, and contextually specific. In a rejection of old-style *Kulturkritik*, the transcendental ego of science has been displaced by the concept of subject position produced as a discursive practice, or as an effect of textuality. The ubiquity of ideology has, in this perspective, little to do with class struggle and more to do with the architecture of desire, the production of meanings within discourse and representation, and an endless self-reflexive interrogation. To his credit, Žizek is one of the few prominent post-Marxist cultural critics who have attempted to bring an analysis of capitalist social relations of exploitation and an advocacy for socialism back into the conversation about cultural politics (he amusingly refers to himself as “an old Stalinist” [*JAC*, 18] and a “naïve Old Leftist” [*JAC*, 27], an example of what he refers to as a “self-ironical inside joke,” *JAC*, 4). Žizek explains how, at the moment that one seriously interrogates the existing liberal consensus, one is accused of abandoning scientific objectivity for outdated ideological positions. Despite the derision that is certain to follow attacks on liberal democracy, Žizek warns that we are entering perilous waters if we follow the post-Marxists in their cowardly wavering on the notion that “actual freedom of thought means the freedom to question the predominant liberal democratic consensus—or it means nothing” (Repeating, p. 2). And while his work is fundamentally Lacanian in analytical thrust, attempting to produce a *replatriage* between psychoanalysis and Marxism (it argues, for instance, that fascism is the inherent symptom, the return of the repressed of capitalism and not just its external contingent deviation), Žizek candidly admits that psychoanalysis likely will not help social theory resolve its problems. Yet he remains persuasive in making the case that the psychoanalytic tradition (particularly the work of Lacan) can assist Marxists in thinking through a number of concepts crucial to understanding global capitalist culture, ideology being the most significant (through his important articulation of the concept of ‘fetish,’ for instance). The dilemma of

Zizek is that he believes Marxist theory is still inadequate for an understanding of current manifestations of globalized capitalist exploitation; he believes that we can't repeat the 'old Marxisms' but at the same time he is now firmly convinced that what can be loosely termed 'postmodern theory' is largely wrongheaded. Like the philosopher Pascal, he wants to remain faithful to tradition while at the same time moving beyond tradition. In other words, Zizek would like to remain faithful to Marx's central ideas yet at the same time he wants to rethink some of his notions, while deepening and extending (and rejecting) others. In a field as contentious as Marxist scholarship, it is understandable that the question of how successful Zizek has been is a matter of sharply divided opinion. Some will see his scholarship as displaying world-historical significance; others will pronounce it as clever but largely Thermidorian.

Zizek's coy admission that he has not read much more than summaries of many of the literary works upon which he has based his nuanced appraisal of them raises the *quaestio vexata* about whether or not he is one of the few internationally acclaimed social theorists who has written more books than he has read. His writings spew forth ideas like a "swirl of Lacanized lava" vomited up from an orifice deeply recessed in his Gothic laced unconscious. The point to emphasize here is that his criticisms are staggeringly erudite and scintillatingly innovative. The paroxysms that spike his ideas and his cross-dressing of different codes recall surrealism. Reading Zizek is like being invited to drink formalist logic from Marcel Duchamp's urinal. To some of his critics, Zizek's writing finds its Archimedean point in the desires that it serves rather than in the unmasking of the *auta ta pragmata* or actual disposition of things. His volcanic theoretical constructs conveyed in the thick-boned prose of a debt collector create an exciting contrast that have captured the imagination of many progressive intellectuals. Whether one believes that Zizek's oeuvre represents a seismic shift in Marxist analysis or avant-garde cultural criticism disguised as revolutionary struggle, it is impossible not to admire the scope and depth of Zizek's theoretical understanding, especially his acute familiarity with and probing analysis of issues that range across so many disciplinary traditions. One cannot but welcome his brash attempt to break with the post-Marxist radical democracy project spearheaded by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

Zizek's peculiar strength is that he is able to respond to historical reality as it is in the process of becoming unreality; his work has so persistently anticipated the basic tendencies of the human psyche traumatized by daily life in the orbit of capital that he can arguably be considered one of the most brilliant cultural critics in the world today. His work does not betray the eyes-averted ontological loathing of the masses or a cheery celebration of

their outlawed passions. Yet his insights are those of a night crawler, a hyena on methamphetamine, circling his topics with a presence so carnivorous that he seemingly can ingest them without contact. Lacan is not so much the origin of Žižek's insights as the host upon which he feeds in order to provide the sustenance that he needs to stalk his ever more elusive academic prey. In canvassing the detritus of a world gone mad, Žižek makes popular culture the springboard for his sans-culotte intellect. His mind effortlessly careens into the theoretical stratosphere where it spins out of control like a wounded Owl of Minerva, only to regain its balance and dive bomb its unwitting victims—filmmakers, artists, politicians, writers, and the more sub-lunar cultural critics who scurry about the charred ruins of capitalist culture seeking explanations for the chaos.

His personal zeal for exposing the contradictions within the greater logic of capital belies his obsessional fear of exposing personal aspects of himself to the public. In a recent interview in *Lingua Franca*, he writes that "For me, shopping is like masturbating in public" (Boynton, 1998). In the *JAC* interview he notes that "for me, writing poetry would be masturbating in public" (4). Here it appears as if Žižek doth protest too much. Is this Žižek's way of telling his readers: Try not to think of a purple elephant!

The muscular force of his theory from which Žižek's ideas are bench-pressed into academic forums (such as the present *JAC* interview), serves at times to exaggerate the power of his ideas—even to himself—rendering Žižek vulnerable to his own press as the *stupor mundi* of psychoanalytic marxism. But no theory is so strong that it can break down all the walls of the historical world and on this humble point Žižek appears to uncharacteristically concur.

Žižek is passionately committed to a politics that shapes the contours of the present and is at no loss of words in decrying the "false radicalism" of leftists whose radical positions are so removed from everyday political struggles that they partake of what he calls "interpassivity." In other words, their radical positions produce, in Žižek's view, a "cul de sac of debilitating impossibility" (Repeating, 3) because they do not let their actions get close to a certain limit. These radicals are, in Žižek's view, nothing more than imposters. The hidden logic of their positions assumes the following form: "let's talk as much as possible about the necessity of a radical change to make it sure that nothing will really change" (Repeating, 5).

Following a rather conventional format, I will comment on what I appreciate most about Žižek's work—not all of which is touched upon in the *JAC* interview—followed by a discussion of what I perceive to be some problems with and limitations of his work.

OUTCLASSING IDENTITY POLITICS

Žižek is to be applauded for not following recent post-Marxist trends. For instance, we do not see him rejecting the dialectic in favor of the more fashionable varieties of ludic pragmatism, poststructuralist nominalism, and obscurantist idealism for sale in the rag-and-bone shop of today's theoretical marketplace. His brilliant defense of the dialectic is most welcome, especially by historical materialists such as myself. The absolute centrality that Marx now plays in his work is not just fashionable theoretical brigandism but a sincere attempt to rethink social relations outside of the social universe of capital—a universe where there exists so much suffering, oppression, and exploitation.

While admittedly he does not offer a brass-knuckle defense of revolutionary marxism—in fact his Lacanized marxism proposes a fascinating yet not unproblematic Hegelian re-reversal of marxism—it is none the less possible for Marxists to appreciate the way that he has rejected the poststructuralist obsession with identity politics and made the globalization of capital a central theme in his most recent work. He appears to have recognized the dilemma put forward by Meiksins Wood, namely, that “Once you replace the concept of capitalism with an undifferentiated plurality of social identities and special oppressions, socialism as the antithesis to capitalism loses all meaning” (29). Given the obstacles to revolutionary praxis put forward in poststructuralist criticism, it is worth appreciating Žižek's assertions that “the crucial point is how to create an international political movement that would politicize economy itself” and that “the old Marxist logic of capitalism generating its own contradictions is still relevant” (*JAC*, 27).

Žižek importantly challenges the relativism of the gender-race-class grid of reflexive positionality when he claims that class antagonism or struggle is not simply one in a series of social antagonisms—race, class, gender, and so forth—but rather constitutes the part of this series *that sustains the horizon of the series itself*. In other words, class struggle is the specific antagonism that assigns rank to and modifies the particularities of the other antagonisms in the series. In what I consider to be his most important work to date [coauthored with Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau], *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*), Žižek militantly refuses to evacuate reference to historical structures of totality and universality and argues that class struggle itself enables the proliferation of new political subjectivities (albeit that, ironically, relegate ‘class struggle’ to a secondary role). As Marx has argued, class struggle structures ‘in advance’ the very terrain of political antagonisms. Thus, according to Žižek, class struggle “is not

the last horizon of meaning, the last signified of all social phenomena, but the formal generative matrix of the different ideological horizons of understanding" (Repeating, 16–17). In Žižek's terms, class struggle sets the ground for the empty place of universality, enabling it to be filled variously with contents of different sorts (ecology, feminism, racism). He further argues that the split between the classes is even more radical today than during the times of traditional class divisions. Žižek takes the position that post-Marxists have done an excellent job in uncovering the *fantasy* of capital (vis-à-vis the endless deferral of pleasure) but have done little to uncover its *reality*. Those post-Marxists who advocate for new social movements—such as Laclau and Mouffe—*want revolution without revolution*; in contrast, Žižek calls for movements that relate to the larger totality of capitalist social relations and which challenge the very matter and anti-matter of capital's social universe. Žižek's strategic focus on capitalist exploitation (while often confusing and inconsistent) rather than on racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual identity is a salutary one: "The problem is not how our precious particular identity should be kept safe from global capitalism. The problem is how to oppose global capitalism at an even more radical level; the problem is to oppose it universally, not on a particular level. This whole problem is a false one" (*JAC*, 31). What Žižek sets himself against is the particular experience or political argument. An experience or argument that cannot be universalized "is always and by definition a conservative political gesture: ultimately everyone can evoke his unique experience in order to justify his reprehensible acts" (Repeating, 4–5). Here he echoes Ellen Meiksins Wood who argues that capitalism is "not just another specific oppression alongside many others but an all-embracing compulsion that imposes itself on all our social relations" (1994, 29). He also echoes critical educators such as Paulo Freire who argues against the 'basism' of the position which claims that experiences speak for themselves. All experiences need to be interrogated for their ideological assumptions and effects, regardless of who articulates them or from where they are lived or spoken. The critical pedagogical act of interrogating experiences is not to pander to the autonomous subject nor to individualistic practices but to see those experiences in relationship to the structure of social antagonisms and class struggle. History has not discharged the educator from her mission of grasping the "truth of the present" by interrogating all the existing structures of exploitation present within the capitalist system where, at the point of production, material relations characterize relations between people and social relations characterize relations between things. The critical educator asks: How are individuals historically located in systematic structures of economic relations?

How can these structures—these lawless laws of capital—be overcome and transformed through revolutionary praxis into acts of freely associated labor, “where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”?

Žižek considers capitalist democracy as infinitely perverse in the sense that it can place a lot of energy in protecting the rights of a serial killer or war criminal while at the same time supporting massive violations of the rights of ordinary people. In his challenge to assist individuals in penetrating beyond what Habermas has called the *neue undurchsichtlichkeit* (new opacity) of postmodern culture, Žižek has placed his political project securely within a Marxist problematic. In his call to overthrow capitalism and liberal/bourgeois democratic arrangements, Žižek criticizes contemporary theorists such as Judith Butler for insisting that human emancipation has to occur in civil society against the state by claiming that state power is itself split from within and that it has its spectral underside. While he joins Butler in positing an unbridgeable gap between ideal and imperfect reality, between the goal of a political project and the limits of its realization, Žižek refuses this as the ultimate horizon of political engagement because he chooses to remain mindful of both the shortcomings of his project and the importance of remaining enthusiastic about it.

IDEOLOGY ON THE BRINK

Arguably, Žižek's most important theoretical advance is his reconceptualization of the theory of ideology, the theoretical contribution for which he is best known. The idea of the unconscious has not lost its relevance for Marxists, if for no other reason than the fact that the world economy is dominated more than ever by the unconscious and unplanned mechanisms of the world market. We have become victims of the market's structural unconscious which has opened up humankind to the crises and wars that result from attempts to control the productive forces.

Žižek's cardinal concept of ideology repays close attention by Marxists, especially those who have (rightly in my mind) abandoned Althusser yet still yearn for a link between ideology and the unconscious. The concept of ideology should have a singular purchase for Marxists, especially during a time when the product of digitalized society is “interpassivity”—where, according to Žižek, the subject is active while displacing onto another the fundamental passivity of his or her being (*JAC*, 19). Since we are “entering the last stage of modernity at full speed” (*JAC*, 18), where

cyberspace functions like a gnostic dream which tells us that we can all become Gods, Zizek's psycho-Marxist approach to ideology apparently will help us free ourselves of our need for passive support (*JAC*, 20) while making our ascent to Mount Olympus. Clearly, for Zizek, such an approach is indispensable "in order to really grasp the paradoxes of consumer culture" (*JAC*, 7).

Zizek's conception of ideology is represented by a tear or a rip in the fabric of the symbolic order by that which remains stubbornly resistant to symbolization, by that which cannot be named or marked. We can loosely describe this as a 'structured absence' or 'missing fullness'—or what Zizek calls a 'fetishistic inversion'—that functions in the unconscious as a specter. This phantasmic guardian or specter (the *object a* or "sublime object") protects this tear or gap in the unconscious from our awareness of it. The purpose of the specter is to disguise the gap between reality and the real by camouflaging the unmarked and the unmarkable real that subjectivity must foreclose if it is to have ontological consistency; such an act of disguise is necessary in order to protect reality's dark secret: that we are *always already* implicated in relations of domination and oppression. Thus the sublime object or specter sustains the misrecognition necessary for ideology to do its work and to maintain itself as a frame within which the subject's psychosocial fantasies are structured in dominance. In other words, the mission of ideology is to render invisible the symbolic fiction that passes for the real. Ideology reflects the untenable and unassimilable notion that to assume the role of the subject of history is to be a priori implicated in discursive regimes and social practices linked to race, class, gender, and sexual exploitation.

Take the case of Timothy McVeigh. During the Gulf War McVeigh drove a bulldozer that shoveled Iraqis into mass graves, some of them buried alive. He referred to his Oklahoma bombing victims as "collateral damage," the same term the U.S. military used to describe Iraqi civilian casualties. During the war, he wrote to his mother that "after the first one, it got easier." In Zizekian terms, ideology writ large in this instance functions to enable significant numbers of the public-at-large to misrecognize the contradiction contained in the fact that George Bush's war machine made McVeigh a killer while George W. Bush wanted to execute him for taking to the utmost extreme the violent logic around which the patriotism of his country is structured. Ideology, in other words, works to contain the ambivalence felt in recognizing unbearable contradictions such as this. It does this by supplying the subject with a nonsignifying surplus or *jouissance* that helps make the ambivalence pleasurable. The dominant media certainly have drawn an equivalence between executing mass murderers and patri-

otism. We praise the executioners when mass murder is undertaken in the name of war, but we condemn them when our erstwhile students of terror turn their butcher's skills against their teachers in the name of patriotism.

Today, as the United States and United Kingdom unleash their imperialist armies of death and destruction against Iraq, in a preemptive war that makes a mockery of international law, and as they pound Iraqi soldiers and civilians under the banner of "Operation Iraqi Freedom," the ontological consistency of American identity is at risk of being shattered if the official reasons for fighting this war were actually challenged by the American public. So they relish in the ambiguity of whether or not the war is designed to free the Iraqi people from a dictator and ferret out terrorists and weapons of mass destruction or—as the war protestors have claimed—to plunder the resources of the region, create a market for U.S. capital, and gain geopolitical advantage in an increasingly unstable world. U.S. democracy can only survive its ongoing legacy of imperialism if the population is discouraged from asking too many questions (on the basis that to do so is unpatriotic) and if the majority of the population is motivated to misrecognize the real reasons for the war in order to avoid the trauma of democracy's unconstitutive unfreedom.

Moving beyond the structuralist problematic of Althusser, whereby individual subjects (as defined by the intersection of historical and biographical vectors) are interpellated as subjects through a process of misrecognition, Žižek does not view ideology as functioning to distort or disguise reality. He argues, instead, that ideology is not an illusion that masks reality but a process that enables reality to be lived precisely by refracting it and rendering its constitutive antagonisms oblique to our conscious mind. In other words, ideology structures the way that we perceive reality such that we are motivated (through surplus desire) to misrecognize it at the level of the *socius*. This misrecognition allows us to survive the traumatic kernel of and our impossible encounter with the Real. To glimpse inside the fissure that separates the Real from reality is to witness the unthinkable, it is to discover that the sun has a cold, silken anus. Precisely in this fashion is the social able to be retrospectively constituted by the terrain of the symbolic. Thus, the notion of 'false consciousness' (social practices are real but our beliefs about them are false) is rejected by Žižek in favor of a view of ideology that posits the mechanisms by which illusions constitute the prevailing structure of our social practices. As he is wont to emphasize: ideology "prohibits something that it already claims is itself impossible" (*JAC*, 26).

Žižek explains this process by locating ideology within the logic of the signifier, in the discursive structure of the unconscious where our social

reality is engineered by fantasy and desire, where ideology effaces the threat of social antagonism constitutive of capitalist subjectivity. Ideology, for Žizek, is not an escape *from* reality but an escape *to* reality. But it is a special kind of reality—an unconsciously mediated reality where presuppositions are *always already* minimally posted, a special kind of reality that conceals its scaffolding and the surplus-enjoyment that the unconscious serves up in order to compensate for its motivated amnesia. This is what Žizek refers to when he notes that ideology is a “false psychology” (*JAC*, 16) that is imposed on individuals and internalized by them. He argues that ideology sells individuals “new unfreedoms” . . . as freedoms . . . where something is really imposed on you by the external symbolic network but you tend to identify with it, to internalize it as your own free psychological choice” (*JAC*, 16). Zavarzadeh puts it succinctly when he notes that “what is regarded as ‘freedom’ of the individual subject is not ‘natural,’ but is an ideology effect: the dominant ideology posits the individual as free in order that he/she may freely consent to the ruling regulations of production which, through the social division of labor, produce and maintain (economic) inequality (27–28). The notion of free choice therefore, “functions practically as its opposite” (Žizek, *JAC*, 16). In other words, the only free cheese is in the mousetrap. Ideology in this sense perpetuates what Marx referred to as ‘an imagined association’ of freely associated human beings.

We are reminded that ideology works paradoxically and becomes post-ideological the moment it exposes its own soiled undergarments. Here Žizek is emphasizing the point that in this age of cynical reason where the brutal workings of capitalist machineries of oppression are laid bare for all the public to see (do you remember how Ronald Reagan made racism fashionable, how George Bush made Ronald Reagan fashionable, how Clinton reduced welfare recipients to half-citizens, and how George W. Bush began early on in his first presidential term to lay the ideological groundwork for making the idea of public executions more palatable—even attractive—within the quotidian habitus of his ‘compassionate’ consumer citizenry?), ideology critique itself has become a fetish object that conceals the social mode of production and the historical Real. Of course, all this gets intensified when Žizek considers how subjectivity is isotopically constituted by the new media technologies. We become cyborgs, or cyborg-communists, as the subtitle of the *JAC* interview indicates.

Žizek demands that we distinguish symptom (return of the truth in the universalized lie) from fetish (the lie that enables the subject to sustain the truth) and recognize that today ideology functions at the level of everyday life in a way that is much closer to the notion of fetish. In the current historical juncture, “we’ve passed from symptom to the functioning of fetish” (*JAC*, 10). Today it is important to identify our fetishes because, in

the current historical juncture “in which nothing is repressed” (*JAC*, 9), we have adopted “very cruelly realistic attitudes” (*JAC*, 9) sustained by small fetishes. Here we see the contradictory process of ideological functioning, as “fetish,” far from being impossible in a moment where no thing is repressed, is the mode of appearance and condition of possibility of an official position that nothing is repressed. Žižek, like Marx, believes that fetishes are necessary forms of appearance of alienated life. Certainly they have a moral claim to our attention. Having a less clear claim to the attention of the revolutionary left is Žižek's work on multiculturalism.

THE MULTICULTURALIST CANARD

In focusing on how multiculturalism functions, rather than on the contradictions within its theoretical optic (*JAC*, 28), Žižek chooses the bold path of criticizing liberal multiculturalism's selected key signifier of ‘tolerance.’ In doing so, he correctly emphasizes that multiculturalism frequently works to legitimize the “logic of universalized victimization” (*JAC*, 28) to the extent to which the Other becomes good insofar as she remains a victim. He is also right to assert that a conventional approach to multiculturalism too frequently “translates problems of economic and political struggle into problems of fundamentalism and tolerance” (*JAC*, 29) and thus “obliterates the actual roots of intolerance” (*JAC*, 29) not to mention psychologizing what are, in effect, material social relations. Žižek clearly recognizes the fetishism of normative plurality within liberal multiculturalism that occludes issues of social class and rejects the notion of hegemony (see San Juan, 1995). Condemning the “patronizing, naïve attitude of ‘learn to cope, learn to tolerate each other’” that has infected the liberal variant of multiculturalism—and admitting that this is his “*only* problem with multiculturalism” (*JAC*, 30, my emphasis)—Žižek goes on to defend what he calls the positive notion of multiculturalism. This positive notion—that other cultures can be tolerant—is celebrated as a modern Eurocentric idea that is praiseworthy because it postulates a Cartesian subject. In claiming that it is “*only* against the background of Cartesian subjectivity that you can experience your own culture as something that is contingent” (*JAC*, 30, my emphasis), it might appear that the thrust of his analysis is Eurocentric—as if he is saying, in effect, that only European cultures (presumably those that reflect the Judeo-Christian tradition that he supports) are capable of tolerance. Admittedly, there is some ambiguity here. But as a historical materialist, he is also saying, in effect, that the “cogito” is coterminous with capitalism and that capitalism itself is the condition under which cultural tolerance emerges as a problem.

While it is easy to agree with Žižek that communication among groups is less in need of contextualization and more in need of an understanding of their own political, economic, and cultural embeddedness (*JAC*, 23–24), it is more difficult to swallow his idea that multicultural communication can be nothing more than a “shared perplexity” (*JAC*, 24) that follows when two groups realize that they share the same problem (Žižek also describes this as the overlapping of two misunderstandings, *JAC*, 24) but do not necessarily share the same approach to revolving the problem, assuming it is resolvable. One of the difficulties with this perspective is that it fails to specify on what basis non-Cartesian/Kantian subjects will be able to communicate with Cartesian subjects, since according to Žižek only a Cartesian/Kantian subject (“an empty subject, which, precisely because of this needs identifications or fantasies in order to fill in its own gap,” *JAC*, 23) can experience the contingency of her own culture. One of the central difficulties with Žižek’s pronouncements on multiculturalism is contained in his argument that the ideological practices of Eurocentrism constitute the very forces out of which multinational capital “thinks” itself. In making this claim, he presumes that corporate capitalism is able to recuperate any gains made by a critical multiculturalism. But, as Anna Kornbluh has noted, critical multiculturalism is not always reducible to the same project as multinational corporate capitalism insofar as the totality of capitalism is not able to colonize fully—in advance—each and every space of ethnic, racial, or class subversion.

There is no gainsaying that Žižek develops an important point when he claims that a fundamental dimension of Eurocentrism is premised on the belief that “we were somehow deprived of some original jewel of wisdom that is then to be sought elsewhere” (*JAC*, 11) which leads to a false evaluation of the other (this is similar to the way in which the progressive academic in the West “needs the dream that there is another place where they have the authentic revolution so that they can be authentic through an Other” [*JAC*, 20]). Admittedly, it is difficult to argue against the idea that at the bloody heart of racism and patriarchy exists ideal Otherness. I am prepared to give some credit to the notion that a false elevation of the Other can be problematic on a number of fronts. For example, such an uncritical elevation of the Other has instanced forms of idealization that have had a troubling history, the Nazi idealization of the German peasant being a case in point. And then there are those paradoxical instances of a different register, such as Afrocentric ethnosociological readings of Egyptian civilization, often paradoxically deriving their claims and methods from European sources, and sometimes unconsciously utilizing European epistemologies to validate non-European ones, while simultane-

ously denigrating European epistemologies. And we are also faced with the chronic dilemma of the romanticization of cultures that have been 'disappeared' by European settlers and the cultural appropriation of marginalized groups by Euro-Americans. One also thinks of Ruth Beebe Hill's novel, *Hanta Yo*, and her depiction of, in the words of Ward Churchill, "the collectivist spirituality of the nineteenth-century Lakota as nothing so much as a living prefiguration of her friend Ayn Rand's grossly individualistic cryptofascism" (100). Not to mention the poet, Gary Snyder, who sometimes pretends to see the world through the eyes of an American Indian "shaman," and Lynn Andrews, "an airhead 'feminist' yuppie" who has been putatively charged by the power of Jaguar Woman and sent forth "to write a series of books so outlandish in their pretensions as to make [Carlos] Castaneda seem a model of propriety by comparison" (Churchill, 101). But when Žižek makes the claim that indigenous peoples "are as bad as we" (*JAC*, 11), he appears to shift the goalposts. It is an unfortunate statement and if I were not familiar with many of his numerous works, I would be tempted to claim that here he is establishing a false equivalence between the elevation of the symbolic Other and the elevation of the real Other. While his remark assumes a selective affinity among himself and his interviewers (presupposing a mainly Euro-American readership of the journal), it also appears to endorse an "us-versus-them" positionality.

Žižek runs into serious problems that seemingly he is unable to surmount when he makes the claim that Native Americans "also caused innumerable ecological catastrophes by killing too many buffaloes" (*JAC*, 11). However, upon closer examination, and in reading this statement in the context of his other works, he appears to be doing something quite different. By arguing that Native Americans are "just as bad as we," he is not trying to render American Indians as being "normal" like he and his fellow Europeans (*JAC*, 11), which would be an absurd—not to mention pernicious—move. Rather, he is trying to underscore how ideology works by incorporating the Other within itself—in this case, so that the dominant white majority can recognize its secret longings in the Other that it historically has all but vanquished. Whereas his comments in the *JAC* interview appear contradictory, they are more clearly expressed in his written work. For instance, in a recent essay, Žižek makes the claim that it is precisely in the struggle against Eurocentrism by Euro-American liberal multiculturalists that another—and more devious—species of racism is produced. One such struggle is embodied in the false elevation of the Other. The myth of Native Americans living in the undisturbed balance with nature instead of trying to dominate and transform it is, according

to Zizek, the ultimate racist myth, because it implicitly reduces Native Americans "to beings who, like animals, left no traces of themselves on their land, while 'aggressive' Western man cultivates it" (Repeating, 76). What Zizek does not sufficiently elaborate upon is the way in which the false elevation of the Other works in conjunction with the imperial demonization of the Other. What he could have emphasized in his critique of liberal multiculturalism is the motivated amnesia of the European colonizers and ruling dictatorships everywhere who have attempted to erase the traces of *los olvidados* whom they now 'showcase' as a display of their morally elevated 'tolerance.' One of the most powerful ways exercised by the ruling classes for erasing the traces of a people whom they have slaughtered and whom they continue to exploit is to erase their memories. Eduardo Galeano tells of a story by Spanish writer, Don Ramon Gomez de la Serna, about a fellow who had such a bad memory that one day he forgot he had a bad memory and remembered everything. The colonizer continues to work hard to put memories to sleep. The danger, of course, is to risk a re-birth of re-remembering as a form of dangerous memory, a re-awakening of subjugated knowledges, memories cathecting with and catapulting revolutionary struggle into the guarded precincts of hope. Eduardo Galeano notes that

A memory that's awake is contradictory, like us. It's never still, and it changes along with us. It was born to be not an anchor but a catapult. A port of departure, not of arrival. It doesn't turn away from nostalgia, but it prefers the dangers of hope. The Greeks believed memory was the sister of time and the sea, and they weren't wrong. (211)

Galeano is worth quoting at greater length on this issue:

Impunity is the child of bad memory. All the dictatorships that have ever existing in Latin America have known this well. They've burned entire mountain ranges of books, books guilty of revealing an outlawed reality and books simply guilty of being books, and mountains of documents as well. Military officers, presidents, priests: the history of burnings is a long one, dating from 1562 in Mani de Yucatan when Father Diego de Landa threw Mayan books into the flames, hoping to reduce indigenous memory to ashes. To mention only a few bonfires: in 1870, when the armies of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay razed Paraguay, the historical archives of the vanquished were torched; twenty years later, the government of Brazil burned all the papers that testified to three and a half centuries of black slavery; in 1983, the Argentine brass set fire to all the records of their dirty war against their countrymen; and in 1995, the Guatemalan military did the same. (211)

Žižek is only partially successful in his critique of liberal multiculturalism. This is because he does not comment upon the danger in asserting that Native Americans are “just as bad as we” as an antidote to the false elevation of the Other—possibly because he meant the comment to be “ironic.” In fact, there is a danger that Žižek will disappear into the liberal multiculturalism that he so trenchantly contests. The argument that the Other is “just as bad as we are” is an argument that liberal multiculturalists put forward all the time. It is the condition of possibility for the comment that we should be antiracist because “all our blood runs red.” Žižek is aware of this but he leaves the implications of this argument unaddressed. It is the basis for a “colorblind” multiculturalism and sets up a false equivalence that flattens or ‘symmetrizes’ the European/Other couplet as if it were a ‘unity of opposition’ floating in some transcendental ether when, in fact, this move camouflages the fact that at the level of the materiality of social relations, the European/Other functions not as a binary opposition so much as a “distinction” within a dependent hierarchy (see Anthony Wilden, 1980). The playing ground is far from equal today and to assume otherwise is as naïve as it is tendentious. One wonders how such a dependent hierarchy could be rationalized by liberal multiculturalists as ‘normal.’ Liberal multiculturalists offer the horrors of colonial genocide an ‘alibi’ when they leave racism at the level of the signifier where it remains sundered from the hierarchy of historical determinations in existing capitalist social relations—relations that shattered the lives of millions of indigenous peoples through capital’s quest to dominate nature and to exploit populations for their labor power. That this hierarchy exists is not so much the result of the return of the repressed vomited up by a false elevation of the Other as much as it is the product of the violent acquisition of territory, the exploitation of nature, the quest for an endless accumulation of capital, and the demonization of indigenous peoples through criteriologies and systems of classification developed by science, religion, and anthropology that constitute the center of the legacy of European colonial conquest. At this point, one is reminded of Walter Rodney’s systematic challenge to established contentions on the nature of slavery in traditional African societies. In his now famous debates with J. D. Fage, Rodney acknowledged and lamented both the participation of Africans in the slave trade and practices of domination and exploitation among Africans prior to the coming of the Europeans. However, Rodney was able to point out how the trans-Atlantic character of slavery was essentially alien to Africa and how it subsequently corrupted elements of indigenous African institutions and values (Adeleke, 2000). Here he exposed African history as part of the myths of Eurocentric historiography

in the academy that served “as a weapon of domination, keeping Africans at home and blacks in diaspora” (Adeleke, 44).

In a similar vein, liberal multiculturalists fail to identify racial practice as stemming from the structure of race rather than racism; in particular, in the functioning of the master signifier of Whiteness (see Seshadri-Crooks, 2000) linked to capitalist social relations of production. In other words, they fail to identify the unconscious function of the signifier in the constitution of the subject of race as one that is informed by whiteness as a specific regime of looking that shapes the perceptual structure of ruling class Euro-Americans—a regime given ballast by capitalist social relations of production.

In steamrolling their ideas across the landscape of differences, liberal multiculturalists level out the concept of difference itself so that now the European putatively can become the subaltern Other of the Native American because, after all, they are just like us. In their desire to relativize the Native American, to bring her down to earth, to reduce her to the North American analogue of the multicultural Other, liberal multiculturalists trivialize the unique historical determinations that create the objective conditions for racism, no doubt a consequence of reading the Native American from the standpoint of the European settler. Also, isn't the remark that Native Americans are “just like us” just another way of saying “what belongs to you belongs to us.” This certainly helps to explain the contemporary pillaging of Native American spirituality by white yuppies. A comment by Russell Means, the leader of the American Indian Movement, is apposite here: “What's at issue here is the same old question that Europeans have always posed with regard to American Indians, whether what's ours isn't somehow theirs. And, of course, they've always answered the question in the affirmative. When they wanted our land they just announced that they had a right to it and therefore owned it. When we resisted their taking of our lands they claimed we were being unreasonable and committed physical genocide upon us in order to convince us to see things their way. Now, being spiritually bankrupt themselves, they want our spirituality as well. So they're making up rationalizations to explain why they're entitled to it” (cited in Churchill, 104).

The central problem with liberal multiculturalism so effectively undressed by Žižek is that it delinks multiculturalism from its founding gesture in global capitalist relations. It is one thing to admit that there are no uncontaminated origins (cultures, philosophies, sciences) and that multiculturalism itself is a multiculturalism of impurity and contamination, it is quite another to reduce all cultures to the same level of historical culpability (we are all sinners in our heart of hearts and thus should be bound

together by our human frailty). The slaughter of Native Americans by European imperialists cannot be reduced to an uncomfortable hiccup in the drunken brawl of history. It is an event that continues to haunt the present, one that should, at the very least, extract an acknowledgment from us that the conditions of global capitalism from which European imperialism sprang must also be held accountable. The supranational cultural identity of the metropolitan European powers that has historically defined itself as shouldering the White Man's Burden of bringing universal values to bear on Native Americans—a burden that had been nurtured by the "Hellenomania" that buttressed European chauvinism, that continues to be influenced by the Aryan model of ancient history that banished the so-called wisdom traditions in Egyptian, Hebraic, Babylonian, Mesopotamian, and Sumerian cultures, excluding them from the canonical definition of philosophy (Critchley, 19), that has always concealed its genocidal intentions under the cloak of a civilizing mission—did not grow out of a vacuum nor was it tributary to the racist and imperialist logic in the literary, religious, philosophical, and scientific traditions of these empires. So I remain perplexed: From what 'enlightened' space are liberal multiculturalists speaking when they claim that Native Americans are just like us? This resembles the wish-fulfillment of the post-colonial critic whose views are actually a symptom produced by Western master-theories of the sublime (San Juan, 1995). To harbor the fantasy that you can "speak from the standpoint of the excluded without being excluded, of wishing to speak from the margins whilst staying at the centre" is to imbibe "the fantasy of a romantic anti-Hellenism or Rousseauesque anti-ethnocentrism" (Critchley, 20). Multiculturalism needs to be understood as often having more to do with maintaining such fantasies than with defending the dream of ethnic pluralism. In fact, it still has a great deal to do with camouflaging imperialist aggression and defending imperial domination in various forms throughout our transculturalized planet (Critchley, 1).

Žižek is acutely aware that multiculturalism too often is predicated on a number of specious assumptions: that monoculturalism and nationalism are often relegated to evils in themselves; that there has been an egregiously tendentious failure on the part of multiculturalist theorists to recognize that many Eurocentric universal values have been open to internal contestation; that Eurocentric values also include pluralism and skepticism, and that multiculturalism has too often ignored social relations implicated in the globalization of capital. While Žižek correctly identifies the major contradiction within the order of race—the institution of difference and the desire for sameness ("contrary to the slogan that Western racism wants to make the world uniform, I think it thrives on differences," *JAC*, 11)—

he does not sufficiently locate this contradiction in the specific investments in the order of race by the subject of race; he also gives too little attention to the desire of the white capitalist for absolute mastery of the nonwhite Other. In short, by failing to expose more fully the contradiction of the order of the European subject of race, Žizek falls prey to reproducing the very Eurocentric/liberal multiculturalist prescriptions about race that he ostensibly opposes; that is, he avoids encountering the desire at the heart of the system of race founded on the master signifier of European whiteness (is this a symptom of Žizek's secret desire for sameness?). While Žizek's selective valorization of the Cartesian-Kantian-Hegelian abstract subject of history (see Katz, 2000) does not prohibit him from being attentive to historical determinations (in a long conversation with me in Los Angeles, he readily admitted that the heinous crimes of the European colonizers cannot—and should not—be compared with those of their victims), he does not attempt to deal sufficiently with the traces of his own Eurocentrism operative within the very terms he uses to critique liberal multiculturalism. This is not to say that his critique of liberal multiculturalism does not have a great deal to offer.

CLASS STRUGGLE AS PRESENT ABSENCE

A provocative exchange between Žizek and Laclau occurs at the end of *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*. Here Laclau decries Žizek's attempt to distinguish between class struggle and postmodernism. Laclau links Žizek's call for the direct overthrow of capitalism and liberal democracy to Žizek's futile and irascible attempt to create a new version of the base/superstructure model—considered anathema by concessionary left-liberal post-Marxists such as Laclau. Whereas Žizek sees class struggle as spontaneously and tendentially more universal in its effects because it occurs at the nexus of the capitalist system, Laclau believes that class struggle should in no way be considered a privileged locus of universalistic political effects. For instance, Laclau believes that workers' demands can be as easily integrated into the system as any other group (292). However, Žizek claims that he is not conceiving of the logic of capital as an "essentialist anchor" that limits the struggle for hegemony but rather he argues that the economy represents the *positive condition* of hegemonic struggle. In contrast to Laclau, Žizek refuses to relegate the concept of class to that of a floating signifier. He refuses, as well, to consider all elements that enter into hegemonic struggle as—in principle—equal. Žizek sees class struggle as overdetermining the horizon upon which multiple struggles

play out: political, economic, feminist, ecological, ethnic, and so forth. He uses the example of "oppositional determination" to make a convincing case that class struggle is that part of the chain of antagonisms that structures in advance the very terrain on which the multitude of particular contents fights for hegemony.

When Laclau claims that Zizek's anticapitalist/antipostmodernist position as well as his opposition to the liberal-capitalist regime is mere "empty talk" and a prescription for "political quietism and sterility" (apparently because Zizek does not address the issues of bureaucracy and social control of the productive processes), Zizek responds in kind. He argues that Laclau's support for what he calls the "democratic control of the economy" and "radical democracy" means either "palliative damage-control measures within the global capitalist framework, or it means *absolutely nothing*" (321). Zizek attempts to move beyond the left-liberalism of Laclau by not treating it as an empty signifier, the contents of which are to be struggled for within the horizon of the democratic imaginary. This bold refusal on the part of Zizek is propelled by his realization that the contradictions now being spawned by global capitalism "are potentially even more explosive than those of standard industrial capitalism" (322). Here we need to appreciate the significance of the break between Zizek and liberal proponents of radical democracy such as Laclau and Mouffe. For instance, Zizek's desire to "repeat Lenin" (to be distinguished from reinventing him) in the Kierkegaardian sense—to retrieve Lenin's "impulse" in the current historical juncture—can be admirably contrasted to Laclau and Mouffe's reduction of the economy and material production to a limited empirical sphere. Capital, for Zizek, is not a limited empirical sphere but rather constitutes a sociotranscendental matrix that generates the totality of social and political relations (Repeating, 38). But has Zizek gone far enough? Has his work moved sufficiently beyond the "cosmetic surgery" and "resignifications" of the liberal-democratic horizon that he contests? Is his psychoanalytically driven dialectics rendered detumescent in the face of the capitalist juggernaut?

One of the challenges of Zizek's project is to provide a sufficient explanatory framework for redefining the role of the proletariat in addition to her function within the "social form" of the party. For all the clarion calls to dismantle global capitals that pullulate his work, his essentially psychoculturalist strategies—while crucial to the revolutionary imagination—are insufficient in contesting the universalizing effects of the new hydra-headed forms of finance capital that he so brilliantly analyzes and vociferously condemns. The unity of theory

and practice is either evaded or resolved mainly at the level of theory, although admittedly there are some recent indications that his work is engaging the concept of praxis in his recent discussions of Lenin, whose awe-inspiring leadership in 1917 reflected a pure, autonomous, and ethical act in the Kantian sense.

In order to appreciate his assertion that we must “repeat Lenin” we need to realize that Žižek’s assertion of materialism is not to be found in a positioning of objective reality outside subjective mediation, but by arguing that the external object effectively inheres in subjective mediation itself and it is precisely this external object that prevents thought from achieving or attaining full identity with itself. Žižek does not insist on the (idealistic) notion of the independent existence of material reality outside of consciousness. For Žižek, the partiality of the “subjective reflection” occurs on the basis of the fact that the subject is included in the process that it reflects. Thus, he ascribes to the ultimate perspectivism of figures such as Deleuze—that the distorting aspect of a partial perspective is inscribed into the very material existence of things (Repeating, 87). In this view, the infinite becomes the negative self-cancelling of the finite. Yet Žižek’s perspective could be called materialist in the way that he articulates class struggle. Žižek argues that the only universal class whose singularity (exclusion from the society of property) *guarantees* actual universality is the proletariat. The proletariat should not be considered the negative of positive full essential humanity, or the “gap” of universality, but rather the singularity of the social structure, the universal class or the nonclass among the classes. Here, Žižek is describing class struggle as the Form of the Social. In other words, all social phenomena are overdetermined by it. Žižek sees class struggle as the traversing of the political across the entire social body, which helps to explain why he attributes tremendous importance to Lenin’s call for a consciousness that would be introduced from the outside by intellectuals (i.e., vanguard party)—but intellectuals who, while they may be outside the economic struggle, are not outside of class struggle (Repeating, 11). When Lenin describes the knowledge that intellectuals should deliver to the proletariat, he cautions that this depends upon the status of this knowledge. According to Žižek, Lenin’s wager is that universal truth (knowledge) and partisanship—the gesture of taking sides—*condition each other*. Universal truth can be articulated only from a partisan position. (I would add: truth can only be articulated from the perspective of class struggle. Class struggle is the founding gesture of radical critique, declaring the impossibility of remaining neutral and affirming the strategic centrality of proletarian revolution.) Intellectuals external to the proletariat are needed because the

proletariat cannot perceive its own place within the social totality—a perception that will enable it to accomplish its mission. This must be mediated through an external element. Yet we need to remember that, for Žižek, externality is strictly internal. The need for the Party stems from the fact that the working-class *is never fully itself* (Repeating, 14). To understand the role of the party is to understand how Lenin was able to formalize Marx. For Lenin, the party becomes the political form of its historical interaction with Marxist theory. The party stands for *the form of our activity*, not its interpretation. It is, in other words, the form of subjectivity. The concept of form here has little to do with the liberal notion of formalism—a space of neutrality, or a form independent of its contingent context—rather, the concept of form here “stands for the kernel of the Real, for the antagonism, which ‘colors’ the entire field in question” (Repeating, 17). Žižek’s defense of Lenin’s concept of the party shares much in common with Gramsci in the sense that Gramsci always advocated for the party to educate (like a school) the spontaneity of the proletariat so that the proletariat could gain a critical appreciation for its historical potential and eventually overcome bourgeois hegemony. Here the masses are not considered to be the repositories of truth. The role of the political party as an educational and organizational entity is essential for engaging in protracted struggle against the state (see Holst).

Žižek points out that Lenin’s greatness resides in his reaction to the despair in 1914 brought about by the adoption of the patriotic line of the Social Democratic parties. Out of the catastrophe of 1914, Lenin’s utopianism was born in his desire to crush the bourgeois state and invent a new communal social form without any police or bureaucracy—the Lenin that many of us associate with *The State and Revolution*. Žižek notes that Lenin’s close reading of Hegel’s *Logic* helped him discern the unique chance of revolution. Kevin Anderson, Peter Hudis, and Raya Dunayevskaya, among other Marxist humanists, would certainly concur on this point. All of them have written about the influence of Hegel’s *Logic* on Lenin (underscored, for instance, in the sense that Lenin shifts his understanding of cognition as something that not only reflects the world but creates it). But Žižek fails to articulate the contractions between Lenin’s views of the state and revolution and his concept of vanguardism and discipline from above. Žižek would do well to consider further the ease with which a “vanguard” party becomes the basis for a new bureaucracy after the revolution. According to Hudis (personal communication), the question facing our generation, in light of all those aborted and unfinished revolutions, is not simply “how to make the revolution” but “how to avoid the tendency of revolutions to so quickly

transform into their opposite" and create new forms of oppression. This is where, according to Hudis, the need for new forms of organization does make itself felt. In virtually every case we have of mass spontaneous revolt against the conditions of capitalism, either in the "West" or the supposedly "socialist" East in the twentieth century, the masses have eschewed centralized vanguard forms and have shown a marked preference for decentralized, multiple forms of organization: Hungary 1956, Paris 1968, Poland 1980, Seattle 1999. To Hudis, this suggests that the means to achieving liberation has to somehow reflect the goal of liberation itself, insofar as breaking down sharp divisions between "leaders" and "led," workers and intellectuals, and so forth, is concerned (isn't this the real meaning of 'radical democracy'?). This is in no way an argument against the need for an organization of "disciplined" revolutionaries which exists independent of, so to speak, the spontaneous actions of the masses. Hudis notes that even the greatest spontaneous outburst does not by itself fill the theoretical void in the revolutionary movement, nor provide full direction for its ultimate development. What is needed today is an organization of committed Marxists, who see their responsibility as providing a full restatement of "what Marx's Marxism means for today." What is needed is a revolutionary party that can challenge the alienation of labor at the point of capitalist production. Zizek's view of the party is important in that he not only examines the 'objective conditions' for revolution but also stresses the importance of human agency in that he calls (after Badiou) the "event" (the seizure of power). Hudis is critical of Zizek for dismissing Rosa Luxemburg's concern for what happens after the seizure of power so that the revolutionary process continues in permanence (News and Letters). The question becomes: What is the nature of such a revolutionary organization for revolutionaries? For Zizek, as for Lenin and Gramsci, this took the form of the party. Yet Zizek offers little insight into revolutionary strategies that could be carried out in this current historical era under the direction of a revolutionary party. This is no doubt partly due to Zizek's belief that today we are not faced so much with the old Marxist choice between private property and its socialization as with the choice between hierarchical and egalitarian post-property society (a belief that I consider highly questionable). As evidenced in *The Ticklish Subject*, Zizek is "not preaching a simple return to the old notions of class struggle and socialist revolution" and he acknowledges "the breakdown of the Marxist notion that capitalism itself generates the force that will destroy it in the guise of the proletariat" (352). While his attempt to "recover politics" is laudatory, Zizek's discussion of revolutionary class struggle fails to provide con-

vincing strategies for contesting the rule of capital both in organizational terms and in terms of a coherent philosophy of revolution. It is here where a Marxist humanist/historical materialist approach offers a more lucid political response to the traumatic impasse of always already existing in the intersection of various ideological fields.

In all, Žižek's psycho-Marxism relies too heavily on a theory of language that focuses on the erotogenic body and ignores the toiling body. Granted, his work in this regard is a vast improvement on that of Derrida, whose work is grounded in an "economy of fictitious capital" (McNally, 2001) where our birth into language is detached from our origin in the bodies of others in the same way that money-capital is supposedly self-generating, without an origin in labor. In their rage against decidability, Derrida and his poststructuralist supporters deny the origin of value in labor, in the life-giving, toiling, body in labor. Derrida, as you will recall, argues that there is only 'différance,' that unknowable form prior to language, that condition of undecidability and the very condition of possibility of that undecidability that permits the endless play of reference that Derrida famously discusses in his large corpus of work (Derrida seems enraptured by difference and enraged by sameness, norms, standards). When Derrida makes the claim that *différance* is the most general structure of the economy he denies the praxis and labor that ground economic relations (McNally, 2001). For Derrida, the body is reduced to a site of mediation where signification exceeds itself and undecidability reigns supreme. Žižek argues that Derrida's *Specters of Marx* is emblematic of the problem in Derrida's understanding of global capitalism. In Derrida's work there exists a tension between his avowedly anticapitalist sentiment and his analysis of the irreducible spectrality that has to supplement the gap of every positive ontological edifice as the prototranscendental a priori which opens up the space for the spectrality of capital (Repeating, 38). This tension helps to explain why Derrida views Marx's critique of capital essentially as a form of reductionism. Derrida sees capital as an order that contains its own excess so that it already constitutes its own difference and therefore lacks any fixed center to be subverted. Contrast this to Marx, who argues that capital does not engender itself, but exploits the workers' surplus value. While Žižek is not prepared to follow Derrida in dismissing the connection among discourse, subjectivity, and the production of value through laboring body, Žižek nevertheless leaves us with little more to work with than a strategic admonition: Confront the Real of our desire, disinvest ourselves of our fantasy objects, exorcise our specters, and decathect ourselves from economies of desire and the fetish objects that help to sustain our disavowal. Žižek's approach

could be sharpened by bringing it into conversation with some ideas from Walter Benjamin.

Benjamin's project is a direct challenge against the autonomy of thought, that is, against objective, concrete, sensuous life being subsumed by the self-movement of thought. His critique of commodity fetishism abolishes fetishes by undressing them, undoing them, and, through revolutionary praxis, abolishing the capitalist social relations that produced them. But by developing revolutionary praxis we also mean uncovering redemptive possibilities within the commodity form itself. David McNally (2001) discusses how Walter Benjamin realized the redemptive possibilities within the de-mythified and barren landscape of capitalism. In his work on the *flâneur*, for instance, Benjamin conveyed the insight that everyone in capitalist society is a prostitute who sells his or her talents and body parts. We live in the charred world of capital, a dead zone inhabited by corpses and decaying commodities. Benjamin argued that such a realization can help break through the naturalization of history and enter the terrain of historical action.

According to McNally, Benjamin effectively ruptures the myth of the self-made social agent: We are all dead objects awaiting the meanings we have yet to write, as McNally puts it. McNally sees Benjamin as establishing a political project in which the oppressed class must reclaim the libidinal energies it has cathected onto commodities and rechannel them into a revolutionary praxis, a praxis of historical struggle toward emancipation, toward liberation. Revolutionary action involves the dialectics of remembering and forgetting, of challenging the repressed bourgeois desires linked to the rise of capitalism, and embodied in the collective dreams of a pathological culture, a society gone mad. According to McNally, Benjamin views the body as the site of a transformative type of knowing, one that arises through physical action. Revolutionary practice, for Benjamin, means cultivating a "bodily presence of mind." We need to locate new energies—in hip-hop, in art, in protest demonstrations (like the Zapatistas)—without being reinitiated into the giddy whirl of bourgeois subjectivity, its jacuzzi reformism, and its lap-dog liberalism. That can happen only when you have a collective political project that posits as a central objective transforming through revolutionary praxis the material and social practices under capitalism that deform human relations. Bringing this about requires direction. For me, such direction comes from a commitment not only to defeat the capitalists but also capital. Admittedly, we are consigned by history to live in the disjunction between the defeat of capital and the recognition that such a defeat is not likely to happen soon.

Žižek's work points to the need for a materialist history of the laboring body that can be linked to a quest for universality within the absolute movement of becoming of which Marx so presciently spoke (see Anderson, 1995). A becoming whose condition of possibility is the transformation of capitalist social relations of production. Here the Marxist humanism of Raya Dunayevskaya proves to be of signal importance and is another possible point of linkage to Žižek's work.

What remains promising yet still largely underdeveloped in Žižek's attempt at a rapprochement between Marxism and psychoanalysis—a psycho-Marxism, if you will—is a coherent pedagogy of the concrete. I use the term pedagogy here in the Freirean sense of praxis. The purpose of a pedagogy of praxis is to enable subjects to grasp the specificity of the concrete within the totality of the universal—for instance, the laws of motion of capital as they operate out of view of our common-sense understanding. Furthermore, a pedagogy of praxis plays a key role in enabling our understanding of history as a process in which human beings make their own society, although in conditions most often not of their own choosing. It employs the Hegelian-Marxist practice of double negation (absolute negativity) as a hermeneutical device for examining the movement of both thought and action by means of revolutionary praxis, or what Dunayevskaya (1973) has called the 'philosophy of history.' Dunayevskaya rethought Marx's relations to Hegelian dialectics in a profound way, in particular, Hegel's concept of the self-movement of the Idea from which Marx argued the need to transcend objective reality rather than thought. Dunayevskaya notes how Marx was able to put a living, breathing, and thinking subject of history at the center of the Hegelian dialectic. She also pointed out that what for Hegel is Absolute knowledge (the realm of realized transcendence), Marx referred to as the new society.

A pedagogy of praxis is more like a 'living philosophy' than a psycho-analytical practice such as Žižek's in that it proceeds from social reality and not from abstract concepts. Such a praxis is achieved by revolutionary agents not only by grasping the contradictions within their own position within society but also by elevating the contradictions into a principle of knowledge and action (San Juan, 1995). The emphasis here is on helping students through 'the labor of the negative' in order to analyze human development from the perspective of the wider social totality. Critical analysis, however, must be part of a revolutionary praxis aimed at replacing capitalist relations of production with freely associated labor under socialism. This approach relies heavily on Marx's appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic, specifically how we can comprehend more clearly the way in which the positive is always contained in the negative. Of

course, Mészáros warns that positive transcendence by means of the negation of the negation cannot be envisaged in merely political terms but must be concerned with the universality of social practices as a whole (161). The point here is to develop a living philosophy that addresses both the objective conditions of the laboring subject and the subjective conditions for laboring agents to become revolutionary subjects.

While Hegel's self-referential, all-embracing, totalizing Absolute is greatly admired by Marx, it is, nevertheless, greatly modified by him. For Marx, Absolute knowledge (or the self-movement of pure thought) did not absorb objective reality or objects of thought but provided a ground from which objective reality could be transcended. By reinserting the human subject into the dialectic, and by defining the subject as corporal being (rather than pure thought or abstract self-consciousness), Marx appropriates Hegel's self-movement of subjectivity as an act of transcendence and transforms it into a critical humanism. Marxism, in this instance, becomes the unity of the theory and practice of class struggle.

In her rethinking of Marx's relationship to the Hegelian dialectic, Dunayevskaya parts company with Derrida, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, Negri, Deleuze, Mészáros, and others. She has given absolute negativity a new urgency, linking it not only to the negation of today's economic and political realities but also to developing new human relations. The second negation constitutes drawing out the positive within the negative and expressing the desire of the oppressed for freedom. Second negativity is intrinsic to the human subject as an agent; it is what gives direction and coherence to revolutionary action as praxis. Subjective self-movement through absolute negativity hastens forth a new relation between theory and practice and can connect us to the realization of freedom. Absolute negativity in this instance becomes a constitutive feature of a self-critical social revolution that, in turn, forms the basis of permanent revolution for an associated humanity. The creation of a social universe not parallel to the social universe of capital (whose substance is value) is the challenge here. The form that this society will take is that which has been suppressed within the social universe of capital: socialism, a society based not on value but on the fulfillment of human need. For Dunayevskaya, absolute negativity entails more than economic struggle but the liberation of humanity from class society. This is necessarily a political and a revolutionary struggle and not only an economic one. This particular insight is what, for me, signals the fecundating power of Dunayevskaya's Marxist-humanism—the recognition that Marx isn't talking about only class relations but also human relations. Human relations can be liberated by transforming the current objective economic condi-

tions that imperil human dignity and survival worldwide. A dialectical grasp of the “working day” is necessary for such a transformation to occur. A coherent philosophy of revolution can “educate” revolutionary consciousness and give direction to human praxis.

Dialectical movement is a characteristic not only of thought but also of life and history itself. But today it appears that history has overtaken us, that the educational left is running a losing race with history. Consequently, we require a pedagogy whose critical practices are not defanged by resignation or despair, a critical pedagogy that meets the conditions of the current times. We need to understand that diversity and difference are allowed to proliferate and flourish provided that they remain within the prevailing forms of capitalist economic and social arrangements.

Zizek's ideas on capitalism, multiculturalism, racism, gender, and ideology—while often dazzling and courageous—have a mixed currency in the development of a Marxist revolutionary praxis. Combining Lacan, popular criticism, and a critique of political economy is an eclectic gambit that carries various freight. One does not need to populate one's language with speechifying ‘oughts,’ messianic calls for the overthrow of the state, sky-punching rallying cries to storm the barricades, or placard-waving sloganeering designed to empty the adrenal glands in order to give class struggle its due. I am not asking Zizek to be like Hope, the ‘maniac maid’ in Shelley's “The Mask of Anarchy” and rouse the masses to “Rise like Lions after slumber” and agitate the “many” against the few. After all, for all of Zizek's calls to overthrow the capitalist state, Zizek rejects such strategies and tactics as woefully outmoded. But in Zizek's attempt to revitalize Marxist theory, he needs to specify how class struggle, as the defining problematic of his project, can proceed apace without the proletariat as the major motor of contestation. Consequently, it is unclear how Zizek would suggest that we proceed—organizationally—in our mission to slay the beast of capital. The contradiction between the forces of production and its system of ownership and control is still the fundamental historical force that leads to revolutionary change. That this central contradiction remains insufficiently developed in Zizek's work enfeebles his avowed socialist project.

As revolutionary Marxists, we are not seeking the spontaneous self-development of human capacities but the transformation through class struggle of the exploitation of labor within capitalist social relations. Zizek's work can greatly assist us in understanding the constitutive desire that enables these social relations to reproduce themselves. But in order to effectively challenge the universalization of the logic of capital and its

relations of exploitation, the left needs to link a politics of intelligibility to a praxis of revolutionary struggle in order to transcend them. To accomplish this we will need to look beyond Zizek, but his ideas can still prove fruitful in such a search.

NOTES

In preparing this response, I am grateful to Anna Kornbluh, Ramin Farahmandpur, and Noah DeLissovoy for their suggestions.

This chapter was previously published as Peter McLaren, "Slavoj Zizek's Naked Politics: Opting for the Impossible, a Secondary Elaboration," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 21 (2001): 613–47.

1. Zizek's unblushing support of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia has, by his own admission, left much of the democratic left aghast. Zizek's comments fail to explore the connection between the NATO bombings and U.S. policy of global military intervention against socialist countries who refuse to make sufficient room for international finance capital or countries whose leaders try to enforce IMF austerity policies but whose governments are deemed too unstable. The bombing of Yugoslavia as a way of forcing Yugoslavia to hand itself over to the free market increases the valency of Aijaz Amad's recent remark: "The power of capital comes today, as it has always come, out of the barrel of a gun" (1996, p. 32). In his remarks on the NATO bombings, Zizek fails to account for the singular universals that would define a general Serbian left or that would re-politicize the economy (Katz, 216–17).

REFERENCES

- Adeleke, T. "Guerilla Intellectualism: Walter A. Rodney and the Weapon of Knowledge in the Struggle for Black Liberation." *Journal of Thought* (Spring 2000): 37–59.
- Ahmad, A. *Lineages of the Present: Political Essays*. New Delhi, India: Tulika, 1996.
- Allman, P. *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Radical Possibilities and Critical Education*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 1999.
- . *Critical Education against Global Capital: Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 2001.
- Anderson, K. *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Boynton, R. S. 1998. "Enjoy Your Zizek! An Excitable Slovenian Philosopher Examines the Obscene Practices of Everyday Life—including His Own." *Lingua Franca* 8, no. 7 (October 1998).
- Butler, J., E. Laclau, and S. Zizek. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso, 2000.

- Churchill, W. *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema, and the Colonization of American Indians*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998.
- Cole, M., D. Hill, G. Rikowski, and P. McLaren. *Red Chalk*. London: The Tufnell Press, 2000.
- Critchley, S. "Black Socrates? Questioning the Philosophical Tradition." *Radical Philosophy* 69 (1995): 17–26.
- Dunayevskaya, R. *Philosophy and Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.
- Eagleton, T. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Ellwood, W. *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*. London: Verso and New Internationalist, 2001.
- Galeano, E. *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.
- Hill, D., M. Cole, and G. Rikowski. (eds). *Postmodernism in Educational Theory*. London: The Tufnell Press, 1999.
- Hudis, P. "The Dialectic and the 'Party': Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* Reconsidered." *News & Letters*, forthcoming.
- Holst, J. *Social Movements, Civil Society, and Radical Adult Education*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, in press.
- Katz, A. *Postmodernism and the Politics of 'Culture.'* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000.
- Kornbluh, A. "When You Cast a Wider Net, You Get More of What You Need: Multiculturalism and the Logic of Multinational Corporate Capitalism. Published by Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, May 1999.
- Mayo, P. *Gramsci, Freire & Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action*. London: Zed Books, 1999.
- McLaren, P. *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Post-modern Era*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Revolutionary Multiculturalism: Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997.
- . *Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Towards a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Gestures*. 3rd ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.
- . *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- McLaren, P., R. Allen, and Z. Leonardo. "The Gift of Si(gh)ted Violence: Towards a Discursive Intervention into the Organization of Capitalism." *Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 21, no. 2 (1999): 139–62.
- McLaren, P., and R. Farahmandpur. "Marx after Post-Marxism: Reclaiming Critical Pedagogy for the Left." Working Papers in Cultural Studies No. 25. Department of Comparative American Cultures. Washington State University. Pullman, Washington, 2001a.
- . "Class, Cultism, and Multiculturalism: A Notebook on Forging a Revolutionary Politics." *Multicultural Education* 8, no. 3 (spring 2001b): 2–14.
- McNally, D. *Bodies of Meaning: Studies on Language, Labor, and Liberation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.

- Mészáros, I. *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London: The Merlin Press, 1970.
- Miklitsch, R. "Going through the Fantasy": Screening Slavoj Žižek." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (spring 1998): 475–507.
- Parenti, M. *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia*. London: Verso, 2000.
- Postone, M. *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Rikowski, G. "That Other Great Class of Commodities: Repositioning Marxist Educational Theory," a paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference 2000, University of Cardiff, Wales, 9 September.
- San Juan, E. *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression: Essays in Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Sayers, S. *Marxism and Human Nature*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Seshadri-Crooks, K. *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Wilden, A. *The Imaginary Canadian: An Examination for Discovery*. Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1980.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. "Identity Crisis." *In These Times* (June 13, 1994): 28–29.
- . "Modernity, Postmodernity, or Capitalism?" In *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*. Ed. Robert McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood, and John Bellamy Foster, 27–50. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998.
- Zavarzadeh, M. "Theory as Material Force." Working Papers in Cultural Studies. Department of Comparative American Cultures. Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, 2001, 20–30.
- Žižek, S. "Against the Double Blackmail." *New Left Review* 234 (1999a): 76–87.
- . "Repeating Lenin." Unpublished manuscript. June 2001.
- . *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology*. London: Verso, 1999b.
- . "Postface: Georg Lukacs as the Philosopher of Leninism." In George Lukacs, 151–82. *A Defense of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*. London: Verso, 2000.

Anthony Giddens—The Last Global Theorist

David Scott

Anthony Giddens has been described as the last of the global narrativists and a defender of modernity, though he prefers to describe himself as a late or high modernist. What distinguishes him from philosophers of a postmodernist persuasion is that he is not prepared to abandon universalizing modes of thought and description. He thus rejects a wide range of postmodernist themes—the delegitimization of the transcendental self, the localization of knowledge, and a distaste for universalizing modes of thought and global narratives. He is concerned to defend not just an appropriate set of methods for describing the world but a realist ontology as well. As we will see, this defense of realism has been criticized from both postmodernist and critical realist perspectives. Furthermore, his latest foray into practical politics (cf. Giddens, 2000a, 2000b) has left some bemused by his inability to translate highly abstract sociological and philosophical concepts into a language which can mediate reality at a practical level. This chapter will focus on his theory of structuration and its implications.

The most intractable problem which social theory has attempted to solve is the relationship between the individual and society. This has in the last part of the twentieth century been understood as a relationship between structure and agency, thus incorporating a further element into the dualism—that of freedom to choose as against being constrained by social forms. If the latter is overemphasized, critics have suggested that this acts to marginalize human agency and indeterminacy. These social forms may comprise class relations, linguistic structures, biological mechanisms, or whatever. This can be contrasted with social theories which in

turn place an undue emphasis on the creative or intentional dimension of human activity and which as a result marginalize the effects of structures, in particular the way human beings are both immersed in and constrained by the way society is constructed.

For Archer (1988, 1995), a persistent critic of Giddens, *downward conflation* refers to the first of our positions, where "structure and agency are conflated because action is treated as fundamentally epiphenomenal" (Archer, 1990: 81), and thus agency becomes a pale shadow in discussions of social theory. The second position comprises, for Archer, a case of *upward conflation*, and this is where, representing the exact opposite, "structure is held to be the creation of agency" (Archer, 1990: 84). She further suggests, for example, that "the neo-phenomenological school asserts the primacy of agency by reducing the structural context of action to a series of inter-subjectively negotiated constructs" (Archer, 1990, 84). For her, both these positions are flawed. She does, however, suggest two other positions: the first of these is what she calls *central conflation*, popularized by Giddens (1984) as a theory of structuration; the second is a morphogenetic/morphostatic framework, which has the virtue for her of avoiding some of the problems implicit in upward, downward, and central conflation.

For the time being we need to note, as Giddens does, that rejecting both oversocialized and overindividualized perspectives is central to any proper development of social theory and furthermore to the adoption of a coherent methodological stance. The procedures and methods of educational and social research cannot afford to ignore these insights and therefore have to take account of a properly argued view of both agency and structure and the relationship between them. This position, then, immediately distances itself from more pragmatic versions of educational and social research propounded by Bryman (1988) among others. For Bryman (1988) no necessary linkage has been established between epistemology and methodology; that is, neither an actual nor a logical connection has been convincingly shown to exist. However, with regards to the first point, it is possible to suggest that what researchers have done in the past cannot be a guide as to what they will do or should do in the future. In relation to the second point, Giddens suggests that there is a logical relationship between epistemology and methodology, and indeed between epistemology and ontology. How we understand these important relationships is a crucial determining factor in the methods and procedures we adopt as we seek to understand social practices. An oversocialized view of the relationship condemns us to the adoption of methods which fail to capture the intentional dimension of human agency in the production and

reproduction of social institutions. Likewise, too great an emphasis on agency may be reflected in the adoption of methods which signally fail to capture the institutionalized nature of social life.

The most potent of the theories which Archer calls central conflation then is structuration theory. For Giddens (1984: 2), "The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time." However, in his desire not to reify these social practices, he is at pains to reconfirm his essential thesis: structural properties exist, and then only fleetingly, in their insubstantiation by social actors as they carry on their daily routinized activities. Structural properties therefore have a virtual existence which again has implications for how they can be known. Though Giddens is prepared to accept that human agents may have acquired a store of tacit knowledge which they are unable to articulate in the course of an interview, for example, and that they may be unaware of many of the structural features which define the contexts within which they act, and even that they may be motivated by unconscious forces which are at odds with their professed reasons for action, '*all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them*' (ibid: 9, my italics). Structural properties therefore cannot be understood or analyzed outside of the reasons social actors have for their actions.

The subject matter of empirical enquiry, its ontology, as a result, avoids any form of reification and at the same time places individuals and collectivities of individuals as central to the production and reproduction of social life. For Giddens, the persistent patterning of social life that he and others have observed occurs because of the routinized nature of social life—social actors are much more likely to make choices which reproduce existing structural properties than make choices which lead to limited or fundamental changes in those structural properties. However, even in this case, the reproductive activity does not go behind the backs of social actors, but is a consequence of their active participation in the process.

There are also methodological implications of the framework developed above. Giddens (ibid.) elucidates four levels of social research. The first is the hermeneutic elucidation of the frame of meaning of the social actor(s) involved. The second is the investigation of context and the form of practical consciousness. The third is the identification of the bounds of knowledgeability and the fourth is the specification of institutional orders. His argument is that quantitative researchers either pay insufficient attention to the first or collect data about it in the wrong order or ignore

it altogether. What this schema also implies is that a purely phenomenological perspective is inadequate. This is so for four reasons: first, social actors operate in unacknowledged conditions, that is, societal structures which position the social actor; second, there are unintended consequences of his/her actions; third, social actors operate through tacit knowledge which is hidden by virtue of what it is, or at least is not articulated during the formation of explanations of action; fourth, the social actor may be influenced by unconscious motivation. What this points to is the inevitable objectification involved in social research (that is, the going beyond the purely phenomenological perspective) (cf. Bhaskar 1989). However, as Giddens argues, this going beyond, in order for the explanation to be valid, has to involve an understanding of the perspectives of social actors and the implication of this is that methods have to be used which do not distort those meanings. There is always an ethnographic moment in social research and this cannot legitimately be written out by quantitative researchers.

Giddens's theory of structuration therefore is composed of four inter-related propositions (Clark, 1990). The first of these is that social theory needs to focus on social practices, and not on individual action (for example, methodological individualism) or social determinism (for example, structural functionalism or neo-marxism). The second proposition is that human beings are knowledgeable agents with powers to make a difference. Furthermore, they have the capacity to monitor their own actions and thus change the practical setting of action. The third of these propositions suggests that these social practices are ordered across space and time. Social actors draw on these structural properties, but are never absolutely constrained by them. Finally, what follows from this is the fourth of his propositions, which is that structure is both the medium and the outcome of human interaction and thus human agency is responsible for both the production and the reproduction of society.

For Archer, one of Giddens's principal critics, structuration theory provides a partial and misguided view of social reproduction and systemic change. She rejects his approach because "it fails to specify when there will be *more* voluntarism or *more* determinism" (Archer, 1990: 77, my italics). She argues that structuration theory embraces two images, both of which she wants to reject: the hyperactivity of agency and "the rigid coherence of structural properties associated with the essential recursiveness of social life" (Archer, 1990, 77). The first of these follows from Giddens's desire to avoid reification of structural properties, in that structures are deemed to have only a virtual existence. Thus rules and resources only have substance in their instantiation by human agents. Even in relation to

the essentially recursive nature of society, this is only achieved through the active collaboration of agents and groups of agents. Though Giddens denies that he is offering an idealist perspective, the realism of his viewpoint rests on the notion that human beings are actively engaged in the continual process of making and remaking society. It does not rest on the existence of mechanisms in society which may or may not be activated by human agency.

This criticism of structuration theory, that is, its hyperactivity and rigidity at one and the same time, leads us inevitably to the second criticism which has been made, and this refers to the weak argument he makes for realism. It is weak not because it is inadequately argued for, but because its effect is to discount the existence of real structural properties. Critical or transcendental realists (cf. Bhaskar, 1979) make a number of conceptual moves which give substance to a real world. The first of these moves is to distinguish between the epistemological and the ontological realms; that is between the realms of knowing and being. Indeed, the conflation of the two leads to theorists being guilty of the ontic fallacy. The constant conjunction of events which we can observe are merely the appearance of reality. What they do is reflect real mechanisms which can operate causally, but do not make themselves known in any immediate sense. For Bhaskar, social reality consists of three domains or levels: the real, the actual, and the empirical. The first of these, the real, comprises those mechanisms, powers of which drive actual events (his second domain) which produce actual experiences at the empirical level. These events are real whether they are observed or not. However, they may be and if they are they operate within the empirical domain. A theory is realist, therefore, if it accepts that: first, something exists whether it is known or not; and furthermore it may still be real without appearing so; second, all claims to knowledge are fallible and dependent on current ways of understanding developed by communities of knowers; third, all claims to knowledge imply a going beyond mere appearance and these underlying mechanisms may endure longer than their appearances and make them possible, indeed, generate them; and fourth, reality may actually be counterphenomenal; in other words, knowledge of real structures certainly will go beyond appearances, but in addition may actually contradict appearances. This stronger realist argument is an antidote to the idealistic or weak realist arguments posed by Giddens above.

A third criticism of structuration theory is made by Archer, when she argues that "Giddens commits himself to an enormous coherence of the structural properties, such that actors' inescapable use of them embroils everyone in the stable reproduction of social systems" (Archer, 1990: 81). The key to

Archer's critique is that Giddens's tight binding of structure and agency to avoid structural reification does not allow a judgment to be made about particular structures working on human beings in particular ways, that is, some are more binding than others, and some act in a more coercive way, and that at different time points they may act coercively in different ways and to different degrees. Indeed, depending on circumstances and context, they may not coerce at all. Conversely, the degree of enablement in structural properties can be determined only by empirical investigation of particular activities embedded in particular contexts. As soon as we attempt to specify what that degree of coercion or enablement might be in the form of a theoretical model, we are immediately engaged in a process of reification which as a result fails adequately to describe what actually happened.

A fourth criticism centers on his inadequate conception of the relationship between structure and agency in terms of time (cf. Archer, 1988). Because structure, for Giddens, is ever present in human interaction, and because this implies that the whole infrastructure is implicated in every human act, it is not possible to understand structure as in any way separate from the exercise of agency. Morphogenetic theory suggests otherwise. Here, structure is analyzed separately from decisions made by individuals and groups of individuals and precedes it. The morphogenetic perspective is therefore sequential with endless cycles of structural conditioning/social interaction/structural elaboration taking place. The danger of moving toward this dualistic framework is that, as Outhwaite (1990) notes, structure once again becomes reified, and human agency simply becomes a faint reflection of it. However, by stressing that many agential decisions have no effect on structural properties and by suggesting that human beings have the capacity to act outside of the compelling demands of structural properties, it is possible to understand a morphogenetic perspective as dualistic but not reificatory.

A fifth area of concern focuses on the methodological implications of structuration theory. Here, the problem is not so much one of inadequacy but of neglect. Giddens (1984) repeatedly stresses that his theory cannot provide a blueprint or set of procedures for the conduct of empirical research. Rather, he suggests that structuration theory can only act as a methodological guide to the specification of appropriate methods for empirical enquiry. However, this acts to weaken the links which he has sought to affirm between methods, strategies, epistemology, and ontology.

In order to pay full attention to these important relationships, social researchers, bearing in mind the criticisms of structuration outlined above, need to examine the following eight propositions (Scott, 2000). The first of these conjoins the researcher to focus on relations or structural prop-

erties at each time point. These may or may not have been activated in the particular circumstances under investigation, but provide access to understanding the essential contexts of action. Second, the researcher needs to attend to the interpretations of those relations by relevant social actors. This is because they provide access to those structural properties which position social actors. Third, they need to attend to relations between different structures at each time point. Instead of assuming that a structural property always operates to effect human actions and interactions at every time point, it is important to understand when, where, and how these different structures are influential; and furthermore, what the precise relationship is between them at specific moments and places during these interactions. Fourth, they need to understand how those relations between different structures at each time point are perceived by the relevant social actors. This is a necessary part of the research process because it provides access for the researcher to those real relations referred to above, and because social actors' perceptions of those relations constitute a part of them. Fifth, the researcher needs to take account of the intentions of social actors in the research setting. Actors may also be motivated by unconscious forces which compel them to behave in certain ways and which may conflict with the accounts they give of their reasons for action. By examining the intentions of social actors, it is possible to make a judgment about how much they know and how this impacts on decisions they make. They also need to take account of the unintended consequences of actions. Some activities may be designed, and thus have a degree of intention behind them, which has the effect of changing structural properties; others less so. But, more important, all actions have unintended consequences to some degree. This is an important dimension to the research enterprise. The seventh proposition is that they need to address the subsequent effects of those intended and unintended actions on structural properties. After each interaction, however limited, it is important to examine social actors' effects on those structures which provide the contexts for future exchanges and interactions. Finally, the empirical researcher needs to make an assessment of the degree of structural influence and the degree of agential freedom for each human interaction. This is the crux of the matter because it allows the researcher to understand the complex relationship between agency and structure at each time point.

Structuration theory provides a partial solution to the central problem of social theory and to the methodological implications of developing an appropriate understanding of the relationship between structure and agency. It is being suggested here that Giddens's solution fails to account for the complexities of this relationship, and, in the end, fails to offer a way forward

for empirical researchers. However, his focus on the structure/agency relationship and his acute understanding of the status of descriptions researchers and theorists may make about society have provided in the last part of the twentieth century a resurgence of interest in this much neglected area of theory.

This chapter has focused on his theory of structuration, and as a result neglected most of his work in other fields. More recently he has addressed issues dealing with time and space (Giddens, 1985a), the nation-state (Giddens, 1985b), modernity (Giddens, 1990), self-identity (Giddens, 1991), intimacy (Giddens, 1992), risk (Giddens, 2000c), globalization (Giddens, 2000c) and the third way (Giddens, 1995, 2000a, 2000b). This neglect has been necessary because to do justice to this most prolific of writers would require more space than is allowed for here. However, his general focus on those aspects of twentieth-century human relations has commanded universal attention, not least because he has always sought to reinvigorate our understanding of human action by preserving agency in the face of functionalist, reductionist, determinist, structuralist, and indeed, postmodernist attempts to reduce it to a weak carrier of structural properties.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Archer, M. 1982. "Morphogenesis versus Structuration." *British Journal of Sociology* 33 (4): 455–83.
- . 1988. *Culture and Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1990. "Human Agency and Social Structure: A Critique of Giddens." In J. Clark, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil, *Anthony Giddens: Consensus and Controversy*. London: Falmer Press.
- . 1995. *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bhaskar, R. 1979. *Possibility of Naturalism*. London: Harvester Wheatcheaf.
- . 1989. *Reclaiming Reality*. London: Verso.
- Bryman, A. 1988. *Quality and Quantity in Social Research*. London: Unwin and Hyman.
- Clark, J. 1990. "Anthony Giddens, Sociology and Modern Social Theory." In J. Clark, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil, *Anthony Giddens: Consensus and Controversy*. London: Falmer Press.
- Giddens, A., ed. 1971a. *The Sociology of Suicide*. London: Cass.
- Giddens, A. 1971b. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A., trans. 1972a. *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Giddens, A. 1972b. *Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber*. London: Macmillan; New York: Pall Mall.
- . 1973. *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*. London: Hutchinson; revised edition, New York: Harper and Row.
- Giddens, A., and P. Stanworth, eds. 1974. *Elites and Power in British Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. 1976. *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies*. London: Hutchinson; New York: Harper and Row.
- . 1977a. *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, London: Hutchinson; New York: Basic Books.
- . 1977b. 'Introduction' to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- . 1978. *Durkheim*. London: Fontana; New York: Penguin.
- . 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London: Macmillan; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1981. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Vol.1: *Power, Property and the State*. London: Macmillan; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A., and D. Held, eds. 1982a. *Classes, Power and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*. London: Macmillan; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. 1982b. *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1982c. *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction*. London: Macmillan; New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich.
- . 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1985a. "Time, Space and Regionalisation." In D. Gregory and J. Urry, eds., *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*. London: Macmillan.
- . 1985b. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Vol. 2: *The Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1985c. "Jurgen Habermas." In Q. Skinner, ed. *The Return of Grand Theory in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A., ed. 1986. *Durkheim on Politics and the State*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A., and J. Turner, eds. 1987a. *Social Theory Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. 1987b. *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. 1987c. *Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press; revised U.S. edition, New York: Norton.
- Giddens, A. 1990a. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- . 1990b. "R. K. Merton on Structural Analysis." In J. Clark, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil, eds., *Robert Merton: Consensus and Controversy*. Brighton: Falmer Press.

- . 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 1992a. *The Transformation of Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A., ed. 1992b. *Human Societies: An Introductory Reader in Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. 1995. *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 1996. *In Defence of Sociology: Essays, Interpretations and Rejoinders*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 2000a. *Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- . 2000b. *The Third Way and Its Critics*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- . 2000c. *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Outhwaite, W. 1990. "Agency and Structure." In J. Clark, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil, *Anthony Giddens: Consensus and Controversy*. London: Falmer Press.
- Scott, D. 2000. *Realism and Educational Research: New Perspectives and Possibilities*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Cyberfeminism with a Difference

Rosi Braidotti

In the city now there are loose components, accelerated particles, something has come loose, something is wriggling, lassoing, spinning towards the edge of its groove. Something must give and it isn't safe. You ought to be careful. Because safety has left our lives.

—Martin Amis, *Einstein's Monsters*¹

INTRODUCTION: POSTMODERNITY

In this chapter, I will first of all situate the question of *cyber*-bodies in the framework of postmodernity, stressing the paradoxes of embodiment. I will subsequently play a number of variations on the theme of cyber-feminism, highlighting the issue of sexual difference throughout. Contrary to jargon-ridden usages of the term, I take postmodernity to signify the specific historical situation of postindustrial societies after the decline of modernist hopes and tropes. Symptomatic of these changes is urban space, especially in the inner city, which has been cleaned up and refigured through postindustrial metal and plexiglass buildings, but it is only a veneer that covers up the putrefaction of the industrial space, marking the death of the modernist dream of urban civil society.

This is primarily but not exclusively a Western world problem. The distinct feature of postmodernity is in fact the transnational nature of its economy in the age of the decline of the nation-state. It is about ethnic mixity through the flow of world migration: an infinite process of hybridization at a time of increasing racism and xenophobia in the West.²

Postmodernity is also about an enormous push toward the "third-worldification" of the "first" world, with continuing exploitation of the "third" world. It is about the decline of what was known as "the second world," the communist block, and the recurrence of a process of 'balkanisation' of the whole Eastern European block. It is also about the decline of the legal economy and the rise of crime and illegality as a factor. This is what Deleuze and Guattari call 'capital as cocaine.' It proves the extent to which late capitalism has no teleological purpose, no definite direction, nothing except the brutality of self-perpetuation.

Last, but not least, postmodernity is about a new and perversely fruitful alliance between technology and culture. Technology has evolved from the Panoptical device that Foucault analyzed in terms of surveillance and control to a far more complex apparatus, which Haraway describes in terms of "the informatics of domination." Approaching the issue of technology in postmodernity consequently requires a shift of perspective. Far from appearing antithetical to the human organism and set of values, the technological factor must be seen as coextensive with and intermingled with the human. This mutual imbrication makes it necessary to speak of technology as a material and symbolic apparatus, that is, a semiotic and social agent among others.

This shift of perspective, which I have analyzed elsewhere³ as a move away from technophobia, toward a more technophilic approach, also redefines the terms of the relationships between technology and art. If in a conventional humanistic framework the two may appear as opposites, in postmodernity, they are much more interconnected.

In all fields, but especially in information technology, the strict separation between the technical and the creative has in fact been made redundant by digital images and the skills required by computer-aided design. The new alliance between the previously segregated domains of the technical and the artistic marks a contemporary version of the posthumanistic reconstruction of a technoculture whose aesthetics is equal to its technological sophistication.

All this to say that I wish to take my distance equally from, on the one hand the euphoria of mainstream postmodernists who seize advanced technology and especially *cyber-space* as the possibility for multiple and polymorphous reembodiments; and on the other hand, from the many prophets of doom who mourn the decline of classical humanism. I see postmodernity instead as the threshold of new and important relocations for cultural practice. One of the most significant preconditions for these relocations is relinquishing both the phantasy of multiple reembodiments and the fatal attraction of nostalgia.⁴ The nostalgic longing for an allegedly better past is a hasty and unintelligent response to the challenges of our age. It is not only cul-

turally ineffective—insofar as it relates to the conditions of its own historicity by negating them; it is also a short-cut through their complexity. I find that there is something deeply amoral and quite desperate in the way in which postindustrial societies rush headlong toward a hasty solution to their contradictions. This flight into nostalgia has the immediate effect of neglecting by sheer denial the transition from a humanistic to a posthuman world. That this basic self-deception be compensated by a wave of longing for saviors of all brands and formats is not surprising.

In this generalized climate of denial and neglect of the terminal crisis of classical humanism, I would like to suggest that we need to turn to ‘minor’ literary genres, such as *science fiction* and more specifically *cyber-punk*, in order to find non-nostalgic solutions to the contradictions of our times.

Whereas mainstream culture refuses to mourn the loss of humanistic certainties, “minor” cultural productions foreground the crisis and highlight the potential it offers for creative solutions. As opposed to the amorality of denial, “minor” cultural genres cultivate an ethics of lucid self-awareness. Some of the most moral beings left in Western postmodernity are the science-fiction writers who take the time to linger on the death of the humanist ideal of “Mann,” thus inscribing this loss—and the ontological insecurity it entails—at the (dead) heart of contemporary cultural concerns. By taking the time to symbolize the crisis of humanism, these creative spirits, following Nietzsche, push the crisis to its innermost resolution. In so doing, they not only inscribe death at the top of the postmodern cultural agenda but they also strip the veneer of nostalgia that covers up the inadequacies of the present cultural (dis)order.

In the rest of this chapter, I would like to suggest that first and foremost among these iconoclastic readers of the contemporary crisis are feminist cultural and media activists such as the riot girls and other ‘cyber feminists’ who are devoted to the politics of parody or parodic repetition. Some of these creative minds are prone to theory, others—feminist science-fiction writers and other ‘fabulators’⁵ like Angela Carter—choose the fictional mode. While irony remains a major stylistic device, of great significance are also contemporary multimedia electronic artists of the non-nostalgic kind like Jenny Holzer, Laurie Anderson, and Cindy Sherman. They are the ideal travel companions in postmodernity.

POSTHUMAN BODIES

It’s a good thing I was born a woman, or I’d have been a drag queen.

—Dolly Parton

The quote from that great simulator, Dolly Parton, sets the mood for the rest of this section, in which I will offer a survey of some of the sociopolitical representations of the cyber-body phenomenon from a feminist angle.

Let us imagine a postmodern tryptic for a moment: Dolly Parton in all her simulated Southern Belle outlook. On her right hand that masterpiece of silicon reconstruction that is Elizabeth Taylor, with Peter Pan look-alike Michael Jackson whimpering at her side. On Dolly's left, hyperreal fitness fetishist Jane Fonda, well established in her post-Barbarella phase as a major dynamo in Ted Turner's planetary cathodic embrace.

There you have the Pantheon of postmodern femininity, live on CNN at any time, any place, from Hong Kong to Sarajevo, yours at the push of a button. Interactivity is another name for shopping, as Christine Tamblin⁶ put it, and hyperreal gender identity is what it sells.

These three icons have some features in common: first, they inhabit a posthuman body, that is to say an artificially reconstructed body.⁷ The body in question here is far from a biological essence: it is a crossroad of intensive forces; it is a surface of inscriptions of social codes. Ever since the efforts by the poststructuralist generation to rethink a nonessentialized embodied self, we should all have grown accustomed to the loss of ontological security that accompanies the decline of the naturalistic paradigm. As Francis Barker puts it,⁸ the disappearance of the body is the apex of the historical process of its denaturalization. The problem that lingers on is how to readjust our politics to this shift.

I would like to suggest as a consequence that it is more adequate to speak of our body in terms of embodiment, that is to say of multiple bodies or sets of embodied positions. Embodiment means that we are situated subjects, capable of performing sets of (inter)actions which are discontinuous in space and time. Embodied subjectivity is thus a paradox that rests simultaneously on the historical decline of mind/body distinctions and the proliferation of discourses about the body. Foucault reformulates this in terms of the paradox of simultaneous disappearance and overexposure of the body. Though technology makes the paradox manifest and in some ways exemplifies it perfectly, it cannot be argued that it is responsible for such a shift in paradigm.

In spite of the dangers of nostalgia, mentioned above, there is still hope: we can still hang on to Nietzsche's crazed insight that God is finally dead and the stench of his rotting corpse is filling the cosmos. The death of God has been long in coming and it has joined a domino effect, which has brought down a number of familiar notions. The security about the

categorical distinction between mind and body; the safe belief in the role and function of the nation-state; the family; masculine authority; the eternal feminine and compulsory heterosexuality. These metaphysically founded certainties have floundered and made room for something more complex, more playful, and infinitely more disturbing.

Speaking as a woman, that is to say a subject emerging from a history of oppression and exclusion, I would say that this crisis of conventional values is rather a positive thing. The metaphysical condition in fact had entailed an institutionalized vision of femininity which has burdened my gender for centuries. The crisis of modernity is, for feminists, not a melancholy plunge into loss and decline, but rather the joyful opening up of new possibilities. Thus, the hyperreality of the posthuman predicament so sublimely represented by Parton, Taylor, and Fonda, does not wipe out politics or the need for political resistance: it just makes it more necessary than ever to work toward a radical redefinition of political action. Nothing could be further from a postmodern ethics than Dostoyevsky's overquoted and profoundly mistaken statement that, if God is dead, anything goes. The challenge here is rather how to combine the recognition of postmodern embodiment with resistance to relativism and a free fall into cynicism.

Second, the three cyborg goddesses mentioned above are immensely rich because they are media stars. Capital in these postindustrial times is an immaterial flow of cash that travels as pure data in cyber-space till it lands in (some of) our bank accounts. Moreover, capital harps on and trades in body fluids: the cheap sweat and blood of the disposable workforce throughout the third world; but also, the wetness of desire of first world consumers as they commodify their existence into oversaturated stupor. Hyperreality does not wipe out class relations: it just intensifies them.⁹ Postmodernity rests on the paradox of simultaneous commodification and conformism of cultures, while intensifying disparities among them, as well as structural inequalities.

An important aspect of this situation is the omnipotence of the visual media. Our era has turned visualization into the ultimate form of control; in the hands of the clarity fetishists who have turned CNN into a verb: "I've been CNN-ed today, haven't you?" This marks not only the final stage in the commodification of the scopic, but also the triumph of vision over all the other senses.¹⁰

This is of special concern from a feminist perspective because it tends to reinstate a hierarchy of bodily perception which overprivileges vision over other senses, especially touch and sound. The primacy of vision has been challenged by feminist theories. In the light of the feminist work

proposed by Luce Irigaray and Kaja Silverman, the idea has emerged to explore the potentiality of hearing and audio material as a way out of the tyranny of the gaze. Donna Haraway has inspiring things to say about the logocentric hold of disembodied vision, which is best exemplified by the satellite/eye in the sky. She opposes to it an embodied and therefore accountable redefinition of the act of seeing as a form of connection to the object of vision, which she defines in terms of 'passionate detachment.' If you look across the board of contemporary electronic art, especially in the field of virtual reality, you will find many women artists, like Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf, who apply the technology to challenge the in-built assumption of visual superiority which it carries.

Third, the three icons I have chosen to symbolize postmodern bodies are all white, especially and paradoxically Michael Jackson. In his perverse wit, hyperreal con artist Jeff Koons (ex-husband of the posthuman Italian porno star Cicciolina) depicted Jackson in a ceramic piece, as a lily-white god holding a monkey in his arms. With great panache, Koons announced that this was a tribute to Michael Jackson's pursuit of the perfectibility of his body. The many cosmetic surgery operations he has undergone testifies to Jackson's willful sculpting and crafting of the self. In the posthuman worldview, deliberate attempts to pursue perfection are seen as a complement to evolution, bringing the embodied self to a higher stage of accomplishment. Whiteness being, in Koons's sublime simplicity, the undisputed and utterly final standards of beauty, Jackson's superstardom could be depicted only in white. Hyperreality does not wipe out racism: it intensifies it and it brings it to implosion. One related aspect of the racialization of posthuman bodies concerns the ethnic-specific values it conveys. Many have questioned the extent to which we are all being recolonized by an American and more specifically a Californian 'body-beautiful' ideology. Insofar as U.S. corporations own the technology, they leave their cultural imprints upon the contemporary imaginary. This leaves little room to any other cultural alternatives. Thus, the three emblems of postmodern femininity on whose discursive bodies I am writing this could only be American.

THE POLITICS OF PARODY

Confronted with this situation, that is to say with culturally enforced icons of white, economically dominant, heterosexual hyperfemininity—which simultaneously reinstate huge power differentials while denying them—what is to be done?

The first thing a feminist critic can do is to acknowledge the aporias and the aphasias of theoretical frameworks and look with hope in the direction of (women) artists. There is no question that the creative spirits have a head start over the masters of metadiscourse, even and especially of deconstructive metadiscourse. This is a very sobering prospect: after years of poststructuralist theoretical arrogance, philosophy lags behind art and fiction in the difficult struggle to keep up with today's world. Maybe the time has come for us to moderate the theoretical voice within us and to attempt to deal with our historical situation differently. Feminist have been prompt in picking up the challenge of finding political and intellectual answers to this theoretical crisis. It has largely taken the form of a 'linguistic turn,' that is, a shift toward more imaginative styles. Evidence of this is the emphasis feminist theory is placing on the need for new 'figurations,' as Donna Haraway puts it, or 'fabulations,' to quote Marleen Barr, to express the alternative forms of female subjectivity developed within feminism, as well as the ongoing struggle with language to produce affirmative representations of women.

But nowhere is the feminist challenge more evident than in the field of artistic practice. For instance, the ironical force, the hardly suppressed violence and the vitriolic wit of feminist groups like the Guerrilla or the Riot Girls are an important aspect of the contemporary relocation of culture and the struggle over representation. I would define their position in terms of the politics of the parody. The riot girls want to argue that there is a war going on and women are not pacifists, we are the guerrilla girls, the riot girls, the bad girls. We want to put up some active resistance, but we also want to have fun and we want to do it our way. The ever increasing number of women writing their own science fiction, cyberpunk, film scripts, 'zines,' rap and rock music, and the likes testifies to this new mode.

There is definitely a touch of violence in the mode exposed by the riot and guerrilla girls: a sort of raw directness that clashes with the syncopated tones of standard art criticism. This forceful style is a response to hostile environmental and social forces. It also expresses a reliance on collective bonding through rituals and ritualized actions, which far from dissolving the individual into the group, simply accentuate her unrepentant singularity. I find a powerful evocation of this singular yet collectively shared position in the raucous, demonic beat of Kathy Acker's *In Memoriam to Identity*,¹¹ in her flair for multiple becomings, her joy in the reversibility of situations and people—her border-line capacity to impersonate, mimic, and cut across an infinity of 'others.'

As many feminist theorists have pointed out, the practice of parody, which I also call 'the philosophy as if,' with its ritualized repetitions,

needs to be grounded in order to be politically effective. Postmodern feminist knowledge claims are grounded in life experiences and consequently mark radical forms of reembodiment. But they also need to be dynamic—or nomadic—and allow for shifts of location and multiplicity.

The practice of 'as if' can also degenerate into the mode of *fetishistic representation*. This consists in simultaneously recognizing and denying certain attributes or experiences. In male-stream postmodern thought,¹² fetishistic disavowal seems to mark most discussions of sexual difference.¹³ I see feminist theory as a corrective to this trend. The feminist 'philosophy of as if' is not a form of disavowal, but rather the affirmation of a subject that is both nonessentialized, that is to say, no longer grounded in the idea of human or feminine 'nature,' but she is nonetheless capable of ethic and moral agency. As Judith Butler lucidly warns us, the force of the parodic mode consists precisely in turning the practice of repetitions into a politically empowering position.

What I find empowering in the theoretical and political practice of 'as if' is its potential for opening up, through successive repetitions and mimetic strategies, spaces where forms of feminist agency can be engendered. In other words, parody can be politically empowering on the condition of being sustained by a critical consciousness that aims at the subversion of dominant codes. Thus, I have argued¹⁴ that Irigaray's strategy of '*mimesis*' is politically empowering because it addresses simultaneously issues of identity, identifications, and political subjectivity. The ironical mode is an orchestrated form of provocation and, as such, it marks a sort of symbolic violence and the riot girls are unsurpassed masters of it.

I am sick and tired of *Virtual Reality* technology and cyber space being toys for the boys. I am mildly amused and tolerably bored with the sight of recycled aging hippies who, having failed to shake off their narcotic habits from the 60's, simply resolved to transpose them to 'video or computer drugs.' This is only a displacement of the pursuit of one solipsistic pleasure onto another. I, as one of the riot girls, of the bad girls, want my own imaginary, my own projected self; I want to design the world in my own glorious image. It is time for the unholy marriage of Nietzsche's Ariadne with Dionysian forces; it's time for the female death-wish to express itself by setting up workable networks of translation for female desire into socially negotiable forms of behaviour. It is time for history and the unconscious to strike a new deal.

The metaphor of war is invading our cultural and social imaginary, from rapmusic to cyber space. Let us take the example of popular music. I would start with the realization of the decline of rock'n roll as a subversive politi-

cal force, as evidenced by two parallel phenomena: one is the second coming of what I call 'geriatrics rock,' that is to say the never ending 'returns' of the Rolling Stones and other 'cock rock' relics from the 60's.¹⁵ Will they ever retire? The second, far more problematic effect is the military use to which rock'n roll has been put by the American army. Started in Vietnam, the use of rock music as an assault weapon was perfected in the attack on Noriega in Panama City.¹⁶

Now rap has taken over and masculinist war-mongering 'gangsta rap' images have taken over rap. Listen to the women's rap band Salt'n Pepper- however and you will have to reconsider the inevitable connection between subversive music and aggressive masculinity. Yes, the girls are getting mad; we want our cyber dreams, we want our own shared hallucinations. You may keep your blood and gore, what's at stake for us is how to grab cyber-space so as to exit the old, decayed, seduced, abducted and abandoned corpse of phallo-logocentric patriarchy; the death squads of the phallus, the geriatric, money-minded, silicon-inflated body of militant phallocracy and its annexed and indexed feminine other.' The riot girls know that they can do better than this.

Creative writing in the fictional mode is another important example of the politics of parody. Writing in postmodernity is not only a process of constant translation but also of successive adaptations to different cultural realities. This point is raised strongly by the Vietnamese Californian writer and filmmaker Trinh Minh Ha who, following Deleuze's rereading of Nietzschean Dionysian forces, speaks of: 'writing in intensity.' This indicates that writing marks an intransitive sort of becoming, that is, the kind of becoming that intensifies one's level of joyful creativity and pleasure.

Laurie Anderson's performance-art is an interesting example of intransitive becoming through an effective parodic style. Unsurpassed master in the 'as-if' mode of creative expression,¹⁷ Laurie Anderson proposes a conceptual universe where situations and people are always reversible. This allows Anderson to depict a high-tech kind of continuum between different levels of experience. In turn this makes for her extraordinary talent to evoke complexity in a minimalist mode.

Interventions in public spaces also form an important element of this kind of artistic sensibility. For instance, Barbara Krueger's large billboards are strategically set up in huge intersections at the center of the metropolises of the Western world. They announce 'We don't need another hero' with breathtaking force.¹⁸ In these days of postindustrial decay of the urban space, artists like Krueger manage to return to the artwork the monumental value that used to be its prerogative in the past, while also

preserving its politically committed nature. Similarly, Jenny Holzer's electronic panels flash right across the advertisement-infested skyline of our cities and relay very politicized and consciousness-raising messages: 'Money creates taste,' 'Property created crime,' 'Torture is barbaric,' and so forth.¹⁹ Holzer also uses the airport spaces, especially the information panels of luggage carrousel, to transmit her staggering messages, such as: 'Lack of charisma can be fatal' and ironical ones, such as; 'If you had behaved nicely, the communists wouldn't exist' or: 'What country should you adopt if you hate poor people?'

Krueger and Holzer are perfect examples of postmodern, insightful, and non-nostalgic appropriations of urban, public spaces for creative and political purposes. In their hands, the city as an area of transit and passage becomes a text, a signifying space, heavily marked by signs and boards indicating a multitude of possible directions, to which the artist adds her own, unexpected, and disruptive one. The guerrilla girls have been doing this with supreme talent for years.

The public spaces as sites of creativity therefore highlight a paradox: they are both loaded with signification and profoundly anonymous; they are spaces of detached transition, but also venues of inspiration, of visionary insight, of great release of creativity. Brian Eno's musical experiment with 'Music for airports' makes the same point very strongly: it is a creative appropriation of the dead heart of the slightly hallucinating zones that are the public places.

THE POWER OF IRONY

One of the forms taken by the feminist cultural practice of 'as if' is irony. Irony is a systematically applied dose of de-bunking; an endless teasing; a healthy deflation of overheated rhetoric. A possible response to the generalized nostalgia of mainstream culture cannot be summarized, it can only be performed:

No spectacular fin-de-siècle for us contemporary statistical units. No theatrical come back in broad daylight. We are the anti-Lazarus generation of the post-Christian era. No cry of alarm, no tears. The age of tragic aesthetic arrest has been replaced by the principles of the photocopy—the eternal absent-minded reproduction of the Sarne. Walter Benjamin and Nietzsche with I.B.M. and Rank-Xerox.

Sitting in the post-Becket gloom I lost the last fragment of wholeness. I had the impulse to wait, wait for the accelerated particles to come. Nothing very tragic, just the steel-cold blue light of reason reducing us to in-

significance. Life a mere reaching-out for non-being, a living ab-negation. Love is dead in metropolis. My voice is dry and fading already. My skin getting cracked and rougher at each clicking of the digital mastermind. The Kafkaesque plot is working its way through my genetic apparatus. I'll soon be a gigantic insect and I shall die after my next attempt at copulation.

This is the way the world will end, my post-mortem lover, not with a bang but with the whimpering buzzing sound of insects crawling upon a wall. The long-legged spiders of my discontent, my heart a cockroach's delight. S(t)imulating, dissimulation. They failed to keep the margin of negotiation open, stayed right on target till they pushed us over the edge, drawing the penphery to the centre and we were blasted off-balance. Aphasic. So beautiful, ever so beautiful it made me long for the nine teenth century, before god died. It must have been nice to say: "God, it is true!" and not feel the probabilities pulling us apart.

Not that I mind the loss of the classical narrative. Lyotard tells all about modernity and the crisis of legitimation. I don't mind not having a single shred of discursive coherence to rest upon. Conceptually, it is quite a stimulating position, rich with epistemological potential, and yet I know: I have already paid for this. Deep in the heart of the gaping hole of my heart I mourn the loss of metaphysical grandeur, I mourn the death of love divine. I miss the sublime, as we plunge headlong into the ridiculous.

Yes, the world will end, my post-Zarathustra friend. It will go out like a brief candle. Dying is an art and one must have a flair for it. And you do it exceptionally well, you do it so it feels like hell, you do it so it feels real. We're only killing time. I hope you make your killing in time.

Unconditional surrender, o Hiroshima mon amour, my own private Enola Gay. What immortal eye drew your breath-taking dissymetry? What injection of post-heideggerian angst, what fatal nuclear leak traumatized you into such a state of emotional incompetence? When did you turn into such an autistic machine, a collection of non-integrated circuits? Where did your death-wish go right, my posthuman travel companion?

You are a wire electrifying, when bared. Hardly a self, an entity, an individual in any old humanistic sense of the term. Heraclitus revisited with Deleuze, you embody the decapitated modern subject. You declared yourself pure becoming, but you were actually a rnerer reflector, a moving synthetic image—one-dimensional and yet multi-functional.

Is this how one should read Deleuze's machines *désirantes*? Is this what Lyotard is getting at? And Baudrillard with his hyper-reel and the simulacrum? Are all these just elaborate metaphors for the metabolic bankruptcy we are going through? Of course all this necrophilic discourse makes me nervous and if you had my brains you'd be nervous, too. I am a human, sexed, mortal being of the female kind, endowed with language. Just call me—woman.

FEMINIST VISIONS ON SCIENCE FICTION

The posthuman predicament implies a blurring of gender boundaries. I think this does not always work to the advantage of women, though. Many feminists have turned to both writing and reading science fiction in order to try to assess the impact of the new technological world upon the representation of sexual difference.

All fans know that science fiction has to do with fantasies about the body, especially the reproductive body. Science fiction represents alternative systems of procreation and birth, ranging from the rather childlike image of babies born out of cauliflowers to monstrous births through unmentionable orifices. This gives rise to what Barbara Creed defines as the syndrome of the monstrous feminine.²⁰

Thus, it is no coincidence that in *Alien*, a classic of this genre, the master computer that controls the spaceship is called 'Mother' and she is vicious, especially to the heroine (Sigourney Weaver). The maternal function in this film is displaced: she reproduces like a monstrous insect by laying eggs inside people's stomachs, through an act of phallic penetration through the mouth. There are also many scenes in the film of ejection of smaller vessels or aircrafts from the mother-dominated, monstrous and hostile spaceship. Mother is an all-powerful generative force, pre-phallic and malignant: she is a nonrepresentable abyss from which all life and death come.

Following feminist critics of science fiction, I want to argue that science-fiction horror films play with fundamental male anxieties and displace it by inventing alternative views of reproduction, thereby manipulating the figure of the female body. Julia Kristeva has argued that the 'horror' part of these films is due to the play with a displaced and fantasized 'maternal' function, as holding simultaneously the key to the origins of life and to death. Just like the Medusa's head, the horrific female can be conquered by being turned into an emblem, that is to say becoming fetishized.²¹

Some of the forms of posthuman procreation that are explored in science/fiction films are: cloning (*The Boys from Brazil*); parthenogenesis (*The Gremlins*). Another topos is the impregnation of woman by aliens, as in the fifties classic *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*, *Village of the Damned*, and psychological dramas like *Rosemary's Baby*. The production of the human as machine is also quite popular; (*Inseminoid*, *The Man Who Folded Himself*); this entails the intercourse woman/machine (as a variation woman/devil) (*Demon Seed*, *Inseminoid*). Actually, Spielberg is the master of male-birth fantasies. The film *Indiana Jones* is the perfect example of this: there is no mother in sight, ever, but God the father is

omnipresent. In the *Back to the Future* series he produced, the teenage boy's fantasy of being at the origins of himself is given full and prolonged exposure.²²

Modleski has pointed out that in contemporary culture, men are definitely flirting with the idea of having babies for themselves. Some of this is relatively naive, and it takes the form of experimenting with new and definitely helpful social forms of new fatherhood.²³ In postmodern times, however, this male anxiety about the missing father must be read alongside the new reproductive technologies. They replace the woman with the technological device—the machine—in a contemporary version of the *Pygmalion myth*, a sort of high-tech *My Fair Lady*.²⁴

If you look at contemporary reconstruction of femininity and masculinity through media culture, you cannot help being struck by its staleness. Take for instance masculinity in the alternative Cameron-Schwarzenegger or Cronenberg modes. Cameron and Cronenberg are the great reconstructors of the posthuman masculine subject. They represent two opposed trends: Cameron takes a deep plunge into what Nancy Hartsock calls 'abstract masculinity' by proposing a hyperreal male body in the Schwarzenegger format. Cronenberg, on the other hand, explodes phallic masculinity into two diverging directions: on the one hand the psychopathic serial killer and, on the other, the hysterical neurosis of the overfeminized male. The latter is also celebrated by the Toronto-based academics Arthur and Marielouise Kroker.

In cyberpunk, the theme of death and the ritual burying of the body is so omnipresent that it overrules the procreative factor. We all know how very male-dominated cyberpunk is, so to argue that it reflects male fantasies and especially the male death wish would be an understatement. Cyberpunk dreams about the dissolution of the body into the Matrix (as in 'mater' or cosmic womb), in what strikes me as a little boy's final climactic return to Big Mama's organic and forever expanding container.

I find such images of the cosmos very sloppy, literally, but also quite essentialistic in their portrayal of the cosmic force of the archaic mother as the all-powerful container of death and life forces. Once again, sexual difference understood as dissymmetry results in different positions on the issue of the archaic mother.

We, the riot girls who have been persecuted, hassled and repressed by Big Mama all our life; we who had to fight mama off our backs and chase her out of the dark recesses of our psyche, we have quite a different story to tell. *Virginia Woolf's* famous injunction that the creative woman needs to kill 'the angel in the house' that inhabits the most ancient layers of her identity

is quite relevant. It is the image of the caring, nurturing, self-sacrificing soft female that stands in the way of self-realization. Women cannot be expected to share easily in the fantasy of a return to the Matrix, if anything, we want out of it and fast.

We, the riot girls want our own dreams of cosmic dissolution, we want our own transcendental dimension. Keep your own matrix dreams: your death wish is not our death wish, so you'd better give us the space and time to develop and express my own wishes, or else we will get really mad. Anger will push us to punish you by deciding to enact, in our real, everyday life, your own worst fantasies of just how obnoxious women can be. As that other great simulator, Bette Midler, put it:

"I'm everything you were afraid your little girl would grow up to be—and your little boy!"

In other words, as a female feminist who has taken her distance from traditional femininity and has empowered new forms of subjectivity, the riot girl knows how to put to good use the politics of parody: she can impersonate femaleness in her extreme and extremely annoying fashion. To avoid such eruptions of female feminist anger, it may be advisable for us to sit down to a good talk in order to negotiate margins of mutual toleration.

THE CYBER IMAGINARY

While this kind of negotiation goes on, the gender gap in the use of computers, in women's access to computer literacy, internet equipment, and other expensive technological apparati, as well as women's participation in programming and in designing the technology will continue to grow wider. Similarly, the gap between first and third worlds in the access to technology will also go on. It is always at times of great technological advance that Western culture reiterates some of its most persistent habits, notably the tendency to create differences and organize them hierarchically.

Thus, while the computer technology seems to promise a world beyond gender differences, the gender gap grows wider. All the talk of a brand new telematic world masks the ever-increasing polarization of resources and means, in which women are the main losers. There is strong indication therefore, that the shifting of conventional boundaries between the sexes and the proliferation of all kinds of differences through the new technologies will not be nearly as liberating as the cyber-artists and internet addicts would want us to believe.

In analyzing the contemporary cyber-imagination, a special point needs to be made about the cultural production surrounding virtual reality technology; this is an advanced brand of computer designed reality, useful in its medical or architectural applications, but very poor from the angle of the imagination, especially if you look at it in terms of gender-roles. Computer-aided design and animation has the potential for great creativity, not only in professional areas such as architecture and medicine but also in mass entertainment, especially videogames. It originates in technology to train air pilots to fly jet fighters. The Gulf War was fought by virtual reality machinery (it still resulted in the usual butchery); of late, the costs involved in producing Virtual Reality equipment have simply decreased, so that people other than NASA are able to afford it.

Feminist researchers in this field have noted the paradoxes and the dangers of contemporary forms of disembodiment, which accompany these new technologies. I am especially struck by the persistence of pornographic, violent, and humiliating images of women that are still circulating through these allegedly 'new' technological products. I worry about designing programs that allow for 'virtual rape and virtual murder.' For example, *The Lawn Mower Man* is one of the commercially released films featuring 'virtual reality' images, which are in fact only computer images. I find that it makes a very mediocre use of powerful images. The subject of the film is a scientist who works for NASA and has devised very advanced mind-manipulating technologies first using a chimpanzee as the object of a scientific experiment later to be replaced by a mentally retarded man, whose brain gets 'expanded' through this new technology.

The images of penetration of the brain are crucial to the visual impact of this film: it is all about 'opening up' to the influence of a higher power. You can compare this to Cronenberg's 'invaginated' male bodies, penetrated by the cathode tube radiations of *Videodrome* and more recently to the brains implants in *Johnny Mnemonic*. Thanks to this technology, the retarded man blossoms first into a normal boy, then grows into a super-human figure. The reconstruction of masculinity in this film shows an evolution from idiot/little boy/adolescent cowboy/loses virginity/great lover/macho/ rapist/murderer/serial killer/psycho. The film implicitly raises questions about the interaction of sexuality and technologies, and both of them as forms of masturbatory and masculinist power.

At an intermediary stage of his development, he claims he can see God and he wants to share this experience with his girlfriend, to give her the ultimate orgasm. What follows is a scene of psychic rape, when the woman is literally blown apart and goes out of her mind. The woman will be insane from then on, as the boy progresses to become a god-like figure, a serial

killer, and finally a force of nature. Thus, whereas the male mind gets first to see and then to become god, the female one is just shown as cracking under the strain.

A feminist watching this cannot help being struck by the persistence of gender stereotypes and misogynist streaks. The alleged triumph of high technologies is not matched by a leap of the human imagination to create new images and representations. Quite on the contrary, what I notice is the repetition of very old themes and clichés, under the appearance of 'new' technological advances. It just goes to prove that it takes more than machinery to really alter patterns of thought and mental habits. The fiction of science, which is the theme of science-fiction films and literature, calls for more imagination and more gender equality in order to approximate a 'new' representation of a postmodern humanity. Unless our culture can take up the challenge and invent suitably new forms of expression, this technology is useless.

One of the great contradictions of Virtual Reality images is that they titillate our imagination, promising the marvels and wonders of a gender-free world while simultaneously reproducing some of the most banal, flat images of gender identity, but also class and race relations that you can think of. Virtual Reality images also titillate our imagination, as is characteristic of the pornographic regime of representation. The imagination is a very gendered space and the woman's imagination has always been represented as a troublesome and dangerous quality as the feminist film theorist Doane put it.²⁵

The imaginative poverty of virtual reality is all the more striking if you compare it to the creativity of some of the women artists I mentioned earlier. By comparison, the banality, the sexism, the repetitive nature of computer-designed videogames are quite appalling. As usual, at times of great changes and upheavals, the potential for the new engenders great fear, anxiety, and in some cases even nostalgia for the previous regime.

As if the imaginative misery were not enough, postmodernity is marked by a widespread impact and a qualitative shift of pornography in every sphere of cultural activity. Pornography is more and more about power relations and less and less about sex. In classical pornography sex was a vehicle by which to convey power relations. Nowadays anything can become such a vehicle: the becoming-culture of pornography means that any cultural activity or product can become a commodity and through that process express inequalities, patterns of exclusion, fantasies of domination, desires for power and control.²⁶

The central point remains: there is a credibility gap between the promises of Virtual Reality and cyberspace and the quality of what it delivers.

It consequently seems to me that, in the short range, this new technological frontier will intensify the gendergap and increase the polarization between the sexes. We are back to the war metaphor, but its location is the real world, not the hyperspace of abstract masculinity. And its protagonists are no computer images, but the real social agents of postindustrial urban landscapes.

The most effective strategy remains for women to use technology in order to disengage our collective imagination from the phallus and its accessory values: money, exclusion and domination, nationalism, iconic femininity, and systematic violence.

THE NEED FOR NEW UTOPIAS

Another qualitative leap is also necessary, however, toward the affirmation of sexual difference in terms of the recognition of the dissymmetrical relationship between the sexes. Feminists have rejected the universalistic tendency which consists in conflating the masculine viewpoint with the 'human,' thereby confining the 'feminine' to the structural position of devalorized 'other.' This division of social and symbolic labor means that the burden of devalorized difference falls upon certain empirical referents who can be defined in opposition to the dominant norm as: non-man, non-white, nonowner of property, non-speaker-of-a-dominant-language, and so forth.

This hierarchical organization of differences is the key to phallogocentrism, which is the inner system of patriarchal societies. In this system, women and men are in diametrically different positions: men are conflated with the universalistic stand and therefore are confined to what Hartsock defines as 'abstract masculinity.' Women, on the other hand, are stuck to the specificity of their gender as the 'second sex.' As Beauvoir observed: the price men pay for representing the universal is disembodiment, or loss of gendered specificity into the abstraction of phallic masculinity. The price women pay, on the other hand, is loss of subjectivity through overembodiment and confinement to their gendered identity. This results in two dissymmetrical positions.

Also, this produces two divergent political strategies when it comes to looking for alternatives. The masculine and the feminine paths to transcend the phallogocentric sociosymbolic contract diverge considerably. Whereas women need to repossess subjectivity by reducing their confinement to the body, thus making an issue of deconstructing the body, men need to repossess their abstracted bodily self by shedding some of

the exclusive rights to transcendental consciousness. Men need to get embodied, to get real, to suffer through the pain of reembodiment, that is to say incarnation.

A splendid example of this process is the fall of the angels from the inflated heights of the Berlin sky in Wim Wenders's film: *Der Himmel über Berlin*. When the angels do choose the path of embodiment, the pain of incarnation is rendered with acute insight. Bell hooks astutely observed the culture-specific nature of such an exercise, in her rather witty reading of the Teutonic angst in this film.²⁷ I think she correctly points out the quintessentially Western character of the flight from the body and of the related creation of abstract masculinity as a system of domination of multiple 'others.' In her equally culture-specific account she emphasizes the need for a revision of the phallogocentric sociosymbolic contract. However, Julia Kristeva also stresses the need for a redefinition of the position of the female body in this system.

I would like to argue therefore that the central point to keep in mind in the context of a discussion on cyberspace is that the last thing we need at this point in Western history is a renewal of the old myth of transcendence as flight from the body. As Linda Dement put it: a little less abstraction would be welcome.²⁸ Transcendence as disembodiment would just repeat the classical patriarchal model, which consolidated masculinity as abstraction, thereby essentialising social categories of 'embodied others.' This would be a denial of sexual difference meant as the basic dissymetry between the sexes.

In the project of exploring the dissymetry between the sexes, I would emphasize very strongly the importance of language, especially in the light of psychoanalytic theory. In so doing, I also mean to take my distance from the simplistic psychology and the reductive cartesianism that dominate so much cyberpunk literature and cyberspace technology. In opposition to these, I would like to emphasize that Woman is not only the objectified other of patriarchy, tied to it by negation. As the basis for female identity, the signifier Woman also and simultaneously pertains to a margin of dissidence and resistance to patriarchal identity. I have argued elsewhere that the feminist project intervenes on both the level of historical agency, that is, the question of the insertion of women in patriarchal history and that of individual identity and the politics of desire. It thus covers both the conscious and the unconscious levels. This deconstructive approach to femininity is very strongly present in the politics of the parody that I defended above. Feminist women who go on functioning in society as female subjects in these postmetaphysical days of decline-of gender dichotomies, act 'as if' Woman was still their location. In so doing,

however, they treat femininity as an option, a set of available poses, a set of costumes rich in history and social power relations, but not fixed or compulsory any longer. They simultaneously assert and deconstruct Woman as a signifying practice.

My point is that the new is created by revisiting and burning up the old. Like the totemic meal recommended by Freud, you have to assimilate the dead before you can move onto a new order. The way out can be found by mimetic repetition and consumption of the old. We need rituals of burial and mourning for the dead, including and especially the ritual of burial of the Woman that was. We do need to say farewell to that second sex, that eternal feminine which stuck to our skins like toxic material, burning into our bone marrow, eating away at our substance. We need to take collectively the time for the mourning of the old sociosymbolic contract and thus mark the need for a change of intensity, a shift of tempo. Unless feminists negotiate with the historicity of this temporal change, the great advances made by feminism toward the empowerment of alternative forms of female subjectivity will not have the time to be brought to social fruition.

The answer to metaphysics is metabolism, that is to say a new embodied becoming, a shift of perspective which allows individuals to set their pace and rate of change while moving toward workable social forms of consensus to readjust our culture to these shifts and changes. In her splendid text *In Memoriam to Identity*, Kathy Acker points out that so long as "I" has her identity and her sex, "I" is nothing new. I would add also that, as long as one believes in grammar, one believes in God. In modernity, God died and though the stench from his rotting corpse has been filling the Western world for over a century, it will take more than hysterical experiments with bad syntax or the solipsistic fantasy of joy rides to get us collectively out of his decayed but nonetheless still operational phallogocentric folly.

We rather need more complexity, multiplicity, and simultaneity, and we need to rethink gender, class, and race in the pursuit of these multiple, complex differences. I also think we need gentleness, compassion, and humor to pull through the ruptures and raptures of our times. Irony and self-humour are important elements of this project and they are necessary for its success, as feminists as diverse as Hélène Cixous and French and Saunders have pointed out. As the Manifesto of the Bad Girls reads: "Through laughter our anger becomes a tool of liberation." In the hope that our collectively negotiated Dionysian laughter will indeed bury it once and for all, cyberfeminism needs to cultivate a culture of joy and affirmation. Feminist women have a long history of dancing through a variety of potentially lethal

mine fields in their pursuit of sociosymbolic justice. Nowadays, women have to undertake the dance through cyberspace, if only to make sure that the joy-sticks of the cyberspace cowboys will not reproduce univocal phallicity under the mask of multiplicity, and also to make sure that the riot girls, in their anger and their visionary passion, will not recreate law and order under the cover of a triumphant feminine.

NOTES

This chapter was previously published as Rosi Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a Difference," *New Formations* 29 (autumn 1996): 19–25.

1. Martin Amis, *Einstein's Monsters* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 32–33.
2. Stuart Hall, "Race," *Ethnicity, Nation: The Fateful/Fatal Triangle*, The W. E. B. Du Bois lectures, Harvard University, April 25–27, 1994.
3. See especially Rosi Braidotti, "Re-figuring the Subject" in *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
4. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism. Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).
5. Marleen Barr, *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory* (New York: Greenwood, 1987).
6. Remark at the Conference "Seduced and Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World," held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, March 12–13, 1994.
7. *Post-Human*, catalogue of the exhibition at Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany, 1993.
8. Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984).
9. Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, eds., *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
10. Evelyn Fox Keller and C. R. Grontowski, "The Mind's Eye" in Sandra Harding and M. B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), 207–24; Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism* (New York: Freeman, 1985); Luce Irigaray, *Speculum* (Paris: Minuit, 1974); Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (London: Association Books, 1990), 149–82; Haraway, "Situated Knowledges" in op. cit., 183–202.
11. Kathy Acker, *In Memoriam to Identity* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990).
12. See for instance, Naomi Schor, "Dreaming Dissymetry—Foucault, Barthes and Feminism," in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

13. Rosi Braidotti, "Discontinuous Becomings: Deleuze on the Becoming—Woman of Philosophy," 24, no. 1 *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 24, no. 1 (January 1993): 44–55.

14. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

15. Robyn Archer, *A Star Is Torn* (London: Virago, 1986).

16. On December 20, 1989, in Operation Just Cause, 23,000 U.S. troops with air cover seized control of Panama, to capture the rebel president Noriega; 230 people died. Noriega took refuge in the Papal Nunciature but, after the building was bombarded for ten days with rock music and other psychological measures, he gave himself up and was flown to the United States to await trial on drug charges. Source: the entry "Noriega" in *A Dictionary of Twentieth-Century World Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

17. This point is argued by John Howell, *Laurie Anderson* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992), 17.

18. Barbara Krueger, *We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture* (London: I.C.A., 1983); *Love for Sale* (New York: Harry M. Abams, 1990); "No Progress in Pleasure," in Carole S. Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger* (Boson: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

19. Jenny Holzer, Solomon R. Gugenheim, New York, 1988.

20. Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993).

21. See on this point Rosi Braidotti, "Mothers, Monsters and Machines," *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

22. Constance Penley, Elizabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel, and Janet Bergstrom, *Close Encounters. Film, Feminism and Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

23. Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Post-feminist" Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

24. This is the case of the film *Weird Science*, where you see three teenage boys designing their favorite woman on the computer, discussing at length the size of her breasts.

25. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Women's Film of the '40's* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

26. Susan Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

27. bell hooks, *Yearning* (Toronto: South End Press, 1990).

28. Remark at the Conference "Seduced and Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World," held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, March 12–13, 1994.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

Edward Said: The Locatedness of Theory

Bill Ashcroft

Edward Said is probably most familiar to readers as the author of *Orientalism* and for his seminal role in the growing study of postcolonial cultures. But this better known aspect of his cultural theory can be understood fully only in the context of his view of the role of the intellectual in contemporary society and the function of criticism itself. More far-reaching, perhaps, than his work on orientalist representation, has been the concept of 'worldliness' which underlies his view of the public intellectual's relevance to society and the locatedness of texts in their particular 'world.' Worldliness is a fascinating aspect of a theory developed during the rise to prominence of poststructuralism, because it is so manifestly contrary to the general trend of critical theory over the last few decades. Despite the widespread celebration of *Orientalism*, and its pivotal place in postcolonial theory, it is the concept of 'worldliness' which stands as Said's most significant contribution to critical theory. Worldliness underlies the project of *Orientalism* itself, and perhaps more important, represents a view of the text, of the material situation of writing, of the *location* of literature, which will outlast the post-structuralist anxiety which often haunts contemporary critical practice.

Worldliness is curiously appropriate to Said's work since his paradoxical identity as a Palestinian, a celebrated (and irritating) public intellectual and a widely fêted academic cannot be easily separated from his critical theory. Said's own peculiar locatedness, the paradox of his identity, is so pronounced, and such a central feature of his cultural theory, that he forces us to reassess the nature of the link between the text and its author. The trenchant consistency of Said's position and the wide-ranging scope of his interests have been obscured by two things: the dominance

of poststructuralism in textual analysis over the last two decades and the extraordinary prominence of *Orientalism* in his reputation as a cultural critic. In the concept of worldliness we discover a principle which retrieves the materiality of the world for political and cultural theory and which offers a powerful resource in the postcolonial insistence on the political importance of colonization. Said's insistence on the materiality of the text, the 'worldliness' of its production and reception, its being-in-the-world, predates the euphoric reception of deconstruction by the American academy in the seventies which Said helped introduce (1971, 1971a, 1972). As poststructuralism begins to wane, Said's commitment to 'worldliness' remains as strong as ever. Yet one more paradox in a paradoxical career, we find that Said's extensive reputation as a cultural critic is underpinned by his much lesser known intellectual position as a literary theorist, particularly his stance on textuality.

We can better understand the significance of worldliness when we understand how Said's political consciousness emerged. He was well on the way to establishing a distinguished but unexciting career as a professor of comparative literature when the 1967 Arab-Israeli war broke out. That moment changed his life. He suddenly found himself in an environment hostile to Arabs, surrounded by an almost universal support for the Israelis, and in which he, a respected academic, had become an outsider and a target (Ali 1994). The 1967 war and its reception in America confronted Said with the paradox of his own position; he could no longer maintain two identities, and the experience began to be reflected everywhere in his work. For the first time he began to construct himself as a Palestinian, consciously articulating the sense of a cultural origin which had been suppressed since his childhood and diverted into his professional career. The poignancy of displacement is captured in his book on Palestine, *After the Last Sky*, when he says: "Identity—who we are, where we come from, what we are—is difficult to maintain in exile. . . . we are the 'other,' an opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement, an exodus. Silence and discretion veil the hurt, slow the body searches, soothe the sting of loss" (1986: 16–17). The question of identity for Palestinians has always been vexed, because Palestinians have been, according to Said, excluded from the state of Israel and consequently scattered throughout the world. For him the Zionist slogan "A people without land [the Jews] for a land without people [Palestine]"—saw Palestine as the European imperialist did, as "an empty territory paradoxically 'filled' with ignoble or perhaps even dispensable natives" (1980: 81).

The politicization of the young Edward Said had a profound effect on his work, for he saw that even literary theory could not be separated from

the political realities of the world in which it was written. Ten years after the war he wrote his trilogy *Orientalism* (1978), *The Question of Palestine* (1980), and *Covering Islam* (1981), which located Palestine as a focus of all the issues of textuality and power which had been preoccupying him. The significant thing about Said's work is that we cannot separate this political concern for the state of Palestine, this concern with his own identity and the identity of Palestinians in general, from his conviction of the function of the intellectual, and from his theoretical and literary analysis of texts and insistence upon the way they are located in the world. We can neither relegate his writings on Palestine to a kind of 'after-hours' journalism nor dismiss his theory as merely the professional activity of the Palestinian activist.

It is this construction of identity which helps us to understand Edward Said's place in literary and cultural theory during the last four decades. The facts of an individual's life are not necessarily crucial to the direction of their theory, and even mentioning them would be scandalous to most poststructuralists. But with Edward Said, the conditions of his own life, the 'text' of his identity, are constantly woven into and form the defining context for all his writing. His struggles with his dislocation, his recognition of the empowering potential of exile, his constant engagement with the link between textuality and the world, underlie the major directions of his theory and help to explain his uncertain relationship with contemporary theory. The issues which stand out in Said's writing include: his concept of 'secular criticism,' by which he means a criticism freed from the priestly restrictions and unreflective certainties of intellectual specialization; his concomitant advocacy of 'amateurism' in intellectual life, and his belief in the importance of a text's 'affiliations' with the world rather than its filiations with other texts. These views have important corollaries in his view of intellectual work: first, a conviction of the need for the intellectual's actual or metaphoric exile from 'home,' since this frees the critical activity from factional interest: second, a passionate belief in the need for intellectual work to recover its connections with the political realities of the society in which it occurs, to recognize its 'worldliness.' It is the relationship of criticism to the world which underlies his exposure, in *Orientalism*, of the way in which the 'Orient' has emerged as a discursive construction, and how contemporary 'Islam' continues to evolve as an alien construction of the West, indeed of the way the West continually constructs its others. It also underlies his 'contrapuntal' reading, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), of the canonical texts of imperial culture to expose the heavy, if invisible investment they have in the imperial project.

This question of worldliness, of the writer's own position in the world, gets to the heart of another paradox central to this consideration of Edward Said's work—how do we read texts? For, any text, Said's included, is constructed out of many available discourses, discourses within which writers themselves may be seen as subjects 'in process', and which they may not have had in mind when they put pen to paper. Worldliness begins by asking one of the most contentious questions in politically oriented theory: who addresses us in the text? And this is a question we must ask of Edward Said's work, for there is no other cultural theorist who so intimately constructs his identity through his own texts. Ultimately, worldliness is concerned with the materiality of the text's origin, for in this material being is embedded in the very materiality of the matters of which it speaks; dispossession, injustice, marginality, and subjection. In many respects it is this concept of worldliness, a commitment to which underlies his examination of Orientalism, rather than *Orientalism* itself which constitutes Said's most strategic contribution to postcolonial theory.

It is the approach to the text's worldliness, and the desire for criticism to actually speak to an intellectual's public audience, that drives Said. Contemporary intellectual work, and particularly attitudes to the text, he claims, have fallen into the trap of specialization, a 'cult of professional expertise' which has rendered them marginal to the pressing political concerns of contemporary societies (1983: 1). In contrast, "Secular Criticism" dispenses with 'priestly' and abstruse specialization in favor of a breadth of interest and an 'amateurism' of approach which avoids the retreat of intellectual work from the actual society in which it occurs. No matter how much intellectuals may believe that their interests are of "higher things or ultimate values" the morality of the intellectual's practice begins with its location in the secular world, and is affected by "where it takes place, whose interests it serves, how it jibes with a consistent and universalist ethic, how it discriminates between power and justice, what it reveals of one's choices and priorities" (1994: 89).

The secular trinity he espouses—'world,' the 'text,' and the 'critic'—is in direct contrast to the 'theologies' of contemporary theoretical schools which lead, he claims, to a continually inward-turning professional critical practice. Leaving aside the rather perverse view of theology as necessarily specialist and inward-turning, it is clear that he sees much intellectual work as 'cultish.' American criticism, he claims, had retreated, by the seventies, into the labyrinth of 'textuality,' the mystical and disinfected subject matter of literary theory. Textuality is the exact antithesis of history, for although it takes place, it doesn't take place anywhere or anytime

in particular. "As it is practiced in the American academy today, literary theory has for the most part isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work" (1983: 4). Ironically, the increasingly complex and even dazzling program of contemporary theory has left it less and less to say to the society from which it emerges. "In having given up the world entirely for the aporias and unthinkable paradoxes of the text, contemporary criticism has retreated from its constituency, the citizens of modern society, who have been left to the hands of 'free' market forces, multinational corporations" (1983: 4).

The alternative to such specialization is a form of criticism from which ambiguity and contradiction cannot be entirely removed but which happily pay that price in order to reject dogma. As JanMohamed puts it, within this paradoxical formulation "criticism functions to define that which is simultaneously to be affirmed and denied" (1992: 111). Criticism is thus not a science but an act of political and social engagement, that is sometimes paradoxical, sometimes contradictory, but which tries to avoid solidifying into dogmatic certainty. The problem with Said, of course, is that his textual theory has developed no clear way of distinguishing dogma from commitment, nor has his own commitment always avoided the lure of dogma.

The consequences of 'worldliness' for the critic are quite profound. Said introduces the disarming, not to say disconcerting idea of the critic as 'amateur', by which he means that the critic must refuse to be locked into narrow professional specializations which produce their own arcane vocabulary and speak only to other specialists. The cult of professional expertise in criticism is pernicious because it surrenders the actual material and political concerns of society to a discourse dominated by economists and technocrats. This situation occurs in every developed nation in the world today, to the extent that economic and technological discourse is regarded not only as being the best and most canny representation of the real world but the only true reflection of human affairs. Questions of justice, oppression, marginalization, or hemispheric, national, and racial equality are submerged almost entirely beneath the language of money economy with its utopian dream that 'if the figures are right everything else will fall into place.'

It is in such 'amateurism' that the worldliness of the critic can be fully realized. Increasingly, critics have turned their backs on the circumstances and real events of the society for which criticism actually exists. And a very great part of this process has been the locking of the intellectual into an inwardly focused and inwardly spiralling discourse only accessible to

other professionals. The word 'amateur' is a useful one because its pejorative connotations disrupt our sense of the function that the professional intellectual fills in contemporary society. Asked why he used the term *amateur* rather than 'generalist,' Said replied that he was drawn to the literal meaning of the French word which means a love of something, 'very involved in something without being professional' (Ashcroft 1996: 8). Said's own work is ample demonstration of the somewhat ironically termed business of the amateur. The amateur is one who believes that to be a thinking and concerned member of society one can raise moral questions about any issue, no matter how technical or professional the activity (1993: 61). His province has been everything from literary theory, to textual criticism, history, discursive analysis, sociology, musicology, anthropology, and all this emerging in a form of cultural studies which, above all, has highlighted the politics of cultural difference in the postcolonial world.

A crucial feature of the 'amateur's' return to the world is the return to an accessible writing style. In the priestly world of high theory, a "precious jargon has grown up, and its formidable complexities obscure the social realities that, strange though it may seem, encourage a scholarship of 'modes of excellence' very far from daily life in the age of declining American power" (1983: 4). Style, as Said puts it, the recognizable, repeatable, preservable sign of an author who reckons with an audience, neutralizes the worldlessness, the silent, seemingly uncircumstanced existence of a solitary text. This is particularly important for understanding the way in which Said himself approaches the task of writing. At times (as in *Culture and Imperialism*), the style seems discursive, conversational, and even repetitive, which makes it appear to some as 'amateurish' and untheorized. But this style is crucial to Said's project of confirming the worldliness of his own texts because they always impute a nonspecialist reader. The fact that this style, this balance might vary in more robust venues such as journalism or correspondence to journals and replies to other critics, indicates that the affiliations of the critic with the discourse in which he or she is operating are constantly in play. The critical writer is not a cipher of discourse any more than a novel is produced 'simply' by its historical and social circumstances.

The attempt to produce a criticism which engages the real material ground of political and social life is one Said has pursued unflaggingly over the last twenty years. For him, criticism continually crosses the boundaries between academic and journalistic texts, between professional and public forums, and between professional specializations, for at base its character and purpose are urgent and immediate. "Criticism must think

of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom" (1983: 29). The refusal of ideological or theoretical dogma also underlies Said's willingness to consider what normally might be regarded as conservative positions, particularly in relation to the efficacy of historical and empirical scholarship, alongside radical views of social and political relations.

Once we take criticism out of the professional domain of the literary critic, we discover its transformative possibilities. Ultimately, criticism is important to Said because criticism is the key function of the concerned intellectual. Criticism locates the intellectual in the world, for the ultimate function of such a person is not to advance complex specialized 'theologies' but to 'speak truth to power,' the title of an essay in *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994). "How does one speak truth? What truth? From whom and where?" (1994: 65). There is no way of providing a global answer, but the intellectual must strive for freedom of opinion and expression. The power of resistance comes in the ability of the author to 'write back' to imperialism, to speak 'truth' to injustice. Not only do human beings construct their truths, but "the so-called objective truth of the white man's superiority built and maintained by the classical European colonial empires also rested on a violent subjugation of African and Asian peoples" (1994: 67).

Despite a proliferation of the liberal rhetoric of equality and justice, injustices continue in various parts of the globe. The task for the intellectual is to apply these notions and bring them to "bear on actual situations" (1994: 71). This means taking a stand against one's own government, as Said does in the Gulf War, or against one's own people, as he appears to be doing in speaking out against the Oslo peace accord at a time when there was considerable euphoria that it might have ended the long-running battle between Israel and the Palestinians. In retrospect, Said's position appears to have been vindicated. The reason for speaking 'truth to power' in contemporary societies is to effect better conditions to achieve peace, reconciliation, and justice. The intellectual follows such a path not for personal glory but to change the moral climate. "Speaking the truth to power," says Said, "is no panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change" (1994: 75).

The idea of 'speaking truth to power' is not without its paradox. For what is it, we might ask, that would make power listen? As Bruce Robbins suggests, it must be, partly, the assumption of power itself, the action of a

counterauthority (1994: 29), the assumption of a power attached to a recognizable (and even celebrated) public identity which can make 'power' listen to 'truth.' But how is this identity to be located? Paradoxically, the intellectual seems only able to make power 'listen' to 'truth' by assuming the authority of the professional, an act which runs counter to the very secularism Said so vigorously espouses. When an article appears in a newspaper anywhere in the world under the name 'Edward Said' people pay attention: his fame is itself a form of power. This irony does not diminish the validity of his desire to speak out. Rather it demonstrates how very complex and ambivalent the intellectual's position can be.

In *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said poses an important question: how far should an intellectual go in getting involved? Is it possible to join a party or faction and retain a semblance of independence? Despite once being a member of the Palestine National Council, which he joined as an act of solidarity (but resigned after disputes with the leadership), Said admits to being cautious to surrendering himself to a party or faction. Ideally the intellectual should represent emancipation and enlightenment, and this can be done only in a 'secular' manner which prevents one from seeing things in extremes with one side good and the other irreducibly evil. Rather than '*a politics of blame*' (1993: 45), by which Third World and postcolonial societies become so locked into the habit of blaming imperialism, that they forestall any strategies for change, Said posits a "more interesting politics of *secular interpretation*" (1993: 46). Such a politics links criticism to the possibility of a different world.

However, the postcolonial intellectual's role is to act as a reminder of colonialism and its continuing effects as well as to clarify and expand the space which postcolonial societies have been able to carve out for themselves. This is precisely what intellectuals like Salman Rushdie, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiongo, and Pakistani scholar and activist Eqbal Ahmad (1933–1999) have been trying to achieve. Between colonialism and its genealogical offspring there is what he terms "a holding and a crossing over" (54). Many postcolonial writers bear their past within them

as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a future, as urgently re-interpretable and re-deployable experiences in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the colonialist. (1993: 55)

The crossing over and the reinscribing by these postcolonial intellectuals is precisely the politics of secular interpretation. For them, the experience of colonization renders it impossible to draw clear lines between

'us' and 'them.' By their various efforts—historical, interpretative, and analytical—these intellectuals “have identified the culture of resistance as a cultural enterprise possessing a long tradition of integrity and power in its own right, one not simply grasped as a belated reactive response to Western imperialism” (Said 1990: 73).

One of the more enduring of Said's convictions, one clearly emanating from his own location, is the belief in the necessity of exile for the intellectual and cultural critic. One of the best expressions of this necessity can be found in a passage from a twelfth-century Saxon monk called Hugo of St. Victor which Said uses more than once:

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. (cited in Said 1984: 55)

Such an attitude not only makes possible an originality of vision but also (since exiles are aware of at least two cultures) a *plurality* of vision (1984: 55). “Because the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation” (1994: 44).

Exile is, for Said, a profoundly ambivalent state, for while it is an almost necessary condition for true critical worldliness, “the achievements of any exile are permanently undermined by his or her sense of loss” (1984: 49). While it is “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place” (49), nevertheless, the canon of modern Western culture “is in large part the work of exiles” (49). This tension between personal desolation and cultural empowerment is the tension of exile in Said's own work, a tension which helps explain his own deep investment in the link between the text and the world. For that very worldliness is the guarantee of the invalidity of the text's *ownership* by nation or community or religion, however powerful those filiative connections might be. Whether talking about Eric Auerbach, Jonathan Swift, or Theodor Adorno, Said's contention—that the intellectual not only benefits, but in some sense *needs* to be in exile to develop the capacities for free-ranging criticism, and act out an intellectual endeavor freed from the debilitating effects of the national and the partisan—is one which consistently informs his cultural and political theory.

Perhaps the deepest paradoxes emerge from the intellectual's relationship to culture, because while he or she may be saturated by culture, the deep link between that culture and place locates the exile within the unsettling

provisionality of a diasporic culture. The connection between culture and place does not mean simply connection to a nation or region, but includes "all the nuances or reassurance, fitness, belonging, association, and community, entailed in the phrase *at home* or *in place*. . . . It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in a place*, being *at home in a place*" (1983: 8). This places the exile in a singular position with regard to history and society, but also a much more anxious and ambivalent position with regard to culture:

Exile . . . is "a mind of winter" in which the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential of spring are nearby but unobtainable. Perhaps this is another way of saying that a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and is less seasonal and settled than life at home. Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew. (1984: 55)

But there is also a more interesting dimension to the idea of culture which Said describes as "possessing possession. And that is the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorise, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict and validate" (1983: 9). Culture is "a system of values *saturating* downwards almost everything within its purview; yet paradoxically culture dominates from above without at the same time being available to everyone and everything it dominates" (9).

Much of the contradictory nature of Said's view of the interrelation of exile, intellectual and culture, perhaps can be explained by the fact that for him exile is both an actual and a metaphorical condition:

Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one in your new home or situation. (1994: 39)

One can detect a certain slippage even here between the actual and the metaphorical which suggests that for Said exile is also an act of will by intellectuals, allowing them to stand outside the comfortable receptivity of home or nation. For it is difficult to see how far the idea of metaphoricity can be taken without dissolving the concept of exile altogether.

Certainly in the most powerful exilic influence upon Said, Theodor Adorno, the combination of separation from home and the willed distancing from the everyday world seems complete. The "dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century, whose entire career

skirted and fought the dangers of fascism, communism and Western consumerism" (Said 1994a: 40), Adorno is a figure whose intellectual and personal life has uncanny echoes in Edward Said's. But curiously, whereas Adorno is the consummate example of the exiled intellectual, he is also one who problematizes the notion, because "Adorno was the quintessential intellectual, hating *all* systems, whether on our side or theirs, with equal distaste. For him, life was at its most false in the aggregate—the whole is always the untrue" (1994: 41). In some respects, Adorno was an exile before he left home. To what extent actual exile exacerbated the tendencies of metaphoric exile already deeply embedded in his nature is a matter of conjecture.

A characteristic paradox in Said's celebration of exile, however, is the surprising focus on European exiles like Adorno. While the dislocated and displaced 'European' exile has been accommodated, celebrated, and allowed a new 'home,' the position of the non-European exile has been highly problematic. The dilemmas and plights faced by diasporic peoples throughout the world have received at best cursory attention in the West. Rather than accommodation, these 'new' exiles are seen as a threat to the old order. They are represented as dislocating old inhabitants and, in places such as London, Paris, Miami, New York, and the once exclusively white suburbs of Johannesburg, the Anglo and French populations feel weary and uncomfortable. The mood and place of these 'new' exiles has been captured by the influential colonial discourse theorist, Homi Bhabha. Reflecting on his own dislocation as a Parsee, Bhabha writes:

I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and emigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafés of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also the gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status. (Bhabha 1990: 291)

It should not be surprising that the 'other,' non-European exile has not been permitted to 'settle.' The very construction of the 'other,' as eloquently demonstrated by Said in his *Orientalism*, is premised upon the difference between the Occident and the Orient. It is through this process

of 'othering' that the Occident is able to 'Orientalize' the region. This construction has a distinctly political dimension and nowhere is this better exemplified than in imperialism. There is a power imbalance, then, that exists not only in the most obvious characteristics of imperialism—'brute political, economic, and military rationales'—but also in terms of culture. Hence, for cultures which have been denigrated and marginalized within the dominant discourse, it would hardly be appropriate to celebrate their exiles. Furthermore, the 'other' exile is generally the product of the fracturing and fissuring of societies that have endured the wrath of colonialism and imperialism. That exiles such as Said have been able to carve out some space from their peripherality and marginalization speaks more about their resolve rather than the accommodation they have received in the West.

Edward Said's critical and cultural theory presents us with a remarkable confirmation of the locatedness of theory itself. In an era of abstraction Said's insistent construction of himself as a marginalized Palestinian, an exiled intellectual, provides a dynamic basis for his theory of worldliness and his insistence on the social importance of criticism. Worldliness is not simply a response to the structuralist revolution in criticism but a view of the social function of criticism and the need for intellectuals to speak to their constituency, to take back the ground lost to technocrats and bureaucrats. Said's passionate and sometimes argumentative defense of Palestinian causes has provided a remarkably clear focus for his own demonstration of this intellectual function. Whether in literary criticism or social activism the worldliness of the critic determines his or her real relations to power. Worldliness remains the source of that energy which drives Edward Said's own intellectual engagements with culture and politics. It is the dis-articulation of the exiled intellectual which provides the strongest motivation to 'speak truth to power'.

WORKS CITED

- Ashcroft, Bill. 1996. "Interview with Edward Said." *New Literatures Review* 32: 3–22.
- Ashcroft, Bill, and Pal Ahluwalia. 1999. *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi, ed. 1990. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. 1992. "Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual." In Michael Sprinker, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Robbins, Bruce. 1994. "Secularism, elitism, progress, and other transgressions: On Edward Said's 'Voyage in.'" *Social Text* 12 (3): 25–37.
- Said, Edward. 1971. "Abecedarium Culturæ: Structuralism, Absence, Writing." *TriQuarterly* (winter).
- . 1971a "What Is beyond formalism?" *MLN* (December).
- . 1972. "Michel Foucault as an Intellectual Imagination." *Boundary 2* 1(1) (July).
- . 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- . 1978a. "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions." *Critical Inquiry* 4: 673–714.
- . 1980. *The Question of Palestine*. London: Vintage.
- . 1981. *Covering Islam*. New York: Vintage.
- . 1983. *The World, the Text and the Critic*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1984. "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile." *Harper's* 269: 49–55.
- . 1984a. "Permission to Narrate: Reconstituting the Siege of Beirut." *London Review of Books*, February 16–29, 1984.
- . 1986. *After the Last Sky*. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1990. "Yeats and decolonization." In Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said, eds., *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- . 1994. *Representations of the Intellectual, the 1993 Reith Lectures*. London: Vintage.
- . 1994a. *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian*. Monroë, Maine: Common Courage Press.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

“Antiglobalization” and Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies*

Michael Peters

Work on oneself, in as much as one is a collective singularity; construct and in a permanent way re-construct this collectivity in a multivalent liberation project. Not in reference to a directing ideology, but within the articulation of the Real. Perpetually recomposing subjectivity and praxis is only conceivable in the totally free movement of each of its components, and in absolute respects of their own times—time for comprehending or refusing to comprehend, time to be unified or to be autonomous, time of identification or of the most exacerbated differences.

—Guattari and Negri, cited in
“Translators’ Introduction,” *Three Ecologies*

Holidaying in what used to be a little medieval town on the Costa Brava, trying both to escape the inconsistency of Glasgow’s summer and to find some time for uninterrupted thought, I began to reflect upon the events that characterized the so-called antiglobalization protests at Genoa only a few weeks earlier.¹ The English daily media, including the BBC, had concentrated on reporting the violence of a wing of the protestors, focusing on the death of Carlo Giuliani, a twenty-three-year-old history student from Genoa and son of a labor official in Rome. Only later did they begin to report and question the State violence and brutal retaliation against the protestors engaged in by the Italian police.² As with reportage by most Western mass media of the so-called antiglobalization protests, the world politicians and officials were given prime time to freely comment while the ‘voices’ of the protestors themselves were suppressed or ignored. It is my impression that most

British daily media do not seem interested in reporting, analyzing, or exploring the underlying issues of the protests: What are the protestors protesting about? Why a string of worldwide protests? Why don't leaders of the "free" West allow representatives of the protestors a voice at their meetings? Why are there meetings only of the leaders and officials of G8 countries? And so on.³

Significantly, British prime minister Tony Blair, fresh from his reelection victory in one of the poorest turnouts of the British electorate since World War II (less than 60% voted), defined his political colors by immediately taking a position against the protestors and their perceived antiglobalization cause. Blair, the leading figure in Third Way politics, theoretically buttressed by the likes of Anthony Giddens, has politically invested himself heavily in arguments for globalization and "free trade" as forces for good within the world.⁴ Both he and Giddens emphasize that globalization is an inevitable and desirable process, in part, driven by technological improvements in the world's information and communication infrastructure. Their view, however, does not take enough account of the project of globalization as a politically engineered creation, developed actively by the rich trans-Atlantic democracies through "free trade" agreements (GATT, NAFTA, EU, WTO) and by the world policy quasi-institutions of the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and, to a lesser extent, the OECD. It is a view that does not take into account either that there are alternative visions to be given of globalization—as, for instance, of progressive world democratization—or that there have been an economic, social, and ecological downside to neoliberal globalization. The Third and Fourth Worlds, in particular, have felt the deleterious effects of the so-called Washington consensus, promoting "structural adjustment" policies as a condition of World Bank and IMF loans.

While Blair and Giddens attempt to differentiate Third Way politics from the neoliberalism of the Thatcher-Reagan alignment that dominated the decade of the 1980s—in part, through the criterion of a heightened ecological consciousness (see e.g., Giddens, 1998)—it is becoming increasingly clear that Blair's second-term administration is committed to many of the principles of reform that distinguished Thatcher's neoliberalism, including the privatization of public services, especially education and national health.⁵ Certainly, there is the same commitment to the market both domestically, as a substitute for state intervention, and internationally, making the United Kingdom attractive to foreign direct investment from multinational corporations.

On reflecting on the so-called antiglobalization protest at Genoa and its predecessors in half a dozen world cities, I was interested by the globalized nature of these protests and their apparent myriad composition. While there may be an umbrella organization working on the day, there is no single world organization or movement; rather, the protests constitute a rainbow coalition of overlapping political interests that cannot be described in terms of a single cause. If anything, it seems, the environmental groups dominate.

I was also struck by the anticipation of some of these events by Félix Guattari,⁶ the radical psychoanalyst, activist, and co-author with Gilles Deleuze, of a range of books that helped to give the French Left new orientations during the decade of the 1970s: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Fr. 1972, trans. 1984), *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (Fr. 1975, trans. 1986), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II* (Fr. 1980, trans. 1988), and, much later, *What Is Philosophy?* (Fr. 1991, trans. 1994).⁷

While these books written with Deleuze certainly capture and elaborate the themes I wish to discuss in relation to antiglobalization, it is, in particular, a little book that Guattari (2000) wrote by himself and published first in 1989, called *The Three Ecologies*, that I want to focus on. The first part of this chapter begins with a discussion of antiglobalization, focusing on the events at Genoa and analyzing the media reports that followed; in the second part, I present the main ideas of Guattari, as they appear in *The Three Ecologies*, to consider them as a framework within which to theorize so-called antiglobalization.⁸

ANTIGLOBALIZATION?

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001), writing in *The New York Times*, recognize that the rainbow protests at the Genoa G8 'world' summit are united in the belief "that a fundamentally new global system is being formed" and that "[t]he world can no longer be understood in terms of British, French, Russian or even American imperialism." They maintain that no longer can national power control or order the present global system and that, while the protests often appear anti-American, they are really directed at the larger power structures.

Yet it seems as if the protests must win the same kind of battles for democracy at the global level that ordinary people—citizens—won at the level of the nation-state over three hundred years ago. And since those first

democratic revolutions, movements of various kinds—civil rights, anti-racism, antiwar, women's rights, children's rights, animal rights, environmental protests—have progressively enfranchised ever larger groups of the world's populations, although not inevitably or without struggle or reversals.⁹ Hardt and Negri point out the salient fact that “this new order has no democratic institutional mechanisms for representation, as nation-states do: no elections, no public forum for debate.” And they go on to describe the antiglobalization protestors as a coalition united against the present form of capitalist globalization, but not against the forces or currents of globalization per se. Neither are these protestors isolationists, separatists, or nationalists. Rather, as Hardt and Negri claim, the protestors want to *democratize globalization*—to eliminate the growing inequalities between nations and to expand the possibilities for self-determination. Thus, “antiglobalization” is a false description of this movement.¹⁰

Against all odds, against the power of supranational forces, people in the street at Genoa—and earlier in a series of locations at Gothenburg, Quebec, Prague, and Seattle—still believe in a form of resistance in the name of a better future. They believe, against all propagandizing and media control, in the story of democracy and in the seeds that were sown for emancipation and self-determination over three centuries ago. Hardt and Negri believe that a new species of political activism has been born, reminiscent of the “paradoxical idealism of the 1960s.” Such protest movements are part of democratic society even though they are unlikely to provide the practical blueprint for the future. Yet they create political desires for a better future and, remarkably, unify disparate interests and groups—unionists, ecologists together with priests and Communists—in openness toward defining the future anew in democratic terms.¹¹

Hardt and Negri are not the only ones to have asserted a connection between the so-called antiglobalization protestors and those who demonstrated during the 1960s. Todd Gitlin (2001) also clearly considers the present-day movements evident at Genoa as a successor movement to the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s—one that he claims has already engaged more activists over a longer period of time and one he predicts will be longer-lived. Gitlin, similarly, pictures the protestors as “creating a way of life,” although he profiles the protestors as engaging in the debate about the meaning of Europe, seemingly truncating its obvious more global aspects outside Europe. He also questions the antiglobalization label, drawing attention to anticapitalist revolutionaries, reformists who demand to “Drop the Debt,” and anarchists bent upon violence. The new face of protests, as *Newsweek* columnists Martha Brant and Barbie Nadeau (2001) point out, is a *composite* of different types: an-

archist and Marxists, "kinder, gentler globalists," health-issue advocates, environmentalists, consumer advocates. They name the protest groups from violent to nonviolent in the following order: Black Blocs (anarchist and Marxists who wear black masks); those who claim to be nonviolent but often provoke retaliation such as Globalize Resistance, Reclaim the Streets, Tute Bianche (Luca Casarini) and Ya Basta!; decidedly nonviolent groups ranging from celebrities to religious leaders, including, AIDS activists, ATTAC (Bernard Cassen and Susan George), CAFOD, Christian Aid, Cobas, Confédération Paysanne (José Bové), various consumer groups, Drop the Debt (Bono), Greenpeace, La Via Campesina, Oxfam, Rainforest Action Network, Roman Catholic Church, War on Want, WWF.

These myriads of action groups reflect vectors of subjectivity and singularization, as Guattari would argue, that can be understood only if we begin to apply the ecological model to the realm of the mental—to understanding subjectivity—as much as to the environmental and the social.

GUATTARI'S *THE THREE ECOLOGIES*

Guattari's achievement is to link three spheres of ecology—environmental, social, and mental—into a complex set of interrelations he calls *ecosophy*, a term he coins seemingly unaware of the "deep ecology" movement or the ecosophy of Arnold Naess.¹² He writes: "only an ethico-political articulation—which I call *ecosophy*—between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity) would be likely to clarify [the ecological dangers that confront us]" (p. 27).

His object of criticism is what he calls *Integrated World Capitalism* (IWC) that, through a series of technoscientific transformations, has brought us to the brink of ecological disaster, causing a disequilibrium of the world natural environment from which the Earth will take many generations to recover, if at all. Integrated World Capitalism, as Pindar and Sutton (2000: 6) explain, is "delocalized and deterritorialized to such an extent that it is impossible to locate its sources of power." IWC is now, above all, a fourth-stage capitalism, no longer oriented to producing primary (agricultural), secondary (manufacturing), or tertiary (services), but now oriented to the production of "signs, syntax, and . . . subjectivity" (p. 47). Part of Guattari's thesis is that the expansion in communications technology, and, in particular, the development of world telecommunications has served to shape a new type of passive subjectivity, saturating the unconscious in conformity with the demands of global market forces.

IWC, thus, poses a direct threat to the environment in ways that are now all too familiar to us—pollution of all forms, extinction and depletion of species with the consequent reduction of biodiversity, and so forth. Less often are we alerted to the dimension of social ecology and its practical politics. What is not often recognized, if at all, is what Guattari calls *mental ecology*: both how the structures of human subjectivity to which it refers, like a rare species, are also under threat of extinction and how it underwrites an understanding of environmental and social ecology.

It is in the realm of understanding human subjectivity in ecological terms that Guattari has most to offer. In this recognition of the “ecology of mind” he is strongly influenced by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson, especially his *Steps Towards the Ecology of Mind* (1972).¹³ Indeed, Guattari (2000: 27) begins with a quotation from Bateson’s essay “Pathologies of Epistemology” from that same collection of essays: “There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds.” The importance of Bateson’s argument, as the translators’ note clarifies (see fn 1, p. 70), is in criticizing the dominant “epistemological fallacy” in Western thinking that the unit of survival in the bio-taxonomy, is the individual, family line, subspecies or species, where the unit of survival is “organism plus environment.” The choice of the wrong unit leads to an epistemological error that propagates itself, multiplying and mutating, as a basic characteristic of the thought-system of which it is a part. The hierarchy of taxa leads to a conception of species against species, Man against Nature—a view that has been reinforced by various ideologies and movements, including Romanticism. By contrast, according to Bateson:

we now see a different hierarchy of units—gene-in-organism, organism-in-environment, ecosystem, etc. Ecology, in the widest sense, turns out to be the study of the interaction and survival of ideas and programs (i.e., differences, complexes of differences, etc.) in circuits. (Bateson, 1972: 484, cited in Guattari, 2000: fn 1, 70)

Thus, for Guattari we must conceive of ecology as a complex encompassing the environmental, the social, and the mental (the complex, environment-social-mental) where mental ecology transcends the psychology of the individual. Taking a leaf from Bateson, Guattari (2000: 54) argues:

Gregory Bateson has clearly shown that what he calls the ‘ecology of ideas’ cannot be contained within the domain of the psychology of the individual, but organizes itself into systems or ‘minds’, the boundaries of which no longer coincide with the participant individuals.

Yet, as he also acknowledges, Guattari parts company with Bateson over treating action and enunciation as parts of an ecological subsystem called 'context.' (I shall return to this idea and Guattari's notion of praxis as an a-signifying rupture of the systematic "pretext" below).

Guattari's ecosophical perspective of subjectivity, in large part, is a product of his Lacanian training, his experience as a working psychoanalyst, and his attempt to reorient Freudianism toward the future (see Genosko, 2000: 156). Thus, while *The Three Ecologies* retains the old Freudian triad (id, ego, superego), it departs from Freud in understanding subjectivity according to his concept of "transversality"—a concept that dates from 1964 and that Guattari developed over his lifetime. Genosko (2000) interprets this conceptual development as a series of shifts "from transversality to ecosophy," conceptual shifts involving, first, the early theorizations based on "transference," second, the development of the "coefficient of transversality," third, a "theory of groups" (subject and subjugated groups, utilizing Sartre's concept of "seriality"), and, eventually a shift to "transversality." Genosko (2000: 145–46) explains this important concept in the following terms:

Guattari's transversalist conception of subjectivity escapes the individual-social distinction as well as the givenness or preformedness of the subject either as a person or individual; subjectivity is both collective and auto-producing.

The full exposition of this concept, as Genosko (2000: 146) makes clear, would take us into Guattari's reception of structuralism, "his rejection of Freudian psychogenetic stages in favour of a polyphonic conception of subjectivity of coexisting levels," his turn against Lacanism (retaining the notion of the partial object), his theoretical cooperation with Deleuze, and, above all, his rejection of all forms of scientism.¹⁴

While Guattari is against scientism in psychoanalysis, especially those pseudo-scientific programs and models that dress themselves up in concepts borrowed from thermodynamics, topology, linguistics, and systems theory (p. 36), and is cautious of technoscience, particularly its technocratic approach to industrial pollution, he is not technophobic or anti-technology. For instance, he believes that the Internet holds potential for democratization. In psychoanalysis, he advocates ridding ourselves of all scientific metaphors and forging new paradigms that are ethicoaesthetic, taking inspiration from Goethe, Proust, Joyce, Artaud, and Beckett, who he describes as the "best cartographers of the psyche" (p. 37). He emphasizes a reassessment of psychoanalysis that invokes both ethical and

aesthetic paradigms that underline a new sense of “engagement” and the fact that in practical psychiatry everything has to be continually reinvented, like a work in progress.

His understanding of subjectivity departs from the Cartesian-Kantian tradition, to talk of *components of subjectivity* rather than the subject and to emphasize a distinction between the individual and subjectivity. As he writes:

Vectors of subjectivity do not necessarily pass through the individual, which in reality appears to be something like a “terminal” for processes that involve human groups, socio-economic ensembles, data-processing machines, etc. Therefore, interiority establishes itself at the crossroads of multiple components, each relatively autonomous to relation to the other, and if need be, in open conflict. (p. 36)

As his translators put it: “Guattari is fascinated by the non-human aspect of subjectivity. Singularity is not individuality, although it is about being singular. It operates at a pre-personal, pre-individual level.” They go on to argue: “The resingularization of subjectivity, the liberation of singularities that are repressed by a dominant and dominating mass-media subjectivity, has nothing to do with individuals” (Pindar and Sutton, 2000: 11–12). And they quote Deleuze to good effect:

Far from being individual or personal, singularities preside over the genesis of individuals and persons; they are distributed in a “potential” which admits neither Self nor I, but which produces them by actualising or realizing itself, although the figures of this actualization do not at all resemble the realized potential. Only a theory of singular points is capable of transcending the synthesis of the person and the analysis of the individual as these are (or are made) in consciousness. (Deleuze, 1990: 102–23, cited in Pindar and Sutton, fn 12, 19)

In line with this understanding of subjectivity, the three ecologies are ruled by a logic different from that of ordinary communication between speaking subjects. It is not a discursive logic or one pertaining to signification. By contrast, eco-logic is “a logic of intensities, of auto-referential existential assemblages engaging in irreversible durations” (p. 44) concerned only with “the movement and intensities of the evolutive processes” (p. 44). Guattari defines process in opposition to system and structure, as that which “strives to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, definition and deterritorialization” and relating to “expressive subsets that have broken out of their totalizing frame, manifesting themselves as their own existential indices, processual lines of flight” (p. 44).

Ecological praxes, in a-signifying ruptures of systems of signification, act as catalytic vectors of singularization and subjectification, producing a partial, dissident, or breakaway subjectivity.¹⁵ Their objective is to enable the singular, to protect the rare and the exceptional, and to resist the homogenization of subjectivities by new capitalist market-technologies at deeper and deeper levels of the unconscious. In a word, these new ecological practices aim to activate repressed singularities and single events that might possess a catalyzing micropolitical power and application out of all proportion to their size or magnitude. Thus, within a system of potential energy, only a small—sometimes infinitesimally small—"event" may trigger a massive expenditure of energy, as when a loose rock on the mountainside causes an avalanche, or a spark kindles a forest fire.¹⁶

The dualist oppositions that characterized the older social antagonisms of class and the Cold War are over. While the conflicts remain they are no longer to be understood in terms of an unequivocal ideology for they have been transmuted in multipolar allegiances and nationalist demands for singularity. Guattari (2000: 33) argues: "It is in this context of break-up and decentralization, the multiplication of antagonisms and processes of singularization, that the new ecological problematics suddenly appear."

In terms of the development of social relations, Guattari suggests, we must cultivate a *dissensus* (cf., Lyotard, 1983), one comprised of "dissident subjectivities" that are untamed and unpredictable. He argues: "The principle specific to social ecology concerns the development of affective and pragmatic cathexis in human groups of differing sizes" (p. 60).¹⁷

IWC produces three types of subjectivity: "Firstly, a serial subjectivity corresponding to the salaried classes, secondly, to the huge mass of 'uninsured' and finally an élitist subjectivity corresponding to the executive sectors" (p. 61). Guattari argues that mass-mediatization has created even greater divergences between these groups and that an essential point of transformation for social ecology is when capitalist societies are encouraged to make the transition to a post-media age, "in which the media will be reappropriated by a multitude of subject-groups capable of directing its resingularization" (p. 61). While this seems an unlikely possibility, Guattari reminds us of the effects of sudden consciousness raising, the progressive collapse of Stalinism which leaves room for other social struggles, the democratizing potential of the media as technological evolution achieves reductions in costs, and a reconstitution of the labour process substitutes a postindustrial, "creationist," subjectivity for the old industrial Taylorist mass ideologies.

Under the principle of environmental ecology—anything is possible—Guattari, perceptively remarks that natural equilibriums will come to rely

on human intervention, at which point we have reached a stage where we will require more than a defense of nature. We will need to adopt a new ecosophical ethics to engage with the issues of the creation of new living species and we will need to invent new stories of the “permanent recreation of the world [to] replace the narrative of biblical genesis” (p. 67).¹⁸

He writes in conclusion:

A new ecosophy, at once applied and theoretical, ethico-political and aesthetic, would have to move away from the old forms of political, religious and associative commitment . . . Rather than being a discipline of refolding on interiority, or a simple renewal of earlier forms of “militancy”, it will be a multi-faceted movement, deploying agencies and dispositives that will simultaneously analyse and produce subjectivity. (pp. 67–68)

As the translators makes clear, Guattari envisages “moments when eco-activists will work together, and other times when they drift apart again. The important thing is that they do not have a leader directing their activity” (Pindar and Sutton, 2000, 14). This “fluidarity” (the translators’ word), Pindar and Sutton argue, following Alan Carter (1999), will be directed at the development of egalitarian, decentralized, democracies, and towards a sustainable way of life. As they go on to note, a “capitalism that does not exploit resources . . . is as yet unthinkable. A capitalism that is symbiotic rather than parasitic may never be possible” (p. 15). In this situation, trapped on Spaceship Earth, we need to develop an immanent, materialist ethics based on the respect for *terrestrial* life (as opposed to religious beliefs), together with a new global politics that is produced by what Guattari calls *heterogenesis*, that is, processes of continuous resingularization that help us to become both more unified and also increasingly different.

NOTES

“Antiglobalization and Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies*” previously appeared in *Globalization* (<http://globalization.icaap.org/volume2issue1.html> 2, no. 1 (winter 2002)).

1. My wife and I stayed for a couple of weeks at Tossa de Mar at the height of the tourist season. As antipodeans, it was our first experience of a European beach holiday. The little Spanish town was previously a fishing village. It incorporates the beautiful medieval-walled Vila Vella and has links back to Roman and, indeed, neolithic, times. Since the 1970s Tossa de Mar has increasingly fallen prey to problems of tourist overdevelopment, with thousands of Spanish, Italian, French, German, and British tourists descending upon it for their annual summer holiday. By

"overdevelopment" I mean the development of numerous multistoried hotels, hostels and time-share apartments that ring the foreshore at one end of the bay and, progressively, have been built in the township itself to exploit the panoramic views. These developments, which are built butting up against one another, have created "mini-canyons" with no public areas or plantings, increasingly crowding out the township, valley, and vistas. The effects are obvious on the microecosystem, particularly, the pollution of the beach, seawater, and coastline. Coincidentally, during our stay Greenpeace issued a statement stating that the ecology of the Costa Brava had reached a critical point under the onslaught of mass tourism (reported in *The Times*, Saturday, 4 August). Local media, and even local business proprietors, emphasized the same themes of overcrowding and ecological overload. The village was an artist colony during the early 1930s, with frequent visits by the likes of Chagall, Masson, Zügel, Kars, Metzinger, Mompou, and many others. I emphasize my environment and the locality (of thought) as it anticipates several Guattarian themes essential to ecosophy, especially deterritorialization.

2. The *International Herald Tribune*, in a front-page story (Thursday, 9 August) reported that an American student on her way elsewhere stopped over in Genoa to participate in the peaceful demonstrations. She was among the 92 other peaceful protestors whose headquarters Italian police raided on July 22, 60 of whom were injured, many hospitalized, and some would have died without emergency treatment. Only belatedly have some European ministers and heads of state begun to comment that the Italian police "over-reacted"; other commentators have likened the brutality of the Italian *carabinieri* to fascist activity. *Newsweek* reported that the police were singing fascist songs.

3. The molding and control of subjectivities by the world mass media is a feature of what Guattari (2000: 47) calls *Integrated World Capitalism* (IWC), which, as he says: "tends increasingly to decentre its sites of power, moving away from structures producing goods and services towards structures producing signs, syntax and—in particular, through the control which it exercises over the media, advertising, opinion polls, etc—subjectivity." I am pleased to say that there have been some exceptions to these generalizations about world mass media by the likes of the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, with articles written both by staff writers and academic/intellectuals, as I acknowledge in the text. It is also the case that *Newsweek* (30 July, p. 13) carried a story by Fareed Zakaria that characterized the protestors as a unitary movement which is fundamentally "anti-technology" and techno-phobic. By contrast, the report by Greg Burke in *Newsweek* (July 30, pp. 24–25) was very critical of the G8 summit: "Out of sight and smell of the blood and tear gas the leaders inside the red zone discussed regional conflicts like the Middle East and Macedonia and failed to bridge their gap in the Kyoto Protocol. . . . Nowhere did they break new ground or produce new ideas for the pressing problems of the world. That paucity of progress . . . gave new force to the question of whether such meetings should be held at all" (p. 25). Burke quotes the European Commission president Romano Prodi as saying that the summits had grown "extravagant and excessive" and that it was time to "return to an organization which puts priority on people" (ibid.).

4. It is also true to say that Tony Blair was the most outspoken of the G8 leaders in favor of moves to reduce the debt burden facing the world's poorest countries.

5. Some would argue that the heightened ecological consciousness said to distinguish Third Way politics from neoliberalism is not evidence in New Labour's handling of the foot and mouth crisis affecting British farming and rural life. The ecological crisis of food sources in Britain in recent years has reached new heights with, in addition, to the outbreak of foot and mouth, "mad cow" disease, salmonella scares, depletion of fish stocks, contamination of salmon feed, and so forth. These problems are exacerbated by the monopolization of food-stuffs retailing, false advertising, incomplete and misleading acknowledgment of contents in foodstuffs, and poor consumer watchdog standards and enforcement. It is to be noted that New Labour has invested considerable sums in research into genetic foodstuffs.

6. Guattari was born in 1930, joined the youth division of the Paris Communist Party, became involved with experimental psychiatry, trained with Lacan in the 1960s, founded the *Société de psychothérapie institutionnelle* in 1965, met Deleuze in 1969, formed a close friendship with Toni Negri in the same period, was active politically both internationally and locally (standing in Paris regional elections), and died in 1992. See the full chronology, on which this summary is based, provided by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, translators of *The Three Ecologies* (pp. ix–xv).

7. This is not meant to imply that the themes I discuss in this chapter do not appear in books he wrote by himself. See especially, Guattari's *Molecular Revolution* (Fr. 1977, trans. 1984), *L'Inconscient machinique: Essai de schizo-analyse* (1979), *Les années d'hiver 1980–1985* (1986), *Cartographies schizoanalytiques* (1989) and *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Fr. 1992, trans. 1995).

8. I was led to this possibility, in part, through the conjunction of events—reading Guattari's *Three Ecologies* in the aftermath of Genoa—and, in part, by Pindar and Sutton's "Translators' Introduction." As they suggest: "Guattari's finely nuanced, radically dissensual approach to *social ecology* requires the collective production of unpredictable and untamed 'dissident subjectivities' rather than a mass movement of like people" (p. 14) and in a footnote they point to the "fit" between Guattari's characterization of social ecology and the "Carnival against Capitalism" that took place in London on June 18, 1999 (see fn 17, p. 19).

9. The Hegelian philosopher of jurisprudence Norberto Bobbio (1994) in *The Age of Rights* provides a useful description of these generational rights, although his Hegelian philosophy of history appears to me wrong-headed, especially in light of the reversal of so-called social rights that occurred in the 1980s under the combined forces of the neo-conservative Thatcher-Reagan administrations. There are no real signs that Third Way governments in the West have attempted to restore these social rights. If the second-term Blair government, re-elected in 2001, is anything to go by, the privatization of public services and, thereby, the continued erosion of citizen rights is pursued with a renewed vigor.

10. Klaus Schwab (2001), founder and chairman of the World Economic Forum, also points to the "systemic failure" of the present institutions that provide a measure of world governance (UN, IMF, WB, WTO) and embraces the need for global institutions that more effectively and democratically deal with the problems we face. He suggests that the G8 be replaced with the broader Group of 20. Foreign Office minister in the Blair government, Peter Hain, like a number of other commentators, criticized the "ruling élite" in Europe talking to itself and becoming remote from ordinary people (reported by David Hughes in the *Daily Mail*, July 25, p. 2).

11. Susan George (2001), by contrast, provides a graphic account of the anti-democratic strategies and tactics adopted by the opponents of the protestors at Genoa, detailing the use of force and manipulation and reporting on the ideological backlash. George suggests that there is evidence of complicity between authorities and gangs of the Black Block *agent provocateurs* (see fn 4).

12. To each of the three ecologies there corresponds what Guattari calls an existential Territory, which is one of four ontological domains—including Universes, Fluxes, and Phylums—that defines an ecological niche or home.

13. It is not often noted that Bateson was a part of the "cybernetics group," including Claude Shannon, Norbert Wiener, Margaret Mead (his, then, wife), and Kurt Lewin, among others who meet regularly during the 1940s to develop cybernetic epistemology and applications.

14. Genosko (2000: 149) describes him as "a forward looking cartographer of the unconscious, a pragmatist whose formulations centered on assemblages of subjectification, rather than a backward looking scientific interpreter of a restricted topography all of whose roads led back to childhood, or for that matter, to the signifying chain." In a passage Genosko cites from Guattari, Guattari talks of his rejection of the Conscious-Unconscious dualism and of "An unconscious of flux and abstract machines, more than an unconscious of structure and language" (ibid.).

15. On the principle specific to mental ecology—likened by Guattari to Freud's "primary process"—see pp. 54–58.

16. Pindar & Sutton refer to the physicist James Clerk Maxwell whom Prigogine and Stengers cite, thus: "Every existence above a certain rank has its singular points: the higher the rank, the more of them. At these points, influences whose physical magnitude is too small to be taken into account by a finite being, may produce results of the greatest importance. All great results produced by human endeavour depend on taking advantage of these singular points when they occur."

17. Guattari presents two options for how social ecology relates to mental ecology: what he calls a personological triangulation—I-YOU-S/HE, Father-Mother-Child—or auto-referential subject groups (see pp. 60–61).

18. Guattari's comment is as apposite now as it was over a decade ago, especially given the recent controversy that broke during mid-August 2001 over President Bush's decision to finance federal research to the tune of \$100 million based on the existing 60–65 stem cell lines.

REFERENCES

- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine.
- Bobbio, Norberto. 1994. *The Age of Rights*. London: Polity Press.
- Brant, Martha, and Barbie Nadeau. 2001. "First Blood." *Newsweek*, July 30, pp. 14–18.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1984. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia I*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. London: The Athlone Press.
- . 1986. *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: The Athlone Press.
- . 1994. *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Genosko, Gary. 2000. "The Life and Work of Félix Guattari: From Transversality to Ecosophy." In Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*. Trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, London: The Athlone Press: 106–60.
- George, Susan. 2001. "The Genoa Protests: Democracy at the Barricades." *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 2001 (www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2001/08/02/genoa).
- Gitlin, Todd. 2001. "Having a Riot." *Newsweek*, July 23, pp. 48–49.
- Guattari, Félix. 1979. *L'Inconscient machinique: Essai de schizo-analyse*. Fontenay-sous Bois: Éditions Recherches.
- . 1984. *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*. Trans. Rosemary Sheed. London: Penguin.
- . 1986. *Les années d'hiver 1980–1985*. Paris: Barrault.
- . 1989. *Cartographies schizoanalytiques*. Paris: Éditions Galilée.
- . 1995. *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis. Sydney: Power Publications.
- . 2000. *The Three Ecologies*. Trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton. London and New Brunswick, N.J.: The Athlone Press.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2001. "The New Faces in Genoa Want a Different Future." *The New York Times*. Reprinted in *The International Herald Tribune*, July 25, p. 6.
- Schwab, Klaus. 2001. "The World's New Actors Need a Bigger Stage." *Newsweek*, July 30, p. 18.

Index

- Acker, K., 245, 257
 Adorno, T., 2, 40, 60, 90, 193, 269, 270, 271
 Ahmad, E., 268
 Althusser, L., 8, 207
 Amin, S., 183
 Amis, M., 239
 analytic-Continental divide, 23–26
 Anderson, L., 241, 247
 antiglobalization, 275–84
 Arab-Israeli war, 262
 Archer, M., 230, 232, 233, 234
 Bataille, G., 4
 Bateson, G., 280, 281
 Baudelaire, C.-P., 92
 Baudrillard, J., 62
 Beauvoir, S. de, 181, 255
 Benjamin, W., 222
 Bennington, G., 146
 Bergson, H., 11, 130
 Bernstein, R., 95, 96
 Bhabha, H., 271
 Bhaskar, R., 232, 233
 Blair, T., 276
 Bourdieu, P., 187–96
The Boys from Brazil, 250
 Breton, A., 4
 Bryman, A., 230
 Bush, G. W., 206
 Butler, J., 12, 13, 203, 205, 246
 Caputo, J., 141, 149
 Chomsky, N., 190
 Cixous, H., 257
 Critchley, S., 23–25, 215
 critical theory, 16; criticism as
 practical politics, 88–94; critique,
 86–88; critique of modernity,
 26–30; and deconstruction, 142–44;
 scope of, 16–19
 cyberfeminism, 239–58
 cyberspace, 240; cyber-imaginary,
 252–55; cyberpunk, 253
 deconstruction: and difference,
 146–48; and justice, 141–53; and
 metaphysics of presence, 144–46
 Deleuze, G., 5, 11–12, 93, 247, 277,
 282; as critical theorist, 127–38;
 and critical theory, 14–16; and
 Guattari, F., 2, 15, 128, 129, 132,
 133, 134, 135, 138
Demon Seed, 250
Der Himmel Über Berlin, 256

- Derrida, J., 1, 5, 8–10, 12, 32, 33, 117, 118, 141–53, 221. *See also* deconstruction; *différance*
- Descartes, R., 5, 41, 83, 95
- Dewey, J., 189
- différance*, 9, 10, 146–48, 149, 150
- Dosse, F., 7
- Dreyfus, H., 65
- Dunayevskaya, R., 224–25
- Eno, B., 248
- ethics, the face of, 109–12
- EU. *See* European Union
- European Union (EU), 276
- Ewald, F., 141, 146
- existentialism, 5, 78
- Feenberg, A., 59–69
- feminism: French, 170; and science fiction, 250–52. *See also* cyberfeminism
- Feyerabend, P., 155
- Foucault, M., 1, 12, 13–14, 32, 33, 34–35, 40–41, 136, 240, 242; and critique, 73–98; on the self, 48–52
- Frankfurt school, 2, 16, 31, 39, 60
- Fraser, N., 80, 83
- freedom, 39, 40
- French and Saunders, 257
- French theory, 1–3, 127
- Freud, S., 4, 10, 132, 133, 143, 193; Freudism, 129
- Galeano, E., 212
- GATT. *See* General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
- General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 276
- Genosko, G., 281
- Giddens, A., 229–36, 276
- Gitlin, T., 278
- Giuliani, C., 275
- Gramsci, A., 220
- Guattari, F., 275–84; and Negri, A., 275
- Gulf War, 206, 267
- Habermas, J., 7, 39, 40, 89–92, 143, 155; and question of postmodernity, 30–35
- habitus, 188–89, 190, 191, 192, 196. *See also* Bourdieu, P.
- Hand, S., 14
- Haraway, D., 240, 245
- Hardt, M., 15–16, 277–78
- Hartsock, N., 255
- Hegel, G., 3–14, 33, 90, 91, 110, 174, 175, 176, 219, 223
- Heidegger, M., 6–7, 8, 31, 86, 110, 143; and *The Question Concerning Technology*, 59–66
- Hiley, D., 79, 83
- Hill, R. B., 211
- Hitler, A., 60
- Holzer, J., 241, 248
- Horkheimer, M., 40, 90, 193
- Hudis, P., 219
- humanism, 6–7, 23, 78–83, 240; antihumanism, 83–86; Marxist, 223, 224; posthuman bodies, 241–44
- Humboldt, W., 162
- Hume, D., 41–42, 130
- Husserl, E., 10, 116
- identity politics, 203–5
- ideology, 205–9
- IMF. *See* International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- imperialism, U.S. and U.K., 207
- Indiana Jones*, 250
- Inseminoid*, 250
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), 276
- Iraq, versus imperialist armies, 207
- Irigaray, L., 169–84, 246
- Jackson, M., 243, 244
- Jefferson, T., 84
- Johnny Mnemonic*, 253
- Jonas, H., 104
- justice, 112–16; and deconstruction, 141–52

- Kafka, F., 137
 Kant, I., 16–18, 24, 40, 41, 143;
 Foucault, M., and, 74–81, 83, 87,
 91, 94, 95
 Kearney, R., 114
 Kofman, S., 11
 Koons, J., 244
 Korten, D., 199
 Kroker, A. and M., 251
 Krueger, B., 247, 248
 Kuhn, T., 155

 Lacan, J., 131, 132, 178, 200, 281
 Laclau, E., 201, 216–17; and Mouffe,
 C., 201, 217
 Large, D., 11
 Latour, B., 66
Lawn Mower Man, 253
 Leibniz, G. W., 130
 Lenin, V., 198, 218, 219, 220
 Levinas, E., 103–18, 142
 Lévi-Strauss, C., 7, 10, 190, 191
 Locke, J., 17, 42
 Lotringer, S., 2–3, 19
 Lyotard, J.-F., 19, 31–32, 106, 128,
 155–67

The Man Who Folded Himself, 250
 Marcuse, H., 4, 59–62
 Marx, K., 4, 7, 8, 15, 40, 41, 133,
 193, 199, 208–16, 219, 221,
 223–25
 Marxism, 4, 5, 11, 62, 64, 78, 90, 92,
 129, 174, 197, 200, 201, 205,
 220–21, 224, 225; and class
 struggle, 216–25
 Masumi, B., 138
 McCarthy, T., 82
 McNally, D., 222
 McVeigh, T., 206
 Mead, G. H., 189
 Means, R., 214
 Midler, B., 252
 Miller, J., 74, 80, 81, 88, 95
 Min Ha, T., 247
 modernism, 29
 modernity: critique of, 26–30;
 postmodernity, 30–35, 239–41
 multiculturalism, 209–16

 Naess, A., 279
 NAFTA. *See* North American Free
 Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
 Nazism, 60, 61, 109
 Negri, A., 15–16, 277–78
 Nehamas, A., 28–29
 New Left, 60
 new social movements, 169
 Nietzsche, F., 3, 15, 39, 40, 46–47, 49,
 52, 84, 91, 104, 106, 145, 242; and
 Hegel, 3–14; nihilism and the
 critique of modernity, 23–35;
 post-Nietzschean philosophy,
 25
 nihilism, 23, 24; Deleuze, G., and,
 130–31
 North American Free Trade
 Agreement (NAFTA), 276
 Nussbaum, M., 94–98

 “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” 207
 Orientalism, 261, 262, 264, 265
 Other, the, 109–12, 113, 114, 115,
 116, 117, 210, 211–12, 213,
 216
 Outhwaite, W., 234

 Paine, T., 84
 Peters, M., 19
 Popper, K., 144
 posthuman bodies, 241–44
 postmodernity, 30–35, 239–41

 Reagan, R., 208, 276
 Reich, W., 133
 religious thought, 106–9
 Rodney, W., 213
 Rorty, R., 129
Rosemary's Baby, 250
 Rousseau, J.-J., 43, 84
 Rubin, G., 180
 Rushdie, S., 268

- Said, E., 261–72
 Sartre, J.-P., 5, 6, 129, 281
 Saussure, F. de, 146, 147
 Schmitt, C., 60
 Schopenhauer, A., 40, 43–46, 47, 50
 self, critical theory of, 39–52
 Serres, M., 105
 sexual difference, 169, 170, 172, 177, 180. *See also* cyberfeminism
 Sherman, C., 241
 Shiva, V., 183
 Sluga, H., 45, 46
 Spinoza, B., 113, 130
 Spivak, G., 9, 184
 structuralism, 7, 8
 structuration theory, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236
 surrealism, 4, 200
 technology, 59–69. *See also* cyberfeminism
 Terkel, S., 187
 Thatcher, M., 276
 Thiongo, N., 268
 Third Way politics, 276

Videodrome, 253
Village of the Damned, 250

 Wallerstein, I., 169, 183
 Warren, M., 29–30
 WB. *See* World Bank (WB)
 Wenders, W., 256
 Wittgenstein, L., 40, 43–46, 50
 Wolin, R., 59
 Wood, E. M., 204
 World Bank (WB), 276
 World Trade Organization (WTO), 276
 WTO. *See* World Trade Organization

 Zizek, S., 197–226

About the Contributors

Bill Ashcroft teaches in the School of English at the University of New South Wales. He is the author and coauthor of several books, including the seminal *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995), *The Gimbals of Unease: The Poetry of Francis Webb* (1996), *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998), *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity* (1999), and *Edward Said* (2000). His most recent works are *Post-Colonial Transformation* (2001) and *On Post-Colonial Futures* (2001).

Gert J. J. Biesta is professor of educational theory in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter, England, and visiting professor for education and democratic citizenship at Örebro University, Sweden. He is editor-in-chief of *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. Recent publications include *Derrida & Education* (edited with Denise Egéa-Kuehne, 2001) and *Pragmatism and Educational Research* (with Nicholas C. Burbules, 2003).

Rosi Braidotti is professor of women's studies in the Arts Faculty of Utrecht University and scientific director of the Netherlands Research School of Women's Studies. She coordinates ATHENA, the European Thematic Network of Women's Studies for the European Commission's SOCRATES program, as well as the NOISE inter-European University exchange program. During the academic year of 1994–1995 she was a fellow in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. In 2001 she was awarded a Jean Monet fellowship in the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute, Florence.

Her publications include: *Metamorphoses: Toward a Materialistic Theory of Becoming* (2002); *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference* (1994); *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis* (with Sabine Hausler, Ewa Pluta, and Saskia Wieringa); and *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (1991). Her work has been translated in several languages. She has published extensively in feminist philosophy, epistemology, poststructuralism, and psychoanalysis. She serves as an advisor to the journals: *Signs*, *Differences*, *Feminist Theory*, and *The European Journal of Women's Studies*. She is currently concentrating her philosophical research on the concept of difference and the notion of 'Europe'.

Pheng Cheah teaches in the rhetoric department at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (forthcoming 2003) and the coeditor of *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson* (forthcoming 2003); *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998); and *Thinking through the Body of the Law* (1996). He is currently working on a manuscript on financialization, human rights, and the inhuman for Harvard University Press.

Denise Egéa-Kuehne is director of the French Education Project for Research and Teacher Education and associate professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. She has been an invited scholar at the Institut National de la Recherche Pédagogique, Paris. Her areas of research include curriculum theory, philosophy of education, critical theory, and cultural studies with a focus on French authors. She lectures and publishes in North America and Europe on issues of diversity, languages, human rights, and related ethicopolitical issues. She recently coauthored and coedited a book with Gert J. J. Biesta, *Derrida & Education* (2001) and is currently working on texts by Levinas, Serres, and Derrida.

Colin Lankshear is currently a professorial fellow at the University of Ballarat, Australia, and a freelance education researcher and writer based in Mexico. Formerly a professor of education, he was heritage fellow of the Mexican National Council for Science and Technology during 1999–2001. He has published widely in international journals and is the author of *Changing Literacies* (1997), and joint author of *Digital Literacies* (1997), *Teachers and Technoliteracy* (2000), and *New Literacies and Changing Knowledge in the Classroom* (2003).

James D. Marshall is professor of education and was the foundation dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is the author or editor of twenty-two books, including an authored book on Foucault, a coauthored book with Michael Peters on social policy, a coauthored book with Dominique Marshall on punishment of children, and books on Wittgenstein with Paul Smeyers and Michael Peters. He has published widely in international journals in the areas of social theory, policy, and education.

Peter McLaren is a professor in the Division of Urban Schooling, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author and editor of forty books on a wide range of topics that include critical pedagogy, the sociology of education, and Marxist theory. He is the recent recipient of the Paulo Freire Social Justice Award from Chapman University, California.

John R. Morss was born in London of Marxist parentage and educated at Sheffield and Edinburgh Universities. He lectured in developmental psychology and related areas for twenty years at the Universities of Ulster, United Kingdom, and Otago, New Zealand. He became interested in Deleuze through critical psychology. He is currently completing studies at the Law School of the University of Otago. His latest books are *Postmodern Psychologies* (edited with Lois Holzman, 2000) and *Theoretical Issues in Psychology* (edited with Niamh Stephenson and Hans van Rappard, 2001).

Roy Nash is a sociologist of education at Massey University College of Education, New Zealand. His principal interest is in theories of social difference in access to education. This is the subject of his most recent book, *School Learning: Conversations with the Sociology of Education*.

Mark Olssen is reader and director of doctoral programs, in the Department of Educational Studies, University of Surrey. He is editor of *Mental Testing in New Zealand: Critical and Oppositional Perspectives* (1988), author (with Elaine Papps) of *Doctoring Childbirth and Regulatory Midwifery in New Zealand* (1997), and editor with Kay Morris Matthews of *Education Policy in New Zealand: The 1990s and Beyond* (1997). More recently he is author of *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education* (1999). He has published articles in Britain in the *Journal of Education Policy*, *The British Journal of Educational Studies*, *Educational Psychology*, and *Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

Michael Peters is research professor of education at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, and holds a personal chair at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is also adjunct professor of communication studies at the Auckland University of Technology. He has research interests in educational theory and policy, and in contemporary philosophy. He has published over one hundred articles and some twenty books in these fields, including: *Poststructuralism, Marxism, and Neoliberalism* (2001); *Nietzsche's Legacy for Education: Past and Present Values* (edited, 2001); *Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Postmodernism, Pedagogy* (with James Marshall, 1999); *Poststructuralism, Politics and Education* (1996); *Curriculum in the Postmodern Condition* (edited, 2000); *Education and the Postmodern Condition* (edited, 1995/97).

David Scott is chair of educational leadership and learning at the University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. He has previously worked at the Universities of London, Southampton, and Warwick, as well as the Open University. He has conducted or is conducting research projects in professional doctorates and professional development in education, citizenship education, accelerated learning in literacy and numeracy, among others. He was the editor of *The Curriculum Journal* between 1996–2002, and is visiting lecturer at London University and visiting research professor (curriculum) at the University of Cyprus. He is the series editor for *International Perspectives on the Curriculum* (Greenwood Press), and has published widely in the fields of assessment, curriculum, citizenship education, and research methodology. His most recent books are *Reading Educational Research and Policy* (2001); *A Realist Approach to Educational Research: Possibilities and Perspectives* (2000); and *Researching Education: Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Enquiry* (with Robin Usher, 1996). In addition, he has edited thirteen books and published over thirty chapters in edited books and fifteen journal articles.

Iain Thomson is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico, specializing in Heidegger's philosophy. He has articles published (or forthcoming) in *Inquiry*, *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophy Today*, the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, *Ancient Philosophy*, and the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. He is currently working on a book titled *Heidegger, Education, Politics*.

Peter Pericles Trifonas teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. His most recent books are *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy* (2002); *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Justice* (2002), and *Good Taste*.