



FRENCH FANTASIES

Baudrillard
Foucault

Canadian Journal of
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
THEORY

Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory
Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale

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The Journal acknowledges with gratitude the generous assistance of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada/Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines au Canada.

Publication of the Journal has been facilitated by the generous assistance of Concordia University, and in particular by the Department of Political Science, by the Office of the Dean of Social Science, and by the Fonds F.C.A.R..

Indexed in/Indexée au: International Political Science Abstracts/Documentation politique internationale; Sociological Abstracts Inc., Advance Bibliography of Contents: Political Science and Government; Canadian Periodical Index; and Alternative Press Index.

Member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association.

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Cover Design: Marilouise Kroker

Cover Photograph: Man Ray © Vis-Art.

ISSN 0380-9420 Printed in Canada

Canadian Journal of
Political and Social Theory

Revue canadienne
de théorie politique et sociale

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Volume XI: Number 3: 1987

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THE GAMES OF FOUCAULT

Arthur Kroker

Cynical Sex

Cynical sex: this is what we have at the end of the world. For sex no longer exists as a privileged referent of the Real nor as the locus of a suppressed subjectivity, but as postmodern sex, fascinating now only on its reverse side — the Bataille side of expenditure, waste, and excess. A *sacrificial* sex, then, that exists only parodically and schizoidly because sex has entered into its third order of simulation: the ideological *mise-en-scène* where the postmodern body promises its own negation. Here the previously reflexive connection between sexuality and desire is blasted away by the seductive vision of sex without organs — a hyperreal, surrogate, and telematic sex like that promised (but *never* delivered) by the computerized phone sex of the Minitel system in France — as the ultimate out-of-body experience for the end of the second millenium. Here the terror of the ruined surfaces of the body translates immediately into its opposite — *the ecstasy of catastrophe and the pleasure of sex without secretions as a final, ironic sign of our liberation.*

In his recent schizo-biography, Jean Baudrillard said this about the invasion of the body, under the double signs of the pleasure of catastrophe and the terror of the simulacrum, by the logic of exterminism — that is, the implosion of the postmodern body into an indifferent sign-slide between the hermetic self and the schizoid ego:

And if reality under our eyes would suddenly dissolve? Not into nothingness, but into a real which is more than real (the triumph of simulation?). If the modern universe of communication, the space of hypercommunication through which we are plunging, not in forget-

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fulness, but with an enormous saturation of our senses, would consume us in its success — without trickery, without secrets, without distance? If all this mutation did not emanate, as some believe, from the manipulation of subjects and opinion, but from a logic without a subject where opinion vanishes into fascination? If it would no longer be correct to oppose truth to illusion, but to perceive generalized illusion as truer than truth? And if no other behavior was possible than that of learning ironically how to disappear? If there were no longer any fractures, lines of flight or ruptures, but a surface full and continuous, without depth, uninterrupted? And if all of this was neither a matter of enthusiasm nor despair, but fatal?¹

A 'logic without a subject' in the late 1980s is sex without a body, a sex that is interesting as every advertiser knows when it is about the death of seduction (like the *New Look* in Paris fashion where what counts is "innocence not experience," or, as Dorothy Vallens says in *Blue Velvet* about sexual encounters of the hyperreal kind: "you have put your disease inside me"); or, more than this, a sex which is about the liquidation of the body and the cancellation of desire itself — like the TV sex of *Videodrome* or the "smart sex" of the New York art scene because it's neo-geo to excess in an age of the death of desire and the spreading out everywhere of a pervasive mood of indifference. Hyperreal sex, therefore, is a violent edge between kitsch and decay, between violence and inertia, between cyberspace and hyper-subjectivity. No longer Foucault's "local bodies," "effective history" and "subjugated knowledge," but the ideological production of cynical sex energized from within by subjugated knowledge, by the constant recycling of local histories, and by the endless reprise of difference.

It is ironic. 1986 was the 350th anniversary of the publication of Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* and, with it, the production of the epistemological menu for the emergence of the modernist, geometrically centered perspective of the thinking head, framed within the discursive space of the liberal body. All of the key tendencies of contemporary French thought — from Michel Serres' bleak vision of *Le parasite* (where the positions of predator and parasite are the regulatory poles of hypermodern experience), and Bataille's meditations on the *solar anus* and the *pineal eye* as the privileged signs of the general economy of excess, to Michel Foucault's early philosophical reflections on madness as an indifferent absence, to, finally, Jean Baudrillard's hologram of the postmodern scene — represent the fatal implosion of the Cartesian subject. No longer the Cartesian thinking self, but *fractal subjectivity* in a hypermodern culture where panic science is the language of power; not ratiocination to excess, but *parallel processing* as the epistemological *reçit* of postmodern consciousness; not the local body, but *technologies for the body immune* as key features of a libidinal economy that

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produces toxic bodies and designer aesthetics as its necessary conditions of operation; and not univocal (grounded) perspective anymore, but the fascinating implosion of perspective into the *cyberspace of virtual technology*. For when we already live beyond gravity (in hyperreal bodies) and beyond representational space (in the mathematical reality of *fuzzy sets* where individual particles have no determinate meaning apart from their random patterning within larger and more abstract statistical totalities), then the Cartesian self no longer exists except, perhaps, as an optical afterimage of the present condition of the post-Cartesian body as *dangling subjectivity in quantum reality*.

What, then, of the *post-Cartesian* body? This is the imploded body of postmodernism that has been traced in all of its detrital residue, in all of its exhaustion as it disappears into the suffocating, dark density of the schizoid sign; the missing body that has been marked as the sutured absence of Derrida's *trace*, of Lacan's *misrecognition*, of Irigaray's *speculum*; the hypermodern body that can be thematised now as the ventilated remainder of dangling subjectivities in quantum reality because its existence has been reduced to the threefold trajectory of a cynical power.

1. *Technologically*, the postmodern body is both objective remainder and subjective constituent of the technical interpellation of identity by dead and spectral image-systems. Not Foucault's "technologies of the self" whereby the modern self constitutes itself as the ethical subject of its own sexual conduct (although that too), but a hyper-technology of the self to such a point of violent excess that the self is (ideologically) peeled inside out, exteriorizing all of its bodily parts in society as cyberspace. Like the "world strip" of quantum physics, music, images, language, all of the sidereal cultural vibrations, pass through the dead space of hypermodern bodies, making of bodies only a topological and surface feature of hypercommunication. The postmodern body, therefore, is a *superconductor* for all of the dying energies of the social.

2. *Ideologically*, the postmodern body is the prime after-effect of its possession by the violent and excessive language of *contractarian liberalism*. Not contractarian liberalism with its reduction of the meaning of justice to a barren equality in the primary goods of the industrial heartland of North America, but a contractual theory of justice that focusses on *body invasion*; from the Baby M case where the natural mother is reduced to a "hired womb" and the surrogate father (he was, anyway, always just borrowed sperm) is consecrated anew as the real, living Daddy, to all the recent cases of *fetal appropriation* whereby the state intervenes (supposedly on behalf of the rights of the unborn baby) to take juridical possession of the body of the mother; and the conflation of the private property principle and genetics, wherein the reproduction of new life forms is rendered a matter of market-determination with the newly legislated power of business to

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acquire patent rights on the genetic creation of new life-species.

3. Finally, in the language of *fashion*, or in the semiotics of visual pleasure and transgression, the postmodern body is tattooed by all of the signs of the death of seduction. In a postmodern culture dominated by the disappearance of the Real and by the suffocation of natural contexts, fashion provides aesthetic holograms as moveable texts for the general economy of excess. If fashion cycles appear to move towards greater and greater speed, violence, and intensity of circulation of signs, that is because fashion, in an era where the body is the inscribed surface of events, is like brownian motion: the greater the violence and circulation of its surface features, the greater the internal movement towards stasis, immobility and interia. A whole postmodern culture, therefore, under the double sign of culture where, as Baudrillard has hinted, the secret of fashion is to introduce the *appearance* of radical novelty while maintaining the *reality* of no substantial change. Or is it the opposite? Not fashion as a referent of the third (simulational) order of the real, but as itself the spectacular sign of a parasitical culture that, always excessive, disaccumulative, and sacrificial, is drawn inexorably towards the ecstasy of catastrophe. The fashion scene, and the tattooed body with it, as a Batailleian piling up of the "groundless refuse of activity" because the sign of the Real has now disappeared into appearance. Consequently, the fashion scene, like pornography before it, must also give the appearance of no substantive change, while camouflaging the reality of radical novelty in a surface aesthetics of deep sign continuity. Fashion, therefore, is a conservative political agent complicit in deflecting the eye from fractal subjectivity, cultural dyslexia, toxic bodies, and parallel processing as the social physics of late twentieth-century experience.

Three Games

Even as I speak of the postmodern body as both object and privileged after-image of a colonizing power, the words begin to fade into a laconic and fatal disintegration. I remember, I *must* remember, the bitter words spoken by Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that "(P)ower as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability:"² the limit, that is, which makes bearable our instatiation within a cynical and indifferent freedom.

But perhaps it is no longer, as Foucault theorised, the radical play of domination and freedom with the *self* as a contested space of absence (the famous recovery of an "unspoken subjectivity"), but domination now under the sign of cynical power as a *mise-en-scène* of the truth of the postmodern body as a Batailleian site of recklessness, discharge, and upheaval. When we have already passed beyond the first two orders of sexuality, beyond *organic* sex and *discursive* sexuality, to the third stage of a

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hyperreal sex (where the body is doubled in an endless labyrinth of media images, where transgression is the law, and bodies alternate between hermeticism and schizophrenia), then even Foucault's privileging of the second order of discursive sexuality (where we must pass through what is *said* about our sexuality, its *discourse*, in order to finally know the truth of our sex) works now only to suffocate the grisly implications of a hyperreal, cynical sex.

This would be to claim, though, that Foucault's fate was to be the last and best of all the Cartesians: the theorist who on the clinical grounds of medicine, power, sexuality, and science thought through the bitter analytics of the "thinking subject," of ratiocination to excess, even as rationality secreted into the very constitution of the ethical subject, and emerged finally as the enucleating horizon of western experience. If Foucault could never think beyond the dark side of Kant, could never escape — whether in his interpretation of science as cynical truth, medicine as cynical power, or the panoptic space as the cynical gaze — the full horizon of the trap Kant had laid for him (just as Nietzsche could never break beyond a modernist entanglement with the question of the death of God); if Foucault could never free himself from a resolutely modernist entanglement with Kant's nominalism on the question of the death of truth; and if Foucault could not finally avoid the complicity of his own theory with the unfolding disaster of the "games of truth"; this is not to deny that there is everything to be gained, and everything at stake, in meditating anew on the games of Foucault. For the games of Foucault are simultaneously the limit and possibility of his theoretical legacy.

First, a theorist of political transgression *par excellence* whose meditations on "relational power" could evoke such an impassioned mood of political resistance (the emancipation of subjugated knowledge) because all his reflections on power were leavened with the hard knowledge that transgression, far from representing an experience of rupture, works now only to confirm the impossibility of traversing the limit experience.

Second, a historian of the quantum kind — ironic, ambivalent and paradoxical on the question of the irreality of the historical moment — who could simultaneously refuse historical totalisations as a will to power and nothing besides, and then work to create a double recuperative moment: the famous method of historical genealogy with its privileging of zones of knowledge with low epistemological profiles; and a marked preference for plural histories of local subjectivity, a hyper-materiality of pleasures and desires, not value. Ultimately, Foucault was of that peculiar order of a reluctant historian: a historian who refused history as a game of truth, only to install in its place the game of *effective history*, a "history which descends."

And third, an anti-epistemologist who could be so relentless in

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tracking down the discursive networking of the “games of truth” — in sexuality, in science, in penology, in psychiatry — since he was all along only the latest of the philosophical exponents of the logic of quantum science, of a quantum epistemology which functions by the mirroring of *code elements* (the constitutive conditions of possibility of a structural sex, a structural power, and a structural madness) *and local historical practices*. Probably against his own theoretical intentions, Foucault’s thought was the breaking-edge of the advanced liberal mind with its full aestheticization of knowledge. His discourse was also that of the dying days of an episteme: the liberal episteme with its relational power, relational truth, and regulatory ethics achieving, finally, self-reflection on itself. A murderer of the old humanist author, Foucault was also an inscribed “local subject” who fulfilled Unamuno’s precept: “I am I in the human circumstance and the human circumstance is I.”

Foucault’s then was the fully modern liberal mind at the height of his times. In him alone you see them all, because this was the aestheticized liberal mind at its most intense and acute point of auto-critique, brilliance, and ambiguity: simultaneously a master parody of the fate of the panoptic body and an ironic meditation on the fate of a relational, sideral, and topographical postmodern scene. Consequently, in Foucault alone there are to be found all of the key panic sites at the *fin-de-millennium*:

Panic Science: Foucault’s early encounter with Canguilhem where science is forced to confess its secret: that it never was anything more than an unreal cosmology, and one in which moreover the object of scientific investigation was, in the deployed form of power/knowledge, a prime after-image and constitutive condition of justification for the scientific episteme itself.

Panic Medicine: Foucault’s genealogy of the discourse of the clinic revealed the great epistemic shifts in medical discourse for what they always were: the inscription of a shifting social physics and its associated hieratics of the body and exclusionary power strategies onto the purely fictional and topological terrain of what French intellectuals these days like to call — *Quel Corps?*

Panic Madness: Not just the suppression into silence of the imagination by the will to truth of psychiatry, not just, that is, Blake’s dark dream of the sleep of reason begetting monsters of *Madness and Civilization*, but all of the panic suppressions:

- the *panic power* of Discipline and Punish where the prisoner entombed within the gaze of the panoptic is reduced to a silhouette, and the jailer also is entangled in a deep complicity with the eye of power, of which he is also a necessary rhetorical function.
- the *panic gender* of Herculine Barbin, the real story of which is not so much about the normalization of sexuality under the patriarchal

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medical, religious, and psychiatric gaze (as Foucault will claim), but about a gender and a body — the *woman's body* of Herculine Barbin — that is not allowed to be spoken, and about the dream of another sex which must be suicided because it is insurrectionary.

Panic Erotics: Foucault's last two books — *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure* about the reduction of the body, in Athens and Rome, to an "aesthetics of existence," to a tutelary regime of the moral problematization of pleasure — are texts that can be so disappointing to some because they recover (brilliantly) the erotic subject only to reveal this erotic subject as a panic site. For Foucault's erotic subject is colonized from within by the publicisation of dream life in Artemidorus, where dreams are also empty sign-systems waiting to be inscribed by all the primitive myths; inscribed from without by an *aphrodisia* — an "aesthetics of experience" — that was regulatory not only of the care of the *bodily humours*, of pleasure under the sign of high aesthetics, but also of marital relations and the erotic *réçits* of "boys loving boys." *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure* are texts about panic erotics: that moment when the body disappears into an empty sign, interpellated by all the ideologies, tattooed by the pleasures of a fully aestheticized sexuality, and inscribed by the languages of medicine, philosophy, and *oneiroheureutics*.

Waiting for Augustine

In short, *Panic Foucault*: a thinker, whose particular brilliance is that he actually becomes what he sought to describe: a *sliding signifier*, oscillating between the suffocating antinomies of modernist discourse, sliding between a grisly and clinical examination of the production of cynical power, cynical truth, cynical sex, and cynical language; and a famous, but ultimately futile, attempt to recover the *truth of sexuality* in a meditation on Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. Like Freud's Michelangelo before him, Foucault woke to find himself in the midst of the nightmare he thought he was only dreaming. He was a thinker, in the end, with no exit. Because in his meditations on the truth of sexuality (an aesthetics of pleasure), Foucault could never think through, finally, the truth of the Christianity of Augustine. Like the Roman stoics before him, and that peculiar strain of Greek skepticism before them, Foucault ended his life with the melancholy resignation of intellectual futility; that is, the consciousness of much but no exit from the nightmare of the infolded technologies of self to which he had awoken.

Fourth century Christianity was not a continuation of Greek and Roman theories of the self, nor their simple and abrupt reversal, but, at least in the writings of Augustine, a *solution* to a fundamental crisis of the self that neither the Greeks with their "aesthetics of existence" nor the Romans with their reduction of the self to a purely juridical and corporative

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concept rooted in *dominium proprietium* could resolve.

What Foucault in his last writings avoids, and as a fallen-away Cartesian *must avoid*, is that neither rationalised ethics nor materialistic conceptions of bodily pleasures could provide a directly experienced mediation of the antinomies of existence.

Consequently, when calamities arose, whether in the form of the Athenian plague of the fifth-century B.C. or the failure of the Democritean ideal of democracy or the bitter sense of fatalism and intellectual futility that swept the Roman imperium when, at the height of its power, the corrosive question arose: now that we have conquered an empire, now that we have become the sign itself of empire for whom the spear is our symbol, a restless will to survive at any cost is our dominant psychology, and the acquisite spirit of private possession our most cherished belief, what are to be the ultimate ends of empire?³ How, that is, and why go on willing when there are no longer substantive purposes to the ends we choose, in a universe indifferent to the choices we will in full freedom?

While the Greeks and the Romans moved ultimately in the grip of fatal necessity, the Christians, and Augustine specifically, solved the crisis by making the self an *individual psychology*; and, moreover, producing a vision of the self, not just the confessing self but also the ecstatic self, as a directly experienced mediation for summoning into a new *episteme*, a new unity, all the divided antinomies of the classical experience of Athens and Rome. Against Athens and Rome with their purely *external principles* of unity — the moral problematisation of the pleasures into an aesthetics of experience on the one hand, and the reduction of the self to an instrument of private property on the other — the early Christian thinkers held out the possibility of a hyper-material theory, not only of bodily pleasure, but also of bodily suffering. In their eschatology, the principle of the unity of western experience was finally rendered internal to the psychology of self. Indeed, in the Augustinian vision, metaphysics *secretes* into the bodily tissues, making the body a *will* and nothing besides. It was from Jerusalem, not Athens or Rome, that the self as a constitutively nihilistic will to power began to spread out. Foucault's "confessional self" as an early warning system of panopticism misses the whole point of the Christian negation that subordinated the body — will, intelligence, and feelings — to the exterminist sign of the trinity. Ultimately, the directly experienced trinitarian body — the western body — with its breaking of the will into itself, with its new starting-point in individual psychology, is the real truth of Christianity, of which Foucault's theses on the confessing self and the panoptic are sociological diversions, reflecting as they do only the reified manifestations of the already exterminated body.

Because Foucault missed the secret of the truth of Christianity (reading the Christian body under the sign of the panoptic, the "confessing

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self"), he was condemned to recapitulate in his own life and death the fatal necessity, the tragic sense of futility, and the last dark laughter of the parodist, of Greek enlightenment. If *The Care of the Self* could end bleakly by noting the sterility of the philosopher's virtue for "boys loving boys,"⁴ this was because Foucault's mind was, once again, an outbreak of the (classical) dialectic of enlightenment. In his thought, the melancholy play of chance that ultimately dashed the best intellectual hopes of the Athenians and made intellectually futile the militant and imperial ambitions of the Roman stoics is recapitulated with such intensity that Foucault must have known that he was only awaiting another Augustine.

The game of Foucault was a daring and brilliant one. As a philosopher whose thought transgressed the white space of indifference, Foucault always said that his intention was

to examine both the difference that keeps us at a remove from a way of thinking in which we recognize the origin of our own, and the proximity that remains in spite of that distance which we never cease to explore.⁵

This is the game of the intellectual imagination, of life and death, to such a point of melancholic excess and brilliant intensity that thought begins to fold in on itself, making of Foucault a marker of the postmodern fate.

His is the self-confession of the fully exhausted late modernist mind, the mind of the dying days of aestheticized liberalism, which functions only to confirm the impossibility of the mythic legacy of the dialectic of enlightenment. If, for example, Foucault could end his life with two texts on the constitution of the sexual self as an ethical subject and an analytics of sexual austerity, this is because, in these last works, Foucault finally came home to his Kantian self. Permitting himself the discontinuity he had always permitted others, Foucault's meditation returned to the project which runs through all of his theorisations on medicine, science, power, and psychiatry: that is, studying intently the "conditions of possibility" for our enucleation within the will to truth, the will to sexuality, and the will to power as our own *primal*.

Having reflected on cynical power and cynical truth too deeply ever to be content with the phenomenological reductions of Merleau-Ponty and too much a tragician on the matter of the discursive infolding of power ever to make his peace with Sartre's moralising historicism, and too much a floating signifier to be content with Irigaray or Cixous, Foucault, finally, was that rarity: an unfinished, radically discontinuous, and ambiguous thinker.

The lasting fascination and seduction of the games of Foucault is less philosophical or political than, perhaps, purely literary. It may someday be

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written that reading Foucault is perceiving how the liberal mind at the *fin-de-millennium* liked to think of its history (genealogical, but with possibilities for rupture), its epistemology (nominalist, but later nomist), its ethics (a little cynicism, a little piety), its theory of politics (the Kantian regulatories), its power (relational and topological), and its theory of the self (trapped in a continuing debate among Athens, Rome and Jerusalem).

Foucault's legacy would then be that he is the latest of the elegant tombstones of the dying days of aestheticized liberalism. If he could be so deeply evocative, it is because his entire theorisation with its brilliant meditations on the cynical analytics of power, sexuality, truth and madness is also a clonal after-image of an age that has already ceased to exist.

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Notes

1. Jean Baudrillard, *L'Autre par lui-même*, (Paris: 1987), pp. 53-54.
2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley, (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 86.
3. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), chapters 2 and 3.
4. Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3*, (New York: Pantheon, 1986), Part 6, "Boys", pp. 187-232.
5. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2*, (New York: Vintage, 1986), p. 7.

THE END/S OF WOMAN

N.P. Ricci

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*¹

With the disappearance of man, what happens to woman? Having only recently gained a voice *as* women, feminists are now confronted with the proposition that to speak as a woman is merely to reinscribe oneself within the logic of an androcentric epistemology, the very logic, in other words, which feminists have been trying to combat. The decentering of the subject advocated by Michel Foucault and other French theorists has moved us, apparently, beyond sexual identity, into a new landscape where men can be women and women men, and where subjects are simply proper nouns. But if the disappearance of 'man,' the dissolution of the sovereign Cartesian ego, ensures that "Men will no longer speak for mankind[s]hould women, by implication, no longer, i.e. *never* speak as women?"² While writers like Foucault have provided women with the tools required to 'deconstruct' the systems of power that have oppressed them, doesn't the current eliding of sexual identity require from feminists a note of skepticism, a wariness that the new polemic does not simply reauthorize old injustices?

I: Subjects and Subjection

The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.

Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*³

The question of identity, and hence of sexual identity, arises out of the general poststructuralist critique of humanism and Western metaphysics. In current theory, identity — individuality, subject-hood — is held to be a construct complicitous with certain modes of restrictive logic. What French theorists have been trying to do — writers like Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes — is to wear away the ontological ground which has traditionally accrued around the “I” of discourse, to question the self-presence of the speaking subject, to show how subjects *are spoken* rather than speak — that is, how they are constituted by a web of forces of which consciousness is the effect rather than the point of origin.

The most thoroughly historical critique of the subject, and perhaps the one most useful to feminists, is that of Michel Foucault. Though Foucault does not specifically pose the question of *sexual* identity, his work on the subject’s historical constitution lays out the terms in which such a question might take form. Throughout his research, Foucault has been concerned to show how the individual is constituted “as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge.”⁴ In a Foucauldian framework, then, the question of woman comes down to a question of knowledge and power.

In his analysis of penal reform in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shows how “a refinement of power relations” in the nineteenth century helped foster the growth of those sciences known (aptly, feminists have noted) as “the sciences of man.” At the center of these new sciences stood a new object of knowledge, the individual, invested through and through by the systems of power which had created it. Hence the recent vintage of “man”: in Foucault’s view, “individuality” is a social construction whose origins are traceable to the institution of a new technology of power. By creating new forms of knowledge, power constitutes its own objects; and the objects which power has thus constituted then become the elements of its own articulation. “It is a double process, then: an epistemological ‘thaw’ through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge” (*DP*, 224). Thus the human sciences, which grew out of a web of power relations spanning everything from medicine, psychiatry and education to military training and penal reform, helped perpetuate those very relations by constituting the individual as a new object of knowledge.

Foucault’s perspective on subject-hood, then, is decidedly polemical: to become subject means to be subjected. “We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects” (*P/K*, 97). The human sciences, by reordering our ways of knowing and focussing our attention on the individual, have made it possible for power to entrench itself more firmly into the social body. Foucault gives the example of the homosexual, who arose as ‘a species’ at the point where homosexuality was characterized

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“less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility” — when, in other words, emphasis shifted from the act to the individual.⁵ But it has been this very sort of shift, according to Foucault, through which individuality has been constituted. Around this new object arise new discourses — in the realm of medicine, psychiatry, criminology — and through them “power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives” (*P/K*,39).

But in Foucault’s view it would be wrong to imagine that power simply acts *against* individuals, in the form of prohibition and oppression. On the contrary, “individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application” (*P/K*,97); in other words, power passes *through* individuals, using them to further its own ends. Thus the “I” which power and knowledge have jointly constituted is also the “eye” of power and knowledge, that which subjects everything to its normalizing, hierarchizing gaze. To become subject, then, also means to subject, to give priority to identity, to authorship, to ownership, to situate consciousness at the origin of truth while excluding everything that is different and ‘other.’

It is this aspect of the subject which Foucault attacks in his critique of traditional historicism. In his preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault dissociates himself from the “phenomenological approach” to history, that “which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity — which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness” (*OT*,xiv). The same technology of power which has created individuals as objects of knowledge also situates them as subjects of knowledge. This “sovereignty of the subject” has led to what Foucault calls “continuous history”:

Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject — in the form of historical consciousness — will once again bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.⁶

Totalizing and totalitarian, continuous history, the history of “transcendental consciousness,” strives to situate itself at the privileged source of truth, and so “to preserve, against all decenterings, the sovereignty of the subject, and the twin figures of anthropology and humanism” (*AK*,12).

Thus the subject emerges in Foucault’s work as the nexus of certain

"mechanics of power" — as both effect and vehicle of power, as that which subjects and is subjected. Foucault's task has been to write a history without a subject, "to get rid of the subject itself" (*P/K*,117), and so to expose the complicities of knowledge and power which have led to the subject's historical constitution.

II: Foucault and Feminism

Interviewer: Do you feel that your 'History of Sexuality' will advance the women's question? I have in mind what you say about the hysterisation and psychiatrisation of the female body.

Foucault: There are [a] few ideas there, but only hesitant ones, not yet fully crystallised. It will be the discussion and criticism after each volume that will perhaps allow them to become clarified. But it is not up to me to lay down how the book should be used (*PK*,192).

Foucault's critique of humanism and of the subject offers obvious points of convergence with feminist interests. Throughout his work, Foucault has been concerned with marginal groups, the insane, the delinquent, the sexually perverse — groups which, like women, have been traditionally silenced by the powers-that-be, and excluded from the privileged realm of "truth." But truth, in Foucault's view, as the end point of knowledge, "is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (*P/K*,133) — thus those groups which are barred from it will always be forced to the margins of discourse. Women have traditionally occupied that margin, and the androcentric humanism which Foucault deconstructs — with its "universals," its canons, its privileging of (an overwhelmingly male) tradition — has certainly been one more link in a long history of women's oppression.

But a thoroughly Foucauldian analysis would have to proceed at the level of the "micro-techniques of power" through which woman has not only been silenced, but *constituted* as object of power and knowledge, much as delinquents, the insane, and the sexually perverse have become "species" which power has used for its own ends. What historical determinants have moulded what we understand by the term "woman"? What nexus have women occupied in the web of power relations within a given epistémé, what functions have they served? Foucault gives the example of how the creation and medicalisation of female sexuality served part of a larger strategy for the policing of families and populations.

It is worth remembering that the first figure to be invested by the deployment of sexuality, one of the first to be 'sexualized,' was the

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'idle' woman. She inhabited the outer edge of the "world," in which she always had to appear as a value, and of the family, where she was assigned a new destiny charged with conjugal and parental obligations (*HS*,121).

A Foucauldian history of women, then, would begin at the point where "woman" is revealed to be a social construction.

But it would be wrong, therefore, to see in Foucault merely a project for the reclamation of lost voices. While Foucault's own studies are often exempla of the recuperation of marginal or seldom considered materials, feminist histories which concentrate solely on filling in the gaps and lacunae of traditional history, on giving a voice to women's silenced "sisters," may find themselves firmly reinscribed within the tenets of humanistic historicism, substituting, for example, a "great women's" history for that of the "great men." One of the buzz words of humanism which Foucault deconstructs in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is "tradition." "The problem," writes Foucault, "is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations" (*AK*,5). Once "woman" is seen as a social construction, the question of "tracing a line," of reclaiming women's lost history, becomes somewhat anachronistic.

But on what "new foundation," then, is feminism to build its abode? As feminists begin to examine their own work in the light of a Foucauldian critique, they are finding that what Foucault may offer is not so much an extension of works-in-progress as a change in direction.

III: De-sexualisation

The real strength of the women's liberation movements is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality. These movements do indeed emerge in the nineteenth century as demands for sexual specificity. What has their outcome been? Ultimately a veritable movement of de-sexualisation, a displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem, formulating the demand for forms of culture, discourse, language and so on, which are no longer part of that rigid assignation and pinning-down to their sex which they had initially in some sense been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard (*PK*,219-220).

Among French women theorists, the writer who seems to have come

closest to Foucault's ideas on de-sexualisation is Julia Kristeva. In her article "Women's Time," Kristeva isolates two phases in the women's movement's strategies for dealing with women's traditional exclusion from the social contract.⁷ In the first, women "aspired to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history" (*WT*,36) — in other words, to right the fact of their exclusion by making central what had been marginalized, by bringing women in, on an equal footing with men, to a system which would not be fundamentally changed by the fact of women's inclusion. In the second phase, "linear temporality has been almost totally refused, and as a consequence there has arisen an exacerbated distrust of the entire political dimension" (*WT*,37). In this phase women have rejected traditional sociopolitical and cultural models as inimical to women's needs, since such models are permeated through and through by the male libidinal economy which has created them. Instead, women of this second generation have sought alternative cultural models which will be more expressive of a unique feminine identity.

The danger of these strategies — and I think Kristeva and Foucault would agree here — is that both can be easily reappropriated by the systems of power they struggle against. The first most clearly, since it strives not so much to change the system as to find a place for women within it. But the second also, despite its rejection of male-centred models, since in positing a feminine *identity* it tends to elide the question of social construction and take refuge in a precarious essentialism. Proponents of a unique feminine identity have usually had to resort to a theory of biological difference which triumphs female sexuality as the basis for the subversion of male-dominated systems.⁸ But it has been precisely on the basis of biological difference that women have been traditionally oppressed; any theory which resorts to such difference as its ground merely reinscribes itself within an old logic and risks perpetuating old stereotypes. And Foucault's analysis of the deployment of sexuality should alert feminists to the dangers of seeing any great liberating potential in female sexuality; sexuality itself, according to Foucault, is a social construct, one which has been deployed for the ends of power. "The irony of this deployment," Foucault writes in the last lines of *The History of Sexuality*, "is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance" (*HS*,159).

An essentialist position can only perpetuate an oppositional logic which many French theorists — most notably Jacques Derrida — have been trying to undo. Such a position posits a notion of "difference" as "absolute otherness" rather than as an "alterity" which can be shown to be internal to the system which has excluded it. Traditionally, oppositions like speech/writing, presence/absence, culture/nature, man/woman, have implied a hierarchy, with privilege being given to the first term. A notion of alterity, however, displaces the hierarchy by showing the second term to be the

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necessary condition of the first — not as absolute other, but as a difference at the very heart of the privileged first term. In Foucauldian terms, hierarchized oppositions can be seen as another instance of the complicity of knowledge and power. Thus woman's constitution as man's other — passive rather than active, emotional rather than rational, secondary rather than primary — has served to solidify male domination. The problem with essentialist views which emphasize the positive qualities of "woman" against the repressive aspect of male-centred systems is that they tend to reverse the hierarchy without displacing it — that is, they place "woman" in the privileged position — and thus remain caught up in the very logic they are trying to subvert, a logic which is complicit with the systems of power that have traditionally silenced women.

Kristeva recognizes the necessity of these first impulses of the women's movement — both the attempted insertion into the system and the rejection of that system in the name of absolute difference; they may be seen to correspond roughly to what Foucault calls "that rigid assignation and pinning-down to their sex which women had initially in some sense been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard." But Kristeva sees herself as part of a "third generation" — existing in parallel rather than chronological relation to the other two — for whom "the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *metaphysics*. What can 'identity,' even 'sexual identity,' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (*WT*, 51-52). Here is the "movement of de-sexualisation" which Foucault identifies as the most positive element of the women's movements, the "displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem." This displacement pushes the issue of "woman" outside the restricted logic of metaphysics and opens it up to the question of social construction, to questions of knowledge and power. But is this, then, the end of woman?⁹

IV: New Woman/Old Stereotypes

The Germans are like women. You can never fathom their depths.
They have none.

Friedrich Nietzsche¹⁰

... Nietzsche revives that barely allegorical figure (of woman) in his own interest. For him, truth is a woman. It resembles the veiled movement of feminine modesty.

Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*¹¹

We enter now the new landscape, beyond sexual identity. How have

things changed? For one thing, Nietzsche now looks like a proto-feminist — at least in the treatment he receives in Derrida's *Spurs*, where he appears to have pre-figured woman as the "untruth of truth," as that which undermines truth from within (*Spurs*, 51).¹² But after all it is not biological women Derrida is talking about here; woman for Derrida is the supplement, *différance*, the lack at the center which displaces the center, and if there is any *body* involved in all of this, as Alice Jardine points out, it is the body of the text as *écriture*.¹³

Woman, then, has not disappeared in the poststructuralist landscape, though she has apparently changed her form. For one thing, she has shed her body; for another, she is no longer the absolute other but precisely the point of alterity, the internal exclusion which undermines the system. Simply speaking, woman has become, under several headings — supplement, *écriture*, feminine jouissance, seduction, the unconscious, the *vreél* — a trope, a metaphor for that which bursts through the boundaries of traditional codes.

Of course, in this new order of things, biological women have not entirely dropped out of the scene. Precisely because they have been traditionally marginalized, women may have special access to what has been now coded as a "feminine operation," the act of subversion. For Kristeva, for instance, women, because of their incomplete accession into the social order, are always "*le sujet-en-procès*," the subject in process/on trial, on the threshold between selfhood and its dissolution; they are thus in a privileged position to question the social construction of identity. But it is not a biological difference which thus distinguishes women, only a social one.

The case with someone like Héléne Cixous is more problematic. At times she tends towards a biological essentialism, suggesting that women's bodies are the basis for a subversive practice: "women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse . . ." (*NFF*, 256). Yet she is willing to allow that someone like a Genet can write from the feminine (*NFF*, 255), and she shows an allegiance to a Derridean deconstruction of opposites: "sexual opposition, which has always worked for man's profit to the point of reducing writing, too, to his laws, is only a historico-cultural limit" (*NFF*, 253; see also *NFF*, 90ff). Nonetheless, it would seem that women, that is women with bodies, are in a better position to take hold of feminine writing than men. "More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body. More body, hence more writing" (*NFF*, 257).

But despite the recoding of the feminine as "the untruth of truth," as that which bursts "partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes," we might ask, as Jardine has, in what ways the New Woman — with or

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without a body — is so different from the old.¹⁴ Though Derrida's woman, for example, is (as one expects with Derrida) highly problematic, there are sentences in *Spurs* which wrench as sharply as any of the old stereotypes. "A woman seduces from a distance," Derrida writes. "In fact distance is the very element of her power. Yet one must beware to keep one's own distance from her beguiling song of enchantment" (*Spurs*,49). Here, certainly, is a depiction of woman as old as Genesis: woman as seductress, woman as sorceress. And again: "Because woman is (her own) writing, style must return to her. In other words, it could be said that if style were a man (much as the penis according to Freud is the 'normal prototype of fetishes'), then writing would be a woman" (*Spurs*,57). The problem with this equation of woman with text is that it exactly reiterates a paradigm which has long helped keep women silent: woman is she who is written, not she who writes. "The model of the pen-penis writing on the virgin page," writes Susan Gubar, in another context, "participates in a long tradition identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation — a secondary object lacking autonomy, endowed with often contradictory meaning but denied intentionality."¹⁵ But finally Derrida also has a word or two for the feminists: "And in truth, they too are men, those women feminists so derided by Nietzsche. Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man Feminism too seeks to castrate" (*Spurs*,65).

We have to ask: does Derrida's deconstructive intent justify comments that in another context might be seen as blatant chauvinism? Granted it may be unfair to take Derrida's statements out of context, but perhaps to do so demonstrates the potential danger of this new appropriation of woman. To pose a very Foucauldian question, to what old uses might these "new" representations of woman be put? Whose interests do they serve? What are the dangers of a theory of woman that can elide Nietzsche's blatant misogyny? Even if Derrida is not referring to "real" women when he uses that name in his writing, Nietzsche (despite all the theoretical baggage that accrues around a word like "real" nowadays) certainly was. And for all the rigours of Derrida's thought, the line between deconstruction — the wearing away of old ontological ground — and reconstitution — the point at which subversive concepts crystallize into essences — is often rather thin. One need only look at the American appropriation of the Derridean concept of *mise en abyme* to see how radical concepts can be used to justify old institutions.¹⁶

Even Cixous's depiction of the New Woman sounds suspiciously like an old tale. For Cixous, woman is "a giver": "She doesn't 'know' what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance

that she'll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out" (NFF,264). Elsewhere, woman is a mother: "In women there is always more or less of the mother who makes everything all right, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation; a force that will not be cut off but will knock the wind out of codes" (NFF,252). Woman as giver, woman as mother — Cixous might be describing a positive ethos, but what is troubling is that she doesn't question the social construction of these two fairly standard depictions of woman, or look at them in terms of what role they have served in perpetuating women's oppression. Perhaps it is not enough simply to assert that the mother in women "will knock the wind out of codes."

One of the ironies of this poststructuralist reappropriation of woman is that most of the leading theorists of the feminine — apart from Derrida, there is Lacan, Barthes, Baudrillard — are male.¹⁷ Even Kristeva and Cixous take their basic framework from male theorists — Kristeva from Lacan and Cixous from Derrida — and both of them, when invoking paradigms of subversive or "feminine" writing, refer back to a male tradition (typically Mallarmé, Genet and Joyce). If these facts are not suspicious, they are certainly curious. Where, in fact, are *women* in the midst of all this talk about *woman*? It seems men, on top of everything else, are even better at being women than women are. And what, for example, does history look like when we get beyond sexual identity, and "woman" becomes an attitude rather than a signature?

V: Women and History

What is a woman? I assure you I do not know. I do not believe you know.

Virginia Woolf¹⁸

From the perspective of those who have moved beyond sexual identity, feminism, as a *women's* movement, cannot help but seem outdated, "nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man" — who, in other words, remains caught up in the systems of power defined by the ruling (predominantly male) hegemony. Feminists are thus faced, as Peggy Kamuf admits, with "the erosion of the very ground on which to take a stand."¹⁹ If feminism rests on a biological distinction, it remains open to charges of essentialism: the "feminine," writes Derrida, should not "be hastily mistaken for a woman's femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fetishes which might still tantalize the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist or the inexperienced seducer who has not yet escaped his foolish hopes of capture" (*Spurs*,55). But if feminism rests on a *social* distinction, then it becomes very difficult to say who, under what

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circumstances, is a woman. Feminists who try to have it both ways will find themselves tangled in thorny methodological problems.

To take one example: in an article on the image of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Christine Froula, alluding to a passage from Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, defines "woman" as someone who divines "the priest" of cultural authority, and so calls that authority into question.

This definition identifies 'woman' not by sex but by a complex relation to the cultural authority which has traditionally silenced and excluded her. She resists the attitude of blind submission which that authority threatens to imprint upon her; further, her resistance takes form not as envy of the 'priest' and desire to possess his authority herself but as a debunking of the 'priestly' deployment of cultural authority and a refusal to adopt that stance herself. Women, under this local rule, can be 'men,' and men can be 'women.'²⁰

But one problem with such "local rules," clearly, is that they are self-serving: if definitions of woman are up for grabs, there is little to stop one from choosing a definition that is tailor-made to fit one's own arguments. Another problem, within the specific context of *Paradise Lost*, is that one might conceivably make a case — though Froula's definition does seem to be trying to avoid this possibility — for Satan as a woman. And one could certainly make a case for the author of "On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament" and *Areopagitica* — that is, for Milton himself.²¹ Perhaps, after all, Milton was of woman's party without knowing it, and he might take his place next to Nietzsche as one of history's misogynists reclaimed for the feminist ranks by new definitions of woman.

Little attempt has been made to show what a "history of women" would look like from beyond sexual identity. We have to ask, in fact, whether such a history would be possible. If we take Foucault as a model, then much of the historical work which has been done by feminists to date — the tracing of a women's heritage, the establishment of a women's "canon" — would have to be regarded as caught up with an old, essentially self-defeating, historicism. Jeffrey Weeks has outlined some of the problems confronting a history of homosexuality conducted within a Foucauldian frame;²² a history of women would face the same kinds of problems. If "woman" is a social construction, then women can claim no universal essence which has united them through the ages, no "tradition" they can claim to follow in the line of. And in fact, even any synchronic movement based on a common sexual bond would have to be seen as rooted in an outmoded concept of sexual identity. Hence the move among some women in France today towards "anti-feminism," i.e. the rejection of a stance which takes sexual solidarity as its base.²³

Yet it is Foucault himself who has made us sensitive to the subtle machinations of power, to the way power almost seems to plan ahead for the reappropriation of its own failures — as Foucault demonstrates, for example, in his analysis in *Discipline and Punish* of the “failure” of prison reform: prison reform has failed, in Foucault’s view, not through an inefficiency of power, but as a strategy of power, as a means of creating a class of “delinquents” which power can then use for its own ends. So it would be timely to ask what interests this “beyonding” of sexual identity might serve. Why is it, for instance, that sexual identity is being elided at the very point at which women, after centuries of subjugation, have been emerging as a potent political force? Certainly any move which could effectively undermine women’s solidarity could easily be reappropriated by the very systems of power which have traditionally worked to oppress women. And the “new” representations of woman which have arisen as a result (as a symptom?) of this eliding of sexual identity should also be examined in the light of a Foucauldian critique. We might ask of the new discourse on woman the questions which Foucault poses at the end of “What is an Author?”:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse?

Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?

What placements are determined for possible subjects?

Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?²⁴

There is no guarantee that the new discourse will be “liberating” for women. Foucault himself warns that discourses can “circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy” (*HS*,102) — for example, from a strategy of subversion to one of suppression.

But this logic also suggests — and Foucault’s own analyses, despite his call for “de-sexualisation,” support this argument — that resistances can also operate *within* a given discourse. Thus Rosalind Coward, for instance, is not quite correct to say that Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, in denying that there has been any sudden change from repression to liberation over the past century in the discourse on sexuality, implies also a denial of the important changes in representations of female sexuality which have occurred during recent years.²⁵ “We must make allowance,” Foucault writes, “for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.” Foucault again gives the example of homosexuality, which “began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (*HS*,101). A similar analysis would pertain,

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certainly, to the women's movement and its fight for changes in the representation of female sexuality.

One matter I have not yet addressed is the shift which occurs in Foucault's later work, when he moves away from the classical period in France to classical antiquity. In this later work, we find a continuing concern with the question of the subject, but while Foucault speaks of the subject in relation to the Greeks, speaks, for example, of "the mode of subjection" by which "the individual establishes his relation to [a] rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it in practice," of a Greek boy's attempts to transform himself from "object of pleasure into a subject who was in control of his pleasures," of Greek ethics as "the elaboration of a form of relation to the self that enables an individual to fashion himself into a subject of ethical conduct," it seems he is talking here of a fundamentally different phenomenon than the subject he earlier defined as a product of the human sciences.²⁶ "Because no Greek thinker ever found a definition of the subject and never searched for one," Foucault has said, "I would simply say that there is no subject."²⁷ The Greeks, in Foucault's view, had developed what he calls an "aesthetics of existence," a system of ethics which allowed more room for individuality and self-creation than the later juridical ethics of Christianity. It is in the dawning of Christianity that Foucault sees the first move towards subject-hood, with the beginnings of a code-oriented morality which specified much more distinctly the limits of ethical behaviour, with the introduction of confession as a means of subjecting the very soul of an individual to the gaze of authority, and with the development of conscience as a way of turning that authoritarian gaze inward, of turning self against self as a mode of subjection.

But if we follow Foucault in this formulation of the subject's genealogy, then some limits in a feminist appropriation of his critique of the subject as a point of entry for analyzing woman's construction as "other" become apparent. As Nancy Miller points out, "society did not wait for the invention of man to repress 'woman' or oppress women"²⁸ — did not wait, in other words, until the subject was constituted by humanism before creating the categories of gender opposition which have served to solidify male domination. While Foucault's analysis of homosexual relations in ancient Greece, for example, shows they were viewed then in a fundamentally different light than in the modern era, his considerably less thorough and less satisfying analysis of women in that society reveals what seems to be a fundamental continuity: women were viewed by the Greeks as inferior by nature, to be ruled over and controlled, much as they were viewed later by the Christian church fathers, and much as they have been viewed almost up to the present day. Foucault does suggest a point at which representations of gender identity may have undergone an important shift, when the emphasis on the relationship between men and boys as "the most active

focus of reflection and elaboration" in classical Greek thought gave way, in the Roman and early Christian era, to the emphasis on relations between men and women, on virginity, and on "the value attributed to relations of symmetry and reciprocity between husband and wife" (*Use*, 253). But even taking into account such a shift, an important residue remains. If Greek women were not "subjects" in Foucault's sense of the word, they were certainly subjected, and the main terms of that subjection — that is, a fundamental gender split, and a hierarchical organization of that split — are the same ones that feminists are dealing with today. The history of women, then, may in some respects be a continuous one, in that both the fact of their oppression, and the theoretical terms which have been used to justify that oppression, have demonstrated a tremendous staying power from era to era.

But Foucault's theories do not necessarily preclude this kind of continuity. Foucault himself has bemoaned the emphasis which commentators have placed on his notion of *discontinuity*:

My problem was not at all to say, 'Voilà, long live discontinuity, we are in the discontinuous and a good thing too,' but to pose the question, 'How is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?' (*P/K*, 112).

Yet only recently has the status of women shown signs of being in the process of a *fundamental* transformation, one which is shaking the roots of sexual differentiation and discrimination. And while it would be reductive to deny that any changes have occurred in the image of woman from era to era, many of these changes — for example, the "medicalisation" of the female body which Foucault has pointed to — have merely served to reaffirm women's marginal status. Thus while relations of power may alter according to the kinds of major transformation which Foucault has noted, certain strands in each era's web, specifically those which have accrued around gender oppositions, have remained strong throughout the long history of women's oppression. The forces which have held these strands in place will also have to be looked at before we have finished with the question of woman.

VI: Intellectuals and Power

The intellectual no longer has to play the role of advisor. The project, tactics and goals are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is provide the instruments of analysis (*PK*, 62).

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Foucault's "toolkit" view of theory should help put him in perspective for feminists. While he seems to sympathise with the move "beyond" sexual identity, his work still provides tools for those feminists still fighting, as women, in the trenches, where the battle is far from over. As Bidy Martin points out with respect to the current eliding of sexual identity, "the projects of male" (and, I would add, some female) "critics and feminist critics are necessarily non-synchronous despite commonalities."²⁹ Feminists have only just begun the work of reclamation and production necessary to guard against women's being eclipsed once again at the very moment of their emergence into history. Would a move away from sexual oppositions towards a more epistemologically "correct" position imply, for instance, that women academics should stop lobbying to get more women's work included on course lists? That reading Joyce (whose own views on women are far from trouble-free) may bring one closer to the "feminine" than reading, say, Virginia Woolf? Someone like Derrida (after all a man) may rejoice in the subversive potential of a woman who is "a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum" (*Spurs*, 49); but such "non-identity," as countless feminist analyses have shown, has been precisely the status of women since time immemorial, and this status — for all its supposedly subversive potential — has been the main source of their oppression.

I am not suggesting that feminists reject the new discourses on "woman" out of hand, or that they ignore the epistemological concerns which have prompted those discourses. Instead they should get the lay of the land, see what old faces lurk in the new landscape, judge what is germane to the political reality they face. Next to the Marxist "always historicize," we might add the very post-modern "always problematize."

At the end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault writes that if the arrangements which led to the birth of the human sciences were to disappear, "then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (*OT*, 387). But before that happens perhaps woman's face will have to be etched firmly beside it, if only as a network of scars on a once-smooth surface.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 387. Hereafter cited as *OT*.
2. Bidy Martin, "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault," *New German Critique*, 27 (1982), 17. Emphasis added.

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3. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon et al., ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 98. Hereafter *P/K*.
4. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 192. Hereafter *DP*.
5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 43. Hereafter *HS*.
6. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 12. Hereafter *AK*.
7. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, ed. Nannerl O. Keohane et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Hereafter *WT*.
8. See, for example, Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which is Not One," trans. Claudia Reeder, in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), pp. 99-106. Hélène Cixous, in "The Laugh of the Medusa," (trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *New French Feminisms*, pp. 245-264) also suggests a difference between male and female sensibility grounded in differing sexual economies, but the case with Cixous, as indicated below, is problematic. (*New French Feminisms* will hereafter be cited as *NFF*.)
9. Among American critics, Peggy Kamuf has used a specifically Foucauldian framework to arrive at a position similar to Kristeva's. See her article, "Replacing Feminist Criticism," *Diacritics*, 12, No. 2 (1982), 42-47. Though Kamuf does not acknowledge any debt to Kristeva, she also seems to see herself as part of a "third generation"; she isolates two feminist strategies, strikingly similar to the two "phases" Kristeva identifies, which are doomed to perpetuate the system women have been trying to subvert: "on the one hand an expansion of institutions to include at their center what has been historically excluded; on the other hand, the installing of a counter-institution based on feminine centred cultural models" (Kamuf, p. 45).
10. Quoted in *The Great Quotations*, comp. George Seldes (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, 1960), p. 530.
11. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 51. Hereafter *Spurs*.
12. Derrida, anticipating objections to his rather "eccentric" reading of Nietzsche, summarizes his own position thus: "Must not these *apparently feminist* propositions be reconciled with the overwhelming *corpus* of Nietzsche's venomous anti-feminism? Their congruence (a notion which I oppose by convention to that of coherence), although ineluctably enigmatic, is just as rigorously necessary. Such, in any case will be the thesis of the present communication" (*Spurs*, 57). It is impossible to do justice to the rigours of Derrida's analysis here; what concern me more are the potential *uses* of that analysis.
13. Alice Jardine, "Gynesis," *Diacritics*, 12, No. 2 (1982), 64. Jardine gives a good overview of the role of "woman" in current French theory, though she concentrates mainly on Lacan and his followers. I take her article as a point of departure for what follows.
14. Jardine, p. 64.
15. Susan Gubar, "The Blank Page and the Issues of Female Creativity," in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 77.
16. For the best critique of this appropriation, see Frank Lentricchia's chapter on poststructuralism in *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 156-210; also his chapter on Paul de Man, pp. 282-317. Paul A. Bové provides a similar analysis in his essay "Variations on Authority: Some Deconstructive Transformations of the New Criticism," in *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America*, ed. Jonathan Arac, Wlad Godzich and Wallace Martin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 2-19. See also Wlad Godzich, "The Domestication of Derrida," in the same volume, pp. 20-40.

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17. See Jacques Lacan, *Encore* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975); Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Jean Baudrillard *De la séduction* (Paris: Galilée, 1980).
18. Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, ed. M.H. Abrams et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), p. 2047.
19. Kamuf, p. 42.
20. Christine Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy," *Critical Inquiry*, 10 (1983), 321-347. The Woolf passage alluded to is from *Jacob's Room* (1922; New York, 1978), pp. 40-41.
21. Edward Pechter, in a response to Froula ("When Pechter Reads Froula Pretending She's Eve Reading Milton; or, New Feminist Is But Old Priest Writ Large," *Critical Inquiry*, 11, 1984, 163-170) notes the fact of Milton's own anti-authoritarianism, though he does not take specific issue with Froula's definition of woman.
22. Jeffrey Weeks, "Discourse, desire and sexual deviance: some problems in a history of homosexuality," in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. Kenneth Plummer (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1981), pp. 76-111.
23. Jardine discusses French anti-feminism in "Gynesis."
24. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), p. 138.
25. Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 234.
26. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 27, 225, 251. Hereafter *Use*.
27. Michel Foucault, "Final Interview," *Raritan*, 5, No. 1 (1985), 1-13.
28. Nancy Miller, "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions," *Diacritics*, 12, No. 2 (1982), 49. Miller's article is a response to Kamuf's "Replacing Feminist Criticism," in the same issue.
29. Martin, p. 21.

THE QUESTION OF THE MORAL SUBJECT IN FOUCAULT'S ANALYTICS OF POWER

Hwa Yol Jung

The essence of truth is freedom.
Martin Heidegger

The question of ethics has preoccupied Michel Foucault throughout the different stages of his thought. Ethics and politics are for him inseparable. In his early major work, *The Order of Things*, he asserted that "[the] knowledge of man, unlike the sciences of nature, is always linked, even its vaguest form, to ethics or politics."¹ In his 1983 interview in Berkeley he reiterated his interest in "politics as an ethics."²

There is one phrase that marks the distinguishing characteristic of Foucault's thought: the ubiquity of power. "A society without power relations," he declares, "can only be an abstraction."³ In Foucault's thought, power may be said to be the kingpin of all social relations in connecting everything to everything else. It is embedded in all human events and institutions, not just in what has traditionally been called "government," the "state," or political institutions. From beginning to end, the thematics of power have been the *leitmotif* of Foucault's investigation of differing topics. By its ubiquity, power attains an ontological status, as it were, in Foucault's thought. It is everywhere and comes from everywhere: it is "always already" here and there. The most seminal insight of Foucault is the idea that power exists *as relations*, and this relational mode of investigating power is called by him the *analytics of power*. For power is regarded not as a static substance (*res*) in the Cartesian tradition, but as an ensemble of dynamic relations. Foucault writes:

Power in the substantive sense, "*le*" *pouvoir*, doesn't exist. What I mean is this. The idea that there is either located at — or emanating from —

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a given point something which is a "power" seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena. In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations.⁴

In confluence with the French structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Louis Althusser, Foucault rejected the notion of the subject. While in *The Savage Mind*,⁵ which is a polemic against Jean-Paul Sartre, Lévi-Strauss enunciated the "dissolution of man," Foucault wrote the following requiem in the concluding sentence of *The Order of Things*: "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."⁶ It is in his introductory remarks to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that we find the sharpest reaction to subjectivity which could be construed narrowly as phenomenological or broadly as post-Cartesian or post-phenomenological:

If the history of thought could remain the locus of uninterrupted continuities, if it could endlessly forge connexions that no analysis could undo without abstraction, if it could weave, around everything that men say and do, obscure synthesis that anticipate for him, prepare him, and lead him endlessly towards his future, it would provide a privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness. Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject — in the form of historical consciousness — will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought. In this system, time is conceived in terms of totalization and revolutions are never more than moments of consciousness.⁷

It seems that what is crucial in the context of our discussion on the moral subject of power is not the question of whether Foucault is a philosopher of continuity or discontinuity but of how the idea of continuity or discontinuity funds the movement of the historical subject.⁸ Here Foucault's argument concerning the *necessary* and *sufficient* connection between the sovereignty of consciousness and historical continuity falters and is short-circuited in several ways.

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First of all, a critique of phenomenological subjectivity requires the consideration of phenomenology as the constitution of meaning — including, of course, the constitution of internal-time consciousness in terms of “retension” and “protension” — by the transcendental *ego* to attain the apodicticity of knowledge. In short, it needs a critique of phenomenology as a “metaphysics of presence.”

Second, Foucault fails to take into account Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological idea of the “instituting subject,” so as to avoid the “egological” predicament of the “constituting subject.” To quote fully Merleau-Ponty’s own words:

If the subject were taken not as a constituting but an instituting subject, it might be understood that the subject does not exist instantaneously and that the other person does not exist simply as a negative of myself. What I have begun at certain decisive moments would exist neither far off in the past as an objective memory nor be present like a memory revived, but really between the two as the field of my becoming during that period. Likewise my relation to another person would not be reducible to a disjunction: an instituting subject could coexist with another because the one instituted is not the immediate reflection of the activity of the former and can be regained by himself or by others without involving anything like a total recreation. Thus the instituted subject exists between others and myself, between me and myself, like a hinge, the consequence and the guarantee of our belonging to a common world.⁹

In addition to overcoming the impasse of conceptualizing intersubjectivity or coexistence as the relation between the self and the other, the advantage of this ontological hinge is at least threefold. (1) It overcomes both the overdetermination and the underdetermination of the self over the other or, ethically speaking, the polarization of total power and total freedom, or total submission and absolute freedom. (2) It offers a judicious balance between innovation and tradition as sedimented meanings. And (3), it gives us the conception of human plurality as a dialectical complicity of distinction and equality. Here we are turning to the language of Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*, where human plurality as the basic condition of both speech and action is conceived of as having the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, she explains, there would be no common ground for communicating or acting; if men were not distinct, on the other hand, there would again be no need to communicate or act. Distinction — individual differences — thickens the density of human plurality.¹⁰ Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas maintains that pluralism is not a multiplicity of numbers, it is predicated upon “a radical alterity of the other.”¹¹

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Third and last, if history is viewed as more or less continuous, Foucault must by *logical* necessity recognize some form of subjectivity as sovereign; that is, he harbors or shelters the privileged status of consciousness. If, on the other hand, history is viewed as discontinuous, he is compelled to abandon the sovereignty of consciousness. Contrary to Foucault's own argument, moreover, the sovereignty of consciousness becomes the *precondition* for the thesis that history is discontinuous because history changes, that is, becomes discontinuous only by virtue of the sovereign *agency* of consciousness itself. In the end, the question of whether history is continuous or discontinuous would be dissolved by itself if we entertain the idea of historical transformation as "transgression," in Georges Bataille's sense, or "destruction," in Heidegger's sense. Then and only then, continuity and discontinuity are the two sides of the same historical process. For transgression is not only the overstepping of what is prohibited but it is also delineated by what is prohibited by tradition. Similarly, by "destruction" Heidegger means "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn."¹²

In Foucault's later writings, the retrieval of the subject or the habilitation of a "new subject" makes his legacy with phenomenology tenuous, perhaps more enhancing, and all the more ambivalent. We would be remiss if we failed to notice his 1982 discussion of "The Subject of Power" that attempts to go "beyond structuralism" — the structuralism that dissolves 'man' as subject. He now attempts to habilitate subjectivity in his analytics of power, which is linked at the same time to freedom. As he declares:

... [the] political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men — in the broadest sense of the term — one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains.¹³

From the perspective of phenomenology, Foucault must not go unchallenged and unanswered. Our primary contention against him is that

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his *architectonic* of power is built on the shaky grounding of social ontology whose pillars in different sizes and shapes are free, individual subjects. We are reminded here of Henrik Ibsen's play *The Master Builder*, whose main plot is the story of a man who, having dreamt of building a church tower that "points straight up in the free air — with the vane at a dizzy height" and "a real castle-in-the-air" on a firm foundation, plunges in the end into a ghastly death because he has built too tall a house on too shallow a foundation.¹⁴ The phobia of the subject in Foucault's analytics of power is, unfortunately, like teaching how to swim by continuously teaching aquaphobia.¹⁵ Yet worse, his late addendum — "free subjects" and "new forms of subjectivity" — is like urging someone to swim on dry land! There is, however, a way of constructing social ontology which has a place for the subject but is not subjective, i.e., the conception of *the subject as relational*.

Merleau-Ponty contended that "In Sartre there is a plurality of subjects but no intersubjectivity . . . The world and history are no longer a system with several points of entry but a sheaf of irreconcilable perspectives which never coexist and which are held together only by the hopeless heroism of the I."¹⁶ To reject the "heroism of the I" is for Merleau-Ponty to decentrate the subject toward the affirmation of intersubjectivity. In the analysis of language, the *act* of speaking (*parole*) and the *structure* of language (*langue*) are mutually dependent. For him, therefore, "language makes thought, as much as it is made by thought."¹⁷ According to the linguist Emile Benveniste, "language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse."¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, whose hermeneutical phenomenology has been influenced by the linguistic theory of Benveniste, forces the issue against the structuralist, subjectless theory of language by formulating concisely the "habitation of the word" as "a trader between the system and the event" and by asserting that the speaking being of man and the spoken being of the world are two interdependent categories.¹⁹ By the same token, all interpretation is the dialectical movement of transmission and renewal. The structure without the event is useless, while the event without the structure is powerless. In the end, the subject who is capable of asserting *I* is never absolutely sovereign and completely isolated: he/she is always already social or intersubjective.

To confirm the desubstantialized, rational analysis of power without subject-phobia and without sacrificing the idea of novelty and "free subjects," we should resort to auditory metaphors and models against visual ones, whose chronotopical unity is arranged in terms of the primacy of time over space or the "utopia" (*ou/topos*) of time.²⁰ In the first place, the auditory "tympantizes" social ontology because the ear is, as Jacques Derrida puts it, "the distinct, differentiated, articulated organ that produces the effect of proximity."²¹ In the second place, it enables us to *displace* and *conceptualize*

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power as polyphonic. Yet the *conception* of power as polyphonic relations preserves the "otonomy"²² of the self which arrests hermetically sealed independence at one extreme and totalistic subjugation at the other. Musically speaking, mood as *dis/position* is the *attunement* of an individual existence to the world as a being-in-the-world. As Heidegger observes: "Mood is never merely a way of being determined in our inner being for ourselves. It is above all a way of being attuned, and letting ourselves be attuned in this or that way in mood. Mood is precisely the basic way in which we are *outside* ourselves. But that is the way we are essentially and constantly."²³

There is, moreover, a further analogy to be drawn between the ubiquity of power and that of sound. There is a qualitative difference in human experience between the visual and the acoustic. Color does not separate itself from the object, whereas sound separates itself from its source (e.g., voice or the sound of a musical instrument). In other words, color is a dependent attribute of an object, sound is not. While the color we see is the property of a thing itself and we confront color in space, the tone we hear is not the property of anything and we encounter it out of or from space. Color is locatable and localizable in one single position with the object, whereas sound, once separated from its source, has no definite topological property or determination although its source is locatable. Most importantly, sound travels in no one particular direction, it travels in all directions. Musical tones have no locatable places: they are *everywhere* or *ubiquitous*.²⁴ The ubiquity of sound does not imply, however, that the language, message or meaning of music as the organized movement of sound in time is inexact and imprecise. Its meaning or message is played out, just as speech is uttered or enunciated.

Ethics or the ethics of power must be grounded firmly in social ontology — the ontology of social relations.²⁵ To be specific, by the basic model of social relations we mean the "neighborhood" or "gathering" in multiple forms of the I (ipseity) and the other (alterity) as equiprimordial in the shared field of time and space. We shall designate as *proximity* this chronotopically shared field of the self and the other as equiprimordial in which the sense of "otonomy" is preserved. By proximity, therefore, we refer to what the social phenomenologist Alfred Schütz calls the consociational relationship (*Umwelt*) or we-relationship (*Wirbeziehung*) in which two (or more) persons share together or simultaneously both a section of time and a sector of space, that is, chronotopical immediacy. It may be called the "paramount" relationship because it is the basic modus by which all other types of social relationship are determined and understood.²⁶

Foucault's ethics of power, however, lack an ethics of proximity or, as it were, an ethics with a human face.²⁷ To put it more forcefully, there *cannot* be any ethics of proximity in it. It cannot be otherwise because his thought

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is allergic to the subject, while the basic condition of proximity demands the *confirmation* of the self and the other as two *interdependent subjects*. In order to avoid both extremes of individualizing and totalizing tendencies, we need a third term which has primacy over both ipseity and alterity but does not exclude them as the conditions of its existence: dialogue, conversation, communication, or community — that is, the *we* as the union of ipseity and alterity governed by the sense of mutual participation and attunement. It works as the maieutic between the atomization of the individual and the depersonalization of institution.

The literary theorist Denis Donoghue defines conversation as the best form of verbal and responsive communication in a circle of proximity. It resembles a theatrical performance before a small friendly audience — a sonorous space in which the voice resonates the epitome of human presence. Ideally, conversation is more than communication: it is “communion” because what really matters in it is the presence of the desire to be with others and to share each other’s experience — the processual rite of giving and receiving rather than what is said, and the encoding and decoding of its message. Conversation as communion is compensated for its open-endedness and incompleteness: “The validity of the words in a conversation is their continuous participation in communication. In a conversation, the two voices are making a music of desire, varying its cadences, tones, intensities.”²⁸

The ethics of proximity is an embodied phenomenon which Foucault’s “bio-power,” too, presupposes. While the Cartesian body as “substance” is the body-object, the ethics of proximity is grounded in the body-subject. The incarcerated body as the object of the Panopticon depicted so forcefully by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* exemplifies the body-object.²⁹ It is the *object* of discipline and punishment. In contrast, the body-subject is an active, living agent of communication with the world of others (*Mitwelt*): “the body answers the world by authoring it.”³⁰ Although the body seems distinctively characteristic of Foucault’s new subjectivity, particularly in his historical analysis of human sexuality, he seems nonetheless unaware of, if he does not reject, the body as subject. At any rate, he fails to deal with it systematically. Thus, unfortunately, Foucault’s analytics of power can offer no ethics of proximity. It was indeed a “defacement” or an “effacement” of the body-subject when he spoke poetically of the erasure of man as “a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.”

The ethics of proximity as an embodied phenomenon is characteristic uniquely of Emmanuel Levinas’s phenomenology of the face (*visage*) which is an ethics of the I who is capable of *facing* the other as “you.” The face to face with the other may be called — following Levinas himself — an “interface.”³¹ To insert the name of Levinas into a phenomenological critique of Foucault’s ethics of power is no accident. For Levinas is the social

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ontologist (or "meontologist") and ethicist *par excellence*, in whose thought "Being" and "value" are chiasmic twins. We can go even further: the primacy of the ethical constitutes a common tie between Levinas and Foucault. For Levinas, the idea of "totality" is purely theoretical, while "infinity" is an ethical category.³² Foucault's analytics of power or power/knowledge intertwinement, with an accent on the formation of discursive practices, may be regarded as a consolidation in form, as it were, of Levinas's "theoretical" and "ethical" concerns subsumed under the category of infinity without totality.

In Levinas's social ontology, which accentuates the primacy of the ethical, subjectivity is affirmed never for itself (i.e., never monologic or egocentric) but for another (*pour l'autre*) (i.e., dialogic or heterocentric). Subjectivity comes into being as "heteronomic": "It is my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other that makes me an individual 'I'."³³ Thus the notion of responsibility or answerability that coincides with the ethical or the ethics of proximity is, first and foremost, the confirmation of the I which is what Levinas calls the "meontological version of subjectivity," based on the face as its most basic modus. He writes, therefore, that responsibility is:

the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For I describe subjectivity in ethical terms. Ethics, here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility.³⁴

Martin Buber, too, propounded the ethics of responsibility. According to him, there are two primary words: the "I-Thou" and the "I-It." The subject *I* must be the I of either "I-Thou" or "I-It," or else it is nothing at all: "There is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*."³⁵ In either case, the I is always already *relational* or *dialogical* through and through; where there is reality, there is sociality. In responsibility lies the *we* as the midterm between the isolated *I* and the *No-body* (*das Man* or the "anonymous Other," to use Heidegger's word).³⁶ Only in reference to the *we* does responsibility constitute the *ethical* condition of language itself. The question of "*who* is speaking" is never entirely subjective. Nor is language totally a subjectless structure for the simple reason that, as Edith Wyschogrod puts it tersely, it "does not float empty in social space."³⁷

Now, for Levinas, the face epitomizes the ethics of proximity. It not only establishes the direct and immediate *contact* with the other but also is solicited by and gravitated to the other. The face to face is, Levinas tells us, "the primordial production of being on which all the possible collocations of the terms are found."³⁸ The face *is* indeed an ethic, a human ethic: "the

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epiphany of the face is ethical.”³⁹ As the face speaks (in silence), speaks uniquely from and for each individual, it is an ethical discourse. By the same token, its *look* is not and cannot be determined by the objective color of an eye. In the final analysis, the face is an ethical hermeneutic of the body or the human as embodied.

What is the ultimate *telos* of human plurality or intersubjectivity as polyphonic? For Levinas, it is peace (or harmony). With the idea of peace the question of the ethical merges with that of the political (*res publica*). In the tradition of phenomenology — including of course the ethical phenomenology of Levinas, Hannah Arendt⁴⁰ has developed a *public philosophy* with a focus on the *specificity of power* as political. Despite their differences, some of which separate them radically, there are parallels and intersections between Arendt’s and Foucault’s thought.⁴¹

Power is defined most generally by Foucault as “the multiplicity of force relations,”⁴² which is omnipresent in and all-pervasive to every level and dimension of human relationship. This view, however, produces a mixed result because it *both* dismantles *and* obfuscates the established notion of power as specifically political. On the one hand, power is regarded as not an exclusively political concept. Rather, it — like Foucault’s definition of “government” — is extended to encompass a variety of nonpolitical human relationships including knowledge-claims and such institutions as the clinic, the asylum, the prison, the school, the church, and the family. As power is “decentered,” everything we do is political or contains an element of politextuality. On the other hand, Foucault’s view obfuscates the *specificity* of power as political, although the conceptual configuration of power as such denies no specificity.

The question of the subject is what puts Foucault and Arendt a world apart. Arendt offers an answer to Foucault’s enigmatic question on the subject of power: the primary subject of power *is* the human, moral subject. Her definition of action and power based on the conception of human plurality provides us with the midworld which avoids the Scylla of individualizing and the Chrybdis of totalizing tendencies without abandoning the human, moral subject. For Arendt, the faculty of action alone — not the faculties of labor and work — makes man a political animal. Human plurality is the existential and ethical condition of both power and action. Above all, it is an association (*koinonia*) of equals as humans who are all capable of acting. Foremost, however, it is an association of subjects — that is, in Arendt’s language, “distinct and unique persons.” Human plurality defined as such polyphonically defies the “antipolitical” thought of uniting many into one (*bomonoia*).

However, her defense of the human, moral subject in the context of human plurality and politics as polyphonic is not a subjectivist one. For action and isolation are antithetical or mutually exclusive terms. For

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Arendt, power is human potential "to act in concert" (for the common good) and as such it is impossible in isolation. Thus power is not something in the possession of an individual, a group of individuals, or an organization. True to the existential and phenomenological tradition, on the other hand, Arendt's unwavering defense of the human, moral subject, as is linked to the civility of power, is directed against the undesirable political consequences of the anonymous, faceless One (*das Man*), of "ochlocracy" — to use her own phrase.⁴³ The exemplar of this "anonymous One" is Adolf Eichmann — the paragon of "thoughtlessness" who appeared to be "terrifyingly normal." It is important to note that Arendt does not argue for the death penalty for Eichmann on the basis of the presence or absence of his *intention to kill*. Her argument against the "banality of evil" rests on the "de-subjectivized" ethics of consequences, i.e., on the ethics of responsibility, rather than on the ethics of pure intentions. As Arendt argues, politics is not the nursery, because in it obedience and support are one and the same; and where *all* are deemed or held guilty, *nobody* is. For her, in brief, political ethics make sense only when there is the human subject, the specific individual, who must be held responsible for the consequences of his "thoughtless," yet violent crimes. It was in the name of the moral solidarity of human plurality that she concluded in the last paragraph of her own "verdict" on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem: "... just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations — as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world — we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang."⁴⁴

Arendt's "consensualist" conception of power (and action) as human potentiality to act in concert for the common good includes the existential, Nietzschean idea of *initium* (the initiative) or, to use the phrase of Merleau-Ponty, the "instituting subject" who embarks on something new at his/her birth. Being political is metaphorically conceived of as "a second birth." I say "metaphorically" because birth, as the initial insertion of the self into the world, is always already a *de facto*, if not *de jure*, political act. To be born and to act politically are two steps in the same act. What is so interesting about Arendt's discussion is the linkage between natality and (political) action. She writes that "Philosophically speaking, to act is the human answer to the condition of natality. Since we all come into the world by virtue of birth, as newcomers and beginnings, we are able to start something new; without the fact of birth we would not even know what novelty is, all 'action' would be either mere behavior or preservation."⁴⁵ For Arendt, natality, freedom, and action are the inalienable *birthrights* of men and women as human. Natality is the sacrosanct occasion for a distinct subject

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— each in his or her own unique way — to embark on something new or novel. By virtue of it, human existence is *invested as freedom* (to use the expression of Levinas who implicitly refutes Sartre's conception of human existence as condemned to freedom). For that matter, a *nation*, which is the modern designation of the ultimate political unit, is, etymologically speaking, the "birthplace" of a people and as such it symbolizes a common system of institutions. The investiture of human existence as freedom, however, can never be absolute: there is no unconditional freedom insofar as we, the individuals, inhabit and share the same political arena or universe. "Political theory," writes Levinas, "derives justice from the undiscussed value of spontaneity; its problem is to ensure, by way of knowledge of the world, the most complete exercise of spontaneity by reconciling my freedom with the freedom of the other."⁴⁶ Nor is politics a zero-sum game between power and freedom. The dialectical complicity of power and freedom tells us that freedom is not the "end of power," and power is not the "end of freedom."

Most significantly, we should not lose sight of *initium* as the human gift in consortium with others to transform rather than just to preserve. The direction of transformation, however, is not predetermined or preordained. In other words, the future course of human action is unpredictable or — as Arendt put it — "incalculable." The reverse side of unpredictability is irreversibility. In terms of the human faculty, they are called the capacity of "promising" and "forgiving," respectively, which marks off human existence from animal life. Arendt goes out of her way to emphasize the "unequaled clarity" of Nietzsche on "the connection between human sovereignty and the faculty of making promises," whose relation to Nietzsche's "will to power," according to her, is often overlooked by Nietzsche scholars.⁴⁷ Be that as it may, Arendt shows the indeterminacy of power as political action in terms of its etymological derivation from Greek, Latin, and German: *dynamis*, *potentia*, and *Macht* — the "potential" character in particular of *Macht* being rooted in *mögen* and *möglich*.⁴⁸ The following passage from *The Human Condition* sums up the qualities and attributes of power as the essence of political action: "Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."⁴⁹

What is sadly missing from Foucault's account of power is the idea of *initium* as freedom to transform old realities and create new ones by each subject in concert with others. Being "compatriotic" to power, Foucault's formulation of resistance is ironically — I say "ironically" because his analytics of power in form and tone is agonistic — too undialectical to function effectively as the agent of historical and social change.⁵⁰ To use the

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existentialist language of Simone de Beauvoir, Foucault's formulation allows no genuine "ethics of ambiguity,"⁵¹ that is, the *ambi/guity* particularly between power and resistance.

By way of conclusion it should be emphasized that the primary subject of power is the human, moral subject who is capable of activating — and activating anew — meaning and value in words and deeds for both himself and others. As human interexistence is the existential and axiological condition of power, so is social ontology the presupposed ground for the analytics of power. There is the dialogical way of thinking human intersubjectivity which neither overdetermines nor underdetermines the power of the subject. Since we are concerned primarily with the *intelligibility* of power in history and society, there is no easy escape from the notion of subjectivity. Human subjects are called "self-interpreting animals," by virtue of which, as Foucault himself readily acknowledges, the sciences of man are differentiated from those of nature.⁵² To paraphrase the phenomenological thought of Merleau-Ponty: to be reflective, to be self-interpreting, philosophy must interrogate the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question. Not only would history remain unintelligible and intransigent, but also historical change would be, at best, enigmatic without the subject who triggers it. Defaced man at the edge of history and politics is condemned to nihilism.⁵³ Once power is left to itself without the subject, the moral subject, it subverts or even destroys the very ground and rationale of what defines power as an ensemble of multiple relations.⁵⁴ In the end, Foucault's analytics of power is fractured and scarred by the radical discontinuity between the end and the nascence of the (new) subject. In other words, his idea of new subjectivity is left ungrafted to the analytics of power. And yet to give credence to the idea of historical continuity is to harbor or shelter the sovereignty of consciousness. To translate the same issue into the problematical context of literary theory today: in Foucault's thought, the author dies, without the birth of the reader who is capable of fusing the horizons of the past and the future or mediating the continuity and discontinuity of the world and history as text or intertext.⁵⁵ This, I submit, is the ultimate, unresolved dilemma, if not blackhole, of Foucault's analysis of knowledge, politics, and history. Yet as long as there are traces and tracks of knowledge, politics, and history, it is premature to renounce, abandon, or write a requiem for the moral subject.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 328.
2. Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 375.
3. Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 222-23.
4. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 198.
5. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. George Weidenfeld (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
6. *The Order of Things*, p. 387.
7. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 12.
8. Many, if not all, commentators on Foucault have come to view the idea of discontinuity as one of the most radical features of his thought. Foucault himself addresses the question of continuity and discontinuity in one of his interviews: "Power and Truth" (1977). See *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 111-13. According to Paul Rabinow, Foucault is a philosopher of both continuity and discontinuity. Rabinow comments that "Indeed, Foucault has often mistakenly been seen as a philosopher of discontinuity. The fault is partially his own; works such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things* certainly do emphasize abrupt changes in the structures of discourse of the human sciences. But Foucault has also stressed, in other contexts, the longer-range continuities in cultural practices. The sharp lines of discursive discontinuity in the human sciences and the longer lines of continuity in non-discursive practices provide Foucault with a powerful and flexible grid of interpretation with which to approach relations of knowledge and power. It should be underlined, however, that this is not a philosophy of history which for some mysterious reason glorifies discontinuity" ("Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 9).
9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France, 1952-1960*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 40.
10. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 175-76.
11. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), *passim*.
12. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 23. This critical interchange of continuity and discontinuity is best worked out by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his philosophical hermeneutics, in his notions of historically effective consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*), and the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*). Gadamer insists that "obedience" to tradition is "neither blind nor slavish." *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 34. Whatever unbridgeable differences there may exist between Jürgen Habermas and Gadamer, Habermas, who is critical of Gadamer's idea of tradition in particular and his hermeneutics in general as too conservative, also allows room for an interchange between continuity and discontinuity in language as well as communication when he asserts that language is "inwardly as well as outwardly porous." See Jürgen Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*," in *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 340.
13. "Afterword: The Subject and Power," pp. 216 and 212. Interestingly, Sartre's taped dialogue with Pierre Victor would be titled *Power and Freedom* — a treatise on morality which is, according

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to Sartre, the fulfillment of his promise in *Being and Nothingness*. See "Translator's Introduction," in Francis Jeanson, *Sartre and the Problem of Morality*, trans. Robert V. Stone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. xxv.

14. See *Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen*, trans. Eva Le Gallienne (New York: Modern Library, 1957), pp. 458 and 498. Ibsen's play is also alluded to in Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 48.
15. See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 17.
16. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 205.
17. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, trans. Hugh J. Silverman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 102.
18. Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 225.
19. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 92 and 261.
20. Cf. Alfred Schutz, "Making Music Together," *Collected Papers, II: Studies in Social Theory*, ed. Arvid Brodersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 159-60: "a study of the social relationships connected with the musical process may lead to some insights valid for many other forms of social intercourse, perhaps even to illumination of a certain aspect of the structure of social interaction as such that has not so far attracted from social scientists the attention it deserves."

This cardinal insight of Schutz has still not been tapped fully by the human sciences. Arguing against classical mechanics cloaked and masked in visual and spatial models, Milic Capek proposes that auditory models are better suited to explain the dynamics of contemporary quantum physics. He writes: "In the musical experience of melody or polyphony, the situation is considerably different. The quality of a new tone, in spite of its irreducible individuality, is tinged by the whole antecedent musical context which, in turn, is retroactively changed by the emergence of a new musical quality. The individual tones are not externally related units of which the melody is additively built; neither is their individuality absorbed or dissolved in the undifferentiated unity of the musical whole. The musical phrase is a *successive differentiated whole* which remains a whole in spite of its dynamic wholeness. Like every dynamic whole it exhibits a synthesis of unity and multiplicity, of continuity and discontinuity; but it is not the unity of an undifferentiated simultaneous whole nor is it the plurality of juxtaposed units; it is neither continuity in the mathematical sense of infinite divisibility nor is it the discontinuity of rigid atomic blocs." *Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), pp. 371-72.

In this context, at the risk of going beyond his own intended formulation, let me extrapolate and speculate on the seminal insight of Foucault's analytics of power as a cluster or an ensemble of dynamic relations. For it transforms political thinking from the age of classical mechanics to that of quantum physics, from the closed, static world to the infinite, dynamic universe of power. Foucault's is the quantum field of power whose dynamic quality derives from the temporalization (dynamization) of matter and motion, while classical mechanics was obsessed with "timeless" spatialization. Power associated with "free subjects" may be said to be a relational field of quanta governed by the principle of indeterminacy.

21. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. xvii.
22. The neologism *otonomy* is patterned after Jacques Derrida's discussion of Nietzsche under the playful title "otobiographies" (oto/biographies) in place of "autobiographies." By "otonomy," I wish to preserve the double meaning of "autonomy" without being subjective and the

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sensibility of the "associative ear" rather than the "collecting eye" — to use Eric Havelock's phrases. See Jacques Derrida, "Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," trans. Avital Ronell, in *The Ear of the Other*, ed. Christie V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), pp. 1-38. Of course, we cannot afford to ignore the (musical) aestheticism of Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967). Music is for Nietzsche one way to make the aesthetic intelligible and grasp it directly: "Quite generally, only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon" (*ibid.*, p. 141). Social and political philosophy has yet to come to terms with the radical, immensely important implications of Nietzsche's transgression of Platonism, part of which is the opposition of *aesthesis* to *theoria*.

23. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1: *The Will To Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 99. In *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), David Halliburton describes the encompassing circle of a musical performance that captures Heidegger's sense of mood, attunement, and proximity: "In the performance of a symphony, for example, responsibility may be seen in the interconnecting indebtedness of each constituent: the musicians, as users of equipment (instruments, chairs, music stands, and the like), together with their skills; the artisans responsible for the preparation of the equipment; the members of the audience, together with their capacity to hear and to sustain attention; the score, a being with a thingly character that allies it with equipment even as it carries an already constituted inclination (the totality of the composer's notations); the composer, as one who brings forth within the same order as the artisan; that artisan who is the printer of the score; the manner (in the sense of melody, timbre, tone) of the score as performed; the space of time in which that manner emerges through the concerted composure of performance; the space of time of the tradition without which the music could not move into its own articulation — without which, as the temporal structure that preserves the reciprocal responsibility of all the constituents, it would not be music; and finally, the space of time which is the world play's manner of moving, through all that is thus indebted, to its own disclosure" (p. 217).
24. For a detailed discussion of the nature of music as the organized movement of sound in time, see Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956). Cf. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Message* (New York: Bantam, 1967), p. 111: "The ear favors no particular 'point of view.' We are enveloped by sound. It forms a seamless web around us. We say, 'Music shall fill the air.' We never say, 'Music shall fill a particular segment of the air.' We hear sounds from everywhere, without having to focus. Sounds come from 'above,' from 'below,' from in 'front' of us, from 'behind' us, from our 'right,' from our 'left.' We can't shut out sound automatically. We simply are not equipped with earlids. Whereas a visual space is an organized continuum of a uniformed connected kind, the ear world is a world of simultaneous relationships."
25. For a critical, extensive account of social ontology in the phenomenological movement, see Michael Theunissen, *The Other*, trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).
26. See Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967). For the social ontology of Schutz, see Helmut R. Wagner, "Toward an Anthropology of the Life-World: Alfred Schutz's Quest for the Ontological Justification of the Phenomenological Undertaking," *Human Studies*, 6 (1983): 239-46; and "The Limitations of Phenomenology: Alfred Schutz's Critical Dialogue with Edmund Husserl," *Husserl Studies*, 1 (1984): 157-78. Incidentally, no one has thus far examined seriously the philosophical consequences of Schutz's proposal in his 1945 article on multiple realities: the idea of what he calls the *epoche* of the natural attitude which, unlike transcendental reduction which suspends our belief in the reality of the world, suspends doubt itself in the existence of the external world. In the *epoche* of the natural attitude, therefore, what we put in brackets is the doubt that the world and its objects might be otherwise that it appears to us." See Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers, I: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 229.

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27. On the issue of proximity in recent French intellectual thought, see Joseph Libertson, *Proximity: Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982). In the tradition of phenomenology, there are four philosophies of proximity: (1) cosmic, (2) linguistic, (3) ethical, and (4) political. Each has been worked out by, and is characteristic of, Heidegger, Gadamer, Levinas, and Arendt, respectively, although there is definitely some overlapping of each over the others. Heidegger's cosmic proximity is typified in his discussion of the fourfold unity (*das Geviert*) of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. See particularly *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). Hans-Georg Gadamer's linguistic proximity is found in, for example, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1972) and *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). For Levinas's ethical proximity, see *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); and *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981). And for Arendt's political proximity, see *The Human Condition*.
28. Denis Donoghue, *Ferocious Alphabets* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), p. 45.
29. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
30. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 175. Here I cannot resist quoting this passage which describes the role of the lived body in Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy. For Bakhtin, dialogism is to monologism what Copernican heliocentrism is to Ptolemaic geocentrism. His sensitivity to the lived body, which is not unlike Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, is rooted deeply in Russian Orthodoxy's belief in the corporeality of Christ and kenosis or the potential holiness of matter. The implications of Bakhtin's dialogism for social, political, and moral philosophy is enormous since it, according to Clark and Holquist, "is not intended to be merely another theory of literature or even another philosophy of language, but is an account of relations between people and between persons and things that cuts across religious, political, and aesthetic boundaries" (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 348).
31. See Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). p. 20.
32. *Totality and Infinity*, p. 83. This work of Levinas as a treatise on political philosophy is yet to be explored.
33. "Dialogue with Levinas," p. 27.
34. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982), p. 95.
35. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1958), p. 4. It should be noted here that Levinas contends that Buber's "I-Thou" is the relation of "a symmetrical copresence" (Levinas and Kearney, "Dialogue with Levinas," p. 31). Levinas's contention should be clarified and may be called into question.
36. The German etymology clearly shows a familial circle of "word" (*Wort*), "answer" (*Antwort*), "to answer" (*antworten*), and "to be responsible for" (*verantworten*). See Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 206, n. 2. For the phenomenological ethics of speaking as dialogical, see Georges Gusdorf, *Speaking*, trans. Paul T. Brockelman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965). One of the most thoroughgoing dialogisms has been developed by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). See particularly, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) and two works published under the name V. N. Voloshinov, *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, trans. I. R. Titunik (New York: Academic Press, 1976) and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) focuses on the implications of Bakhtin's dialogism on the philosophy of the human sciences.

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37. Edith Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p. 207.
38. *Totality and Infinity*, p. 395.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
40. The subtitle of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's intellectual biography of Arendt — "Love of the World" — sums up, I think, Arendt's political ethics of proximity. See *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
41. For example, the triological thematics of Foucault's *The Order of Things* by way of life, labor, and language and Arendt's *The Human Condition* in the forms of labor, work, and action go beyond the casual matchings of their keywords. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966) pay attention to the totalitarian framework of power and the political evils of Western society particularly by means of the "instrumentalization" of the world and humanity.
42. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 92.
43. Soren Kierkegaard's *The Present Age*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), set the tone for the existentialist concern for modern anonymity. The work in the same vein which is most familiar to political scientists is José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton, 1932), whose central thesis, I might add, has quite often been misunderstood.
44. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 279.
45. Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 179. Hans Jonas emphasizes the importance of Arendt's notion of natality because she introduced a new category into the philosophical doctrine of man. See "Acting, Knowing, Thinking: Gleanings from Hannah Arendt's Philosophical Work," *Social Research*, 44 (Spring 1977): 30.
46. *Totality and Infinity*, p. 83.
47. *The Human Condition*, p. 245, n. 83.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Cf. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 188: "Perhaps his interest in rules is part of the reason why Foucault is unable to deal with, or provide an account of, historical change."
51. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1962) is a rare and classical treatise in the development of existentialist ethics. By ambiguity, she means the existential condition of choice. She contends that "the existentialist doctrine permits the elaboration of an ethics, but it even appears to us as the only philosophy in which an ethics has its place. For, in a metaphysics of transcendence in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world . . . Nothing is decided in advance, and it is because man has something to lose and because he can lose that he can also win" (*ibid.*, p. 34).

In the context of Schelling's philosophy, Heidegger discusses the notion of freedom as the capacity of both good and evil: as he writes, "Rather, freedom is freedom for good and evil. The 'and,' the possibility of this ambiguity and everything hidden in it is what is decisive. That means that the whole concept of freedom must change" (*Schelling's Treatise*, p. 97).

52. See Charles Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," *Philosophical Papers*, 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), vol. 2: *Human Agency and Language*, pp. 45-76. Taylor writes that "Human beings are self-interpreting animals. This is a widely echoing theme of

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contemporary philosophy. It is central to a thesis about the sciences of man, and what differentiates them from the sciences of nature, which passes through Dilthey and is very strong in the late twentieth century. It is one of the basic ideas of Heidegger's philosophy, early and late. Partly through his influence, it has been made the starting point for a new skein of connected conceptions of man, self-understanding and history, of which the most prominent protagonist has been Gadamer. At the same time, this conception of man as self-interpreting has been incorporated into the work of Habermas, the most important successor of the post-Marxist line of thought known somewhat strangely as critical theory" (*ibid.*, p. 45).

53. Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, trans. John Wild and James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), pp. 52-53: "History has no meaning, if this meaning is understood as that of a river which, under the influence of all-powerful causes, flows towards an ocean in which it disappears. Every appeal to universal history cuts off the meaning of the specific event, renders effective history insignificant, and is a nihilism in disguise."
54. Cf. Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 54: "... once structures were freed from any subject at all, delivered over totally to their own play, they would lose what *defines* them as structures — that is, any objective coordinates of organization at all... Structure therewith capsizes into its antithesis, and post-structuralism proper is born, or what can be defined as a subjectivism without a subject." In *Towards Deep Subjectivity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), Roger Poole, too, contends, albeit in a different context, that "Positivism in fact weakens the case of objectivity by refusing to consider the hidden structures of subjectivity" (p. 75). In *Foucault, Marxism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), Mark Poster raises some important questions concerning Foucault's notion of the subject. For a general discussion of the subject in reference to literary theory, see David Carroll, *The Subject in Question* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
55. It may be said that everything — everything scholarly at any rate — becomes the matter of reading. What I have in mind is the phenomenology of reading or *Rezeptionsästhetik* which has been exemplified particularly in the following works: Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) and *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) and *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). For a classical text on the subject in American literary theory today, see Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). Cf. the author's "The Edification of Oral Hermeneutics and the Ecology of the Text," in *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, vol. 2: *Comparative Poetics*, ed. Claudio Guillen and Peggy Escher (New York: Garland, 1986), pp. 539-50; and Mary Louise Pratt, "Interpretive Strategies/Strategic Interpretations: On Anglo-American Reader-Response Criticism," in *Postmodernism and Politics*, ed. Jonathan Arac (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 26-54.

THE LIMIT OF HISTORIES: MICHEL FOUCAULT'S NOTION OF PARTAGE

Deborah Cook

The work of Michel Foucault is marked by much the same ruptures and discontinuities which Foucault claimed constituted history. Reading through his work from one end to the other leaves one with the distinct impression that Foucault simply failed to find a single method for the analysis of history. On the other hand, one might be led to believe that Foucault progressively modified his method and, "in the end," managed to unify his working hypotheses. Whatever one's conclusions, however, it might be of value to analyse what each of Foucault's works offers on its own in terms of such concerns as the problem of method. That Foucault *could* constantly reinterpret his working hypotheses, especially those in his earlier work, indicates perhaps that this work contains more insights than have been formulated in any of his explicit statements on the subject. In this paper, I wish to address one of the more important and methodologically interesting notions found in the *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique*: that of the *partage*. I shall also comment on the broader outlines of that history — more particularly, on the nature of the division between reason and unreason which results from the *partage*. Only when the specific contexts in which the *partage* makes its appearance are analysed and clarified is it possible to consider the broader methodological significance of the *partage* in the corpus of Foucault's work. At the end of the paper, I shall address some of the methodological issues raised by this notion.

Before I discuss the notion of *partage*, a few brief comments ought to be made about the differences between *Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* — the first edition of the *Histoire* published by Plon¹ — and Gallimard's second edition: *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique*.² The corpus of these works remains unchanged with the exception of some very minor revisions. The first edition, however, contains a preface in which Foucault

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describes the aim or intent of his history. This preface, which Derrida has criticised in "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie,"³ does not appear at all in the second edition. One can only speculate on the reasons that led Foucault to suppress it. It is, for example, entirely possible that Derrida's criticism of *Folie et Déraison*, which focusses, though not exclusively, on some remarks Foucault made in his preface, so offended Foucault that he did not wish to see it published in the second edition. It is also possible that Foucault's own later criticism of this work in terms of its intent indicates that he believed his first statement of purpose to be inadequate. Because the preface is important for its description of the notion of *partage*, I shall make reference to it here.

A second difference between the two editions can be found in the addition of an appendix to the second edition. This appendix is entitled "La Folie, l'absence d'oeuvre" and was originally published in *La Table ronde* in May of 1964. In it, Foucault extends his analysis of madness in terms of the form of exclusion peculiar to the classical age. Subsequent reprintings of *Histoire de la Folie* do not contain this appendix. Once again, one may only speculate as to why this is the case. Since, however, the appendix is not crucial for an understanding of the *partage* nor for the characterisation of the particular form of exclusion exercised in the classical age, it will not be quoted in this paper.

The notion of *partage* which Foucault introduces to his historical account of madness in the classical age is qualified by a number of different terms in both the preface and the corpus of *Folie et Déraison*. It is the degree zero of history (*FD*, p. i), constitutive of history (*FD*, p. i), a caesura (*FD*, p. ii) and it lies on the confines of history (*FD*, p. iv). Throughout the text proper, it is used interchangeably with the term "*geste*" (gesture). Further, the word "*partage*" has, in French, two distinct meanings or usages. Both of these are found in Foucault's history. It has both the active sense of division or dividing and the passive sense of share or allotment. Used interchangeably with the notion of gesture, it is the active sense that prevails. The history of the classical age can be said to have begun with an anonymous act which separated the institutions, concepts and laws of the Renaissance from those of the classical age. The passive sense of *partage* can be found in the form of exclusion which results from the active gesture and is encapsulated in the classical age in the distinction between reason (*raison*) and unreason (*déraison*).

This view of history which ascribes it to the effect of a *partage* lying on the confines of history already assumes a number of traits which may be discovered in Foucault's later views of history. I shall briefly comment on them here, although I would also point out that there are differences in the later formulations that must be respected. First, the idea that history is constituted by a *partage*, or by an abrupt event or experience, already

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anticipates Foucault's later thesis that history is discontinuous. "The classical experience of madness is born" (*HF*, p. 53). It emerges suddenly on the scene preceded by the *partage* which itself is preceded by nothing. An anonymous act lies at the origin of any historical period, and that period is not, therefore, explicable with reference to other events in previous histories. The anonymity of this gesture of division in the *Histoire de la Folie* is that gesture's more perplexing attribute. One may be able to describe the effects of the *partage* and have some, though not unequivocal, sense of its historical significance. Nevertheless, the *partage* itself, apart from its instantiation in the classical age, is not defined. What it does, however, is to force a radical break with the past.

The discontinuity which characterises Foucault's idea of history throughout his work is thus found from the beginning in his notion of *partage*. While a particular epoch may exhibit its own form of continuity, it is not part of some larger and universal History which would precede it and explain it. Foucault's histories begin with a discussion of the limits or *partages* that divide one age from another.

One might write a history of *limits* — of those obscure gestures, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are accomplished, by means of which a culture rejects something that would be external to it; and all throughout its history, this hollowed void, this white space which isolates it, designates it as much as its values. For it receives and maintains its values in the continuity of history; but in that region of which we wish to speak, it exercises its essential choices, it creates the *partage* which gives it the face of its positivity; there one can find the originary thickness where it is formed. To interrogate a culture about its limit experiences, is to question it on the confines of history, on a rupture which is like the birth itself of its history (*FD*, pp. iii-iv).

Ruptures, confines, and limits lie at the outer edges of any age. History is, in Foucault's *Histoire de la Folie* and elsewhere, constituted in these limit experiences or events. In his later work, these limits become the limits of language and, later still, those of power and desire. Thus, the earlier anonymity of the *partage* gives way to a more positive qualification.

Another idea entailed by this notion of *partage* is that of *aléa*, chance or accident. The *Petit Robert* defines "*aléa*" as an unforeseeable event, an unforeseeable turn that events might take — *hasard*. The *partage* is not something that can be predicted on the basis of prior events which might, otherwise, be assumed to have led up to it. It is neither determined nor the result of the choice of subjects with free will. Its emergence on the scene is as unpredictable as the roll of a dice. The *partage* is an event which can never be anticipated. Thus neither reason nor unreason could appear such as they

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were without the entirely inexplicable gesture that constituted the classical age. In question, then, is the rationality of history and a rational origin for historical periods. It is this refusal to see the real as rational which plants Foucault squarely in the tradition of Nietzsche. Although the word "chance" is not used in *Histoire de la Folie*, it is clear that Foucault's later description of it in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" is applicable to that earlier work. In this article on Nietzsche, Foucault approvingly quotes Nietzsche's view in *Die Morgenröte* that sees history as "... the iron hand of necessity shaking the dicebox of chance."⁴

The final point to be made about the notion of *partage*, which links it to Foucault's later work, concerns the problem of origin. It is here that Foucault's view of the *partage* stands in need of correctives if one wishes to correlate it with Foucault's later ideas. In the preface of Foucault's history, one reads:

What is constitutive is the gesture that divides madness, and not the science which is established: this division [*partage*] which, once it is made, returns to the calm. What is originary is the caesura which establishes the distance between reason and unreason . . . It will therefore be necessary to speak of this primitive debate without supposing a victory nor a right to victory, to speak of those gestures regurgitated in history . . . , of these cutting gestures, of this distance taken (*FD*, pp. i-ii).

The problem with this notion of *partage* as origin has been well formulated by Jacques Derrida, who otherwise misreads Foucault. In "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie," Derrida writes: "... if this great division is the possibility itself of history, the historicity of history, what does 'writing the history of this *partage*' mean here?"⁵ What is the nature of the origin Foucault posits with his notion of *partage*? In *L'Ordre du Discours*, where he links it with the will to truth and power and desire,⁶ it is clear that Foucault means something historical by it. In *Histoire de la Folie*, however, the *partage* appears at once to lie outside of history as that which makes it possible and to be the result or effect of a *partage*. The ambiguity of that word with respect to its two senses is perhaps no more evident than here.

The ambiguity in Foucault's notion of *partage* as origin is a problem that is not resolved in the *Histoire de la Folie*. Can something that is constitutive of history itself be historical? If not, then one is confronted with a gesture that shares much in common with the creative and uncaused act of a divine being. In the beginning was the *partage*. On one interpretation, then, it would be the unmoved mover or uncaused cause of history. Apart from a few vague remarks on the relationship between the *partage* and history, Foucault does not define the status of that gesture that initiates

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history. Only later, when he links the *partage* to power and desire, will one find a characterisation of its status as an historical one. Commenting on his history in *L'Archéologie du Savoir*, Foucault states that he came "... close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history."⁷ This attempt at self-criticism seems particularly apt in light of the difficulties with Foucault's idea of history sketched here.

What the *partage* divides is, as has already been noted, itself a *partage*. In the classical age, what is divided is the realm of reason from unreason. Foucault further claims that the active *partage* which creates this division is an ethical one. This philosophical account of the nature of the *partage* and of its effects is the next topic I shall treat in this paper.

Foucault opens his discussion of the classical age with an interpretation of Descartes. In the stage of natural doubt — before he advances the possibility of total deception with the evil genius hypothesis — Descartes excludes madness as a stage in the process of rational doubt.⁸ Doubting the senses is rational because the senses sometimes deceive me. Doubting that I am awake is rational because I sometimes dream that I am awake when I am in fact asleep. but doubting my sanity is an extravagance which the process of rational doubt makes impossible. Along the road to the truth of the *cogito*, madness must be excluded. If one were to entertain the hypothesis that one was mad, there would be no ground for asserting any truth whatsoever. Madness is thus excluded *de ovo* from the rationality of the doubting process that leads to truth. It is simply presumed to be too extravagant to warrant serious consideration.

This summary exclusion of madness from rational doubt in the stage of natural doubt is not the only exclusion madness suffers in Descartes' work. At a later stage in his analysis, Foucault comments on the exclusion found in Descartes' rejection of the evil genius hypothesis. Foucault interprets the holding of this hypothesis as a final attempt to include madness in the process of rationality that leads to truth. While I object to this interpretation of the hyperbolic hypothesis as a form of madness on the grounds that Descartes advanced reasons for entertaining it, Foucault does manage to show that even the possibility of total deception is excluded from the truth of the *cogito*. His interpretation, however, does not underestimate the force of the evil genius hypothesis.

It is true that the *cogito* is an absolute beginning; but one must not forget that the evil genius comes before it. And the evil genius is not the symbol in which are resumed and systematized all the dangers of those psychological events which are dream images and sensible error. Between God and man, the evil genius has an absolute meaning: in all his rigor he is the possibility of unreason and the totality of its powers ... And it is not because the truth which the *cogito* illuminates

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ends up masking the shadow of the evil genius that one must forget his continually dangerous power; this danger will underlie Descartes' procedure up until the existence and the truth of the external world (*HF*, p. 175).

With the *cogito*, the possibility of complete deception is eliminated. The evil genius may deceive me as much as he wants, he will never arrange it so that I am nothing when I think that I exist. The certitude of my own existence protects me from that danger that lurks in the shadow of the *lumen naturale*: the possibility that I may be utterly deceived. The power of the evil genius does not extend to that absolute beginning that assures me of my own existence. It is in the truth of the *cogito* alone that his power is dispelled.

What Foucault hopes to illustrate with this philosophical account of exclusion is, firstly, the nature of the *partage* itself and, secondly, the new relationship which results from it between reason and unreason in the classical age. What Descartes' spontaneous act of excluding madness from the process of rational doubt exemplifies is a will to rationality that may not be breached by an appeal to extravagant or hyperbolic hypotheses. Foucault writes that "... the *will* to doubt has already excluded the involuntary enchantment of unreason and the Nietzschean possibility of becoming mad" (*HF*, p. 157). The gesture that divides reason from unreason is therefore an ethical one. Doubt is assumed to be the act of a free subject which, by virtue of being rational — *i.e.* free — may lead to truth. In the act of will which impels doubt and sustains it, one has already voluntarily excluded the possibility of madness. The will to doubt already implies a decision to excommunicate madness.

If I doubt, I cannot be mad. If I am mad, I do not exist. The form of exclusion practiced in the classical age on the basis of its ethical *partage* is a radical one. Facing the Cartesian subject — the philosophical counterpart of our classical forebears — is a world of unreason and madness which this subject rejects out of hand as lacking rationality, and thus existence altogether.

Confronting those insensate beings who imagined themselves as pitchers or as having bodies of glass, Descartes knew immediately he was not at all like them ... The inevitable recognition of their madness arose spontaneously in a relation established between them and oneself: the subject who perceived the difference measured it against himself (*HF*, p. 199).

The insane, and those grouped with them under the rubric of unreason, were immediately perceived as ethically null and void and were thus interned in houses of correction where they were punished for their moral turpitude.

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The ethical division leads, by the force of the rationality it spawns, to the positing of a realm of unreason.

The mid-seventeenth century saw the sudden birth of internment throughout Europe and Great Britain. The places in which the insane were housed were designed for the moral castigation of misery and unreason. "If, in the seventeenth century, madness was virtually desanctified, it is because misery has undergone this sort of fall which means that it is now perceived on a moral horizon alone" (HF, p. 74). The insane are not socially useful, moral subjects. Insanity has been created as a form of unreason by virtue of that ethical division which creates both reason and unreason. Given the will to doubt, a whole category of people including the indigent, the libertines, those with venereal diseases, sodomites, the debauched and others, are abruptly shut out of the ethical order. Thus it is not madness itself, or a madness that would preexist the classical age and persist in our own which is excluded.⁹ Foucault makes this point quite explicitly. Madness, and the forms of unreason associated with it, are designated as ethically void in the classical age alone.

. . . one did not intern, in about 1657, one one hundredth of the population of Paris to save oneself from the "asocial element." The gesture undoubtedly had another dimension: it did not isolate misunderstood strangers who had been hidden for too long under the mask of custom; it created them, changing familiar faces in the social landscape to make of them bizarre faces no one could recognise any more . . . In a word, one might say that this gesture was creative of alienation (HF, p. 94).

The creation of madness as a moral fault can thus be attributed to the *partage* which, inasmuch as it is ethical, divides madness from the *cogito*, reason from unreason and being from not-being. "[R]eason is born in an ethical space" (HF, p. 157). And unreason is born in the same space. Reason resides in the free will and the sense of responsibility it entails. Unreason resides in the involuntary behaviour of an animal which lacks even the most nominal sense of guilt. Foucault goes on to claim that reason and unreason confront each other in the classical age as being confronts non-being. It is this final description of the passive form of the *partage* which I shall consider in my concluding remarks.

What distinguishes the classical age from any other is the new relationship established in it by virtue of its ethical *partage* to what it deemed unreason or insanity. Foucault asserts that no other age has experienced the sort of division found in the classical age between reason and unreason. Never has an age so stringently distinguished what it designates as insanity. With the birth of houses of internment, those considered insane were

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opposed to the ethical and rational subject of the classical age as non-being (*non-être*) to being (*être*).

Descartes "... banishes madness in the name of the person who doubts and who can no more be irrational than not think or not be" (*HF*, p. 58). The madman was thus designated "... abruptly and without further ado by his presence alone in the visible — luminous and nocturnal — *partage* of being and non-being" (*HF*, p. 547). An ethical, and therefore, rational subject, who exercises his or her free will, has already, and by virtue of those acts, joined the ethical community. An insane being has failed to exercise the right to choose which is given with free will. As unfree and irresponsible, the insane must be excluded. They form "... the other side of a choice which opens to humankind the free exercise of its rational nature" (*HF*, p. 159).

That unreason in the classical age does not partake in the existence of the ethical community is not, however, to say that it does not exist at all. It means that no truth is guaranteed to the existence of unreason. The insane do not have any assurance of their own existence. And the ethical order which implicitly recognizes their existence in the practice of internment does not validate it. The existence of the ethical order is guaranteed in the truth of the *cogito*. The existence of unreason is assured by the ethical community that recognizes it but refuses to accord it any status in the realm of rationality and therefore of ethics. Thinking, or the rationality given in the exercise of free will, may well be the hall-mark of existence, but existence itself may take other forms which are not rational. It may, and in fact does, take the form of unreason in the classical age.

In the *Histoire de la Folie*, Foucault attempts his first description of an age in terms of a notion that he will progressively revise as he continues his studies of history. The *partage* is central not only to Foucault's early work, but is cited in the later work as well, as a form of "exclusion, limitation, appropriation"¹⁰ which must be studied in what he terms a critical analysis of history. It is an integral part of what Foucault means by archeology. Nevertheless, after we have examined its role in the *Histoire de la Folie*, the nature of the *partage*, apart from its specific (ethical) instantiation in the classical age, remains uncertain. That the classical age should have been constituted by a *partage* which distinguishes it from other ages brings one no closer to understanding what the *partage* itself might be. Indeed, even when it receives a more positive qualification in the later work, it is just its protean capacity to take different forms in different ages which is emphasized by Foucault.

One thing is clear, however. In Foucault's view, it is necessary that historians relate the practices of an age back to their "origin" in a *partage*. The *partage* represents a kind of historiographic imperative. If histories are constituted by such ruptures, and it is certain that Foucault believes this,

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then, in order to write history, one must refer the practices, institutions, laws, and discourse of an age back to the *partage* which limits it and determines it. Yet, and once again, while the necessity of referring the practices of an age back to the *partage* is amply *illustrated* by Foucault's entire corpus, neither Foucault nor his commentators have clarified its status. If "[o]ne must accept the introduction of the aleatory as a category in the production of events,"¹¹ how this should be understood remains a mystery.

Perhaps the *partage* is nothing apart from its instantiations in particular ages. If this were the case, one would be obliged to view the *partage* as historical. However, such an historical interpretation does not agree with Foucault's characterization of the *partage* as the degree zero of history. On the other hand, it might be easier to caricature the notion, by comparing it to the Adamite theory of naming. The creation of an entirely new world of objects which is attributed to a *partage* resembles nothing more than the theory according to which the world was created in the word. Indeed, in such works as *The Archeology of Knowledge*, the *partage* has a peculiarly linguistic character which lends itself easily to such a caricature. In either case, it is clear that what Foucault demands of his readers is simply to accept (or reject) the notion that history is constituted in a series of ruptures or *partages*. No arguments are advanced to defend it; we are simply told (in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, for example) that a new analysis of history which borrows much from Georges Canguilhem, has begun to transform traditional historiography. The validity of this new form of historiography is never demonstrated. Its usefulness to historians is only illustrated by the actual histories produced under the aegis of the methodological principle of referring the "essential choices" of an age back to the *partage* which constituted them. That this methodology and the notion implied by it remain unexamined and undefended is one of the central weaknesses of Foucault's historiography.

In one of his later programmatic statements, found in *L'Ordre du Discours*, Foucault further articulates the notion of *partage*. Systems of exclusion are given a more detailed treatment, and Foucault isolates three which were found in a confused form in the *Histoire de la Folie*. Procedures of exclusion include the interdict (*l'interdit*), rejection, and the will to truth, which excludes falsity. These are historically conditioned forms of exclusion which ultimately refer to power and desire, and to the institutions, laws, etc., which are maintained by power and desire. In order to analyse a society, it is necessary to refer its discourse back to these forms. As in the *Histoire*, then, the analysis of history requires that the exclusionary events which constitute it be identified and characterized. Nevertheless, only if one accepts the view that history is discontinuous, and that this discontinuity is conditioned by *partages*, will Foucault's historiography be practicable. Mere

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acceptance will not validate it however. To defend Foucault, it is necessary to find not only illustrations, but arguments, to support this methodological principle.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Folie et Dérailson: Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961). Henceforth quoted in the text as *FD*.
2. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). Henceforth quoted in the text as *HF*.
3. Jacques Derrida, "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie," in *L'Écriture et la Différence* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), pp. 51-97.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of the Day* (n. p.) p. 130, quoted in Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard, trans., Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967) p. 155.
5. "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie," p. 68.
6. Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du Discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 10-23.
7. Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 27.
8. Although Jacques Derrida has advanced a powerful argument against Foucault's interpretation of Descartes in "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie," I shall treat Foucault's interpretation as unproblematic in this paper. In fact, it can be shown that Derrida completely neglects to take into account the rational character of Descartes' doubt. This oversight, along with a questionable interpretation of the evil genius hypothesis, flaws his criticism, and thus Foucault's account remains the more acceptable one.
9. Another standard interpretation of Foucault that appears in Derrida's work and others suggests that Foucault is attempting an ontology of madness. As I hope to show in this paper, however, madness in the *Histoire de la Folie* is an historical phenomenon constituted by a *partage* whose nature is ethical but whose status in terms of history is uncertain.
10. *L'Ordre du Discours*, p. 62.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

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from 1987

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WHEN BATAILLE ATTACKED THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY

Jean Baudrillard

Translator's Note

Interest in the work of Jean Baudrillard has continued to grow: the impressive critical analyses of the early work, such as *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (Telos, 1981; orig. 1972); the middle polemics, such as *Forgetting Foucault (Humanities in Society)*, Winter, 1980; orig. 1977); the McLuhanesque fatal strategies of late, such as *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (Semiotexte, 1983; orig. 1982). The name Baudrillard, as with that of Deleuze and Lyotard, has gained currency — or 'sign-value' to use Baudrillard's appellation — in the exchange that is coming to be referred to as the modernist-postmodernist debate.

At the same time, interest in the work of Georges Bataille (a name long known in France and in French studies) is gaining momentum outside these geo-political and intellectual boundaries. Even that zealous defender of modernity, Jürgen Habermas — in his recently published collection of interviews *Autonomy and Solidarity* (New Left Books, 1986) — makes a point, in passing, of criticizing Bataille. In North America, this gathering interest has been facilitated by the recent English-language publications of selections of Bataille's work in *Visions of Excess* (Minnesota, 1985) and more recently in the journal *October* (Spring, 1986).

It seems apropos, in light of this unique juncture of interests, to make available the following translation of Jean Baudrillard's review of the seventh volume of the *Oeuvres complètes* — the collected works — of Georges Bataille (Gallimard, 1976). The review is of particular interest at this juncture for the light it sheds on the role played by Bataille's works in the continuing development (or developments) of Baudrillard's thought. It is of further interest in that it helps clarify Baudrillard's elusive notion of

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symbolic exchange, a notion derived in large part from Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (Norton, 1967; orig. 1925), as well as from Bataille's reflections on, and appropriation of that work. I might also note that Baudrillard's 'criticism' here of Bataille's naturalizing the gift-exchange is of particular interest in light of what appears to be his own naturalizing of it, under the guise of "seduction," in the "prodigious metaphysical spiral" that characterizes his own later work (see, for example, his comments in "Game with Vestiges" in *On the Beach* [Winter, 1984]).

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WHEN BATAILLE ATTACKED THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY¹

Jean Baudrillard

Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*: vol. VII. Paris: Gallimard. 618 pp.²

Continuity, sovereignty, intimacy, immanent immensity: a single thought in the work of Bataille, a single mythic thought behind these multiple terms: "I am of those who destine men to things other than the incessant growth of production, who incite them to the sacred horror."

The sacred is *par excellence* the sphere of "*La part maudite*" [the accursed share] (the central essay of this seventh volume of Bataille's works), sphere of sacrificial expenditure, of wealth [*luxe*] and of death; sphere of a "general" economy which refutes all the axioms of economy as it is usually understood (an economy which, in generalizing itself, overruns [*brûle*] its boundaries and truly passes beyond political economy, something that the latter, and all Marxist thought, are powerless to do in accordance with the internal logic of value). It is also the sphere of non-knowledge [*non-savoir*].

Paradoxically, the works collected here are in a way Bataille's "Book of Knowledge," the one where he tries to erect the buttresses of a vision which, at bottom, doesn't need them; indeed, the drive [pulsion] toward the sacred ought, in its destructive incandescence, to deny the kind of apology and discursive rendition contained in "*La Part Maudite*" and "*La Théorie de Religion*." "My philosophic position is based on non-knowledge of the whole, on knowledge concerned only with details." It is necessary, therefore, to read these defensive fragments from the two antithetical perspectives [*sur le double versant*] of knowledge and non-knowledge.

The Fundamental Principle

The central idea is that the economy which governs our societies results from a misappropriation of the fundamental human principle, which is a solar principle of expenditure. Bataille's thought goes, beyond proper *political* economy (which in essence is regulated through exchange value), straight to the *metaphysical* principle of economy. Bataille's target is utility, in its root. Utility is, of course, an apparently positive principle of capital: accumulation, investment, depreciation, etc. But in fact it is, on Bataille's account, a principle of powerlessness, an utter inability to expend. Given that all previous societies knew how to expend, this is, an unbeliev-

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able deficiency: it cuts the human being off from all possible sovereignty. All economics is founded on that which no longer can, no longer knows how to expend itself [*se dépenser*], on that which is incapable of becoming the stake of a sacrifice. It is therefore entirely residual, it is a limited social fact; and it is against economy as a limited social fact that Bataille wants to raise expenditure, death and sacrifice as total social facts — such is the principle of general economy.

The principle of utility (use value) blends with the bourgeoisie, with this capitalist class whose definition for Bataille (contrary to Marx) is negative: it no longer knows how to expend. Similarly, the crisis of capital, its increasing mortality and its immanent death throes, are not bound, as in the work of Marx, to a *history*, to dialectical reversals [*péripiéties*], but to this fundamental law of the inability to expend, which gives capital over to the cancer of production and unlimited reproduction. There is no principle of revolution in Bataille's work: "*The terror of revolutions has only done more and more [de mieux en mieux] to subordinate human energy to industry.*" There is only a principle of sacrifice — the principle of sovereignty, whose diversion by the bourgeoisie and capital causes all human history to pass from sacred tragedy to the comedy of utility.

This critique is a non marxist critique, an *aristocratic* critique, because it aims at utility, at economic finality as the axiom of capitalist society. The Marxist critique is only a critique of capital, a critique coming from the heart of the middle and petit bourgeois classes, for which Marxism has served for a century as a latent ideology: a critique of exchange value, *but an exaltation of use value* — and thus a critique, at the same time, of what made the almost delirious greatness of capital, the secular remains of its religious quality:³ investment at any price, even at the cost of use value. The marxist seeks a *good use* of economy. Marxism is therefore only a limited petit bourgeois critique, one more step in the banalization of life toward the "good use" of the social! Bataille, to the contrary, sweeps away all this slave dialectic from an aristocratic point of view, that of the master struggling with his death. One can accuse this perspective of being pre- or post-Marxist. At any rate, Marxism is only the disenchanted horizon of capital — all that precedes or follows it is more radical than it is.

What remains uncertain in the work of Bataille (but without a doubt this uncertainty *can not* be alleviated), is to know whether the economy (capital), which is counterbalanced on absurd, but never useless, never sacrificial expenditures (wars, waste . . .), is nevertheless shot through with a sacrificial dynamic. Is political economy at bottom only a frustrated avatar of the single great cosmic law of expenditure? Is the entire history of capital only an immense detour toward its own catastrophe, toward its own sacrificial end? If this is so, it is because, in the end, one cannot not expend. A longer spiral perhaps drags capital beyond economy, toward a destruction

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of its own values; the alternative is that we are stuck forever in this denial of the sacred, in the vertigo of supply, which signifies the rupture of alliance (of symbolic exchange in primitive societies) and of sovereignty.

Bataille would have been impassioned by the present evolution of capital in this era of floating currencies, of values seeking their own level (which is not their transmutation), and the drift of finalities [*la dérive des finalités*] (which is neither sovereign uselessness nor the absurd gratuitousness of laughter and death). But his concept of expenditure would have permitted only a limited analysis: it is still too economic, too much the flip side of accumulation, as transgression is too close to the inverse figure of prohibition.⁴ In an order which is no longer that of utility, but an *aleatory* order of value, pure expenditure, while retaining the romantic charm of turning the economic inside out, is no longer sufficient for radical defiance [*au défi radical*] — it shatters the mirror of *market* value, but is powerless against the shifting mirror [*le miroir en dérive*] of *structural* value.

Bataille founds his general economy on a "solar economy" without reciprocal exchange, on the unilateral gift that the sun makes of its energy: a cosmogony of expenditure, which he deploys in a religious and political anthropology. But Bataille has misread Mauss: the unilateral gift does not exist.⁵ This is not the law of the universe. He who has so well explored the human sacrifice of the Aztecs should have known as they did that the sun gives nothing, it is necessary to nourish it continually with human blood in order that it shine. It is necessary to challenge [*défier*] the gods through sacrifice in order that they respond with profusion. In other words, the root of sacrifice and of general economy is never pure and simple expenditure — or whatever drive [*pulsion*] of excess that supposedly comes to us from nature — but is an incessant process of challenge [*défi*].

Bataille has "naturalized" Mauss

The "excess of energy" does not come from the sun (from nature) but from a continual higher bidding in exchange — the symbolic process that can be found in the work of Mauss, not that of the gift (that is the naturalist mystique into which Bataille falls), but that of the counter-gift. This is the single truly symbolic process, which in fact implies death as a kind of maximal excess — but not as individual ecstasy, always as the maximal principle of *social exchange*. In this sense, one can reproach Bataille for having "naturalized" Mauss (but in a metaphysical spiral so prodigious that the reproach is not really one), and for having made symbolic exchange a kind of natural function of prodigality, at once hyper-religious in its gratuitousness and much too close still, *a contrario*, to the principle of utility and to the economic order that it exhausts in transgression without ever leaving behind.

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It is "in the glory of death" [*à hauteur de mort*] that one rediscovers Bataille, and the real question posed remains: "How is it that all men have encountered the need and felt the obligation to kill living beings ritually? For lack of having known how to respond, all men have remained in ignorance of that which they are." There is an answer to this question *beneath* the text, in all the interstices of Bataille's text, but in my opinion not in the notion of expenditure, nor in this kind of anthropological reconstruction that he tries to establish from the "objective" data of his day: Marxism, biology, sociology, ethnology, political economy, the objective potential of which he tries to bring together nevertheless, in a perspective which is neither exactly a genealogy, nor a natural history, nor a hegelian totality, but a bit of all that.

But the sacred imperative is flawless in its *mythic* assertion, and the will to teach is continually breached by Bataille's dazzling vision, by a "subject of knowledge" always "at the boiling point." The consequence of this is that even analytic or documentary considerations have that mythic force which constitutes the sole — sacrificial — force of writing.

*Notes

1. Jean Baudrillard, "Le Livre de la quinzaine: Quand Bataille attaqua le principe métaphysique de l'économie," *La Quinzaine littéraire* 234 (1-15 juin 1976): 4-5.
2. Editor's note: Only two pieces from this seventh volume have been translated into English — "Le sacrifice" (dated 1939-1940), a portion of *La Limite de l'utile* (an abandoned version of *La Part Maudite*); and "Notice autobiographique" (dated 1958). Both pieces have been translated by Annette Michelson and appear in *October* (Spring, 1986) respectively as "Sacrifice" (pp. 61-74) and "Autobiographical Note" (pp. 107-110).

A number of Bataille's works have been translated into English. In addition to *Visions of Excess* (Minnesota 1985), translated by Alan Stockl, these include: *Literature and Evil* (Urizen Books 1985; orig. 1957), translated by Alastair Hamilton, and *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (Arno Press, 1977; orig. 1957).

3. The "Puritan mania of business" (money earned is earned in order to be invested . . . having value or meaning only in the endless wealth it entails), in that it still entails a sort of madness, challenge, and catastrophic compulsion — a sort of ascetic mania — is opposed to work, to the good use of energy in work and usufruct.
4. Destruction (even gratuitous) is always ambiguous, since it is the inverse figure of production, and falls under the objection that in order to destroy it is first necessary to have produced, to which Bataille is able to oppose only the sun.
5. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: RKP, 1954).

MODERNITY*

Jean Baudrillard

Modernity is neither a sociological concept, nor a political concept, nor exactly a historical concept. It is a characteristic mode of civilization, which opposes itself to tradition, that is to say, to all other anterior or traditional cultures: confronting the geographic and symbolic diversity of the latter, modernity imposes itself throughout the world as a homogeneous unity, irradiating from the Occident. Nevertheless, it remains a confused notion, which connotes in a global manner any historical evolution and change of mentality.

Inextricably myth and reality, modernity specifies itself in all domains: modern State, modern technique, modern music and painting — as a sort of general category and cultural imperative. Born of certain profound upheavals of economic and social organization, it becomes concrete at the level of custom, style of life, and the quotidian — even to the point of caricaturing itself. Shifting in its forms, in its contents, in time and in space, it is stable and irreversible only as a system of values, like myth — and, in this sense, it should be written with a capital: Modernity. In that, it resembles Tradition.

As modernity is not an analytic concept, there can be no laws of modernity: there are only traits of modernity. There is no theory of it either: only a logic of modernity and an ideology. As the canonical morality of change, it opposes itself to the canonical morality of tradition, but it is nevertheless just as wary of radical change. It is the “tradition of the new” (Harold Rosenberg). Though linked to a historical and structural crisis, modernity is really only a symptom of it. It does not analyze this crisis, it

* Jean Baudrillard, “Modernité” in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. 12 (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis France, 1985), pp. 424-426. Translated by David James Miller, Purdue University.

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expresses it in an ambiguous fashion, in a continual flight before it. It acts as an ideational force and principal ideology, sublimating the contradictions of history in the effects of civilization. *It makes crisis a value*, a contradictory morality. Thus, as an idea in which a whole civilization recognizes itself, modernity assumes a regulatory cultural function and thereby surreptitiously rejoins tradition.

Genesis of Modernity

The history of the adjective 'modern' is longer than that of 'modernity'. In any cultural context, the 'ancient' and the 'modern' alternate significantly. But there does not exist a universal 'modernity,' that is to say, a historical and polemic structure of change and of crisis. The latter can only be spotted in Europe from the 16th century, and only acquires its full meaning in the 19th century.

The Renaissance

School textbooks make modern times [*les Temps modernes*] follow upon the Middle Ages, from the date of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus (1492). The invention of printing and the discoveries of Galileo inaugurate modern Renaissance humanism. On the level of the arts, and particularly of literature, the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns develops and culminates in the 17th and 18th centuries. Profound echoes of the division of modernity are also heard in the religious domain: the Reformation (in Wittenberg, on October 31, 1517, Luther posts his 95 theses opposing the indulgences) and the rupture it inaugurates for the Protestant countries, but also the repercussions of this on the Catholic world (Council of Trent, 1545-1549, 1551-1552, 1562-1563). The Catholic Church is already undertaking an updating, making itself, with the Society of Jesus, modern, worldly and missionary; perhaps this explains why the term modernity will have a more current, more significant reception in the countries which have kept the Roman traditions, rites and customs, even while progressively renovating them. In fact, the term only takes on strength in countries with a long tradition. To speak of modernity scarcely has meaning in a country without tradition or Middle Ages, like the United States. Inversely, modernization has a very strong impact in Third World countries with strong traditional cultures.

In countries touched by the Catholic Renaissance, the conjunction of lay and secular humanism with the more worldly ritualism of traditional Catholic forms and customs lends itself better to all the complexity of social and artistic life which the development of modernity implies than does the strict alliance of rationalism and moralism in Protestant culture.

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Modernity is not just the reality of technical, scientific and political upheavals since the 16th century; it is also the play of signs, customs, and culture which translates these structural changes at the level of ritual and social habitus.

The 17th and 18th Centuries

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the philosophical and political fundamentals of modernity are set in place: individualistic and modern rationalist thought, of which Descartes and the philosophy of the Enlightenment are representative; the centralized monarchical State, with its administrative techniques succeeding the feudal system; the foundations of a physical and natural science, which lead to the first effects of an applied technology (Diderot's *Encyclopédie*). Culturally, it is the period of the total secularization of the arts and of the sciences. The quarrel of the Ancients and of the Moderns traverses this whole period, from Perraut (*Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, 1688) and Fontenelle (*Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*, 1688), who derived a law of progress of the human spirit, up to Rousseau (*Dissertation sur la musique moderne*, 1750) and Stendhal (*Racine et Shakespeare*, 1823), who conceived of 'romanticism' as a radical modernism, taking as his theme daily customs and subjects borrowed from national history. This quarrel defines an autonomous movement, free from any 'Renaissance' or imitation. Modernity is not yet a way of life (the term does not then exist). But it has become an idea (linked to that of progress). It has taken on a liberal bourgeois tonality which will continue to mark it ideologically.

The Industrial Revolution and the 20th Century

The Revolution of 1789 established the modern, centralized and democratic, bourgeois State, the nation with its constitutional system, its political and bureaucratic organization.

The continual progress of the sciences and of techniques, the rational division of industrial work, introduce into social life a dimension of permanent change, of destruction of customs and traditional culture. Simultaneously, the social division of work introduced some profound political cleavages, a dimension of social struggles and of conflicts which will echo through the 19th and 20th Century.

These two major aspects, which will add to demographic development, urban concentration, and the gigantic development of the means of communication and information, will mark modernity, in decisive fashion, as a social practice and way of life articulated on change and innovation — but also on anxiety, instability, continual mobilization, shifting subjectivity,

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tension, crisis — and as an ideal representation or mythology. In this context, the date of the appearance of the word itself (Theophile Gautier, Baudelaire, 1850 or so) is significant: it is the moment when modern society realizes itself as such, thinks itself in terms of modernity. The latter becomes a transcendent value, a cultural model, a morality — a myth of reference present everywhere, and concealing in part the historical structures and contradictions which gave birth to it.

The Logic of Modernity

Techno-scientific Concept

The prodigious expansion, particularly for the last 100 years, of science and technique, the rational and systematic development of the means of production, their management and organization, marks modernity as the era of productivity: an intensification of human labour and of human domination over nature, both reduced to the status of productive forces and to the schemas of efficacy and maximal output. This is the common denominator of all modern nations. If this 'revolution' of productive forces has not changed life, because it leaves the relations of production and social relations relatively unchanged, at least it modifies the conditions of life from one generation to the other. It institutes today a profound mutation in modernity: the passage from a civilization of work and progress to a civilization of consumption and leisure. But the mutation is not radical: it does not change the productivist finality, the chronometric cutting up of time, the forward-looking and operational imperatives which remain the fundamental coordinates of the modern ethic of the productive society.

Political Concept

"The abstraction of the political State as such belongs only to modern times [*Temps modernes*], because the abstraction of private life belongs only to modern times [*Temps modernes*] . . . In the Middle Ages, the life of the people and the life of the State are identical: man is the real principle of the State . . . modern times [*Temps modernes*] are the abstract dualism, the abstract reflected opposition" (Marx, *Critique de la philosophie de l'État de Hegel*).

It is in fact the abstract transcendence of the State, under the sign of the Constitution, and the formal status of the individual, under the sign of private property, which defines the political structure of modernity. The (bureaucratic) rationality of the State and that of private interest and of private consciousness converge in the same abstraction. This duality marks the end of all anterior systems, where political life was defined as an

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integrated hierarchy of personal relations. The hegemony of the bureaucratic State has only grown with the progress of modernity. Linked to the extension of the field of political economy and other organizational systems, it invests all sectors of life, mobilizing them to its own advantage, rationalizing them in its image. What sometimes obstinately resists these tendencies (affective life, traditional languages and cultures), may now be deemed residual. However, one of the essential dimensions (if not *the* essential dimension) of modernity, the abstract centralized State, is perhaps also in the process of faltering. The hegemonic constraint of the State, the bureaucratic saturation of social and individual life, are no doubt preparing great crises in this domain.

Psychological Concept

In contrast to the magic, religious, symbolic consensus of traditional (communal) society, the modern era is marked by the emergence of the individual, with his status of autonomous consciousness, his psychology and personal conflicts, his private interest — indeed, his unconsciousness; the individual is drawn increasingly into the network of media, organizations, and institutions, which give rise to his modern alienation, abstraction, loss of identity in work and leisure, incommunicability, etc., which a whole system of personalization through objects and signs is intended to compensate.

Modernity and Time

In all its dimensions, modern temporality is specific.

The *chronometric* dimension: this is time which is measured, and by which one measures one's activities; as that which highlights the division of labor and social life, this abstract time belongs to the imperative of productivity, and is substituted for the rhythms of work and celebration. Bureaucratic temporality regulates even "free" time and leisure.

The *linear* dimension: "modern" time is no longer cyclical, it develops according to a past-present-future line, according to a supposed origin and end. Tradition seems centered on the past, modernity on the future, but, in fact, only modernity projects a past (time gone by), at the same time that it projects a future, according to a dialectic which is proper to it.

The *historic* dimension: especially since Hegel, history has become the dominant instance of modernity. At the same time as the real becoming of society and as transcendent reference allowing a glimpse of its final accomplishment.

As measurable, irreversible, chronometric succession or dialectical becoming, modernity has secreted an entirely new temporality. This is a

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crucial feature of modernity — an image of its contradictions. But at the interior of this time, which is indefinite, and no longer knows any eternity, one thing distinguishes modernity: it always wants to be 'contemporary,' i.e., it seeks global simultaneity. After first privileging the dimension of progress and the future, it seems to confound itself more and more today with the present, the immediate, the everyday — the reverse, pure and simple, of historical duration [*durée*].

The Rhetoric of Modernity

Innovation and Avant-Garde

In the sphere of culture and custom, modernity is translated, in formal opposition, but also in fundamental relation to bureaucratic and political centralization, the homogenization of forms of social life, through an exaltation of depth subjectivity, passion, singularity, authenticity, the ephemeral and the ineffable — in short, through breach of rules and irruption of personality, conscious or not.

Baudelaire's "painter of modern life," the bridge between romanticism and contemporary modernity, marks the departure of this quest for the new, this drifting of the subjective: "There he goes: he runs, he seeks. What is he looking for? Surely this man, such as I have depicted him, this recluse with an active imagination, travelling across the great desert of men . . . seeks that something we can call modernity."

At all levels, modernity gives rise to an aesthetic of rupture, of individual creativity, of innovation marked by the sociological phenomena of the avant-garde (whether in the domain of culture or in that of fashion) and by the always more extensive destruction of traditional forms (genres in literature, rules of harmony in music, laws of perspective and of representation in painting, academicism and, more generally, the authority and legitimacy of the received models of fashion, sexuality, and social conduct).

Mass Media, Fashion and Mass Culture

This fundamental tendency has been especially active since the 20th century, through the industrial diffusion of cultural means, the extension of mass culture, and the gigantic intervention of the media (press, cinema, radio, television, advertising). The ephemeral character of form and content has been accentuated, one loses count of the revolutions of style, fashion, writing, custom. In radicalizing itself thus in a change of perspective, in a continual dolly-shot, modernity changes meaning. Bit by bit, it loses all the substantial value of progress which underlay it at the beginning, in order to

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become an aesthetic of change for change's sake. It abstracts itself and deploys itself in a new rhetoric, it inscribes itself in the play of one or multiple systems of signs. At the limit, it merges purely and simply with fashion, which is at the same time the end/aim [*la fin*] of modernity.

The reason for this is that modernity enters into a cyclical process of change, where all the forms of the past (archaic, folkloric, rustic, traditional) are dredged up, drained of their substance, but idealized as signs in a code where tradition and *neo*, ancient and modern, become equivalent and function as alternates. Modernity no longer has the value of rupture at all: it nourishes itself on the vestiges of all cultures in the same way that it does from its technical gadgets or from the ambiguity of all values.

Tradition and Modernity in Third World Societies

Destruction and Change

The distinctive traits, the ferments, the problematic and the contradictions of modernity reveal themselves with the most force where its historical and political impact is the most brutal: in colonized tribal or traditional societies. Apter sees in colonialism a "modernizing force," a "model by which modernization has been universalized."¹

Older systems of exchange are dismantled by the rise of money and the spread of the market economy. Traditional systems of power are swept aside under the pressure of colonial administrations or the new indigenous bureaucracies.

However, in the absence of a political and industrial revolution in depth, it is often the most technical, the most exportable features of modernity which touch the developing societies: the objects of industrial production and consumption, the *mass media*. It is in its technical materiality, and as spectacle, that modernity first invests these societies, and not through the long process of economic and political rationalization peculiar to the West. However, the fallout of modernity has its own characteristic political repercussion: it accelerates the destruction of the indigenous way of life and precipitates social demands for change.

Resistance and Amalgamation

If, therefore, modernity appears here also as rupture, the more precise analysis begun since the Second World War by political anthropology (Balandier, Leach, Apter, Althabe) shows that things are more complex.² The traditional system (tribal, clan, lineal [*lignager*]) offers the strongest resistance to change, and the modern structures (administrative, moral,

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religious) intertwine with these forces through the most curious compromises. Modernity always emerges in this context through a resurgence of tradition, though the latter will have lost its conservative meaning. Favret even describes how the peasants of the *Aurès* reactivated traditional political mechanisms as a demand for progress, in order to protest the lagging spread, in their region, of the instruments and signs of modernity.³

This is important: the terrain of anthropology shows, more clearly than European history, the truth of modernity, namely, that it is never radical change or revolution, but always arises in implication with tradition in a subtle cultural play, in a debate where the two are hand in glove, in a process of amalgamation and adaptation. Thus, analyses based on a *dialectic of rupture* must give way to an approach which recognizes the *dynamic of amalgamation*.

Ideologies as Signs of Modernity

The analysis of decolonized societies uncovers another specific expression of modernity: ideology. Ideologies (national, cultural, political) are contemporaries of detribalization and of modernization. Imported from the West and impregnated with rituals and with traditional beliefs, they nevertheless constitute, more than the economic infrastructure, the locus of change and conflict, of the upheaval of values and of attitudes. Here it is even more a matter of the rhetoric of modernity, deployed in all its ambiguity in societies where it compensates for real backwardness and non-development.

Such observations help define the paradox of modernity. Destruction and change, but also ambiguity, compromise, amalgamation: modernity is paradoxical, rather than dialectical. If ideology is a typically 'modern' concept, if ideologies are the expression of modernity, no doubt *modernity is itself only a vast ideological process*.

Ideology and Modernity

Conservatism through Change

Thus the dynamic of modernity reveals itself, in the West as well as the Third World, as both the locus of emergence of factors of rupture and as a compromise solution with respect to factors of order and tradition. The mobility that it implies at all levels (social, professional, geographic; marriage, fashion, sexual liberation) only defines *the portion of change tolerable by the system*, without essentially changing it. Balandier says of the countries of Black Africa: "political confrontations express themselves in a large measure, but not exclusively, through the debate on the traditional and the

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modern: the latter appears especially as their means and not as their principle cause."⁴ Similarly, one can say that in developed countries, modernity is not a force that retraces social structure or history: it is rather (in its play with tradition), the place where the social rises to the surface in order to be masked, the place where the dialectic of social meaning is blurred in the rhetorical and mythical code of modernity.

A Spectacular Ambiguity

Changes of political, economic, technological, and psychological structures are the objective historical factors of modernity. They do not constitute modernity in themselves. The latter would be defined rather as the denial of these structural changes, at least as their reinterpretation in terms of cultural style, mentality, way of life, everydayness.

Modernity is not technologic and scientific revolution, it is the play and the implication of the latter in the spectacle of private and social life, in the everyday dimension of the media, of gadgets, of domestic well-being or the conquest of space. Neither science nor technology are themselves "modern," but the *effects* of science and technology are. Though founded on the *historic* emergence of science, modernity lives only at the level of the *myth* of science.

Modernity is neither the rationality nor the autonomy of individual consciousness, which however found it. It is, after the phase of the triumphant ascension of liberties and individual rights, the *reactionary* exaltation of a subjectivity threatened everywhere by the homogenization of social life. It is the recycling of this subjectivity lost in a system of "personalization," in the effects of fashion and controlled aspiration.

Modernity is not a dialectic of history: it is the eventness, the permanent play of the present moment, the universality of news blurbs through the media.

Modernity is not the transmutation of all values, it is the destruction of all former values without surpassing them, it is the ambiguity of all values under the sign of a generalized combinatory. There is no longer either good or evil, but we are not for all that "beyond good and evil" (cf. Nietzsche's critique of modernity).

Modernity is not revolution, even if it hinges on revolutions (industrial, political, computer revolution, revolution of well-being, etc.). It is, as Lefebvre says, "the shadow of the failed revolution, its parody Situated in the interior of the inverted world and not put back on its feet, modernity accomplishes the tasks of the revolution: the surpassing of art, of morality, of ideologies" One could add: mobility, abundance, liberations of all sorts. But it accomplishes them by means of a permanent revolution of *forms*, in the *play* of change, finally in a cycle where the open breach in the world of tradition closes up.

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A Culture of the Everyday

Tradition was nourished by continuity and real transcendence. Modernity, having inaugurated rupture and discontinuity, is now closed into a new cycle. It has lost the ideological drive of reason and progress, and confounds itself more and more with the formal play of change. Even its myths turn against it (technology, once triumphant, is today full of menace). Its ideals and human values have escaped it. Modernity is characterized more and more by the *abstract transcendence of all powers*. Liberty is formal, people become masses, culture becomes fashion. Once a dynamic of progress, modernity is slowly becoming an activism of well-being. Its myth covers over the growing abstraction of social and political life, under which it boils down bit by bit into a culture of *daily events*.

Notes

1. D. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
2. See George Balandier, *Political Anthropology*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith (New York: Random House, 1970); Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1954); D. Apter, op. cit.
3. J. Favret, "Le Traditionalisme par excès de modernité," *Archives européennes de Sociologie*, 8 (1967).
4. Balandier, ch. 7.
5. Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction à la modernité* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit).

IDEOLOGY, CRITIQUE AND CONTRADICTION IN MARX: AN ANSWER TO J. LARRAIN*

György Markus

There are no "innocent" interpretations. The need to interpret some texts expresses, of course, primarily our distance from them, the fact that their meaning ceases to be unproblematic and self-evident. However "interpreting" as an activity equally expresses (and explicitly realizes) an attitude toward the text which presupposes a meaning for us — that the text may throw some light on *our* problems, be they theoretical or practical. By regarding definite writings not as mere "documents" (which indicate and signal something about the past), but as "texts" which *tell* us something today, the interpreter preserves and maintains them as living tradition; he is an active participant in that much broader process in which ideas become "re-animated . . . in the context of new practices," to quote the apt words of Jorge Larrain. Every interpretation inevitably goes "beyond" the text concerned: it depends on the interpreter's comprehension of his own situation, and the cultural and practical problems of his own epoch, from which perspective tradition becomes reconstrued as significant.

I refer to these truisms of hermeneutics only because the dispute between J. Larrain and myself concerning the Marxian concept or concepts of ideology¹ seems to me to be at least partially dependent upon the difference in our understanding of the theoretical and practical situation of Marxism in the contemporary world. It is always a precarious and dubious enterprise to characterize the implicit, orientative premises of one's own critic. I hope, however, not to misrepresent Larrain's views by assuming that he regards this situation to be in the last account healthy and unproblematic. Against all the particular theoretical difficulties and, more

* *Editor's note:* This article is a response to Jorge Larrain, "Three Different Concepts of Ideology in Marx," *CJPST* 8, 3 (1984), 151-159.

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importantly, practical distortions, the existence of which he certainly does not deny, he sees Marxist theory on the whole as well able to answer the pressing practical-social problems of our days, and to answer them effectively as proven by its impact on a long list of liberation and radical movements to which he refers (p. 18). Accordingly, he regards Marx's oeuvre as a living tradition in the sense that we find in it *solutions* to many of our problems: answers which are essentially correct even if they may need to be developed or adapted to our changed practices and experiences.

This is certainly a view that I do not share. The history of Marxist theory seems to me to be characterized by the constant recurrence, in new forms, of a number of antithetic interpretations of the "classical heritage," sharply opposed to each other in respect of some well-identifiable (and crucial) problems and difficulties. Furthermore this history demonstrates, after very significant initial success in the realisation of the central aim to unify theory and practice, a growing divorce between the two: a process the beginnings of which can be traced back to the early twenties and which is now virtually completed. For the objective of this unification in its Marxian understanding never was identical with the unspecific claim to a lasting cultural relevance which is *eo ipso* raised and must be fulfilled by any philosophical "tradition." It implies a very strong and specific claim from the side of the theory to provide mass movements of a radical type with a long-run *strategic* orientation in their struggle for the transformation of capitalist societies, and at the same time to offer to their members a unified *cultural framework* of a new type allowing them to make collective sense out of their everyday individual experiences. To assert, as Larrain does, that this twin objective is realized, insofar as recent, intellectually serious and creative developments within Marxist theory are concerned, seems to me a case of self-deception. His rhetorically invoked list — actually a motley collection of liberation struggles recently popular among the Western Left, which actually arose around issues theoretically situated outside the traditional concerns and conceptions of Marxism² certainly failed to convince me.

It would be an outright distortion to introject all the various symptoms of a present "crisis of Marxism" into Marx's own oeuvre. The history of Marxism is just as little a case of filiation of ideas as the history of any other theory. At the same time no truly relevant reading of Marx can today fail to approach his texts in the light of these vagaries and lessons of their "post-history". And in this light Marx emerges, I think, as a living tradition for the present not so much because he provided readily applicable solutions to our problems, but because his oeuvre uncovers and maps out, with an unmatched depth and compass, those theoretical and practical dilemmas and difficulties which radical theories still face and, I fear, fail to resolve. Many of Marx's "answers" have been made highly problematic or

simply untenable by later historical and theoretical developments. But his deep urge toward a systematic intellectual synthesis, combining a never satisfiable, minacious interest in the wealth of the *empiria* with a constant, self-questioning and critical reflection upon his own conceptual framework and methodology, not only frustrated all his attempts to give a completed form to his theory, but also endowed his way of questioning with a paradigmatic many-sidedness and openness. It rendered his *oeuvre* able to keep inter-related — even if often in a tenuous and uneasy way — a number of *prima facie* contradictory insights and impulses in a manner that still retains its power of illumination.

I certainly would not deny that such an “interpretative perspective” results in an idiosyncratic reading of Marx. And since what Larrain and myself share in theoretical and practical convictions is in all probability more important than what divides us, I would be happy to end our dispute here with the very presumptuous, but in principle, true observation that differences in “interpretative perspective” can ultimately be evaluated only through their subsequent fruitfulness.

I cannot stop here, however, for two reasons. What Larrain concretely proposes as the meaning of the Marxian conception of ideology seems to me simply confused and theoretically quite irrelevant from a contemporary viewpoint: if *this* is what Marx’s theory amounts to, then it is a “tradition” only in an antiquarian sense. But it is also important to point out that “perspectivity” of interpretation does not justify arbitrariness: interpretation must satisfy definite criteria of textual adequacy (or at least should not offend against them without explicit justification). Larrain repeatedly raises this requirement in regard to my paper; in fact, however, it is his views on Marx which fail in this respect at several points.

In general Larrain often reads texts as if he knew better what should be in them than their authors did. This is certainly irritating when it happens to one’s own writing. Thus, Larrain has sought to “enlighten” me in truths well suited to an introductory seminar on Marx (including the insight that “Marx’s scientific and critical capabilities were also necessary” for the creation of his theory (p. 17). But any interested reader can decide on his/her own whether I have confounded social determination of ideas with their ideological character or assumed that ideologies can be overcome by theoretical criticism alone. When, however, such an interpretative practice is applied to the texts of Marx himself, it has some relevance to our real disagreements.

A rather glaring example of such a practice is present in Larrain’s interpretation of the “Preface” to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Despite its extreme brevity, no discussion of the Marxian conception can neglect Marx’s here contained formulation of ‘ideology,’ since it is the sole one in his later writings which seems to aim at the

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conceptual clarification of the term and because it comes from a published text specifically written for the "concise formulation" of the "general result" and "guiding thread" of his investigations.³ The passage has certainly spawned a number of divergent interpretations — not because it is especially "difficult and ambiguous," as Larrain suggests (p. 9), but for the reason that it is often thought to be hardly reconcilable with the Marxian *use* of the term, both in earlier and later writings, and since there is a general dispute about the significance one should ascribe to the whole text from which it comes.⁴ One thing, however, is certain: the text in question (through which Marx wished to reintroduce himself to the German public, after a decade of complete intellectual exile and under conditions of a severe censorship) is a very carefully and deliberately formulated one.

Now in the incriminated passage, Marx simply counterposes to the material transformations in the economic conditions of production "the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophical, in short, ideological forms in which men become aware of this conflict and fight it out"⁵ [i.e., the conflict between the material productive forces of society and the existing social relations — G.M.]. According to Larrain, Marx means by this formulation only "some specific legal, political, religious, economical and philosophic forms which are ideological" (p. 9) — and through this he happily manages to transform the first half of the passage into a meaningless tautology. But secondly he is also committed to the view (though he conveniently forgets it at this point) that Marx *always and everywhere* meant by "ideology" those distorted forms of thought which *conceal and mask* social contradictions. If this is so, then by stating that in forms of ideology men become aware (gain consciousness) of social conflicts and contradictions (in the next sentence Marx uses these two terms as synonyms), Marx actually intended to say the exact opposite: ideology "diverts the people's mind from," "explains away," conflicts and contradictions. This does not seem to be an interpretation at all, but a prejudiced prescription. At any rate, given Larrain's preconception, the passage truly becomes "notoriously difficult to interpret" (p. 8).

The matter, however, does not end here. Larrain also maintains that this passage is exceptional in Marx's oeuvre in respect of identifying (in his view, of course, only seemingly, for a non-discriminating reading) ideology with entire cultural branches. There is, at least to his knowledge, no corroborative evidence for such an identification elsewhere in Marx (p. 8). I certainly did not provide such evidence, since I supposed that no reader of the *German Ideology* could have missed them. For in this work it is a recurrent procedure of Marx (and Engels) to identify ideology with a (mostly open-ended) list of whole fields of socio-cultural activities (eg.: "morality, religion, metaphysics and the rest of ideology," "the illusions of ideologists in general, eg. the illusions of jurists and politicians," "politicians,

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jurists and other ideologists" etc.⁶) or to designate some specific cultural genre, without any restriction, as ideological (eg. the characterisation of the "pursuit followed by the philosopher as profession" as ideology⁷). I would agree that these formulations are hardly reconcilable with a number of other things Marx says in this work about ideology which seem to implicate a narrower concept — but I argued exactly that he actually employs this term in three different senses.

All this is naturally related to the question whether it is illegitimate, and without textual support in Marx, to "extend" the scope of the concept "ideology" to cover whole cultural branches and even (in one of its meanings) a definite type of culture in its totality. But the dispute between Larrain and myself concerns more than questions of a Marx-philology. Our disagreements are ultimately about the theoretical significance of a "critique of ideology" within the whole of the Marxian enterprise. These differences can best be seen in light of the question concerning the relationship between science and ideology, which Larrain spells out in greater detail.

According to Larrain, "(t)o the extent that ideology has a negative meaning, being ideological and being scientific are mutually exclusive enterprises which cannot overlap in the main thrust of their activities but which can, of course, contain limited 'enclaves' from the opposite" (p. 11). Therefore he finds my view (more exactly, my reconstruction of Marxian ones) of bourgeois economy as a form of ideology unacceptable. Classical political economy is science penetrating the veil of appearances and not masking the contradictions of capitalist society (which, at the time of the florescence of these theories, had not yet come "to the surface"), so it is not ideological (p. 10). In particular, turning to the certainly apt example of Ricardo, Larrain accepts that his theory contained "some ideological distortions" and *became* ideological with the later emergence of economic crises (p. 11); but the scientific inadequacies of Ricardo's views cannot be explained by these ideological elements. Nor — much more importantly — do the latter comprise the whole of his analyses (p. 11).

Since Larrain again directly challenges me to produce evidence from Marx's writings supporting my characterisation of classical political economy as ideology, I once more must begin with some textual references. In this case, however, I hope they will also directly contribute to the further clarification of what Marx meant by "science" and "ideology."

My "textual argument" is, in short, the following:

1. Transformation of the particular interests of the class into the general interest of the whole society, of a particular historical situation into the human situation as such, is *one* of the ways Marx, through his whole *oeuvre*, characterizes the accomplishment of ideology. Though he clearly indicates that this procedure plays different roles at different stages of historical development (see *MEW*, vol. 3, p. 47-48), he simultaneously

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describes it in general as the "ideological illusion (ideologische Täuschung)" (*Ibid.*, p. 163), and even as "the ground (Boden) of ideology" (*Ibid.*, p. 442).⁹ The ideologists of a class give to its social conditions of existence a "theoretical independence" and thereby render in thought the barriers of its socially determined life situation into barriers of human existence or reason as such. It is this conception of ideology which returns also in the famous passage of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (cf. especially *MEW*, vol. 3, p. 405 with vol. 8., p. 141-142).¹⁰ To exclude all misunderstandings: it is, of course, *not* social determination of ideas in general, but just the deliberately or unconsciously effected preclusion of any reflection upon this determination, the theoretically accomplished transformation of a limited-historical validity (or relevance) into a universal one, i.e., the *foreclosure* of other possibilities of thinking and acting, which makes such ideas ideological. (Incidentally: it was this understanding of ideology in Marx which I took as paradigmatic for the characterisation of its "second," explanatory-functional meaning.)

2. The most important point in Marx's critique of bourgeois economy, including classical political economy, is the demonstration of the ways, in these theories, the capitalist mode of production is transformed into the *sole rational or "natural" way* of organizing the material life-activities of society. From the time that Marx systematically drew the distinction between classical and vulgar economy (1847), he also maintained that this characteristic is *common* to both of them. There is a countless number of places where he makes this point again and again, so I chose arbitrarily two formulations from his discussions of Ricardo. "Ricardo" — he writes in 1859 — "treats the bourgeois form of labour as the eternal natural form of social labour" (Vol. 13, p. 46). Four years later, again in a passage dealing with Ricardo, he states: "The economists express this definite, *specific*, historical form of social labour, as it appears in capitalist production, as universal, eternal form, as truths of nature, and they represent *these* relations of production as the absolutely (not historically) necessary, adequate to nature and rational relations of social labour" (Vol. 26/3, p. 255).¹¹ The distinction between classical and vulgar economy, between science and pseudo-science, is drawn by Marx *within* this common "ground of ideology."

3. The above-mentioned ideological premise is, however, not some "distortion" superadded to the otherwise correct or incorrect views of the classics. Take the case of Ricardo. The identification of the capitalist form of labour with social labour in general is the fundamental abstraction which forms the basis of his greatest scientific achievement: the consistent elaboration of a quantitative theory of value. By reducing the value of all commodities to the labour embodied in them, to *labour as such*, or "labour *sans phrase*,"¹² Ricardo *eo ipso* identifies commodity-producing ("abstract") labour with productive activity as an eternal condition of human life. Once

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this identification and abstraction becomes *methodologically fixed*, then all the principal difficulties and inadequacies of Ricardo's theory logically follow, ie, they follow under conditions of intellectual honesty and logical consistency. At least, this is Marx's contention. For in his criticism of Ricardo, he is only incidentally concerned with his logical or other "mistakes;" what he tries to demonstrate, is precisely the point that once the aforementioned "ideological illusion" is posited in the initial abstraction of the theory, then a false conception of money, an inability to distinguish surplus-value and profit, and an inadequate theory of land rent, etc., are all logical consequences.

These are the main reasons (certainly having ample textual support) on the basis of which I regard the Marxian characterisation of political economy as "the theoretical expression of capitalist production" (*MEW*, Vol. 26/3, p. 271; see also *Grundrisse*, p. 844: "the theoretical expression of bourgeois society") to mean not the truism that it is a theory *about* this mode of production, but that it is its theoretical expression in the sense of its *basic ideology*. Such an interpretation seems to me especially vindicated in view of the fact that in his manuscript of 1865, Marx repeats this characterisation, but now in respect of political economy and *philosophy of law* (meaning by this latter primarily the Lockean theory of natural law).¹³ Philosophy of law certainly is not a theory *about* the capitalist mode of production.

Given all this "evidence," I regard it merely a lucky, but unimportant, corroboration that among the exceptionally few cases when Marx explicitly applies the term "ideological" to the characterisation of economic systems, at least one actually happens to refer to the *whole of classical economy*. In the same manuscript of 1865, he states: "Hence, the general *juridical* idea, from Locke to Ricardo, is that of the petty-bourgeois property, while the relations of production they describe belong to the *capitalist mode of production* . . . One finds with all these writers . . . [that] they *ideologically and juridically* transfer without more ado the ideology of private property founded on labour to property founded on the *expropriation of the immediate producers*."¹⁴ It is, I think, self-evident that this "ideological transference" of the relations of property founded on one's own labour to capitalist relations of production is essentially the same as the identification of wage labour (as labour of universal commodity production) with labour in general: the fundamental abstraction of Ricardian (and in general, classical) theory.

The mutually exclusive character of science and ideology follows in Larrain's argumentation from the simple fact that he identifies *critique* with *dismissal*. The concept of ideology with Marx is a critical one; therefore, he argues, it has a "negative meaning" — and since Marx clearly did not "dismiss" bourgeois science or art, did not regard the whole of Ricardo's analyses as "compromised," these cannot be ideological (cf. p. 13 and 11).¹⁵

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This is a view too crude to capture even the force of the purely *polemic* use of "ideology" in Marx. And it certainly leaves one to wonder: how could Marx then characterize (*expressis verbis* and repeatedly) the whole of Hegelian philosophy as ideology¹⁶ — unless he joined those who regarded Hegel as a "dead dog" to be dismissed.

This simplistic conception of critique misconceives, in my view, the very character of a critique of ideology insofar as it constitutes a part of the systematic critical theory of capitalist society. It misconceives both what is involved in such an enterprise, and what it is ultimately aimed at.

In Larrain's understanding, being ideological means simply *a subcase of being false*: it expresses a relation of inadequacy, non-correspondence of a specific kind (masking, concealing contradictions) between a theoretical content, on the one hand, and its extratheoretical object (society with its contradictions), on the other. The fact that the theories in question fulfill a definite social function, namely, to serve the interests of the ruling class, follows logically for him, as if in a prioristic fashion, from the character of this relationship. Marx, on the other hand, when he analyses ideologies within the framework of his critical theory of capitalism, is interested in the question how, by what cultural and theoretical means, *the function of legitimation* of the existing order (and the preclusion of the possibility of its projective transcendence) is fulfilled in this society, and how these means and forms change with its historical development. Marx explicitly warns us *not* to treat this question in terms of an abstract epistemological relation between the content of a theory and its object, because the social function of ideas cannot be abstracted away from the specific way they are culturally formulated and presented within definite works, or from the concrete, historically specific impact they have upon intellectual and public life (itself a function of many variables) at a given time. In his discussion of the history of the theory of rent, he emphatically draws attention to the fact that one and the same theory, with different authors and in different historical conjunctures, can actually serve *opposed* social interests. "The *same* doctrine has been used by its originator [i.e., Anderson], and by Malthus *for*, and by Ricardo *against*, landed property. At best one can say that some, who represented it, defended the interests of landed property, while others, who represented it, *fought* against the *same* interest. . . ."¹⁷ I would say that from Marx's own standpoint, Larrain's view of ideology partakes of the typical illusion of ideologists, since it transforms a historically and socially specific and concrete relationship into an abstract epistemological one.

The absurdities to which such a view leads when applied to concrete historical cases are well illustrated by Larrain's treatment of Ricardo. According to him, Ricardo's theory was originally scientific, but at the moment when the crisis of the capitalist economy emerged, it became ideological (p. 11) — and therefore, one should assume, also ceased to be

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scientific, since these two characteristics exclude each other. This, however, is the exact opposite of Marx's view (and of any reasonable view on the history of economic thought in the nineteenth century). For Marx, the *scientific relevance* of Ricardo (also from the viewpoint of his own investigations) is never in question. What his detailed discussions of the post-Ricardian phase in the development of economy purport to disclose is just the process through which — under the impact of changed historical circumstances — this theory became *ideologically irrelevant*, unable to function as an adequate legitimation for capitalist society; Ricardo was therefore abandoned (according to Marx often by the flimsiest arguments) and replaced by theories of another type (vulgar economy). Marx traced this process painstakingly, beginning from the "metaphysical dispute" of the twenties, demonstrating how new historical developments (primarily the recurrent economic crises of the world market and the course of the class-struggle) made Ricardo's legitimation of capitalism untenable, and at the same time conferred a completely unintended *critical* potential upon some of his views.¹⁸

Larrain's view of ideology misses the ultimate target of ideology critique. He accepts as self-evident that the critique of ideology is a critique of *theories*, or, more generally, cultural formations of a definite type. This is, of course, true in a trivial sense. But one has only to take into account that Marx regarded his critical history of economy as an integral part of *Capital* to see the *insufficiency* of such a view. His breathtaking effort to outline the complete history of a science, from its emergence to its (in Marx's view, final) demise, is neither dictated by an antiquarian, nor by a school-masterly interest in giving good or bad marks to various economists. In the more than thousand printed pages that Marx, in his various manuscripts,¹⁹ has devoted to this topic, he is not dealing primarily with the "correction" or "dismissal" of various theories, many of them completely obsolete and forgotten already in his own time. What he is investigating, is the way a definite type of society *produces* definite cultural-theoretical forms of its own self-understanding: forms which exclude the comprehension of the true regularities of its reproduction and development just as much as that of the possibility of its radical transformation. He investigates this as a unique historical process, which depends upon the course of social struggles and upon changes in the material conditions of social existence, but has also its own characteristics and direction. And he is specifically interested in the way the very premisses of such an understanding are progressively dissolved in this process, so that, from a definite historical moment, a society becomes incapable of meeting those very cultural standards and criteria that it has created itself historically. As a historian, Marx is well aware that he does not deal with some mysterious and automatic necessity, and he gives due consideration to the achievements, attitudes and biases of

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individual economists (and as a theoretician he meticulously indicates his own indebtedness to each of them). But what he primarily does, is not to criticize individual systems of thought as bad or deceptive theories, but to "criticize" a *type of society* whose practical and cognitive horizon precludes the adequate comprehension both of its own trends of development and those socio-historical alternatives which in principle it creates; a society in which therefore men cannot gain rational control over the course of their lives and historical development.

Larrain's conception of ideology therefore fails to cover the theoretically most significant use or uses of this concept in Marx; it is modelled on its directly polemical use alone, itself misunderstood in some important respects. The formal definition of ideology proposed by him seems to be broad enough, but it is so only because it is ambiguous, confused and certainly unsuited today for critical or theoretical purposes.

According to Larrain, ideology is "equivalent to a distorted form of consciousness which conceals social contradictions in the interest of the ruling class" (p. 6). The stumbling-block in this definition is the concept of (real, social) *contradiction*. In a relatively short paper Larrain manages to apply this term to a truly impressive variety of cases and states of affairs. "Contradictions of capitalism" seem to designate with him the antagonistic relations of interests between the class of capitalists and wage-workers (p. 5); class struggle (p. 10); the occurrence of economic crises (p. 11); the inverted and alienated character of social relations under capitalism, i.e. ultimately the domination of objectified past labour over living labour (p. 5); the relation between the material content and social form of capitalist economic development (pp. 8 and 12); and, at one point, (p. 4) it is apparently used as a synonym for oppression. I would suggest that there is no possible definition of the concept "contradiction" which would make it applicable to all these *categorically* different cases; they have nothing in common, even so far as their most abstract structure is concerned. "Contradiction," in Larrain's use, remains an illusive metaphor without any clear content. To base the very meaning of one important concept and element of critical theory (i.e. that of ideology) on such a confused metaphor actually means to discredit it and to render it quite irrelevant to contemporary theoretical concerns.

At this point, however, elementary justice demands to absolve Larrain from much of the force of this criticism. He certainly only follows Marx himself in this use of "contradiction" — for all his applications of this term, he could have provided precedents from Marx's own texts. Furthermore it was Marx himself who often characterized and criticized economic theories by indicating their relation to the "contradictions of capitalism." True, the sense of such critical evaluations is, as a rule, quite clear in his texts, since they in general unambiguously indicate what is meant by these "contra-

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dictions" in this or that case.²⁰ And what is of far greater import, Marx, as far as I can see, never used such an ambiguous and inflated concept as the basis for further theoretical constructs or arguments. It remains, however, a fact that the metaphorical inflation of the term occurs already with him.

The problem of contradiction is inextricably interwoven, insofar as Marx's late writings are concerned, with the most complex among all the questions related to his intellectual development: namely, that of his "second Hegel-reception." "In the method of elaboration (Bearbeitung)" — writes Marx early in 1858 to Engels²¹ — "it rendered me a great service that by mere accident I again skimmed through Hegel's *Logic*." The premisses of this "methodological service" seem to be clear enough. Already in 1844 Marx conceives Hegel's *Logic* as the logic of a universally alienated existence. Apparently in 1857 this idea re-appears in a concretized form: in the Hegelian dialectics of Concept as identical substance-subject, Marx now finds elaborated (in a metaphysically disguised and distorted form) the constitutive principles for the analysis of that self-reproducing and self-relating collective pseudo-subject which preserves and maintains itself only by suppressing the real subjectivity of social individuals, i.e. that of capital.

This idea is taken by Marx originally in a very strong sense. The close correspondence between the main stages of the Marxian analysis in the opening parts (notebooks 1-3) of the *Grundrisse*, on the one hand, and the Hegelian construction of Quality-Quantity-Essence (as ground and substance) in the *Science of Logic*, on the other, has often been indicated.²² And some of his early plans for the systematic construction of the whole envisaged work can truly be read as straight "economic applications" of the Hegelian *Logic*.²³

In correspondence with this general methodological idea Marx's first attempt at the analysis of capitalist relations of productions veritably takes the Hegelian principle of "progressing contradiction" as its guiding thread. The analysis in the *Grundrisse* departs (or more exactly, intends to depart, since the systematic exposition begins at a later point, with money) from the commodity, which posits the relationship between use-value and exchange value as a mere "difference" (Unterschied): the commodity is at this time conceived by Marx as the necessary unity of these two determinations which, with an equal necessity, completely fall outside each other, as unrelated.²⁴ With the transition to money this "difference," as Marx explicitly states (*Ibid.*, p. 65), becomes transformed into "opposition" (Gegensatz). And with the transformation of money into capital, the relationship between use and exchange value, now personified by the social agents of the wage-labourer and capitalist, turns into that of "real contradiction" (Widerspruch).²⁵

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However, this original project, which in a very strict philosophical sense has been oriented by the Hegelian conception of contradiction, falls apart already in the *Grundrisse*. The muster of the *Logic* proves to be inadequate for the systematic theoretical reproduction of the totality of capitalist economic relations. The deeper theoretical and practical motives which moved Marx to modify radically his original plan-outlines, and in some respects, also the very sense of a "critique of political economy," cannot be discussed here.²⁶ But they certainly result in a lack of systematic correspondence in detail between the structure of *Capital* and that of Hegel's *Logic*.

Nevertheless, Hegel's presence is conspicuous in *Capital*, too. It also certainly amounts to more than mere "coquetting" with a Hegelizing mode of expression. Some fundamental elements of Hegel's dialectics, especially his understanding and analysis of the essence/appearance and form/content dichotomy, retain (or just acquire) a constitutive significance for the conception of *Capital*.

Among these ideas retained from Hegel is also the most striking and basic element of his theory of contradiction: contradiction is a relation ultimately not between propositions, but between *concepts* and (with Marx, primarily) between those *realities* these concepts designate. But the strict Hegelian understanding of the relationship involved is now dissolved with Marx, without being replaced by any clearly articulated notion. Nothing signals this better than the fact that Marx now (actually from 1859 on and to a growing degree) uses without any discrimination a number of categorical expressions ("opposition", contradiction", "antagonism" etc.) which in Hegel had a quite distinct meaning and designated relations with quite different structures. The use of the term "contradiction" in Marx's writings of the sixties can best be seen, I think, as a "*promisory note*" to interconnect (through mediating links), in the completed analysis, the most elemental and fundamental relation ultimately defining the historical *limits* of the capitalist mode of production (i.e. the relation between abstract and concrete labour) with the recurrent, open *dysfunctionalities* and interruptions of its reproduction (economic crises), on the one hand, and, on the other, with class struggle, which makes its *overcoming* possible. These are relations of a different type and, insofar as I can judge, none of them corresponds closely to the real Hegelian model of contradiction. When Marx deals with these (and other) "contradictions" in a detailed fashion in his exposition, he also very carefully analyzes the actual structure of each of them. Furthermore, he does not use this metaphorically vague, unclarified term for any argumentative or constructive purposes; he certainly is not ready to take his own *promisory note* for the real solution of the task it indicates. Nothing demonstrates this better than his constantly renewed (and never quite completed) efforts to work out with logical clarity all the

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mediations necessary to transform the "abstract possibility" of crises, contained already in the structure of commodity exchange, into their "reality."

The promisory note of the unification of the three indicated relations has not been redeemed by Marx. *Capital* remained a fragment abruptly ended at the most crucial point: at the clarification of the connection between the "objective contradictions" of capitalism, with class struggle as their "subjective expression." It is now fruitless to speculate whether this abrupt end, unexplained by any biographic circumstances, signals an awareness on Marx's part of those grave difficulties which from the hindsight of a later century are easily discernible both in the philosophical and in the economical aspect of his critical theory. In any case, the terminology of "contradictions" in such circumstances necessarily turned, during the historical reception of Marxian theory, into a *rhetoric of unity*, not quite borne out by the theory itself.

Already Engels has initiated the transformation of this rhetoric into a philosophical pseudo-theory which uses all the metaphoric vagueness and ambiguity of "contradiction" to do away with the internal strains and unresolved problems of the theory. This tradition has been continued, in a much more pedestrian way, by Plekhanov and turned into a verbal industry in "Soviet Marxism." I am virtually certain that Larrain has little sympathy toward this sort of Marxism — his own effort, however, seems to me situated within this tradition.

This brings me back to the question from which I departed: in what sense is Marx a living tradition today? And I would say that it is certainly not the (non-existent) "theory" of contradictions in his late economic writings, but rather the contradictions *of* these writings, and his never-ceasing (and never concluded) effort to face them and to trace out their implication, which is illuminative for any present attempt at critical understanding of our own society.

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Notes

1. See my "Concepts of Ideology in Marx" and J. Larrain's rejoinder "Three Different Concepts of Ideology in Marx" in this journal, vol. VII, 1-2, 84-103 and vol. VIII, 3, p. 151-159, respectively.
2. Perry Anderson has just recently commented perceptively upon this fact. See *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 81ff.
3. *Marx-Engels Werke (MEW)* (Berlin: Dietz), vol. 13, p. 8.

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4. On this point see e.g. A.M. Prinz: "The Background and Ulterior Motive of Marx's 'Preface' of 1859" *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1969), p. 437-450.
5. *MEW*, vol. 13, p. 9.
6. *MEW*, vol. 3, pp. 26, 49, 339; but cf. also pp. 49, 60, 539, etc.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 363, but see also pp. 63, 212, 263, 362, etc.
8. *Grundrisse*, (Berlin: Dietz, 1953), p. 844.
9. Further relevant formulation in *MEW*, vol. 3, pp. 63, 271, 404-405.
10. It should be indicated that in the *Brumaire* Marx does not use the term "ideology," but writes about "the political and literary representatives of a class" (*MEW*, vol. 8, p. 142). In general, it is very conspicuous that in his later writings Marx employs this term exceedingly rarely (it occurs, to my knowledge, in the many thousand pages of his economic writings and manuscripts only a few dozen times). Since, on the other hand, he does not drop it altogether and he most certainly does not renounce the conception connected with its earlier use, I have no explanation to offer for this striking and in all probability deliberate avoidance of the terminology. With regard to the relevant passage from the *Brumaire*, I have not come across any systematically argued doubt that Marx discusses ideology here.
11. Cf. also *MEW*, vol. 4 (1847), pp. 139 and 170; *Grundrisse* (1857-1858), pp. 236, 450, 904; *MEW*, vol. 26/2 (1861-1863), pp. 149, 504-505, 528-529; vol. 23 (1867), pp. 95-96, etc. etc.
12. Marx's letter to Engels, 8. 1. 1968. *MEW*. vol. 32, p. 11.
13. *Resultate In Archiv Marx-Engels*, vol. II (VII) Moscow, 1933, p. 264.
14. *Ibid.*, cf. also *MEW*, vol. 26/1, p. 343.
15. Larrain's standpoint at the same time involves, as an unstated premise, the traditional, epistemological and (positively) evaluative concept of science. Though science is not the only way to truth and though scientists not only make "mistakes," but are also subjects to historical limitations, science evidently means for him the methodologically secured and controlled knowledge of the essential and lawful interrelations. This misses, however, what is truly illuminative in Marx's approach to science. No doubt, Marx did regard it as a "progressive and liberating element" (p. 13). But his concept of science was neither directly evaluative, nor primarily epistemological. As is demonstrated, especially by his discussions concerning the emergence of scientific economy, he treated science as a historically located *socio-cultural* phenomenon characterized by a definite relation to everyday consciousness, on the one hand, and, on the other, by relation to those forms of "encyclopedic knowledge" which have been articulated within the framework of religious-metaphysical world-views. What is truly significant in his approach is, first of all, the fact that departing from such an understanding of science as socio-cultural objectivation of a specific type, he is nevertheless able to draw from it epistemological consequences with normative force allowing him to distinguish between science and pseudo-science. The *way* he does it — through the use of the categories "essence/appearance" — is from the present standpoint, in many respects, highly problematic (as I indicated in my earlier paper). But *what* he intends to do seems to be most relevant to contemporary disputes in the theory of science.
16. See *MEW*, vol. 3, pp. 167, 331, 442, etc.
17. *MEW*, vol. 26/2, pp. 115-116.
18. It is another question that, according to Marx, this critical potential can only be freed, if the "ideological illusion" fixed in the primitive abstractions of Ricardo's theory is overcome. Marx is not engaged in "correcting" Ricardo's "mistakes", as Larrain suggests (p. 11); this was actually the enterprise of Ricardian socialists who wished to draw the *correct* conclusions from, and to iron out the inconsistencies of, his theory. According to Marx they remained precisely *for this reason* captive to a bourgeois horizon (cf. *MEW*, vol. 26/3, pp. 256-257, 269, etc.). Larrain fails to perceive the decisive *problem-shift* which divorces the critical economy of Marx from the

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theories of the classics (from the question: "how capital produces 'social wealth' and distributes it in ways effecting the further growth of productive forces?" to the question "how capital as a social relation is produced and changed in the total process of social reproduction?"). Therefore he also fails to see that the theoretical object of an "economy" is differently constituted for Ricardo and Marx. For Larrain, Marx's theory evidently is the further development and consummation of the classical, labour theory of value, and not *its critique*. About this question, however, so much has been written that its further discussion seems to be needless. See especially the classical essay of H. Grossmann (1941), *Marx, die klassische Nationalökonomie und das Problem der Dynamik* (Frankfurt: 1969); but also, from the recent English-language literature, the works of G. Pilling, S. Clarke and M. Postone.

19. First of all, in the two "historical" chapters of *A Contribution to Critique*, in the *Theories of Surplus-Value* from the 1861-63 manuscript and in the ideo-historical parts of the third volume of *Capital*.
20. If one disregards these contextual indications and simply takes what Marx has written about the relation of some economic theory to the "contradictions of capitalism" *in general*, then his texts seem to be full of elementary logical contradictions. E.g., in the case of Ricardo, one can read in one and the same manuscript of Marx that these social contradictions find in Ricardo's work "a *theoretically* resounding, though unconscious expression," and further that he "elaborated the antagonism (Gegensatz) within economy itself;" and simultaneously that he "denies the contradictions of bourgeois production" (*MEW* vol. 26/3, pp. 256, 492 and 49). The irreconcilable character of these statements, however, disappears if one takes into account their larger context: Marx speaks about "contradictions" and "antagonism" in quite different senses, well-indicated in the relevant text fragments.
21. Letter to Engels, 16. 1. (1858), in *MEW*, vol. 29, p. 260.
22. Most recently, and in the greatest detail, by F.E. Schrader, *Restauration und Revolution. Die Vorarbeiten zum 'Kapital' von K. Marx in seinem Studienheften 1850-1858* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1980), esp. pp. 117-126. Schrader's general view of the Marx-Hegel relation seems to me, however, unacceptable.
23. See e.g. *Grundrisse*, pp. 186-187.
24. See, e.g., *Grundrisse*, p. 180.
25. See *Ibid.*, pp. 180-85, and 203.
26. I have discussed some of these motives and the general character of this change in earlier publications. See: "Four Forms of Critical Theory," *Thesis Eleven* I No. 1 (1980), and the second part of my book *Langage et Production* (Paris, Denoel, 1982), the English variant of which has been published in *Dialectical Anthropology* IV, No. 4 (1979), and V, No. 1 (1980).

THE POLITICS AT MODERNISM'S FUNERAL

John Laffey

I am convinced that happenings no longer happen; instead the clichés operate spontaneously.

Karl Kraus

But every quotation is also an interpretation.

Georg Lukàcs

The death of modernism, that great bourgeois cultural reaction to the bourgeois notions of modernity which began to take shape in the seventeenth century and reached full maturity in the nineteenth century, is now being widely proclaimed.¹ The current story has it that modernism, once a free spirit but then ensnared by the academies, museums, small journals and mass media, first withered and then died in captivity. At the same but seldom too precise time, the *avant-garde*, so closely associated with modernism, is also supposed to have perished. While the news of these deaths might yet turn out to be exaggerated, the news itself has called forth lamentation on the part of some, exultation on the part of others. Moreover, the cultural turmoil attending the funeral rites has been exacerbated by the equally discordant recognition of a postmodernism which has supposedly appeared to dig modernism's grave and, in so doing, to break new ground. As the results of this situation remain unclear, it makes sense to inquire: "What is the postmodern scene? Baudrillard's vision of excremental culture *par excellence*? or a final homecoming to a technoscape which even as a 'body without organs' (Deleuze and Guattari), a 'negative space' (Rosalind Krauss), a 'pure implosion' (Lyotard) or an 'aleatory mechanism' (Serres) is now first nature, and thus the terrain of a new political refusal?"² Whatever the answer might be, this formulation

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has the merit of recognizing a political dimension to a cultural crisis which might otherwise appear confined to those very environs which purportedly proved so unhealthy for modernism.

Whether one views contemporary Western culture in light of but another permutation within an ever protean modernism or sees it as genuinely postmodernist, the politics at modernism's funeral are rendered all the more cacophonous by the collapse of a series of older cultural distinctions. At the simplest level, the line between the banal and the serious disappears when the question of whether Madonna is a "progressive" or a "reactionary" postmodernist can be debated seriously in *The Village Voice*. But even this bit of ephemera — and postmodernism, should it exist, may be nothing more than a constantly changing collage of such bits — points in the direction of political positions, for Hal Foster has noted "a basic opposition . . . between a postmodernism which seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo and a postmodernism which repudiates the former to cultivate the latter: a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction."³ The latter variety, "aligned with neo-conservative politics," is "defined mostly in terms of style" and "depends on modernism, which, reduced to its own worst formalist image, is countered by a return to narrative, ornament and the figure."⁴ This reactionary postmodernism calls for "the return of history (the humanist tradition) and the return of the subject (the artist/architect as the master *auteur*)."⁵ The postmodernism of resistance, presented without explicit political identification but clearly as a progressive cultural force, is "derived from post-structuralist theory" and "is profoundly anti-humanist;" it "assumes 'the death of man' not only as original creator of unique artifacts, but also as the subject of representation and history."⁶ Very much a man of the resistance, Foster inquired: "what is this subject that, threatened by loss, is so bemoaned?"⁷ He answered: "Bourgeois perhaps, patriarchal certainly — it is the phallocratic order of subjectivity. For some, for many, this is indeed a great loss — and may lead to narcissistic laments about the end of art, of culture, of the West. But for others, precisely for Others, this is no great loss at all."⁸

Among those Others are Women. But here progressive postmodernists would seem to have encountered difficulties. Craig Owens has remarked that "if one of the most salient aspects of our postmodern culture is the presence of an insistent feminist voice . . . theories of postmodernism have tended to neglect or to repress that voice."⁹ And Andreas Huyssen has found it "somewhat baffling that feminist criticism has so far largely stayed away from the postmodernism debate."¹⁰ If some male postmodernists have fastened upon the feminist movement in order to reinforce their claims to a progressive stance, those female Others seem to have recognized that, whether modernism is dead or alive, not much has changed for many

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and that some wars, cultural and otherwise, are more important than others. South African Blacks might perhaps be forgiven for sharing the latter sentiment. This postmodernist fascination with Others — Others of all sorts — recalls almost too readily the desperate search for surrogate proletariats conducted by members of the New Left during the 1960s.

The links between the Left politics of the 1960s, already more damagingly cultural than strictly political, and the postmodernism of the 1980s, has been urged most forcefully by Hilton Kramer and his fellow editors of *The New Criterion*.¹¹ Little more than a well-funded bully-boy in search of sinister cultural conspiracies rotting the fabric of American life, Kramer has sought to defend the "high seriousness that had been a fundamental tenet of the modernist ethos" against the kind of attitudes embodied in Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp" (1964).¹² But as Daniel Bell has remarked, "I think he neglects the subversive force of modernism since he concentrates so much on its 'formal' qualities, and I find strange his argument that modernism is a positive achievement of capitalism! The espousal of modern art today by many corporations is a curious amalgam of modernity chic and the status badge of a corporate elite that (lacking a bourgeois history) has no distinct culture of its own."¹³ Bell himself found the modernist experience disquieting: "one loses the classical sense of wholeness or completeness;" "aesthetic disaster itself becomes an aesthetic;" "behind the chiasm of modern man is the megalomania of self-infinization;" "the modern world proposes a destiny that is always *beyond*: beyond morality, beyond tragedy, beyond culture."¹⁴ Already suspicious of modernism, he refuses to celebrate the emergence of "a powerful current of post-modernism . . . which carried the logic of modernism to its farthest reaches. In the theoretical writings of Norman O. Brown and Michel Foucault, in the novels of William Burroughs, Jean Genet and, up to a point, Norman Mailer, and in the porno-pop culture that is now all about us, one sees a logical culmination of modernist intentions."¹⁵ Postmodernism, in brief, flowed out of modernism, but in the course of doing so, radically changed emphasis: "against the aesthetic justification of life," first voiced strongly by Nietzsche and subsequently central to modernism, "post-modernism has completely substituted the instinctual. Impulse and pleasure alone are real and life-affirming."¹⁶ Subsequent developments would provide Bell with new fears of a collusion between the forces of pre-modernity and postmodernism.¹⁷

Nobody has expressed the fear of an "alliance of postmodernists with premodernists" more forcefully than Jürgen Habermas when he accepted the city of Frankfurt's Adorno Prize.¹⁸ But Habermas' espousal of the modernity of the Enlightenment only served to enrage Jean-François Lyotard, whose celebration of postmodernism rested in part upon a rejection of the terror purportedly spawned by the Enlightenment.

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Lyotard's view of the postmodern condition is, in fact, highly idiosyncratic, for he thinks that "the word is in current use on the American continent among sociologists and critics; it designates the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts."¹⁹ In other words, Lyotard used "postmodern" to describe what North American sociologists and critics have seen, at least until the 1960s, as "the modern" or "the modernist." If it were to lead to the recognition that modernism was already post-, as well as anti-modern and that, hence, the more recently discovered postmodernism is post-post-modern, then his confusion in this regard might actually prove fruitful. In any event, Lyotard multiplied his "posts" — post-eighteenth-century Enlightenment, post-nineteenth-century University of Berlin, post-realism, post-positivism, post-Marxism, and post-metanarrative — before arriving at the celebration of a locally determined, temporally transitory, linguistically heterogeneous, anarcho-technocratic, postmodernist paradise. More recently, however, he has had second thoughts. Heterogeneity now has its costs: "Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games."²⁰ The former member of the dissident *Socialisme ou barbarie* group has come to sound much like Hilton Kramer: "the epoch is one of slackening."²¹

However great their differences in regard to modernity, both Habermas and Lyotard focused their attention upon language. This is not the place to retrace the influences which extend from Ferdinand de Saussure to Roman Jakobson, and on to Claude Lévi-Strauss, but it has to be noted that, despite the claim of the postmodernists to be post-structuralists, there are congruencies between the structuralist and post-structuralist positions which have political implications. It was, after all, the structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss who proclaimed: "I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences to be not to constitute, but to dissolve man."²² He continued in words which could have been penned by Lyotard: "We need only recognize that history is a method with no distinct object corresponding to it to reject the equivalence between the notion of history and the notion of humanity which some have tried to foist on us with the unavowed aim of making historicity the last refuge of a transcendental humanism."²³

Whatever the mutually acknowledged distance between himself and the structuralists, Michel Foucault shared such sentiments and, if anything, carried them farther. In his view, one could say of both ethnology and psychoanalysis "what Lévi-Strauss said of ethnology: that they dissolve man."²⁴ Projecting a generalized anthropology and psychoanalysis inter-

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secting in a "pure theory of language," he celebrated the possibility that "man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter on our horizon."²⁵ Rejecting "all chimeras of the new humanisms," Foucault exulted in a prospect in which "man would be erased, like a face drawn on the sand at the edge of the sea."²⁶ Rather predictably he can conclude that "in our day, and . . . Nietzsche indicated the turning point from a long-way off, it is not so much the death of God that is affirmed as the death of man."²⁷

Nietzsche also concerns Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose *Anti-Oedipus* won warm praise from Foucault. They find in Nietzsche the ideal "de-centred" subject: "there is no Nietzsche-the-self, professor of philology, who suddenly loses his mind and supposedly identifies with all sorts of strange people; rather, there is the Nietzschean subject who passes through a series of states, and who identifies these states with the names in history: 'every name in history is I.'"²⁸ But such experience, it turns out, is by no means confined to Nietzsche: "No one has ever been as deeply involved in history as the schizo . . . He consumes all of universal history in fell swoops. We began by defining him as *Homo natura*, and . . . he has turned out to be *Homo historia*."²⁹ It appears to be a matter of no concern that such a *Homo historia* cannot discriminate historically and, by means of universal self-identification throughout time, cancels out history itself.

Having dissolved history, Deleuze and Guattari can afford to be equally cavalier about politics. But this is not to say that they lack political messages, the most basic of which is remarkably grim:

The death of a social machine has never been heralded by a disharmony or a dysfunction; on the contrary, social machines make a habit of feeding on the contradictions they give rise to, on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they engender, and on the internal operations they regenerate. Capitalism has learned this, and has ceased doubting itself . . . No one has ever died from contradictions. And the more it breaks down, the more it schizophrenizes, the better it works in the American way.³⁰

No doubt the notion that "no one has ever died from contradictions" might provide some solace for Black South African trade unionists today, but the more important message has it that if capitalism is fatally flawed, it is still capable of infinite regeneration. But those who benefit from this situation are nowhere to be found, in part (to be fair) because the authors are more concerned with the question of why people so readily accept subjugation. Unwilling to explore such matters as either the role of "cultural hegemony" or various manifestations of popular resistance, cultural and otherwise, they only succeed in transforming the political into

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the non-political which is, of course, itself political.

If calls for liberation mask the anti-political thrust of *Anti-Oedipus*, nothing would appear at first glance to be less political than Paul de Man's subtle and influential essay, "Literary History and Literary Modernity." And yet the entire thrust of de Man's major de-constructionist effort, with all its careful attention to Nietzsche, led him to conclude that "the bases for historical knowledge are not empirical facts but written texts, even if the texts masquerade in the guise of wars and revolutions."³¹ Despite the formalist distinctions separating de-constructionism from structuralism, this brings him very close, in that spectrum of thought in which the apolitical is political, to Lévi-Strauss' dictum: "Each episode in a revolution or war resolves itself into a multitude of individual psychic movements. Each of these movements is the translation of unconscious development, and these resolve themselves into cerebral, hormonal or nervous phenomena, which themselves have reference to the physical or chemical order."³²

Faced with such assertions, it is well to be reminded by Fredric Jameson that "there is nothing that is not social and historical — indeed . . . everything is 'in the last analysis' political."³³ Yet Jameson himself wants nothing to do with "traditional theoretical worries about so-called linear history, theories of 'stages,' and teleological historiography."³⁴ In this regard, as in others, Jameson is very much a child of his times, perhaps nowhere more so than when he acknowledges: "we are *within* the culture of postmodernism to the point where its facile repudiation is as impossible as any facile celebration of it is complacent and corrupt."³⁵ If there is much he dislikes about it — "obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social of social and political defiance, which transcend anything that might have been imagined at the most extreme moments of high modernism" — he also thinks that "none of us can fail to react to such things as pop art which admirably expresses the tangible and material realities of that American life which is ours."³⁶ Jameson, in the end, refuses to judge: "if postmodernism is a historical phenomenon, then the attempts to conceptualize it in terms of moral or moralizing judgments must finally be identified as a category-mistake."³⁷

Rather than moralizing, Jameson has attempted to arrive at the distinctive features of this new phenomenon. Most generally, he detects in postmodernism "a prodigious expansion of culture through the social realm, to the point where everything in our social life — can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and as yet untheorized sense."³⁸ The implicit demand for theory can itself be seen as distinctly postmodernist, for as Jameson himself has remarked:

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A generation ago there was still a technical discourse of professional philosophy — the great systems of Sartre or the phenomenologists, the work of Wittgenstein or analytical or common language philosophy — alongside which one could still distinguish that quite different discourse of the other academic disciplines — of political science, for example, or sociology or literary criticism. Today, increasingly, we have a kind of writing simply called “theory” which is all or none of those things at once.³⁹

This breakdown of the barriers constructed upon the basis of an intellectual division of labour would be all the more welcome were it not so distinctly postmodernist: eclectic when it comes to bits and pieces of theory rather than concrete in the sense both Hegel and Marx gave to the term, a groping in the direction of a Hegelian “bad infinity” (the ultimate “black hole?”), lacking any sense of a “hierarchy of significance.”⁴⁰

Yet the causes of these tendencies are understandable enough. The attraction and importance of theory, at a time when immediate opportunities for meaningful political action are largely lacking in developed capitalist societies, is not in dispute. Some remarkably powerful theory, after all, did emerge from the British Museum. But whatever the dangers involved in ignoring the historical dimension of human experience, facile invocations of historical materialism will no longer do after the horrors witnessed in the twentieth century. Power, moreover, has become increasingly difficult to pin down in Jameson’s “society of the image or the simulacrum” from which that old target of aesthetic *avant-gardes* and revolutionaries alike, the black-coated, philistine bourgeois, has vanished.⁴¹ In his place now stands the corporate capitalist who, in good postmodernist fashion, is just de-centred enough to be keenly alert to all the passing cultural trends. And yet decisions are taken, and sometimes people die as a result of them.

In such a situation, culture either assumes enormous importance, as the postmodernist critics contend, or, despite much prattle about it, has little importance when measured in terms of real power. It might well be that the nub of the modernism/postmodernism issue resides here. In any event, this question will have to be faced before one can attempt to answer questions about excrement or refusal. In doing so, two disquieting political aspects of the matter will have to be taken into serious consideration. Bell’s almost throw-away line in regard to “a corporate elite that . . . has no distinct culture of its own” raises the possibility that, for the first time in history, a ruling class lacks a distinct culture of its own.⁴² This could be taken as a sign of a more general bankruptcy. But it also could be taken as a sign of so strong a position that “high” cultural pretensions are no longer deemed necessary for the exercise of power. In any event, while it may yet

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prove to be a liability, the erosion of the distinction between "high" and "popular" cultures works to obscure further the power of what remains "objectively" — to use a naughty word — a ruling class. Hence, in celebrating that erosion, the progressive postmodernist theorists could be undermining the very objectives which they wish to secure.

More seriously, the essentially nihilist drive of the postmodernists to obliterate those distinctions which once distinguished the human call for close scrutiny. But some degree of caution is required. Even Foucault and Lévi-Strauss qualified their demands for the dissolution of the human. More to the point, humanism deserves much of the trouble it has recently encountered. It served, after all, as both a disguise for and a manifestation of social privilege. It has also been almost exclusively male-centred. It certainly no more worked as an effective shield against Fascism than did the Christian Churches. But if such weighty charges provide reasons for jettisoning humanist values, they also provide a case for further democratizing those values or, better, for working politically to create a context in which they can be realized to a significant extent for all. That case is all the stronger in that, if premoderns and postmodernists come together, as Bell and Habermas fear, it is quite likely to be on the common ground of a hostility to humanism. More fundamentally, whatever the appeal of blithe and brutal turns of phrase coined in the comfort of the study, the human still has his and her claims at the end of a century in which the jackboot has all too frequently effaced and erased them.

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Notes

1. Different disciplines date modernism in different fashions, a problem obscured by the post-modernist collapse of the barriers between the disciplines. For a general consideration of the periodization of modernity, modernism, and postmodernism, see my forthcoming "Cacophonous Rites: Modernism and Postmodernism," an essay which also seeks to grapple in more detail with the hostility of modernists and postmodernists alike to history as a mode of inquiry.
2. "Postmodernism and Aesthetics," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, X, 1-2 (1986), n.p.
3. Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1984), pp. ix-xvi, xi-xii.
4. Hal Foster, "(Post)Modern Polemics," *New German Critique*, 33 (Fall, 1984), 67.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 76.

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8. *Ibid.*
9. Craig Owen, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. 61.
10. Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique*, 33 (Fall, 1984), 28.
11. The initial manifesto of the editors proclaimed: "We are still living in the aftermath of the insidious assault on mind that was one of the most repulsive features of the radical movement of the Sixties. The cultural consequences of this leftward turn in our political life have been far graver than is commonly supposed. In everything from the writing of text-books to the reviewing of trade books, from the introduction of kitsch into the museums to the decline of literacy in the schools to the corruption of scholarly research, the effect on the life of culture has been ongoing and catastrophic." The Editors, "A note on The New Criterion," *The New Criterion*, I, 1 (September, 1982), 2.
12. Hilton Kramer, "Postmodernism: art and culture in the 1980s," *Ibid.*, 40. In taking modernist seriousness so seriously, Kramer forgets that an earlier and greater critic, also a political conservative and cultural progressive, argued that modernism regarded "art as play and nothing else." José Ortega y Gasset, "The Dehumanization of Art," José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings on Art and Culture* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), p. 13. Given the academic solemnity with which modernism and postmodernism are debated today, it might be well to recall an observation of one of preeminent critics of the twentieth century: "Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before the object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearly the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically." M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), p. 23.
13. Daniel Bell, "The Revolt Against Modernity," *The Public Interest*, 81 (Fall, 1985), 58, n. 2.
14. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 49-50.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
16. *Ibid.* Georg Lukàcs had earlier laid at the door of modernism what Bell ascribed to post-modernism: "Along with the social sense, the intellectual powers, understanding and reason, lose significance and yield to instinct." Georg Lukàcs, "Healthy or Sick Art?," *Writer and Critic and Other Essays* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971), p. 105.
17. Bell, "The Revolt Against Modernity," 53.
18. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity — An Incomplete Project," Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. 15.
19. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiii. Neither champions nor opponents of Lyotard's views have paid any attention to the fact that this "report" was drawn up initially for Québec's *Conseil des Universités*.
20. Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism," *Ibid.*, p. 76. It is difficult to decide which a French Professor of Philosophy would find more offensive: McDonald's food or knowledge as the matter of TV games.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 247.

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23. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
24. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 379.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. xiii, 387.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
28. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 21.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
31. Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 165. It has gone without remark, though it is altogether remarkable, that the son of Henri de Man should have written this sentence.
32. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p. 257.
33. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 20.
34. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, 146 (July-August, 1984), 55. The suspicion of "stages" does not prevent constant reference throughout his work to "late" capitalism.
35. Fredric Jameson, "The Politics of Theory," *New German Critique*, 33 (Fall, 1984), 63.
36. Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," 56; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 414.
37. Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," 85. One is left to wonder how he would deal with a reformulation of this proposition: if Fascism is a historical phenomenon, then the attempt to conceptualize it in terms of moral or moralizing judgments must finally be identified as a category mistake. Jameson, in general, has trouble with Fascism. He managed to devote a book to *Wyndham Lewis: the Modernist as Fascist* (1979) without adequately defining Fascism or proving that the reactionary Lewis was indeed a Fascist. More seriously, as Jameson has come to emphasize increasingly the utopian dimension of modernism, he has consistently ignored the extent to which precisely that dimension overlapped with Fascism. To the extent that Jameson is clearly the most talented of the American Marxist critics, this suggests that the level of current cultural-political debate is considerably below that of the much maligned 1930s.
38. Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," 87.
39. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. 111.
40. For the "hierarchy of significance," see Georg Lukàcs, "The Ideology of Modernism," *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 34.
41. Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," 87.
42. See n. 13.

C.B. MACPHERSON
1911 — 1987

Daniel Drache / Arthur Kroker

C.B. Macpherson was a political theorist who was known internationally as one of the twentieth-century's foremost socialist critics of liberalism: a thinker who undertook a genealogy of the contradictions of liberal-democracy at the level of property and the state; and who, moreover, developed the fundamental concept of "possessive individualism" into a more general political theory: of the failing liberal personality (*The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*); of the crisis of "democratic" capitalism (*The Real World of Democracy*); of the interpellation of law and ideology in the welfare state (*Property*); of the ethical bankruptcy of the liberal account of contractual justice (*Economic Justice*); of the class-ridden character of authoritarian populism (*Democracy in Alberta*); of the irreconcilability of property and democracy (*Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*); and, finally, of liberalism and conservatism as reverse mirror-images under the same ideological sign (*Burke and The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*). Better than anyone else of his generation, Macpherson developed a critical, comprehensive and persuasive account of the limits and possibilities of liberalism as the dominant ideological formation of advanced capitalist societies.

Macpherson's theoretical account of the fate of liberal democracy was based principally on his pivotal study *Democracy in Alberta*, a work which forced him to deepen and extend his analysis of democracy and the party system in a mature capitalist economy. Specifically Canadian in its setting (the emergence of authoritarian populism in response to the crisis-prone character of the Canadian state in the 1930s), and yet global in its political implications, *Democracy in Alberta* was the key stepping-stone between Macpherson's Canadian origins and his later path-breaking studies of the origins and development of liberalism — whether as a theory of the state

(an unlikely fusion of economic liberalism and political egalitarianism), an ideological proclamation concerning the absolute sovereignty of private property rights, a psychology ("possessive individualism"), a discursive understanding of the market-place as a key model of social and political theory ("accumulative" and "maximizing" behaviours), or as a market-steered theory of law.

In *Democracy in Alberta* — a work which was originally published in 1953 at the height of the Cold War — Macpherson undertook a Marxist analysis of the party system. The stunning victories of the Social Credit movement in Alberta of the 1930s became the laboratory *par excellence* for developing and testing his theory of liberal democracy and the role played by the party system in simultaneously advancing and suppressing class interests. In this crucial text, Macpherson translated a specific, local and regional analysis of the democratic party system into a classic account of the contradictions of the petit-bourgeoisie in liberal societies. As a new and persistent species of democratic government, Social Credit raised the most fundamental questions about the character of democratic governments under conditions of sharp class divisions and almost panic-like economic crisis. What seized Macpherson's attention was the dual role played by the party system in democratic theory in articulating, yet containing, divergent class claims on the body politic. For Macpherson, the political contradictions of Social Credit populism in Alberta were ultimately the key ideological contradictions of the *system* of Western liberal democracy writ small. Indeed, it might be said that *Democracy in Alberta* presented Macpherson with a political and theoretical problem — the failure of experiments in radical democracy and the turn to authoritarian populism at a decisive moment in the crisis of capitalist society — which took him the rest of his life to begin to solve.

It was not coincidental that the rise to power of the Social Credit movement in Western Canada in the thirties should have forced Macpherson not only to explore problems confronting liberal democracy but, more particularly, to reflect on the relation of the party system to certain particularities of Canadian society where only the powerful have political influence. In a country where the claims of individualism were traditionally weak and the reality of class glaringly strong, the Canadian party system became the logical institution for revolutionizing the study of Canadian political economy.

Under Innis and Creighton, Canadian political economy was cast in a narrow mould of geographic determinism where environmentalism was the bedrock of Canadian social science. Macpherson changed this with his formative study of Canada as an integral part of the advanced capitalist world. As a necessary corrective to Innis, Macpherson's critical exploration of the significance of the Social Credit movement in Alberta confirmed

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that democracy came as an ideological "top dressing" to market society — even in Canada, a society marginal to Western political development. Whether in new or old societies marked by the ascendancy of liberal ideology, individualism would be betrayed by the older problem of class. Moreover, the Canadian situation underlined another reality that would loom large in Macpherson's later work; namely, the importance of the market mechanism as the central structure of liberal democratic society. Democratic institutions had to accommodate themselves to the operation of a competitive, individualist market society which did not erase class lines and was not expected to. In fact, Canada could be thought of as a 'pure' model where pluralistic theory and the class concept of democracy co-habited in rather unstable and unpredictable ways. On one hand, the Social Credit experience led Macpherson to invent a new category to describe a political structure such as a political party which is a really a non-party: political governments chosen for "efficiency in administration of policies on which there is no deep and lasting division among the electorate."¹ On the other hand, he rejected any suggestion that non-party systems should be confused with a one-party system. At a deeper level, the distinct category of a quasi-party system was needed as a middle way between an alternate-party system — non-existent in the case of Alberta — and a one-party 'socialist' state for which there is no requisite working class basis.

In looking at different dimensions, old and new, of democratic theory in Alberta, the role of the party system *tout court* could not be reduced (as orthodox political scientists wished) to neutralize politics to "... a sort of market which measures and equates political supply and demand."² For Macpherson, pluralist political theory, under the pretext of being a value-free discipline, took the critical and humanistic content out of political economy. The real issue — and what pluralism ignored — was that the party system had a primary task; namely, to diffuse and contain class opposition. His study of the independent commodity producers of Alberta led to the conclusion that moderating class conflict is not only the *raison d'être* of the party system but, in advanced capitalist countries under pressure to moderate their economic structure, will likely become *more* strategically important than its ability to perform brokerage functions between competing interest groups. The unfolding of Canadian political history in the 1980s has witnessed the fundamental accuracy of Macpherson's analysis. Macpherson's theoretical lucidity also led him to speculate that the future of Canadian federalism also lay precisely in this direction. Social Credit was an early warning system of coming transformations in the Canadian party system.

Although a classic in Canadian political economy, *Democracy in Alberta*

remains a curiously unfinished exploration of liberal democracy, pluralism and market society — the very themes that were to dominate Macpherson's interest for the next quarter-century. For Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta* demonstrated simultaneously the full historical limits of orthodox class analysis as well the incipient contradictions of democracy and property. It brought him to the realization that what was required was a theory of the market economy which demonstrated the full tensions between democracy and the acquisitive impulses of maximizing market behaviours. Macpherson's project became then that of understanding liberal democracy as a *historical phenomenon*: this entailed a *political* analysis of the economic logic underlying liberal market societies; and an *economic* diagnosis of the contradictions of liberalism and democracy. Ultimately, Macpherson adopted a genealogical strategy: one which explored the origins of liberal democracy, property and the evolution of the market in the formation of Western capitalist culture.

Revisiting classical democratic theory in the Western tradition — at first, from Hobbes, Locke, Mill to the Levellers and later from Max Weber to Karl Polanyi — Macpherson focussed, almost exclusively, on the historical development of the market as a gigantic mechanism of social order and social dislocation. Why? More than is customary in orthodox political economy and with the eloquence of unerring intellectual precision, Macpherson insisted that *only* the market was capable of transforming the most fundamental of economic arrangements as well as the whole of civil society. Nothing would be excluded. Everything would be subjected to this vast, speeded-up and fully extended universalization of the commodity-form. Religion, subjectivity, marriage, the ideological concept of "careers," democratic theory: all would be interpellated by the transformative idea of individual market freedom and the freedom of market choice.

In industrialized countries from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, this creative tension between democracy (as a *political* theory of egalitarianism) and liberalism (as utilitarian *economic* ideology) had revolutionized society. The justificatory assumption was simply that the market would maximize the utilities of the whole society, although this might necessarily involve inequalities in freedom of choice. Contrary to the traditional claims of democratic theory, the deeper reality of market society was maximum accumulation for the few and maximum dependency for the many. For Macpherson, this fundamental inequality in the "transfers of power" at the centre of liberal society was the key problematic for liberal democratic theory: the requirement "to reconcile the claims of the free market with the claims of the whole mass of individuals for some kind of equality."³ Unlike most Marxist scholarship which is reductionist on the question of the relationship of democratic politics to the commodity-form, Macpherson's theorisation of this relationship was both nuanced and original. He explored, in exhaustive detail, how democratic ideology was

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simultaneously functional and dysfunctional for the smooth operation of capitalist market societies. Long before Claus Offe's theoretical analysis of the state in administered capitalism, Macpherson insisted that market economies come to rely on and yet simultaneously refuse the legitimating logic of democratic ideologies. The 'market right' requires democratic ideology both to sweep aside the detritus of feudalism and to install the historical class compromise necessary for its very operation. Equally however, the market must work to suppress the revolutionary possibilities inherent in liberalism before the unfolding logic of democracy threatens the sovereignty of private property. Macpherson's brilliant decoding of the ambivalent politics represented by the very term 'liberal democracy' stands at the apex of his thought.

As a twentieth century theorist fully sensitive to the transformation of capitalism from its competitive to its regulatory phase, and as one who was equally alert to the dangers of totalitarian liberalism, Macpherson developed a new theory of political economy: one which would recuperate the best possibilities of democratic theory into a critical politics of individualism; and which would function simultaneously to expose the lie in liberal democratic society — its 'suffocation' of developmental democracy by market-maximizing forces. Macpherson's thought, then, was a remarkable synthesis: a political economist, not only of historical capitalism, but also of the newest phase of regulatory capitalism. And all this with the consciousness of a classical democrat.

Because Macpherson was a working democrat, his thought confronted with telling honesty actual historical transformations in the nature of the working class. Refusing the theoretical abstraction of the 'automatic' proletariat, he brought to bear a powerful and rich optic on the effects of science and technology on labour. Theorizing that the welfare state would ultimately produce "... a less oppressed and more educated and versatile working class,"⁴ Macpherson confronted directly key orthodoxies in Marxian labour theories. His aim was to revitalize Marxist labour theory by the method of high realism; that is, addressing critically the dramatically new political and economic circumstances confronting the post-industrial working class.

Too much a socialist on the question of the class bias of Western political democracy ever to be content with "neutralist political theory," Macpherson's thought could never be reconciled with the 'pluralistic' and epistemologically neutered claims of liberal ideology. And, too much a liberal on the issue of recuperating the dynamic tension between individual freedom and state-sponsored theories of democracy — whether of the left or the right — Macpherson could never accept the subordination of democratic individualism to theorisations privileging the ideology of the commodity-form. His thought occupied a critical middleground between

reductionist socialism and opaque liberalism and, more than is customary in critical political theory, worked at the very edge of ambiguity, heterodoxy, and realism. While orthodox socialism might privilege class, there was never anything 'elusive' about 'C.B.'s' Marxism. The politics of *transformation* was at the forefront of all of his theoretical analysis. Indeed, in the last decade of his life — principally in *Economic Justice* and *Democratic Theory* — Macpherson focused squarely on the dilemmas of democratic individualism in the contemporary welfare state. Resituating the issue of the class-specificity of the welfare state in the broader framework of a fully relational theory of power, Macpherson's analysis gave a high-profile to the politics of empowerment and individual rights: the developmental capacities of the free individual working within, but against, the constraints of late capitalist society. Consequently, Macpherson's political legacy was to restore to socialism a humanistic vision of democracy and to liberalism an austere analysis of class-mediated societies. His theoretical analysis of the dilemmas of the welfare state ran parallel to political diagnoses of major social movements in advanced industrial societies: the Greens, socialist feminism, anti-war movements and liberation theology. This was, once again, critical political theory in the service of a transformative vision of society.

Perhaps, though, C.B. Macpherson might best be remembered, and honoured, by stating simply that his emblematic concept — *possessive individualism* — represents, at once, his finest political contribution to understanding the structure of contemporary capitalist domination and his unfinished theoretical legacy. In the concept of possessive individualism, Macpherson captured the full sweep of his times: the schizoid quality of the petit-bourgeoisie (whose politics always short-circuit their economic interests); the reduction of the self to property in capitalist society; the abolition of democratic use-value by the universalizing commodity-form; the recapitulation of the competitive market-place into the logic of regulatory capitalism; and, finally, the suppression of the self-developmental capacities of democratic individualism at the behest of the acquisitive impulses of the market-place. As a sweeping summational concept, possessive individualism designates, in one stroke, the *politics* (liberal-democratic), the dominant *psychological* principle (the "acquisitive individual"), the *economics* ("maximizing"), the *technological* laws of operation (market-steered), the key *cultural* mode (the aestheticization of power), and the prevalent *labour* theory (the technification of labour under conditions of industrial, and later service, economies) of the whole of advanced capitalist societies existing in the shadow of the Year 2000.

Macpherson's political analysis ultimately did not take full advantage of the theoretical complexity of the concept of possessive individualism. This indicates that an integral part of Macpherson's unfinished legacy is to provide the key to a new and decisive link between the approach of political

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economy which he so favoured and other theoretical strategies — semiotics, cultural studies, and psychoanalysis — which, as a thinker deeply marked by the Canadian realities of class, property and the market, he found so intellectually alien. For better or for worse, 'possessive individualism' directly centres today on issues concerning the ideological production of subjectivity in capitalist discourse. That Macpherson's interpretation of political economy opens up important political questions which, however, cannot be solved within the limits of his thought, does him no dishonour. Like other critical thinkers before him, from Marx and Weber to Adorno and Polanyi, Macpherson has revisited on our behalf the Medusa of history; and has come away, once again, only with more unanswered — and perhaps unanswerable — questions.

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Notes

1. C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 238.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
3. C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 173.
4. *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes: A Canadian Annual*, No. 1 (1983): 8.



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WAS JOHN LOCKE A BOURGEOIS THEORIST?: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF MACPHERSON AND TULLY

Jeffrey Isaac

Was John Locke a "bourgeois" theorist? Was he a legitimizer of the activities of the nascent English bourgeoisie? These questions have been hotly disputed in the history of political theory. The view that Locke was a bourgeois theorist goes back to Marx, who wrote that Locke's social theory "was the classical expression of bourgeois society's ideas of right as against feudal society, and moreover his philosophy served as the basis of the whole of subsequent English political economy."¹ In contemporary political theory, this view has been argued most forcefully and convincingly by C.B. Macpherson, in his reknowned *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1961). Macpherson, in an intricate analysis which will be discussed below, concluded that Locke's *Second Treatise* "provides a moral foundation for bourgeois appropriation" and "a moral basis for a class state."² This view has recently been challenged in a brilliant book by James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and his Adversaries* (1980).³ Tully, much influenced by the methodological writings of Quentin Skinner and John Dunn,⁴ and by Dunn's important *The Political Thought of John Locke* (1969),⁵ argues that Locke can only be understood as a natural law theorist rooted in a Thomist conception of politics, property, and man's relation to God. Contrary to the Macpherson thesis, Tully argues that Locke's intention in writing the *Second Treatise* was to *refute* the idea of unlimited accumulation and argue for limits based upon natural law and man's equality with man vis-à-vis God.

In this paper I will summarize and evaluate the arguments of Macpherson and Tully, paying particular attention to methodological issues. I believe that each of the two theorists is partially correct. Tully presents a persuasive criticism of Macpherson based upon a sophisticated analysis of seventeenth century political theory. He is convincing that Locke's project was not the justification of capitalism. However, while I

believe that much of Macpherson's reasoning is persuasively repudiated, it is nonetheless the case that his sense of Locke as a bourgeois theorist will be sustained, although with important modifications. Locke's theory, his intentions aside, does provide a justification for important features of capitalism.

I. The Macpherson-Tully Controversy

Macpherson develops the thesis that seventeenth century English political thought, running from Hobbes, through the Levellers, and James Harrington, to Locke, was characterized by the spirit of "possessive individualism." He does this by examining seeming "contradictions" in various political theories, and by exploring certain background "social assumptions" which might explain/resolve these contradictions.⁶ With Locke, the major problem is how he could have developed a political theory which both justified private property *and* based political legitimacy upon universal contractual obligation. If Locke's theory is intended to justify the prerogatives of private property holders, then how could it presume to ground legitimacy upon the consent of *all*, when the greater part of Locke's society (as Macpherson depicts it) consisted of persons who did not own sufficient property to qualify them to express their consent? And if it was intended to articulate some concept of the general good as embodied in the political majority, then how could its prime function be the preservation of private property?⁷

In this context, Macpherson identifies a "radical contradiction" in Locke: if man in the state of nature is, as Locke says, peaceful and rational, then why is civil society necessary? If the state of nature is *not*, as in Hobbes, a state of war, then why are its "inconveniences" so great that they would cause men to quit that state and form a political society?⁸ Macpherson's answer is that Locke entertains two antithetical views of man and reason. The first is the image of the paragon of bourgeois virtue, the peaceful, rational man, inter-acting with his fellows on the basis of Christian natural-law equality and atomistic individualism. This image corresponds with the "universal" individual who contracts into civil society. The second is a *class-differentiated* concept of man and rationality — only those who own private property in the means of production are rational, as rationality is associated with the industriousness which only property owners can embody. On this view, Locke views workers as basically irrational and morally inferior to the industrious, accumulating private property owners. Macpherson's central point is that underlying Locke's theorization is a concept of *class* differentiation. This explains why the state of nature is sometimes described as a peaceful condition and sometimes as a state of war — Locke's two views of man under the two different descriptions. As regards property owners,

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peaceful rationality obtains. But the irrational workers, both through their covetousness and lack of industry, and the threat they pose to the rational accumulation of wealth, warrant the characterization of the state of nature as a state of war. It is thus in order to quell this class antagonism and secure their private property in the means of production, that the people consent to form civil society.⁹

However, this situation raises the further question of *who* constitutes the "people" who opt into civil society? Macpherson answers that it is the property owners. While Locke *seems* to base government upon universal consent, this is implicitly qualified by Locke's background assumption regarding the irrationality of the working class. This because Locke is clear that civil society is based upon voluntary, *rational* consent. It is on this basis that he distinguishes between paternal and political power in both the *First* and *Second Treatise*. Macpherson argues that this background assumption regarding the working class illuminates Locke's distinction between tacit and express consent to political authority.¹⁰ As Locke writes, while the former "makes not a man a member of that society . . . nothing can make any man so, but his actually entering into it by positive Engagement, and express Promise and Compact."¹¹ Macpherson argues that only property owners expressly consent, becoming full members of the commonwealth, while workers, lacking both property and rationality, are merely subjects of the state, bound to obey its commands. This is seen to be implicit in Locke's assumptions, not explicit in his exposition. Thus, Locke provides a legitimation of a class state, based upon the protection of private property and the political exclusion of the working class. The apparent universality of Locke's political theory is interpreted by Macpherson as masking its particularity as an ideology of the bourgeoisie.

The foundation of Macpherson's interpretation is his analysis of Chapter V of the *Second Treatise*, entitled "Of Property." It is here where Macpherson adduces Locke to have implicitly assumed the existence of capitalist relations of production based upon wage labor. Locke begins this crucial chapter by asserting that the earth is given in common to all men by God. The problem Locke sets out to resolve is "how men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to Mankind in common, and that without any express Compact of all the commoners."¹² Locke continues that "every man has a property in his own Person . . . the Labor of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his." It is through the "mixing" of one's labor with "what nature hath provided," that one individuates one's own from the common, and "makes it his property."¹³ Labor, which is the property of the laborer, is the source of material property. However, as Locke emphasizes, "The same law of Nature, that does by this means give us Property, does also bound that Property too."¹⁴ There are thus important limits placed upon the

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accumulation of possessions: (1) a spoilage limitation; (2) a provision that "enough, and as good" be left for others, and (3) the stipulation that one is only justified in appropriating what one has produced through his own labor.¹⁵

This situation thus far described is one where individual appropriation of the common is bounded, and there is enough for all. With the introduction of money by tacit consent (*de facto* usage) in the state of nature, all of this is changed. Larger possessions are thus justified. This is because money is a non-perishable commodity which when exchanged for a product, can be stored without spoilage. With the introduction of money men both have the incentive to produce more than they can use, and are justified in doing so — the spoilage limitation is transcended. The second provision, that enough and as good be left for others, is also transcended. Macpherson adduces this from Locke's statement that "he who appropriates land to himself by his labor, does not lessen but increase the common stock of mankind." Macpherson argues, on the basis of this text, that Locke possesses a concept of productivity. So long as productivity is increased, the second provision is transcended because more is produced for the *use* of everyone.¹⁶

This still leaves the labor limitation. Macpherson argues here that Locke implicitly assumes the existence of wage labor throughout his discussion, so that this limitation cannot be understood literally. The crucial text is the one where Locke discusses individual appropriation, through labor, of the common. He writes:

Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my Property, without the assignation or consent of anybody. the *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed by Property in them. (emphasis added).¹⁷

Macpherson adduces from this and other texts (discussed below) that Locke assumed the existence of wage labor, otherwise he could not have considered the labor of a servant as belonging to his master. Macpherson argues that Locke's characterization of labor as a possession of individuals implies the alienability of labor, and that this is built into Locke's labor theory of property.

Thus, mixing one's labor is bound neither by the spoilage limitation, the provision of enough and as good for others, nor the individual labor of the proprietor. As Locke writes:

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it is plain that men have agreed to disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth, they having by a tacit and voluntary consent found out a way, how a man may fairly possess more land than he himself can use the product of, by receiving in exchange for the overplus, Gold and Silver, which may be hoarded up without injury to any one, these metalls not spoiling or decaying in the hands of the possessor. This partage of things, in an inequality of private possessions, men have made practicable out of the bounds of Societie and without compact, only by putting a value on gold and silver and tacitly agreeing in the use of Money.¹⁸

Macpherson argues on this basis that Locke justifies unlimited accumulation of private possessions in the state of nature. Moreover, as this state presupposes wage labor, man is not only an egoistic, possessive individualist, but an accumulator of capital. Locke's entire political theory, on this view, is predicated upon the maintenance of capitalist relations of production. It is in this light that Macpherson argues that the defense of private property is Locke's primary concern. He thus claims that while there is an important difference between Locke's support of the restored Stuart monarchy in 1660, and his constitutionalism in 1680, "The difference in the two positions is not as great as it might seem, since . . . he was consistent throughout in wanting a civil authority which could secure the basic institutions of class society."¹⁹

Tully's thesis is that Locke's political theory must be located in terms of the prevailing linguistic conventions and political context. For Tully, Locke's linguistic context is natural law theory and the language of modern subjective rights, and his political context is the English Exclusion Crisis of 1681-82. More specifically, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* must be seen as an extensive criticism of Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* and Filmer's attempt to justify royal absolutism and arbitrary monarchical power. In executing this criticism, and in making the argument for limited government, Locke draws upon the political language of natural law in order to formulate an alternative conception of the relation between property and government.²⁰

According to Tully, the central motif running throughout Locke's philosophy is the "workmanship model."²¹ Tully, identifying this motif in Locke's earlier writings, and also in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, argues that the workmanship model plays a central ontological and epistemological role. Ontologically, it establishes a dependent relationship between that which is created and the active being which created it. Epistemologically, it establishes a privileged access to knowledge by the creator, of that which he created. As Tully quotes Locke in the *Essay*, this model is "the Foundation of our Duty and Rules of Action from which the measures of right and wrong be made out."²² The

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implications of this model for political theory are as follows. Man, as the author of his own actions, has privileged access to knowledge of that which he does and creates. That which he creates also stands in a relation of dependence upon him. However, man also stands in a relation of dependence to God, who created the earth and man. Man does not have privileged access to knowledge of his essence as a creation of God — only God possesses this. He also does not have certain knowledge of God, nor of the essence of the relation between man and God. However, from the law of sufficient reason, Locke is able to argue that God exists, that God created man, and that man therefore stands in a relation of dependence with God, since makership bestows dominion upon the maker. Locke thus writes in the *Essay*:

The original and foundation of all Law is dependency. A dependent intelligent being is under the power and direction and dominion of him on whom he depends and must be for the ends appointed him by that superior being. If man were independent he could have no law but his own will no end but himself.²³

This is very important in refuting those commentators on Locke who downplay the centrality of natural law to his political theory.²⁴ Locke describes law as “that which precribes to everything the form and manner and measure of working.”²⁵ Tully argues that this is a *positive* concept of law, entailing both a concept of *rights* and a corresponding concept of *duties*. The relation of man to God, and the natural law which is based upon this relation, thus has important consequences for Locke’s notions of property and legitimate government.

According to Tully, Locke’s analysis of property must be understood in counterposition to those of Grotius’ *The Laws of War and Peace* (1625) and Pufendorf’s *The Law of Nature and Nations* (1672). Both of these authors had conceived property as an exclusive, private right to possession. As Pufendorf writes: “Property or Dominion, is a right, by which the very substance, as it were, of a Thing, so belongs to one Person, that it doth not in whole belong, after the same manner, to any other.”²⁶ In other words, property is actual, exclusive, private possession. For both Grotius and Pufendorf, although the earth was originally given by God to man in common in the state of nature, private property had come to legitimately established through the right of *first occupancy*. He who first controls a given thing or piece of territory, establishes rightful dominion, or property in it. As Tully argues, this is a radically individualist doctrine, and a radically conventionalist account of property. In the hands of Grotius and Pufendorf, it is used to justify slavery, absolute monarchical authority, and unlimited private accumulation of wealth. Locke’s analysis of property in the *Two*

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Treatises is a repudiation of this doctrine. But Locke's confrontation of the doctrine of exclusive property right is mediated by his concern with refuting the political arguments of Robert Filmer, a proponent of the idea of divine right of kings, and a supporter of the monarchy in the Exclusion Crisis.

As I have sketched, Grotius and Pufendorf articulated radically subjectivist theories of right, based upon first occupancy of the common. Filmer opposed the conventionalism of such an approach, and devoted considerable energy to criticizing it. As he writes:

Grotius saith, that by law of nature all things were at first common, and yet teacheth, that after property was brought in, it was against the law of nature to use community. He doth thereby not only make the law of nature changeable, which he saith God cannot do, but he also makes the law of nature contrary to itself.²⁷

Filmer thus rejects modern subjective rights theory. In its place he articulates the Adamite doctrine that God gave "natural and private dominion" of the earth to Adam, and that this is the basis of the absolute, divine right of kings. Filmer makes this "traductionist" argument in *Patriarcha* by assimilating patriarchal and political authority, and thus by arguing both that royal power is absolute like that of patriarchal power, and that royal power is hereditary, its lineage being God's grant to Adam.

Locke's *First Treatise* is a brilliant critique of the scriptural and logical errors in Filmer's argument. Here Locke, following Aristotle, differentiates between familial and political relations. Moreover, he does this by articulating the doctrine of "creationism." This is that doctrine that God is the knowing maker of man, and that parents are merely intervening causal factors. On this view, rooted in Locke's workmanship model, any rights of man must be based upon his creation by God and the relation which derives from this. Thus, as God creates everyone, there is no basis for Filmer's concept of absolute patriarchal authority — all fathers are equally dependent upon God, and God's natural laws. Also, this dissolves the Adamite notion of absolute political authority. This is because, as all men are created equal by God, there is no natural basis for political authority. Because all men are created equal, political authority must be based upon voluntary consent.

Locke develops his own concept of property in direct contrast to that of Filmer. For Filmer, the monarch possessed exclusive property in his territory and his subjects, analogous to the property a father has in his children. For Locke, as Tully points out, the word "property" is equivocal — it refers both to a right and to the material referent of a right, that which the right is claimed against.²⁸ Tully undertakes an intricate discussion of the *First Treatise*, demonstrating that for Locke property is (1) a right possessed

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by all; (2) a right to preservation and subsistence; and that (3) this translates into a *use* right in the earth, which is given to mankind in common; (4) this property, or right, has a specified end, delimited by natural law, and is antithetical to Filmer's concept of property as unbounded will, and (5) it is a right to one's due, not to one's own. In other words, it is an *inclusive* right, which is possessed by all men by virtue of their being equal creations of God. It is a right both defined by natural law and delimited by it.²⁹

The crucial problem of Chapter V of the *Second Treatise* is the problem of the individuation of the common, i.e., how individuals can use and appropriate that which God has given to mankind in common. We will recall that this is Grotius' problem, and that Filmer's "traductionist" argument is based upon the presumed incoherence of natural law justifying *both* common and private appropriation. However, what is crucial is that Locke, in taking up this problem, is refuting not only Filmer but Grotius as well. This is because, as Tully so convincingly argues, Locke actually employs a Thomist conception of common property translated into the language of subjective rights. This conception places severe limits upon subjectivity. As Locke writes, the foundation of all law is the dependence of man upon God. This is at variance with the arbitrary, voluntarist conception of subjectivity entertained by both Grotius and Filmer, and their corresponding concept of property as an *exclusive* right of private ownership. According to Tully, Locke rejects the concept of property as exclusive individual possession, and articulates this in his distinction between a right *to* and a right *in*.³⁰ This distinction, which Tully traces back to the Spanish Counter-Reformation theorist Suarez, in *The Laws and God the Lawgiver* (1612), is based upon a concept of right as enabling and constraining. Individual rights (in their person and in the use of common property in the earth) both enable men to actualize their duties to God and their potentialities as human agents, and constrain them from doing so arbitrarily. More specifically, Locke rejects unconditional private property. This is because God, as creator of man and the earth, has true ownership and dominion in them. Men have property in their actions insofar as these do not contravene natural law. And men have property in the earth and material things, *to use*, as long as this use is consonant with natural law and man's obligations to God. Tully argues that Locke's concept of material private property is analogous to the medieval concept of usufruct — men have conditional use rights over that which is the property of God. It is in this light that Locke's concept of private property as the product of a man's mixing of his labor with natural materials is relevant. This does *not* establish unconditional property in it — it is simply the means by which the common is individuated. A man's material property is determined by his *makership*. But in the Lockean cosmos, it is not man, but God, who occupies center stage.

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Individual appropriation is thus circumscribed by the law of nature. This law, which is based upon (1) the preservation of mankind; (2) the rights of all men to their *due*; and (3) the performance of duties and obligations toward God, places crucial limits upon appropriation.³¹

Tully further argues that Locke had an antipathy toward commerce which led him to interpret the introduction of money as leading to corruption. As Locke writes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*:

Covetousness, and the desire of having in our Possession, and under Dominion, more than we have need of, being the root of all Evil, should be early and carefully weeded out, and the contrary quality of a readiness to impart to others, implanted.³²

This, according to Tully, is the basis of the need to quit the state of nature and form a civil society. Moreover, as Tully points out, for Locke, the individual, in entering into civil society, not only alienates his executive power over his own life, but also alienates his material possessions. As Locke writes in the *Second Treatise*: "every Man, when he, at first, incorporates himself into any Commonwealth, he, by uniting himself thereunto, annexed also, and submits to the Community those Possessions, which he has, or shall acquire, that do not already belong to any other Government."³³ Once civil society is formed, then, property in material possessions is conventionally determined by civil law. According to Tully, the final task of Chapter V of the *Second Treatise* is to explain the *dysfunctionality* of natural individuation based upon mixing of labor, once money is introduced. Thus, contra Macpherson, the purpose of civil society is not to ratify a prior distribution of private property in the state of nature. It is to establish a *just* distribution according the natural law and the three inclusive claim rights. Civil law is thus in accordance with natural law, but it is *not* in accordance with the distribution of property consequent upon the introduction of money. According to Tully: "once the rule that every man should have as much as he can make use of is rescinded, *no* appropriation is justified."³⁴ The function of government is thus *not* the preservation of exclusive private property, but the establishment of a *just* distribution of property based upon the common good and natural law. Locke is therefore not a legitimizer of unlimited accumulation, hence not of bourgeois relations of production; he is a theorist of natural law and limited use rights. As Tully puts it: "the implication of Macpherson's explanation is that emergent capitalism found the clearest reflection of its central concept, and so its ideology, in Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*."³⁵

Tully's analysis of Locke's intentions is quite illuminating, and on the whole convincing. Macpherson, in arguing that Locke "provides a moral foundation for bourgeois appropriation," compares Locke to Hobbes,

the "possessive individualist" theorist who lacked such a moral component. For Macpherson, then, the history of "possessive individualism" is a history of its progressive articulation as a moral doctrine justifying the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Tully, writing from the point of view of modern linguistic philosophy and philosophy of action, is much more concerned with the subjective intentions of Locke. What does it *mean* to say that Locke was a bourgeois theorist? Does it mean that this is what he intended, that this is what he *meant* to say? For Tully, the interpretation of a text is the understanding of the meaningful communication of an intentional human agent. This requires an understanding of the linguistic and illocutionary contexts of the communication.³⁶ We cannot appreciate which "social assumptions" influenced Locke without first understanding what it was that Locke was saying. In order to do this, we must understand the language which he employed, its conventional usages, etc. Furthermore, in order to understand what he was meaning to say, we must grasp the context in which he was communicating, the active intervention in the social world which the speech act was intending to accomplish.

Macpherson is oblivious to these important methodological canons. He discusses Locke in the context of Hobbes even though Hobbes is in no way pivotal for Locke. As Dunn writes, the problem for Hobbes was political order; the problem for Locke was legitimate government and the limitation of arbitrary authority.³⁷ This *Filmer* is Locke's target, and the Exclusion Crisis his political context. Locke was not responding to Hobbes' incomplete articulation of "possessive individualism," as Macpherson implies, but to the problem of absolute monarchy in the context of the Whig opposition to Charles II. In refuting Filmer's Adamite doctrine of divine right of Kings, Locke is forced to articulate an alternative theory of property. In doing so, he employs the language of modern subjective rights, but underlying this language is a strong commitment to a Thomistic concept of natural law. In this sense he must be seen as a critic of Grotius and Pufendorf as well. If we read Locke contextually, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he clearly situated himself in a contemporary debate on the side of definite limits to the accumulation of material property. As Tully makes clear, in taking this position Locke was not alone; others, such as John Selden, in *Of the Dominion or Ownership of the Seas* (1636), and Richard Cumberland, in *A Treatise on the Laws of Nature* (1672), similarly articulated opposition to the idea of exclusive, unlimited appropriation.³⁸

In this context, Macpherson's central thesis, that Locke justifies a class state, must be questioned. First of all, as Dunn and Tully have argued, there is no basis for Macpherson's claim that Locke intends to exclude the working class from political life. Dunn makes a persuasive argument that consent is the occasion of political legitimacy, but it is not the *ground* of it —

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natural law is the ground of legitimacy, the reason for the formation of political society. Consent itself thus is subordinated in Locke's theory to man's natural law equality. Locke is clear that in the state of nature men are perfectly free to act, within the bounds of the law of nature, and that therefore a necessary condition of the legitimacy of political society is voluntary consent.³⁹ Macpherson's claim that workers are tacitly obligated to obey the state without expressly consenting is at variance with Locke's explicit formulations. It rests on Macpherson's further claim that Locke saw workers as irrational. But Macpherson's textual evidence here is quite sparse, and is limited to Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, which Dunn argues must be understood in terms of Locke's belief in original sin and his moral pessimism deriving from his religious praxis.⁴⁰

Macpherson's claim is further weakened by Dunn's argument that in the seventeenth century there were a number of occasions, most notably oaths of allegiance, upon which men were required to perform actions which could reasonably be described as giving positive oaths. These requirements were incumbent upon all natural-born Englishmen. There is thus no reason to interpret Locke's distinction between express and tacit consent as the basis of his exclusion of the working class from politics.⁴¹ Once we recognize that Locke's intentions were not the creation of a class state but limited government, and further that Locke *opposed* unlimited accumulation, then there is further reason to doubt Macpherson's claim that Locke's political theory is based upon the maintenance of the political power of a minority of private property owners and the political exclusion of the majority.

II. Tully Overturned: Locke as a Bourgeois Theorist

Tully has persuasively argued that Locke intended not to justify unlimited accumulation and the political exclusion of workers, but to criticize unlimited accumulation and defend the idea of human natural equality. However, to say that Locke didn't *intend* to justify capitalism is not to say that he didn't do so. From a *realist* perspective, it is quite possible that one can be said to do things other than what one intends to do.⁴² To label a theorist an ideologist, on this view, is to say that the structural consequence of that theorist's work is to legitimate a specific kind of society. In Marxian terms, it is to contend that a theorist serves to mystify, whether intentionally or unintentionally, actual social relations.⁴³

It is Tully's failure to recognize this, and his narrow focus on authorial intentions, I would suggest, that forces him to misread Locke's text, reasoning (implicitly) as follows: *if* Locke didn't intend to legitimize capitalism, *then* he didn't, therefore the text must be read in such a way as to bear this out. Thus, Tully's incredible statement that "the capitalist not

only never appears in the *Two Treatises*; there is no place for him to appear."⁴⁴

I will argue below that while Locke might not have intended to justify capitalism, that is indeed what his theory of property does. While the capitalist might not be the focus of Locke's attention, it is nevertheless the case that he *is present* in Locke's theory. Locke is an ideologist of emergent capitalism, in that, contra Tully, his theory embodies three sorts of social assumptions which are central features of capitalism: (i) individualism, (ii) wage labor, and (iii) extensive private accumulation of wealth. It is only at great pains, and at the cost of serious misreadings, that Tully is able to deny this.

1: Individualism

Tully claims that Locke conceives of man as an essentially social being. He provides textual support, in the form of Locke's claims that man should "follow those rules which conduce to the preserving of society," and that "God has designed Man for a sociable Creature."⁴⁵ However, I find Tully's claim unconvincing. He presents some illicit evidence in support of it. For instance, pace Tully, Locke does *not* assert in Chapter II of the *Second Treatise* that individuals outside of society are "wild savage beasts." Locke is here talking about criminals who, by their crimes have renounced reason and abjured their natural rights. *These* individuals, by their actions, place themselves out of society.⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is questionable what Locke means by "society" in these instances. Tully's discussion leads us to interpret Locke as talking about sociability. But this does not entail that men be essentially social in the strong sense of this concept for Aristotle or Aquinas. Tully cites Dunn to the effect that Locke, unlike Hobbes, did not presume the problem of an ethical vacuum. True. This is the function of natural law for Locke. But to say that Locke is a natural law theorist is *not* to say that he articulated a concept of *sociability*. In fact, Locke's problematic *is* that of atomistic individualism. True to his Protestantism, it is the individuals' relation to God which occupies the central place in his theory. But while this does place limits upon the actions of individuals, it is still the *individual* which is the problem for Locke.⁴⁷ Contra Tully, Locke's emphasis on contracts and the obligations they create is evidence of Locke's individualism. True, Locke is not a radical subjectivist like Grotius, but for Locke relations between man and man, though mediated by God, are sustained through voluntaristic agreement. There is in Locke no concept of relatively enduring social relations and practices, only voluntaristic interactions between equals.⁴⁸ It is on this basis that Locke's analysis of material property is an analysis of individual appropriation — Locke lacks a concept of *social* production. Labor is thus a property of individuals, and individuation a corollary of this.

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2: Class

Tully claims that Locke can in no way be construed to have possessed a concept of class, particularly a class of wage laborers. He presents a number of arguments to support his claims, none of which sustains them.

(a) the "basic unit" of mankind for Locke is the conjugal family. In criticizing Filmer's arbitrary concept of patriarchal authority, Locke is articulating a "radically restructured communal" concept of the family. To the extent that this is so, "Locke destroys the very foundation of individual rights: the unquestioned assumption that a proprietor is the patriarchal head of a family."⁴⁹ Firstly, Tully seems to exaggerate the radicalness of Locke's concept of family. While Locke *does* oppose arbitrary authority, anyone familiar with the *First Treatise* will recall that he is also quite explicit about the naturalness of male, patriarchal domination of the household. Family relations may not be absolutist in Locke, but neither are they voluntary. Secondly, it is quite true that Locke sees the family as a natural social unit. The point of arguing that he was an individualist is not to deny that he recognized social relationships, nor that he valued them. It is that for Locke's political theory, for his analysis of appropriation and the formation of political society, it is the male head of the household who alone has status as an effective individual identity. When Locke writes that all men are created equal by God in the state of nature, he is talking about all *men*. To say that men have natural law obligations to their families is important, but it does not confront the fact that socially and politically it is male *individuals* who are the only relevant actors, and *their* relations are voluntaristic. Thirdly, Tully claims that Locke entertains a concept of household analogous to the classical Greek, Aristotelian concept of the *oikos*, as a communal organization of common property. This may be, and once again Tully's hermeneutic insight is important. However, it is *also* the case that Locke's household differs *radically* from that of Aristotle — its head is a *proprietor*, who must mix his labor as an individual laborer in order to procure subsistence. We may recall that for Aristotle the household is a prerequisite for the good life, providing, through slave labor, for the needs and tastes of the *zoon politikon*. It is the *polis* which embodies the good life itself. For Locke, politics is *not* natural, and the citizen, if we can call him that, labors to procure his own subsistence. *This* idea is *not* an ancient one. In fact, the centrality of production to political theory is itself a modern phenomenon. In Locke this is mediated by religious praxis. But for Locke the political individual is also an economic individual.⁵⁰

(b) Tully denies that the "Turfs" passage in Chapter V, which Macpherson relies on, has anything to do with wage labor. Instead, he argues, Locke is referring to the "master-servant" relation, which is radically different. Tully's arguments here are thoroughly unconvincing. He first

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quotes Locke:

a Free-man makes himself a Servant to another, by selling him for a certain time, the Service he undertakes to do, in exchange for Wages he is to receive: And though this commonly puts him into the Family of his Master, and under the ordinary discipline thereof; yet it gives the Master but a Temporary Power over him, and no greater, than what is contained in the *contract* between 'em.⁵¹

Tully then proceeds to claim that: (1) Locke was opposed to need being the basis of dependence — only voluntary agreement can satisfy the contract of servanthood; (2) since it is a freeman who makes himself a servant, the agreement presupposes that there be a free choice, and that an alternative be available; (3) Locke contrasts servants with slaves. The latter lack freedom and causal efficacy, but the former are *makers* who create products and embody skills and capacities. The slave, but not the servant, is an instrument of the master's will. Tully thus suggests that there is no room in Locke's theory for capitalist wage labor, which is both predicated upon the absence of alternative means of subsistence for the worker, and is characterized by the subordination of the workers' will to that of the employer. Tully's argument, however, is seriously deficient.

(1) and (2) may be treated together. Tully offers one text in support of both:

Man can no more justly make use of anothers' necessity, to force him to become his vassal, by with-holding that Relief God requires him to afford to the wants of his Brother, than he that has more strength can seize upon a weaker, master him to his obedience, and with a Dagger at his throat offer him Death or Slavery.⁵²

But the text, in its entirety, suggests that Locke's attitude toward relations established on the basis of need is much more ambiguous than Tully would have it. The sentence directly preceding the one quoted by Tully above reads:

As justice gives every Man a Title to the Product of his honest Industry, and the fair Acquisitions of his Ancestors descended to him; so Charity gives every Man a Title to so much out of another's Plenty, as will keep him from extream want, where he has no means to subsist otherwise.⁵³

This sentence implies an important distinction between "justice" and "charity." It is not justice (which Tully suggests is synonymous with right

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on p. 66) which requires that need not result in dependence — it is charity. Furthermore, this charity is rightfully forthcoming only if the needy man “has no means to subsist otherwise.” It is not clear that all this precludes the existence of wage laborers, who do need an income through the sale of their labor (power) to subsist, but who also possess the ability to work for a living. After all, *all* contracts are based upon some element of mutual need.

Moreover, section 43, which follows the text quoted above, reads:

... the Authority of the Rich Proprietor, and the Subjection of the Needy Beggar began not from the Possession of the Lord, but the Consent of the poor Man, who preferr'd being his Subject to starving.⁵⁴

This certainly suggests that for Locke there had to be no *structural* alternative for the starving man in order for his “consent” to be considered voluntary. There is a difference implied here between *forcing* him to become his vassal by with-holding relief and *accepting* the “consent” of the man who wants to work in order to secure subsistence and avoid the vagaries of charity. This attitude is by now too familiar to require gloss; suffice it to say that it is quite compabitle with the “double freedom” of the worker which Marx satirizes in *Capital*.⁵⁵ In short, a careful reading of the text suggests quite clearly that Locke’s point is *not* that relations of dependence cannot be established on the basis of need — it is that only consent, not need, can be the moral ground of dependence.

The kind of relation Locke is criticizing does not seem to resemble wage labor at all. The assumption behind wage labor is that the relation between worker and employer is contractual, not traditional or hereditary; that it is not personal, but pursuant upon the performance of impersonal obligations. The section of Locke discussed above seems to apply to a much more personalistic relation. The language of “lordship” and “vassalage” implies that the relation being criticized is the absolute power of the landlord over peasants or serfs. This relation is neither contractual nor impersonal. Furthermore, it is not, like wage labor, limited to a specified service for a specified wage. In short, while Tully is convincing that Locke opposed certain kinds of domination, and that he placed a value on compassion and charity, he is not convincing that anything in Locke is at variance with the possibility of the wage labor contract.

In fact, Tully’s description of the servant as a “freeman who contracts with another a service he undertakes to do, for a wage he is to receive,”⁵⁶ sound remarkably like a description of the wage laborer. Of course, Tully argues that the worker sells a *service*, not his *laboring activity*. In other words, Locke lacks the concept of labor-power which underlies wage labor. However, here too Tully is on shaky ground. The text in question says that

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the servant sells to his master, "for a certain time, the Service he undertakes to do, in exchange for wages . . ." ⁵⁷ This seems to be a contract based upon *time* — a contract based less upon the completion of a given task than upon the laboring for a definite time-period. Tully argues that the sale of labor-power is at variance with Locke's contention that a man owns his own actions and that which is created by those actions. It may be that Locke is involved in a self-contradiction here. It may also be that Tully's argument lacks specificity. Tully claims that "Since the labor of a person is defined as actions determined by the will of that person, it is logically impossible for an agent to alienate his labor." ⁵⁸ In other words, a man may alienate the product of his labor, or a definite service, but not the labouring activity itself. It is not clear why this is so. To alienate a product, or a definite service, like cutting turf, is to declare beforehand, in an express contract, that the specified product or service will be performed in exchange for a monetary return. To alienate one's labor-power is to specify that x hours of labor will be performed in exchange for y amount of money. In making such a transaction, the worker is not alienating his *right* to labor, only his capacity to labor, for a specified length of time. To describe one's labor-power as alienated is *not* to describe it as no longer the causal effect of the agent in question. It is not to deny that the worker has produced a product, nor is it to assert that the worker is an instrument of the will of his employer. ⁵⁹ In this sense, Tully's objections to the imputation of wage labor to Locke are off the mark. However, to talk about the alienation of labor-power is to speak *not* of the sale of a definite service or product, but of an abstract *capacity*. This *does* entail that no single, specifiable individual is responsible for the production of any specifiable, concrete product. In other words, it entails a complex division of labor. As we shall see, Locke views a social division of labor and the transcendence of concrete labor as completely consistent with natural law.

3: Accumulation

Macpherson, we will remember, argued that Locke, with the introduction of money into the state of nature, legitimized unlimited accumulation and the transcendence of the three previously stated limitations on it. He further argued that this presupposes wage labor, which he contended Locke did. We have seen that Macpherson is wrong, and that Locke opposed unconditional accumulation. However, this does not mean that he did not allow quite extensive accumulation beyond the stated limitations. I have argued above that Tully provides no evidence for us to reasonably suppose that Locke lacked a concept of wage labor. In fact, he seems to have possessed such a concept. If Tully is wrong, and Locke really *does* justify extensive accumulation, this will lend further support to the claim that

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Locke was a bourgeois theorist.

Tully states that "once the rule that every man should have as much as he can make use of is rescinded, *no* appropriation is justified."⁶⁰ He argues from this that the function of civil society is to establish natural justice upon other grounds. However, this seems to be in direct contradiction with Locke's own claim that with the introduction of money men "have found out a way, how a man may *fairly* possess more land than he himself can use the product of . . ." ⁶¹ There is in fact nothing in Chapter V to lead one to believe that Locke saw accumulation beyond use to be unnatural, or unjust. As he says, it is "fair," and is in accordance with natural law. Of course, as Tully argues so brilliantly, this does not mean that Locke justifies unlimited, unconditional accumulation. But it *does* mean that the limits for Locke have nothing to do with use. As Tully argues, men have an inclusive claim right to the earth for their subsistence. This claim right is a natural law, and is also the basis of another natural duty, the duty to praise and honor God. However, the extensive accumulation of wealth and appropriation of the earth is *not* incompatible with this claim right, *provided* that the consequence of this appropriation is an increase in the amount of subsistence goods available for all. On this point, Macpherson's argument that Locke possessed a concept of productivity must stand — Locke's criteria for the extent of appropriation is *utilitarian*. This, of course, is subject to the further constraint that men are equal in relation to God, that involuntary subordination, etc., are prohibited. However, as I have argued above, there is nothing in Locke to lead us to believe that the extensive, unequal appropriation described in Chapter V is in contravention of natural law.

Tully argues that Locke possesses an essentially Aristotelian concept of money as stimulative of commerce and corruptive of social relations.⁶² I will not challenge his contention that money stimulates extensive appropriation, possessiveness, and unforeseen consequences, which lead men to establish a political society. However, Tully's contention that money for Locke led to a transgression of natural law, and that the purpose of political society was to *restore* man to a more moderate and beneficial state, seems to be unfounded. It is not clear to me, as Tully claims, that Locke discusses money in Chapter V in "language which evinces moral disapproval."⁶³ Tully produces a text where Locke refers to the "Phantastical imaginery value" of money, but the context of this statement is a discussion of the rights of spoils in conquest, and says very little in itself about the nature of money.⁶⁴ Locke most definitely does speak of the "temptation" which is a consequence of introduction of money, but this is no evidence of his disapproval of it. He is also quite clear that "covetousness" is a dangerous evil. However, while Tully produces a number of texts making this point, this is not sufficient to demonstrate Locke's antipathy to accumulation. In fact, there is a crucial operative distinction in Locke which

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Tully obscures — that is, the distinction between industriousness and covetousness. As Locke writes of the common: [God] “gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational . . . not to the Fancy and Contentious.”⁶⁵ Locke’s antipathy toward covetousness thus cannot be taken as evidence for his antipathy toward money and the industriousness which it facilitates. In fact, it is industriousness which, as Dunn argues, is a duty to God deriving from Locke’s Protestantism; this more than anything else would seem to justify extensive accumulation.⁶⁶

III. Conclusion

Locke thus justifies extensive accumulation in the state of nature. While this accumulation is accompanied by a growing division of labor and “inconveniences” which require the establishment of a political order, the function of the political order is to *reinforce* natural law and natural rights. It is true, as Tully argues, that the function of government is not simply to ratify exclusive private property. However, contra Tully, government *does* institutionalize the extensive inequalities which *are* compatible with natural law.

Locke’s state is a bourgeois state in that it is based upon the juridical, political equality of all men, and their natural private property rights. These rights are individualistic, but they are not radically subjectivist. They are based upon the property of each in his own person, which underlies both the appropriation of nature *and* the alienation of labor-power. Formally, all men are equal in their possession of property rights construed as claim rights against others. Substantively, however, Locke possesses an *embryonic* concept of wage labor. This is explicit in some passages. And it is implicit in his justification of accumulation beyond use in the state of nature. This is because to allow this presupposes both that some people employ others to produce these surpluses, *and* that there be a class of producers which is dispossessed of the means of production, a class which both requires employment in order to secure subsistence, and functions as the necessary consumer of the surplus produced by the commercial proprietor.

Locke wrote in the midst of political struggles which were part of the transition period from feudal to capitalist relations of production.⁶⁷ He did not intend to justify capitalist appropriation, and he did not articulate a doctrine legitimating unlimited accumulation. However, Locke’s theory of property *can* be interpreted as a critique of feudal notions of property based upon hierarchy and notions of acquisition based upon first occupancy.⁶⁸ Locke provides a justification of the *productive* appropriation of nature based upon labor and accumulation. Underlying this is a concept of individual labor which is tied to a concept of individual proprietorship. This essentially petty bourgeois notion is also tied to an embryonic concept

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of wage labor as the voluntary disposition of the ability to work on the part of individual laborers.

Locke's doctrine is not that of Nozick. The fact that it is based upon certain inclusive claim rights means that, in contrast to contemporary neo-conservative formulations, it lends itself to welfarist and social democratic practical conclusions. This is important — Locke's theory is not based upon the political exclusion of the working class. It is a theory of the natural equality of abstract individuals, and of the plebiscitarian political inclusion of workers as citizens, subject to the state and its blind, "natural" laws. This political relation at once underlies and ideologically reinforces the wage labor contract and the subordinate position of workers in the capitalist relations of production. It thus expresses what Poulantzas has referred to as the characteristic relative autonomy of the political and the economic under capitalism.⁶⁹

It is also not a theory of the untrammelled free market. Private property in material possessions, being subject to natural law, is limited on both utilitarian and normative-religious grounds for Locke. However, these limits are logically compatible with the extensive accumulation which Locke does permit. Further, it would seem that, if Tully is correct, then the "inconveniences" of the free market were seen by Locke as injustices in the sphere of distribution to be remedied by the state. There is in Locke no sense that capitalism involves relations of *production* based upon structural asymmetries and exploitation, nor any recognition that these relations are *fundamentally* unjust or undemocratic — for Locke they would seem to embody the freedom to choose. It may be apparent at this point that both Macpherson and Tully agree that capitalism entails unlimited accumulation and extreme possessivism, and only disagree on whether Locke defended these norms. But capitalism is quite compatible with limits, as witness the contemporary welfare state. What is crucial about Locke's limits is that they in no way challenge, and in fact uncritically accept, the existence of emergent capitalist relations of production and appropriation.⁷⁰

Locke may have been a political radical in the 1680's, but in crucial respects, related to his position vis-à-vis structural transformations taking place in England, he was a bourgeois theorist. The crucial natural law component of his thought, resting upon shaky epistemological foundations, could easily give way to much more empiricist and subjectivist forms of possessivism and utilitarianism. And even given this natural law component, his thought contains assumptions, particularly about labor/appropriation as individual, and labor-power as a property of its possessor alienable in voluntaristic exchange exchange, which are irreducibly bourgeois. Locke's state, based upon formal equalities and substantive structural inequalities, articulates the essential characteristics of the capitalist state.⁷¹

This does *not* mean that we can "explain" Locke's text by seeing it as

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the "expression" of social structural transformations. Locke's *intentions* determined his text, and must be accounted for in any interpretation. However Locke, quite unintentionally, both drew upon a germinating bourgeois ideology of individual appropriation and labor as a commodity, and solidified the normative basis of this ideology. In this important structural sense, Locke must be seen as a bourgeois theorist.

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Notes

I would like to thank Peter Manicas, Ian Shapiro, David Johnston, Debra Kent, and the editors of the *Journal* for their helpful comments.

1. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. I. (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 367.
2. C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 250-51.
3. James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
4. Cf. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 3-53; also "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action," *Political Theory* 2 (1974), 277-303; also John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," *Philosophy*, XLIII, (April 1968), 85-116.
5. John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
6. Cf. Macpherson, op. cit., pp. 4-8.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-51.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 248-51.
11. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett. (New York: Mentor, 1965), 2.122, p. 394 (all references to Locke will include Treatise and paragraph number in Laslett edition, e.g., Second Treatise, paragraph 122).
12. *Ibid.*, 2.25, p. 327.
13. *Ibid.*, 2.27, p. 329.
14. *Ibid.*, 2.31, p. 332.
15. Cf. Macpherson, op. cit., pp. 199-202.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-12.
17. Locke, op. cit., 2.28, p. 330.
18. *Ibid.*, 2.50, p. 344.

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19. Macpherson, op. cit., p. 261.
20. Cf. Tully, op. cit., pp. ix-x; also Richard Ashcraft, "Revolutionary Politics and Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*: Radicalism and Lockean Political Theory," *Political Theory*, 8, 4 (November 1980), 429-85.
21. Tully, pp. 4-34.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
24. Cf. Macpherson; also Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).
25. Cf. Tully, op. cit., p. 44.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-3.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-94.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-8.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-50.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
33. Locke, op. cit., 2.120, p. 393; also Tully, op. cit., p. 164.
34. Tully, pp. 151-2.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.
36. Cf. the articles by Skinner, op. cit.; also Quentin Skinner, "Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts," *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970), 113-38; "On Performing and Explaining Linguistic Actions," *Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1971), 1-21.
37. Cf. Dunn, *The Political Thought . . .*, op. cit., p. 79.
38. Cf. Tully, op. cit., pp. 77-79.
39. Cf. John Dunn, "Consent in the Political Theory of John Locke," in G. Schochet, ed., *Life, Liberty, and Property: Essays on John Locke's Political Ideas*. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1971).
40. Cf. Dunn, *The Political Thought*, op. cit., pp. 191-8.
41. Cf. Dunn. "Consent . . .," op. cit., pp. 143-5.
42. See Ian Shapiro and Jeffrey Isaac, "Realism and the History of Political Thought" (paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Philosophical Association, December 1981).
43. On the concept of ideology, see the essays in John Mepham and D-H. Ruben, eds., *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979).
44. Tully, p. 138.
45. Cf. Tully, pp. 48-9.
46. Cf. Locke, 2.11, pp. 314-15.
47. As Marx observed: "for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of

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homogenous human labor — for such a society, Christianity, with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion." *Capital*, vol. I (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 79.

48. Michael Oakeshott's discussion of the modern concept of *Societas* is relevant here. According to Oakeshott, this concept denotes a human association "understood to be the product of a pact or an agreement, not to act in concert but to acknowledge the authority of certain conditions of acting." In other words, it is a formal, not substantive unity. Oakeshott points out that in the Middle Ages the human race was referred to as a *Societas*, "where each man recognizes himself to be related to every other man in terms of a prescriptive law of Nature or God which he has not chosen and from obligations of which he cannot escape by a choice of his own." Cf. *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 201-2. This would seem to aptly describe Locke's system, where natural law functions as a set of formal prescriptions conditioning individual voluntaristic transactions. Hannah Arendt also has made a point of the modern development of "society" as a homogenized association of atomistic individuals, contrasting this with the unity of the Greek *Polis*. Cf. *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). For a discussion of the concept of relatively enduring relations and practices, see Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); and Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979).
49. Cf. Tully, pp. 133-4.
50. Cf. M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), for a discussion of the differences between ancient and modern economic organization. For a discussion of Locke's sexism, see Susan Moller Okin, "Early Modern Political Theory and the Sentimental Family" (forthcoming, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*).
51. Cf. Locke, 2.85, pp. 365-6.
52. *Ibid.*, 1.42, pp. 205-6.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-6.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
55. Cf. Marx, *Capital*, pp. 169-70.
56. Tully, p. 138.
57. Locke, 2.85, p. 365.
58. Cf. Tully, p. 138.
59. Anthony Giddens suggests that power relations should be conceptualized as relations of autonomy and dependence, in other words that subordinate groups possess powers and are causally efficacious. *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 88-95. See also my "Beyond The 'Three Faces' of Power: A Realist Critique" (unpublished manuscript, 1982).
60. Tully, pp. 151-2.
61. Locke, 2.50, p. 344.
62. Tully, pp. 146-51.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 150; also Locke, 2.184, pp. 438-9.
65. Locke, 2.34, p. 333.
66. Cf. Dunn, *The Political Thought . . .*, pp. 218-21.

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67. Cf. Christopher Hill, "A Bourgeois Revolution?" in J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); also Rodney Hilton, et.al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).
68. Cf. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1977), for a discussion of the difference between feudal and capitalist accumulation — while the latter is based upon the expansion of relative surplus value through the productive employment of labor, the former is largely based upon military conquest and territorial expansion.
69. Cf. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1975), p. 29.
70. See, for example, T.H. Green's remark in *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, excerpted in Carl Cohen, ed., *Communism, Fascism, and Democracy* (New York: Random House, 1972); "Labor, the economist tells us, is a commodity exchangeable like other commodities. This is in a certain sense true, but it is a commodity which attaches in a peculiar manner to the person of a man. Hence restrictions may need to be placed on the sale of this commodity which would be unnecessary in other cases, in order to prevent labor from being sold under conditions which make it impossible for the person selling it ever to become a free contributor to social good in any form," p. 487. This viewpoint, which doesn't question the existence of a working class as an essentially subordinated and alienated class, only some of its effects, seems quite akin to Locke's approach, as Tully presents it. In both cases, state-implemented social welfare legislation would remedy social "problems."
71. For a similar argument, cf. Ross Poole, "Locke and the Bourgeois State." *Political Studies*, XXVII, 2 (June 1980).

dialectica Vol. 41, 1987

Fasc. 1-2

Proceedings of the Colloquium **Norms and Conventions**, May 1-4, 1986

Actes du colloque **Normes et Conventions**, 1-4 mai 1986

Akten des Kolloquiums **Normen und Konventionen**, 1.-4. Mai 1986

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	Switzerland	Other countries	
		Payment in	in other currencies
		SFr.	(\$, £ etc.)
Subscription rate per annum (4 issues)			
Abonnement annuel (4 fascicules)	65.-SFr.	80.-SFr.	+ 8.-SFr.
Jahresabonnement (4 Hefte)			

Distribution/Auslieferung

Dialectica, Case postale 1081, 2501 Bienne (Suisse)

F.W. Faxon, Stechert Coordinator, 15 Southwest Park, Westwood/Mass. 02090 USA

B.H. Blackwell Ltd., Broad Street, Oxford, England

THE NIHILISM OF RESISTANCE AND FREEDOM

Paul Nonnekes

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack. Thetford, Norfolk: Thetford Press, 1985.

I

How does one begin to understand possible forms of resistance to the prevailing forms of domination in our modern industrialized world? When faced with the increased commodification of our lives in the reified world of consumerism, the growing bureaucratization of human relations in centralized agencies of governance, and the expanding power of homogenizing mass media networks to reproduce human desire, what should be our response? And in particular, on what basis do we (re)conceptualize strategies of freedom for the human subject, given the above state of affairs?

A stimulating and provocative text has arisen from within Marxist circles which attempts to deal with these burning questions of our modern existence. This is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*.¹ It will be the attempt of this essay to critically examine the importance given to freedom and resistance by Laclau and Mouffe as they situate their analysis within the overall context of a discussion of the Gramscian inspired concept of hegemony. Methodologically, the analytical intent of this essay is to have Laclau and Mouffe respond to what can be designated as a general problematic of modernity.

At a very general level, this problematic can be characterized as a deep *lament*. It is a lament over a world that has increasingly lost its human face. With the increased commodification, bureaucratization, and massification

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of our social relations, there is a general feeling that the world is not an expression of our own humanity. Thus, we can empathize with Pascal when he cries out that "cast into the immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant and that know me not, I am frightened."² In setting up our problematic, then, we can stand beside Benjamin in seeking to develop a critical theory that takes its stand against this human effacement. It is a stand rooted in sadness and melancholy over a world severed from the claims of human agency as that is tied to the very local bonds of embodiment. By framing the problematic in this way, we are linking criticism to a humanist project of self-understanding. The human attempt to "know" is the attempt to make sense of one's circumstances in order that the world outside of oneself which must be dealt with³ may not be experienced as alien and foreign to one's concerns but, as Herder and the Romantics never tired of telling us, may be taken up as one's own.⁴ This critical project of knowledge, which is an ancient form of "gnosis," is thus the attempt to understand the world as a *human* world.

It was Vico who reminded us that we pay respects to the first humans who designed order out of the chaos of the world, shaping it through the experience of their own bodies tied to family and village.⁵ A founding element in the shaping of our modern problematic is a sadness over what can be seen as a process of forgetfulness in modern consciousness of those "first deeds" which are the ground of our humanity, a grounding in our ability to actively and freely give human bodily shape to our world as a means to our identity as individuals.

The specific analytical intent of this essay, then, is this: How does Laclau and Mouffe's discussion respond to the problematic presented above? How does their discussion tackle questions asked by a humanist critical theory that, at a very general but yet deep and existential level, laments the loss through increased commodification, bureaucratization and massification of an expressive humanity tied to body, earth and community?

II

Let us now turn to Laclau and Mauffe's text to seek answers to our questions. Laclau and Mouffe's analysis functions on two levels. The first is a strictly theoretical level where they strongly reject the essentialism of traditional Marxian class analysis in favour of a view of social life derived from post-Saussurian linguistics. The second level, and one that subverts the first, is an historical argument which in fact situates their de-centered view of social life historically (as only a modern phenomenon) and thus inserts a teleology at the moment of its supposed departure.

Allow me to deal with the purely formal theoretical argument first. This discussion centers around six central concepts: overdetermination,

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articulation, equivalences, antagonisms, subject positions, and finally, hegemony.

In order to subvert the essentialism of an analysis which privileges class as an *a priori* principle lying outside the realm of human signification, Laclau and Mouffe wish to assert that all phenomena have their literality exploded from within by being *overdetermined*. Overdetermination is a concept developed by Althusser, but which originally comes from psychoanalysis, where it was used to deal with the metaphorical character of primary process thinking. Overdetermination is thus the language of the unconscious that seeks to subvert the claims of rational conscious thought which has the tendency to fix entities (such as class) within a purely formal set of co-ordinates.⁶ This assertion of Laclau and Mouffe's, that there is a surplus of meaning at the heart of all human signification, means that the world which we dialogically deal with is not only "alive" but also "open." An object is never simply itself (as in rationalism), it is also a sign of, a repository for, something else.⁷ This is what allows Laclau and Mouffe to make the affirmation of "the incomplete, open and politically negotiable character of every identity."⁸ Any proclamation of the essential nature of a class-base or economic-base is shown to be misguided for "there are not two planes, one of essences and the other of appearances, since there is no possibility of fixing an ultimate literal sense for which the symbolic would be a second and derived plane of signification."⁹

This insight gains credibility if we are able to acknowledge that humans, in their quest to understand and make sense of the world, are symbolizing animals. Symbols function as mental images that do not "refer" to something else, but exist as concepts that represent the form of that which we are attempting to understand. Symbolization makes inward critical thought possible. But it is at the same time true that this symbolic significance is an integral part of the world we are discovering and attempting to make our own. Symbolic language as a qualitative and overdetermined praxis is not artificial, not added on to some so-called objective reality, but is entirely natural — it is the self-conscious fulfillment of reality itself.¹⁰

With this in mind we are able to understand why Laclau and Mouffe wish to assert that a social movement arises through the act of human symbolization. They call this an "articulatory practice"¹¹ — a human activity which discovers and asserts a set of *equivalences* between various phenomenon. An "articulatory practice" forms what they call, following Foucault, a discourse; a discourse that has the character of "regularity in dispersion."¹² This means that the articulated discourse of a social movement does not have its grounding in anything outside of itself, in any transcendental founding principle (such as class, economy, etc.), but is governed by its own articulatory activity, by the symbolic rules of formation

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inherent in it.

There is a limit, though, to any discursive articulatory activity, according to Laclau and Mouffe, preventing any social movement from achieving a totalizing effect on society. This limit is set by *antagonisms*. At the heart of any antagonism is the metaphor in its subversive phase. Antagonisms become the manner in which language subverts the attempts of any articulatory discourse from "suturing" the social world into a fixed space.¹³

A direct implication of a theoretical position that holds that the origin and character of a social movement cannot be derived from anything outside of human symbolizing praxis is that the category of the subject as a transcendental intending ground for social conduct is denied its centrality. Instead, human individuality is situated within the terrain of "subject positions" that only have status as part of discursive strategies.¹⁴

The concept of hegemony presents itself within this field. With the social characterized as an open set of floating signifiers, a hegemonic practice must actively articulate equivalences among heterogeneous subject positions against the force of antagonisms to form an always precarious discursive practice. To take a fairly obvious contemporary example, women's rights may be articulated on to ethnic rights into a discursive strategy trying to achieve hegemonic force. But this will be continually subverted by the existence of patriarchal relations in some ethnic communities.

III

As I mentioned earlier, there is a second level of analysis at which Laclau and Mouffe's discussion of social movements works. This is an argument for the historical specificity of the above open-ended and unstable character of the social. It is their assumption that it is only with the Enlightenment notion of freedom historically evident in the French Revolution that an emergence of the polysemy of the social is allowed to take place. For them, the critical consciousness necessary to recognize the non-necessary character of any form of social arrangement was only possible when a completely radical notion of freedom was articulated in the European Enlightenment. It is only when individuals can think of a social identity completely severed from any traditional organic ties to time, place, or circumstance that a "relation of subordination" which takes the character of fixity can be discursively transformed, through critical consciousness, into a "relation of oppression," and thus an antagonism established which seeks to subvert that oppressive condition.¹⁵

There is an historical teleology at work here which I feel leads Laclau and Mouffe to obscure the internal dynamics of both modern and pre-

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modern society. We are presented with the classical sociological paradigm that sees a movement in society from simple to complex forms. Given their questioning of all *a priori* analysis, this surely is not a self-evident assumption. Was pre-modern society simple, hierarchical and fixed? Laclau and Mouffe simply assume the conventional opinion that it was.

The fit for Laclau and Mouffe between the theoretical and the historical arguments centers crucially around their privileging the Enlightenment notion of freedom. This notion of freedom is organically connected to the historical growth of industrialism. The creation — due to the influence of the French Revolution — of a new “political imaginary” that is “radically libertarian”¹⁶ was dependent upon the ability of industrialism to sever people from old oppositions. For Laclau and Mouffe, industrialism exploded the fixed hierarchical oppositions of pre-modern society, forcing the struggle against domination to take new forms.¹⁷ The levelling operation of industrialism allowed a truly democratic imaginary to surface, centered around “the rights inherent to every human being.”¹⁸ According to Laclau and Mouffe, the French Revolution started this process. It called for the end of a hierarchical society founded on a theological logic of the “great chain of being.” There would now be no other reference point for struggles of freedom than “the people.”¹⁹

On the other hand, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the full flowering of the egalitarian character of this movement could not take place as long as opposition to capitalism operated under a static, dualistic logic which divided the world into two camps: proletariat and bourgeoisie. Thus, when opposition to capitalism began to center itself around the activities of the labour movement, a binary opposition was set in place which, because of its discursive ties to the logic of capital, ended up not questioning the dominant forms of oppression in capitalist relations. This opposition became either reformist in character (in the struggles of the labour unions) or corporatist in character (as in the policies adopted by the 1st and 2nd Internationals).²⁰

According to Laclau and Mouffe, genuinely radical struggles against capitalism, ones that are truly democratic and libertarian, cannot be based on the making of a unified working-class but must exist within the terrain of plural identities arising outside of the dualistic logic that is presented by many traditional Marxists.²¹ They point out, drawing on Craig Calhoun’s analysis of the “reactionary radicals” of late eighteenth century Britain, that early struggles against industrialism reflect this plural character in that they were based on specific *historical identities* that lay outside of the binary logic of proletariat/bourgeoisie.²² And they maintain that these struggles form a *continuity* with the recent struggles of what has been called the “new social movements” — feminism, ecology, ethnic rights, etc. These new struggles against recent forms of subordination are also plural in having their origins in diverse “subject positions.” With the post-WWII

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development of mature capitalism into a phase of increased commodification, bureaucratization and massification, a proliferation of struggles against these processes have arisen that are not unitary in character but must rely for their effectiveness on active, hegemonic articulation.

IV

For Laclau and Mouffe, the continuity of the two sets of struggles mentioned above lies in their both being ideologically grounded in an egalitarian imaginary which finds its inspiration in the French Revolution. In criticism, it is our contention that Laclau and Mouffe have misread the sources of inspiration for these struggles. This is a misreading that calls into question their whole portrayal of freedom.

Their misreading starts with Calhoun. It is Calhoun's claim that the popular radicalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a resistance to new pressures in favour of a traditional way of life. He maintains that "in the early part of the industrial revolution, community was the crucial bond unifying workers for collective action."²³ Calhoun does not see the source of this resistance, as Laclau and Mouffe do, in a radical post-Enlightenment notion of freedom. Rather, it is his argument that it was "traditional values, not a new analysis of exploitation, that guided the workers in their radicalism."²⁴ These traditional values were what brought the resistance movement together, forming the "reactionary radicals," an association of skilled craftsmen, privileged outworkers, small tradespeople, subsistence farmers and small shopkeepers. The distinguishing factor of this group, according to Calhoun, was strong communal ties. The rights that they demanded were collective rights — rights of mutual aid and support, of just price and fair share — all things the new liberal economy was denying. These reactionary radicals were not, then, bonding with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to purge from their lives any local organic ties in order that they might realize the "real" and "true" freedom of self-consciousness. Quite the opposite. They were reacting against the violation of those local embodied ties to kin and community with the intrusion of modern industry.²⁵

In fact, it is Calhoun's explicit desire to counteract this Enlightenment view of rational freedom with the real and potential radicalness of concrete community ties, the bonds that interconnect people in a direct visceral manner. He finds the development theoretically and practically of such bonds to be the most effective source of protest against the destructive nature of capitalism.

What Calhoun has said is extremely important in opposing the nihilism of the post-Enlightenment view of freedom and individuality, a view so forcefully articulated by Laclau and Mouffe. There is a significant

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philosophical point to be made from his analysis about the role of tradition and authority. As the philosopher of hermeneutics H. G. Gadamer tells us, the Enlightenment project was a struggle for a freedom from all prejudices. For Gadamer, this extremism is destructive in the most basic sense, for prejudices form the natural condition of all thought and action. They form the very historicity of thought and action, the initial directedness of our whole openness to the world. To displace them is to subvert effective meaningful action at its source.²⁶

V

In much the same vein as Calhoun, Mikhail Bakhtin has called into question our whole post-Enlightenment inspired view that pre-modern society was fixed, hierarchical and static. In his book, *Rabelais and His World*,²⁷ Bakhtin alerts us in a remarkable way to the effective radicalism of medieval and Renaissance popular culture. And in contrast to Laclau and Mouffe's post-Enlightenment prejudice for an ungrounded and therefore nihilistic characterization of freedom, Bakhtin shows us how popular culture was able to overturn the pretensions of the dominant and high culture to fix and homogenize the world of meaning by concentrating on imagery natural to the material body and material earth. The claims of power in ecclesia and court must be debased and brought down to the level of the dying and decaying body/earth. But as most primitive cultures recognized, the imagery of death and decay is ambivalent. This imagery is at the same time regenerative, for with the death of the old comes the birth of the new. In the popular debasing imagery of the "lower bodily stratum," the bowel defecates and the bladder urinates and thus symbolizes death. But the "lower bodily stratum" is also the place of the womb and the site from which comes semen, which both symbolize the coming of new life. In the imagery of popular culture, power, as an abstract and monological force that seeks to overcome the freedom and relativity of ties to locality and time, must be actively displaced through the use of this ancient symbolism of the dying and regenerating body/earth.

It is on the basis of the above outlined sensibility that both Calhoun and Bakhtin can make the claim that the early struggles against industrialism grounded themselves in a view of freedom and individuality that emphasized ties to body, earth and community. These struggles have in their imagery very little continuity with the spirit of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, which saw freedom and individuality only in a destructive and nihilistic sense.

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VI

With the above contrast between two views of resistance and freedom in mind, our critique of Laclau and Mouffe can become sharpened. It is our contention that Laclau and Mouffe, in their approval of the French Revolution's ideology of liberty and equality, end up endorsing a liberal rhetoric about the freedom of the individual. If we can view this rhetoric as a cultural code for the production of individuality, the founding trope about the "freedom of the individual" presents itself as a crucial focal-point for the intervention of the disciplinary powers of the modern civilizing project. As the work of Michel Foucault has demonstrated,²⁸ the isolation of the individual into a fixed analytical space, i.e., the bounded personality with specific rights, as opposed to his/her more amorphous or sliding character in pre-modern society (with respect to kin, community, ancestors, stars, plants, etc.) allowed the disciplinary powers of modern medicine, judiciary, social work, counselling, mental health, psychiatry, etc. to invest themselves in that demarcated space.

For example, when so much rhetoric was invested (and still is) in the autonomous, privatized nuclear family — severed from the "oppressive" claims of kin and community — one can quickly point out how historically this rhetoric served as an ideological tool where a code establishing the twin axes of husband/wife and parent/child, became the anchorage for the investment of a whole array of disciplinary strategies, from the medical doctor's authoritative claims for "child-care" to the psychiatrist governing and legislating "mental health."²⁹

It was Nietzsche who was able to drive straight to the heart of the whole Enlightenment notion of freedom and expose its nihilistic character centered around "the will to power." As Jean Baudrillard, drawing on Nietzsche, has pointed out, the freedom of the Enlightenment was and is a vacuous freedom built on an "absence" which leads to the extinction of humanity itself into the radical semiurgy of a body-less culture.³⁰ It was only when humanity severed itself from its embodied ties in the Enlightenment that a truly disembodied power could take hold: the cybernetic high-tech power that is congruent with increased commodification, beauracratization and massification. Laclau and Mouffe's plurality of the social is in fact an accurate description of the present state of affairs. They are indeed correct: there is in our post-modern world increasingly little left outside of the floating signifiers of high-tech culture — very little of an expressive, embodied humanity.

Laclau and Mouffe are blinded to the fact that the French Revolution and the Enlightenment are integral to the development of the modern power/knowledge episteme, and that liberty, equality and freedom of self-consciousness are coded terms for the fulfillment of this modern civilizing

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project. They fail to see that power in our modern world no longer works on a representational logic, that it does not need any transcendental grounding, but instead functions most effectively in a revolving, synchronic network that is constantly internalized to form our very desires. (Who is the latest to speak in the name of our "freedom": the therapist, the lawyer, the fashion designer?) It is in a perspective like Laclau and Mouffe's, where the open-ended character of the social is sustained theoretically and encouraged politically and culturally, that power as a disciplinary code for a civilization that has fled in fear from the mortal claims of the body and earth can spin its web into an embracing network of interpellating sign-systems. Given the nihilistic flight from embodiment, community and tradition that informs this vision, a vision that is a lived reality for much of humanity, we cannot but be somewhat overcome with the haunting and frightening suspicion that the active ideology of our post-Enlightenment world is not freedom at all, but is instead that of a death-wish.

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Notes

1. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (Thetford, Norfolk: Thetford Press, 1985).
2. Blaise Pascal, quoted in Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 322.
3. This is a phenomenological insight into man's utter situatedness, that humans are placed in very particular circumstances that must be dealt with. This is in opposition to the solipsistic Cartesian version of consciousness. As Jose Ortega y Gasset explains:

No, life is not my mind, my ideas being all that exist. It is the contrary. From the time of Descartes western man has been left without a world. But to live means having to be outside of myself, in the absolute 'outside' that is the circumstance or world; it is having like it or not, constantly and incessantly to face and clash with whatever makes up that world.

Man and People, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Norton, 1957), p. 48.

4. In the eighteenth century, the German Romantics attempted to repair the radical dualism they saw in Cartesian rationalism by putting forth a *philosophy of expression*. For Herder, the subject is still as for Descartes self-defining; that is, he or she is not related to an ideal order *out there*. Herder wished, though, to re-introduce the categories of human meaning and purpose for this subject by a process of *recognition*. Humans come to know themselves by expressing themselves in culture. Meaning, then, is not out there, but unfolds from the human subject through language. Cf. Charles Taylor, *Hegel!* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), "Introduction."
5. Cf. John O'Neill, *Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986), esp. ch. 2.
6. Gregory Bateson, in a brilliant essay on the dynamics of conscious and unconscious thought processes, explains the relationship this way:

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Consciousness talks about things or persons and attaches predicates to the specific things or persons which have been mentioned. In primary processes the things or persons are usually not identified and the focus of the discourse is upon the *relationships* which are asserted to obtain between them. This is really another way of saying that the discourse of primary processes is metaphoric.

"Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art," *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Chandler, 1972), p. 140.

7. Cf. Owen Barfield, "The Rediscovery of Meaning," *The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1977).
8. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 104.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
10. Owen Barfield, "The Rediscovery of Meaning." See also: George Herbert Mead, *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Merritt H. Moore (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1936), pp. 73-78.
11. Laclau and Mouffe, p. 105.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 154.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 157.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 157.
22. Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982).
23. Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle*, p. 7.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
26. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1975), p. 245.
27. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968).
28. All of Foucault's works are relevant to our discussion, but see in particular: *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970); and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
29. Cf. Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).
30. Cf. Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Post Modern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1986).

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Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack. Thetford, Norfolk: Thetford Press, 1985.

I

Nietzsche's thought on health and illness provides a suitable introduction to this discussion of a post-Marxist politics. It seems that the central insight here is that, as Nietzsche would say, illness has progressed to the degree that our culture is not only unable to recognize that which may be a cure but, even if it would recognize it, health has deteriorated to the degree that it is virtually impossible to act on it. A further complication is the possibility that we are unable even to distinguish between health and illness. The one-dimensionality that permits this is perhaps the clearest sign of advanced disease.

A sign of cultural illness is, as Nietzsche would again say, a constant search for that which may pass as a cure. Culture develops a dependence on science to the extent that the technique developed by scientific reason is used as a point of departure for cultural thought. Culture integrates technique so as to make possible a dialectic of cultural thought which both begins and ends with a valorisation of the possibilities of technique as cure. The dialectical intervention of technique works to guarantee that the end result of the work will not represent any radical break from the original presuppositions.

Amor fati, on the other hand, develops differently. Leaving aside the dependence on reason, *amor fati* would recognize that there is indeed no cure possible. It recongizes the search for cures, for "final solutions," as symptoms of disease. Finally, *amor fati* recognizes the profound unreason

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of a thought which would place its presuppositions at the beginning of its work, simply in order to arrive again at these — but this time not as presuppositions, but as “facts.” The intervening process of cultural dialectic works both ways: it transvalues presuppositions into “facts,” and it retroactively confers fact value on the original presuppositions. Initial “facts” now emerge as proven “truths” upon which we may depend to cure us of illness.

That amor fati recognizes no cure does not mean that it does not recognize illness. Its value is precisely this: it is able to isolate symptoms of illness, but it does not attempt to reverse history by creating the possibility for a cure. It embraces history with the result that it does not attempt to deal dialectically with it. Above all, amor fati is a recognition of the futility and unreason inherent in any process that begins with the artificial hope or promise of cure. If it is possible, the only cure that amor fati would recognize is an excess of health that by its vigorous presence affirms life in the midst of sickness. The need for cure (or for salvation) is a sign of weakness, in that disease is revalued into virtue; the possibility for cure transforms weakness into the strength requisite for patience; and most appropriately in this case, the possibility for cure transforms dispersed, fragmented identity into elements of a clinical rehabilitating practice scattered across the social space, waiting to be integrated.

II

One would welcome Laclau and Mouffe's proposal for a new politics that aims at liberating identity from that which goes under the name of orthodox or essentialist Marxism. It would be hoped that this proposal would result in a practice that liberates cultural identity from imprisoning conceptions of necessity and also that this liberation would mean liberation from the need for cure. One would hope that Laclau and Mouffe's work would contain signs of strength that make superfluous mediating relationships that are connected with disease. It would seem that they are not yet ready for amor fati. We are disappointed, because along with burning plans for prisons, they present us with new ones — for hospitals.

The specific question to be asked of the theoretical work of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is: how is the new constitution of “subject” here proposed in fact different from a conception which Laclau and Mouffe claim to have made illegitimate? The task which they claim to have accomplished is nothing short of the overthrow of Marxist orthodoxy on the ground that it contains a self-referential conception of practice whose effect is no longer emancipatory but imprisoning. One would expect some fresh air to begin circulating among the ruins that they have shown us, but instead, Laclau and Mouffe set up a new self-referential construction

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peopled by post-modern "subjects." The legitimacy of this construction seems to be at least temporarily assured precisely because it relies on a "subject" whose function is simply to realise and affirm the "liberating potential" that is placed at both ends of this new self-referential construction.

That this does not immediately appear as weakness testifies simply to the fascinating effects of simulations. But perhaps the most significant disappointment is that this simulation is presented in a good faith that drips with the optimism possible only in a one-dimensional vision that ignores the parodic and tragic undersides of the very practice that it proposes. This one-dimensionality shows up in the fact that liberating practice, though it may dispense with orthodoxy, is shown in fact to require the construction of new mediating relationships that are simply the flip sides of their conception of the orthodoxy that they wish to critique. This pluralism of new relationships is seen to localise the fragmented elements of a new hegemonic subject whose potential for self understanding emerges with the combination of dispersed elements. But it turns out that, just as the elements of the hegemonic subject are scattered across the social, so too are elements of weakness scattered throughout this text. I will treat three of these here.

1: Overdetermination and Identity Construction

Overdetermination appears as a key determinant in the construction of identity in two instances that Laclau and Mouffe elaborate. The construction of the category "man" and the practice of feminism do, on the surface, illustrate the symbolic play of overdetermination in the construction of operational identity; they also reveal the indifference of overdetermination in that it is no respecter of history: it is unnecessary for contemporary identity to submit to constructions that were prevalent earlier. This flattening out of history into a one-dimensional terrain which provides only a metaphorical difference forms the ground on which the recognition and articulation of contingency emerge as the dialectical bases of the practice that *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* relies on. This practice is strongly one-dimensional in that identity is freed from earlier, oppressive constructions only to be reinstalled into a space circumscribed by the bounds of an egalitarian negotiating strategy. This strategy is essentially dialectical in that it emphasizes the importance of subject positions: these are seen to be both the elements for and the products of negotiation; they exist outside of practice, but are at the same time the products of practice.

Laclau and Mouffe would argue that subject positions are the undersides of necessity or essentialism, in that they are categories of identity that have been ignored by the orthodox practice of linking identity directly

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with class position, and with relationships to production. Once this link is overthrown, identity is seen to be dispersed across the open social space, but subject positions remain more concentrated within this space. These concentrations thus provide the bases for the negotiation that is crucial to their strategy, but they are also seen to emerge out of this process. Their focus on the latter aspect of the process leads them to claim, wrongly, that subject positions do not exist prior to the negotiating process.

Their formula for practice reveals a critical dependence on precisely that which they claim to have overthrown: their elaboration of subject positions shows not so much the novelty of their proposal but rather the failure of their method to effect a radical break from this particular past. While they critique Soviet Marxism for being too imprisoning, they seem to be unaware that the underside of contemporary Marxism (the aspect that they privilege) is strongly characterised by clinical images. That subject positions are seen to exist at both ends of the negotiating process saves the possibility of practice. I would argue though that this method is a sign of weakness in that it illustrates Laclau and Mouffe's refusal or inability to consider the consequences of fully dispersed identity. This weakness not only saves the possibility of practice, it also requires the institutionalisation of subject positions within what is essentially a clinical practice.

2: The City and The Wilderness

Laclau and Mouffe differentiate between two types of contemporary struggle: that which occurs in the centres of advanced capitalism, and that which occurs at its frontiers. The difference between these two lies in the (pre)supposition that struggle in the centre is more fragmented than struggle in the frontier; struggles in the city are qualitatively different from those that occur in the wilderness. Just as subject positions emerge in those places that essentialism ignores, so too with frontier struggles: they have been overlooked by a myopic concern with "developed society," with the result that any possibility of learning from them has been minimized. Opening this possibility means that struggles in the city would develop along lines sketched by struggles in the frontier. As the city adopts the modes of frontier struggle, the possibility for a unifying articulation is seen to emerge; this articulation holds critical hegemonic possibilities in that the combination and coordination of these struggles, along with the fragments of identity that they produce, will result in a totalizing hegemonic articulation.

But is this differentiation between city and wilderness not simply a too-easy nostalgia? How real is any difference that may exist between these two? And if any difference is illusory, how can a practice that claims contemporary validity base itself on a nostalgic and illusory differentiation?

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In arguing the distinction between wilderness and city in American classical philosophy, Michael Weinstein hints at problems with this distinction in the work of Josiah Royce.¹ Weinstein argues that the city is that space in which the morality of human community is operative; the wilderness, on the other hand, is the state that God has left, driven out by the doubting of meaning and identity. Royce exhibits one of the problems in maintaining the centrality of this distinction by having, as Weinstein states, "taken many of the blessings of the city with him into the wilderness."² The obvious question: how valid is the conception of wilderness that Royce is seen to rely on, if he is unwilling or unable to experience it as precisely that state in which the mores of the city have no necessary meaning, operational or otherwise?

Keeping this blindside of Royce in view, we must ask of Laclau and Mouffe whether their reversal of Royce's thought (in this case, carrying the difference of the frontier into the city) does any service to comprehending and guiding struggles in the city with the requisite specificity and attentiveness. Leaving aside for the moment the possibility that there may be only an illusory difference between these two modes of struggle (after all, why not one-dimensionalize this?), Laclau and Mouffe must somehow account for the possibility that their understanding of *both* "central" and "frontier" struggles may be inadequate, and does no necessary service to either.

3: Partial Identity — For What?

It should be no surprise that the discussion of identity contained in Laclau and Mouffe's work is not very different from the two discussions outlined above. Rejecting essentialist identity constructions as metaphorical, they go on to claim that the only identity that may be established with any materiality is in fact partial identity. This partial identity is said to be somewhat equivalent to the construction of a Derridean centre: this category is a functional node within which and through which identity is materially and discursively captured and defined. It is material precisely because it may only be established as partiality, a fragment similar to other fragments dispersed across the social. It is material identity because it exists only discursively, outside of any totalized (metaphorical) construction. But their concept of this node, while being the flip side of essentialist identity construction, is at the same time caught within the bounds of the inflexibility that they seek to overthrow.

The scattered weakness of Laclau and Mouffe's position shows itself again here. All that must be asked of them is: leaving aside the claims of metaphorical essentialism, why is identity constructed as partial? When this "for what" question is asked, and when the one-dimensionality of their claims against essentialism is removed, we are left with this: Identity must

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be seen as partial because it is our thought that these partialities cannot survive on their own. This realization will make all identity aware that it must be hegemonically integrated; this is now possible because we have made egalitarianism the sign of our thought. This is the liberating potential that we are waiting for our subject to discover. It may be more appropriate to say that they have made egalitarianism the sign of their weakness. But, perhaps as Nietzsche would say, this egalitarianism is now the perverted sign of a diseased strength.

Recalling Weinstein on Royce, we need not go much further to see that the blurring of the distinction between wilderness and city (with the resultant inability to recognize the wilderness for what it is, and for what it does not promise) is the same blurring that affects the work of Laclau and Mouffe. Their unwillingness to face the possibilities that they themselves bring up with the dispersion of identity means simply that they have refused to confront the possibility that any practice which does not realize the precariousness of its existence (especially one that announces the death of identity) in the face of the absence of the mores of the city, can only be a practice that weakens its participants, leaving them anesthetized subjects working in a quarantined space, wanting more narcotic.

III

There remains more to be said of the post-modern subject as Laclau and Mouffe describe it. We have seen that their work on subject positions compromises possible understanding of the dispersal of identity. We have also seen that subject position is that category that is ignored by Laclau and Mouffe's conception of essentialist Marxism. They then go on to call the appropriation and re-definition of subject position by identity the entry of the contingent into the social. This optimistic appropriation is a sign of the one-dimensionality of their work, in that they refuse to deepen the conception of the contingent that they present. I would argue that there exists at least one other dimension to the contingent, and that its addition would serve to deepen understanding of the post-modern and post-Marxist subject that Laclau and Mouffe present.

Not all individuals who enter the wilderness . . . will find a treasure there that will allow them to re-enter the community with a special gift. They may not encounter any god there and may suffer instead the despair described by such modern existentialists as Soren Kierkegaard and Miguel de Unamuno.³

What Weinstein refers to here finds a strong echo in Michel Foucault's understanding of language and the death of God in man.⁴ The announce-

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ment of this death is simultaneously the announcement of the death of the unified subject known as "man." The response to this, at least in Foucault, is the invasion of this highly problematic and uncertain space by a speech and a language which seeks to save itself from a death (not Laclau and Mouffe's optimistic "contingency"), which now carries absolutely no promise or resonance.

Foucault writes: "writing so as not to die . . . or perhaps even speaking so as not to die is a task undoubtedly as old as the world."⁵ For Laclau and Mouffe, language is both telling and showing; it is material writing and speech, as Foucault also writes. But what is the purpose of this language, this speaking? Is it, as Laclau and Mouffe claim, the production of a partial subject in the face of radical contingency? Or is it closer to being, as Foucault would say, an effort to push death back by the space of just one more word, to prolong life by the time of just one more letter, by just one more "articulation"?

We must see Laclau and Mouffe's presentation of articulation in a double sense. For them, articulation is that practice which stands just at the intersection of the necessary and the contingent. It is that practice that is able to subvert the one or the other by the space that it is able to open in either. But the vision of hegemony-sign is too blinding for Laclau and Mouffe to see the point that Foucault makes. The contingent, or negative identity, is not the reservoir of quasi-accessible meaning that may be articulated to subvert necessity; the contingent, this shadow which cannot be escaped, is nothing but the death which permeates discourse since the announcement of the death of God. As Laclau and Mouffe would say, but in a profoundly different sense:

. . . the limit of death opens before language an infinite space. Before the imminence of death, language rushes forth, but it also starts again, tells of itself, tells the story of the story, and discovers the possibility that this interpretation might never end.⁶

Laclau and Mouffe's post-modern subjects are asked to equate egalitarianism and contingency. This may be possible, but it would seem impossible to equate the continual collapsing of identity and contingency, something that they are also called upon to do. Their vision of the articulating post-modern subject leads to the suspicion that they may be hiding from this subject the fact that it would have continually to appropriate present identity: a frenzied linguistic existence that attempts to produce itself materially in the face of an overdetermination that washes history away from the subject.

We may take overdetermination as meaning that the subject is to be cut off from its own history. This history will exist merely as a ground on

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which negative identity may be generated.⁷ But as there is no particular necessity for the subject to have anything to do with its own history, this may be just as well removed from the subject itself. One of the results of this is that the subject's history may be manipulated, and even erased. If we are to hold with Laclau and Mouffe that material existence is also linguistic existence (ie. articulation as appropriation as existence) then we must also hold that the "post-Laclau and Mouffe-subject" may very well find itself erased by a history that it no longer has any necessary claim to. In a drama similar to that traced by Foucault in *Madness and Civilisation* (where the institutionalization of madness is a sign of the de-authoring of what emerges discursively as the "madman"), Laclau and Mouffe provide the ground on which the de-authoring of their own subject takes place. The institutionalization of a totalizing hegemony, the point at which this resolves itself into its own space, carries with it the same consequences as the psychiatric institutionalization of madness. This de-authoring, this amputation of the subject from its own history is compromised by implanting an impulse in the subject to be continually appropriating and articulating identity. But once the control of the subject's history is no longer in its own hands, we may wonder how real any production of negative identity may actually be. The articulation of this negativity may just as easily become a symptom that requires adjustment or treatment. In the flattened terrain of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, all difference may be illusory.

The destruction of the identity that Laclau and Mouffe critique, as well as the destruction of the identity that they would propose, recalls Nietzsche on health and illness. The inability to distinguish between these two is the sign of an afflicted and an afflicting reason. The same is true of the reason that goes into Laclau and Mouffe's post-modern subject. Their reason may lead us to believe that the collapsing of this identity is the collapsing of all identity. But then this is nothing but the debilitating effect of an attempt at de-authoring the subject, at removing it from responsibility, and of amputating its history. What's left is the strength of resistance and the responsibility of an *amor fati*.

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Notes

1. Michael Weinstein, *The Wilderness and the City* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), Ch. 1.
2. Weinstein, p. 6.
3. Weinstein, p. 5.

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4. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), Cf. "Language to Infinity", pp. 53-68.
5. M. Blanchot, quoted in Foucault, p. 53.
6. Foucault, p. 54.
7. Michael Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), "History and Intra-History".

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ISSN 0742-9940



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GOODBYE TO ALL THAT: CONSERVATIVE THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

Jeremy Rayner

Gordon Graham, *Politics in its Place: A Study of Six Ideologies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. x — 192.

Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, pp. x — 255.

The First Duke of Wellington remarked that, although English politics seemed suddenly to be about principles — “Whig principles, and Tory principles, and Liberal principles, and Mr. Canning’s principles” — he was quite unable to arrive at a clear idea of what any of them meant.¹ And, of course, he intended to carry on the business of government without reference to principles at all. The Duke’s robust scepticism about the value of principles in the conduct of affairs would make him something of a model politician to both Graham and Minogue. Their studies of ideology are concerned to draw our attention to the dangers and absurdities attending the employment of abstract doctrines in politics. In this sense, although both might deny the charge, their arguments advance a viewpoint which is often thought to be distinctively conservative. This fundamental similarity between two otherwise quite different books derives from a shared appreciation of politics which is characteristically Oakeshottian: the view that politics is a practical activity in which prudence, foresight and other attributes of knowing one’s way about a practice under specific historical conditions take precedence over general theorizing about the aims and ends of political life. This makes their disagreements all the more interesting. For Minogue, absurdity is conceptually inseparable from the style of political thinking he wants to call ideological, while, for Graham, error is a contingent matter to be demonstrated as it arises. I shall explore this basic

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disagreement before returning to the limited politics of which both authors so wholeheartedly approve.

I had best state at once that both books reach uniformly high standards of exposition and argument. Minogue's (hereafter *AP*) is characteristically witty and urbane, a fine illustration of Hobbes's dictum that fancy must "take the Philosopher's part" on those occasions when our arguments confront the accepted wisdom of the age.² Graham's (*PIP*), written in a plain and spare prose style, is a model of philosophical clarity. The advantage, as I shall try to show, lies with Graham, but both seem to me to deny one of the most important features of modern ideologies, the extent to which they increasingly provide the theoretical basis of our own self-understandings. Neither quite see the force of arguments which are sceptical about the possibility of our obtaining full critical distance from beliefs about what is right and what is desirable in politics. Both search for an Archimedean point from which judgement can be rendered uncontaminated by the presuppositions of a particular cultural context. Minogue thinks that he can tackle this problem of partiality by withdrawing to a level of abstraction where practical considerations become simply irrelevant. Graham (and herein lies his advantage) agrees that competing ideologies may be based on presuppositions which pass each other by, so that what for one is self evident truth is for another an absurdity (*PIP* 64-8). However, he argues that the imperative to be of practical relevance forces ideologies to meet on the common ground of politics where they can be duly assessed.

The difference in approach is nowhere better illustrated than in the authors' conceptions of the central misunderstanding about ideology which they feel they must correct before proceeding to their own accounts. Minogue takes as his problem the claim that all social thought is ideological, so that the attempt to characterize ideology as a distinctive kind of thought will inevitably be one more contribution to a particular ideology, illegitimately claiming the objectivity it denies to its competitors. Those in the grip of such a misconception are, Minogue claims, like the hero of *The Charterhouse of Parma*: finding themselves, as they suppose, in the midst of a tremendous battle, "they find a regiment and tag along — the Hussars against Patriarchy, the Dragoon Guards of the Proletariat, and so on" (*AP* 1). Minogue's deep disagreement with this inclusive conception of ideology is familiar from many of his other writings.³ He argues that he is engaged in "academic inquiry" into the *formal* character of ideological thinking, a kind of inquiry so far removed from the events it describes that its central problem is not so much to distinguish the combatants but rather to determine whether there is even a battle going on at all. It is, he suggests, entirely typical of ideologists to seek to conscript such observers, but the call to arms both can and should be avoided (*AP* 5-6).

Graham, identifying this very argument with a popular, but not

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necessarily authentic reading of Oakeshott, is not tempted to follow Minogue to so lofty a level of abstraction. In fact he sees abstraction as the central misunderstanding to be overcome before ideology can be properly studied. He draws our attention at once to the dangers of trying to stipulate the proper relation between theory and politics in advance of discovering how flesh and blood actors actually conceive of that relationship. We do not have to deny Oakeshott's powerful criticisms of one kind of mistaken relationship in order to bring out the many other ways in which theoretical reflection can inform conduct. He is particularly interested in what he calls "evaluation," a lower level activity captured in Bernard Williams's description of "reflection which might show up in greater depth what would be involved in living with (certain) ideas." (*PIP* 12-13). In other words, rather than abstracting something called "the pure theory of ideology" so that it can be confronted by philosophy or "academic inquiry," as Minogue sets out to do, Graham seeks to find a kind of reflection which is both relevant to conduct and susceptible to philosophical criticism. Such criticism may succeed in showing that "what would be involved in living with" an ideology is either incoherent or, once clarified, undesirable. It may not persuade anyone, which is a practical accomplishment, but it is no inconsiderable achievement in its own right.

At this point it clearly behooves Graham to show that ideologies are susceptible to philosophical criticism and, especially, that their evaluative character does not endow them with immunity. But first I want to consider the advantage of his 'stooping to conquer' approach over that of Minogue. Graham is concerned to guard against the danger of denying the political relevance of any particular kind of reflection without giving it a fair hearing, an error he calls "the worst sort of apriorizing" (*PIP* 5). And this is exactly the problem with Minogue's argument as it unfolds. Ideology, we are told, is characterized by hostility to modernity, hostility to "liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice, the market in economics" as conditions fostering an all-pervasive "oppression" (*AP* 4). It arose out of the eighteenth-century fascination with the systematic attributes of the unintended consequences of human action. Ignoring the parallel connection between intention and consequence, ideologists proceeded to argue that all important features of the social world are unintended consequences explicable in terms of an underlying structure accessible only to those who look beyond the busy surface of affairs with the aid of a social theory. As Minogue shrewdly notes, by itself such a conception of the human world might actually generate extremely pessimistic conclusions, as it did, for example, in Gobineau's theory of inevitable racial degeneration. The additional step was taken by Marx in purporting to discover an inevitable process of liberation from the tyranny of a system of unintended consequences at work within that selfsame system, and then aligning himself and

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his associates with it. The secret of ideology lies, according to Minogue, in its claim to be able to fully understand the world at the same time as acting as part of it, and "it is hardly any exaggeration to say that ideology is a footnote to Marx" (AP 31). At the heart of his argument, then, lies a familiar claim: that ideology can be identified in terms of a mistake about the character of social explanation, a mistake which, exploited by a distinctive rhetoric of 'oppression,' results in an ideological style of politics.

This is an odd claim, and Minogue recognizes its oddity at once. He remarks that, in contrast to a description of philosophical argument, where all that is needed is an account of "the logic of the questions it asks and the answers it finds relevant," ideology is a practical business. We must be concerned with its "matter and milieu" as well as its manner, or else we court the "banality" of supposing that ideology has an essence which we will inevitably encounter everywhere we look (AP 31). "Nevertheless," we learn on the very next page, "there underlies the whole endeavour a central theoretical conviction which allows us to discover a formal centre of ideological understanding" — and this is the mistake about social explanation I have just described (AP 32). Minogue is like the man who, having carefully marked out the thin ice, finds it more exciting to skate on the wrong side of his own barrier. Disaster is inevitable, and it comes in two forms. First, the book is exclusively concerned with what might be called totalizing ideologies, of which Minogue thinks that Marxism and feminism are the best examples, views of the world *sub specie malorum*, as he puts it. But it does considerable violence to many well-known ideologies to force them into this Procrustean "form." It might be valuable to bring out the sense in which liberalism, for example, sees all relations of dependence as part of systematic oppression, but it would be peculiar to conclude that this is what makes liberalism an ideology, not least because liberals themselves have been notably suspicious of systematic social theory. It is peculiar that the distinguished analyst of the "liberal mind" should have so little to say about the most important ideological tradition of our age, but such is the distorting effect of his approach in *AP*. Secondly, a corollary of the first point, Minogue's noncombatant status is looking decidedly suspect by the end of the book. If what he stipulatively calls ideology is a mistake, and if that mistake is more central to some historically identifiable traditions than others, it is hardly surprising that his battlefield safe-conduct should be challenged. At the very least, as the cover of the American paperback edition with its endorsements by reviewers from the *Wall Street Journal* and the *National Review* shows, he has been recognized by his friends if not by his enemies.

If *AP* is nonetheless a considerable achievement, perhaps this is most evident in the way in which Minogue never once succumbs to the banality

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that he rightly associates with projects of this kind. Which student of ideology will not recognize "vertical integration" in the ideological incorporation of academic disciplines, or the characteristic exploitation of perceptual metaphors in which opponents fail to see, perceive, acknowledge or notice some self-evident truth (*AP* 138-46)? Who will not smile at the complaint that "reading (ideology) resembles conversation with someone suffering from St. Vitus's Dance. The page is full of twitches, nudges and winks indicated by quotation marks which do not signify quotation, but rather dissent from, and hostility to, the ordinary meaning of a term" (*AP* 105)? *AP* is a book to be read and enjoyed.

Graham, however, resists the temptation to offer an *a priori* account of the mistake involved in ideological argument. He is unconcerned with problems of academic neutrality. Indeed, he believes that arguments like Minogue's condemn political philosophy to "sterility" and "incoherence" (*PIP* 4-6). He expects a variety of different arguments to be employed by ideologists. What makes them ideological for Graham is simply the belief of those who hold them that they have "wide implications for the conduct of political life" (*PIP* 48). Against the objection that this sweeping and inclusive account of ideology only serves to bring out the sense in which the different ideologies rest on incommensurable presuppositions and are hence immune from philosophical criticism, Graham deploys his argument against apriorizing. In advance of looking at ideological arguments, how can we assume them to be incommensurable? He makes the particularly telling point, to which I have already alluded, that apriorism "runs the constant risk of over-generalization," lumping together ideologies like nationalism, which depends on a single idea applied to politics; like Nazism, which appears to have no rationally defensible foundations at all; and those like socialism, which exploit a particular hypothesis about the character of social life, and which come close to what Minogue calls the "pure theory" (*PIP* 60-1).

But, beyond these negative warnings, Graham does want to assert that there is a positive common ground on which ideologies meet and can be assessed, connected with his useful idea of "lower-level" political philosophy. That ground is politics as the ideologist finds it, where he will be confronted with an audience with whom he must share at least some sense of what is to count as a political problem and what would be an acceptable remedy. From here, Graham derives four conditions which an ideology must meet in order to provide a convincing understanding of politics: it must be consistent, its factual or conceptual claims must be true, it must be applicable in an imaginable political context, and it must appeal to political values that go beyond those of self-professed adherents (*PIP* 76). Graham believes that political philosophy is eminently suited to assessing the extent to which an ideology meets these conditions and thus

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in helping us make rationally defensible choices amongst them. Thus the second half of *PIP* consists of a series of chapters dealing in turn with liberalism, socialism, nationalism, "Fascism and the New Right," anarchism and "True Conservatism." Each contains something of interest, but rather than reviewing them, I want to reconsider Graham's claims that we are able to go beyond negative criticism of apriorism to the assertion that ideologies do meet on the common ground of politics as it happens to be practised.

To illustrate what he means, Graham draws an analogy with medicine, based on the suggestion that ideological beliefs are "always in part diagnostic" (*PIP* 75), and he defends it in the following terms. Just as in medicine, the fact that popular beliefs often bear little relation to the phenomena they purport to describe does not rule out the possibility of scientific medicine, so the generally gimcrack character of ideological beliefs does not rule out the fact that some political proposals are demonstrably better than others: "the cure of illness may be a more determinate business in general than the remedy of political troubles, but it is no easier to deny that a war has ended than that a rash has disappeared" (*PIP* 75). Now, there is something very wrong with this analogy which can be seen from the fact that, unless Graham is advocating pacifism, the ending of a war is not at all like the cure of a disease. In some circumstances, 1918 in Germany, for example, it may plausibly be represented as the onset of the illness itself. Where Graham has been misled here is in supposing that the problems of evaluation and interpretation in medicine are any less intractable than those in politics. A false security in the one leads to an overemphasis on common ground in the other.

In other words, despite Graham's sturdy pragmatism, health is a normative concept and, as anyone who has ever suffered from a mysterious rash will testify, what counts as a cure will vary according to a number of possible criteria. The question of whether it has "disappeared" is often far less important than whether it is no longer uncomfortable, disfiguring, or preventing the sufferer from leading a normal life, especially earning his living. Even the presence of a specific microorganism is only contingently, rather than criterially, related to whether someone is actually ill.⁴ While these considerations do not entirely disable Graham's argument — they do not touch questions of coherence or truth, for example — they do seriously call into question the sense in which political philosophy is the right conceptual instrument to analyse the third of his conditions, the extent to which an ideology possesses some "political *vim*" in the real world of politics.

Most important of all, when Graham does appeal to the idea of political health to make these assessments, it follows that he is actually appealing to a disguised normative standard. And the interesting part of his evaluation of the place of politics is that it is not at all dissimilar to

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Minogue's in *AP*. There Minogue contrasts the ideologist who uses truth as a weapon in political disputes with "men of goodwill" (the phrase occurs twice) who recognize that they must come to terms with the values and prejudices of their opponents if they are ever to persuade them of the desirability of a course of action. Party politics is said to depend upon the existence of such men, and to be radically undermined by those who accept the privileges of opposition without understanding the appropriate decorum (*AP* 127-8, 178-9). Graham, in distinguishing "true conservatism" from the arguments of the new right, tells us that he means to imply that there is something true about this kind of conservatism which is not found in competing ideologies. This truth turns on the claim that conservatism, properly understood by its great English exponents, is an "anti-ideology," providing no general answers to the question of what is desirable in advance of being confronted with specific political problems: "once this is clear, we can see that the expression 'ensuring the well-being of society' is just a shorthand way of referring to the business of making wise decisions about what to do with the railways, the national health service, the universities, the Church and so on" (*PIP* 185). This genial parochialism — paralleled in Minogue's rosy vision of party politics (before the First Reform Act?) — is underlined by Graham's conclusion that conservatism of this kind has little appeal in other countries because "only English and hence British political institutions have ever been decent enough to allow a decent man to be a conservative" (*PIP* 188).

What has gone wrong here? Both Minogue and Graham are concerned to defend and elaborate a conception of the autonomous individual as the locus of certain rights and freedoms, a conception which Minogue explicitly links with the idea of modernity. Both think that a particular conception of politics is appropriate to such individuals: decent, limited, and concerned with immediate problems, rather than setting the world to rights. And, of course, there is much to recommend this view, especially to those of us who have been fortunate enough to enjoy these arrangements for extended periods of time. However, it is only within such a context that the diagnostic common ground of which Graham speaks can ever arise in the first instance. It is a *consequence* of an Aristotelean like-mindedness amongst citizens which is an historical artifact. To the extent that ideologies, and events themselves, succeed in dissolving this like-mindedness and begin to constitute our identities in other ways, many of the claims made by Minogue and Graham about the superiority of "anti-ideology" will lose their force. There is no question that political philosophy will have an important, perhaps crucial part to play in assessing what it would be like to live with selves understood in various anti-individualistic ways, but this critical activity now looks rather different from the accounts of it offered by Minogue and Graham.

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For Graham, this objection is serious but not by any means disabling. If like-mindedness is a consequence of a particular tradition of political activity and not a general condition of politics, the extent of incommensurability will increase to the point where assessments of the political force of an ideology lose their independence. This does not rule out other kinds of philosophical criticism, only the debunking kind which becomes increasingly prominent in the second half of *PIP*. It will not do, for example, to suggest that the socialist simply must admit that a society characterized by "grossly disproportionate incomes, but in which those with the lowest incomes are fabulously wealthy by common standards and no one's needs remain unsatisfied" is one in which inequality is not a serious fault (*PIP* 119). The committed socialist still has arguments turning on the idea that gross inequalities fatally damage the attachment to communal interests and pursuits which he values. And to go on to simply assert the priority of liberty as Graham does is to compound the error.

For Minogue, the problem is rather different. His description of the character of his own argument is wrong. To show that certain popular criticisms of modernity rest on a mistake is to give good reasons for not agreeing with that kind of criticism. Prevented from saying this by his curious notion of the status of "academic inquiry," Minogue is reduced in the latter stages of *AP* to what might be called *Encounter* conservatism: modernity has only to recover its confidence and trumpet its virtues as loudly as possible and all will be well. Its superiority will be self-evident, as will be the contradiction involved in exploiting its freedoms to complain about hidden oppression: "the most remarkable fact about ideology is its attempt to demonstrate that what by most ordinary tests — an end of hunger and the heavier burdens of labour, respect of human rights — has been a giant leap forward by mankind, is actually a monumental retardation . . . ideology is the purest possible expression of European civilization's capacity for self-loathing" (*AP* 221). In other words, *AP* is a report from a battlefield after all, and one not at all dissimilar to Waterloo: the Hussars against Patriarchy and the Dragoon Guards of the Proletariat are surging around the beleaguered squares of the Honourable Company of Gentlemen of Goodwill. Modernity may yet be saved but, as the Duke himself was reported to have said, it will be "a damned near run thing."

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Notes

1. Cited in W.H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition*, volume 2: *The Ideological Heritage* (London: Methuen, 1983), xiii.
2. Thomas Hobbes, "The Answer of Mr. Hobbs to Sir Will. D'Avenant's Preface Before Gondibert," in David F. Gladish, ed., *Sir William Davenant's Gondibert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 50.
3. The argument is clearly stated, together with its Oakeshottian provenance, in Kenneth Minogue, "Michael Oakeshott: The Boundless Ocean of Politics," in Anthony de Crespigny and Kenneth Minogue, eds. *Contemporary Political Philosophers* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1975), 120-46; cf. Minogue, "Relativism on the Banks of the Isis," *Government and Opposition* 18 (1983), 359-65.
4. Georges Canguilhem, *Le normal et la pathologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), passim.



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René R. Gadacz

Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

Beginning with the transactionalist approach in anthropology and the microsociology of symbolic interactionism, the last decade or so has seen a vigorous opposition to what has been a Durkheimian-Parsonian grip on the social sciences. A view of the world ordered by rules and norms, with "culture" and "social system" setting the limits and conditions for, and determining, the actions of individuals and groups, left a great many questions unanswered — questions which had their origins in the economically and politically tumultuous 1960s and 1970s.¹ Political activism and consciousness-raising required a concomitant theoretical orientation — having emerged in European political philosophy and social theory earlier (notably German and French) but developed later on the North American continent. Yet structural Marxism and political economy, in getting closer to the "intentional subject" and the "process" of history, still insisted that structure and/or system determined action as well as the motivations of individuals, and that process in history was simply the sum of all actions, *ad hoc* and moving forward with silent momentum (though not utterly directionless). The dualism of individual and society was thus maintained, as was the dualism of society-culture, institution-norm, base-superstructure, and so on.

The Radical question "How can we change the system" thus became the basis for more appropriate questions: Where do systems come from,

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and how are they generated, produced and reproduced? When asked these ways, the dualisms of individual-society and all the rest begin to melt away, changed into dualities like agency and structure, action and intention, culture and meaning, ideology and value, and so on. Causal arrows, if there are to be any, now flow both ways, and then back again; static becomes dynamic while constraint, not denied, and unintended consequences, not ignored, are "produced" at the same time as they "mediate." The notion of change and history as processual, as something living and lived in time and space, is thus much easier grasped — literally, to be grasped.² The action or practice approach moreover yielded another insight, namely that a situated reality could be consciously manufactured, maintained and manipulated to keep other realities hidden from view — perhaps even preventing them from being imagined in the first place.

The two volumes by Giddens and Thompson complement one another in exceptional and important ways. Both volumes grew out of earlier works.³ While one examines how structure is produced and reproduced by agency (Giddens), the other examines the manner in which agents inadvertently reproduce structure (Thompson). The chief difference between the two is that Giddens does not accord language as central a role as does Thompson, who, by adopting a critical conception of ideology, is able to conclude that it is through the medium of language that social relations, asymmetrical or otherwise, are sustained. The difference is not serious if we say that speech is itself action, but, while we know that an action is performed *by* an utterance, *in* uttering and *of* uttering (by someone), the depth-interpretative procedure that Thompson offers for analyzing ideology provides a better sense of just how all-pervasive "structure" as constraint really is. This is because discourse analysis reveals how powerful *meaning* is and what role it plays in the inadvertent reproduction and maintenance of relationships, structures and systems. One suspects then, in Giddens' own scheme (pp. 7, 289), but following Thompson's argument, that much reproduction actually takes place in the realm between what is referred to as "practical consciousness" and the "unconscious," instead of solely in the realm between practical and "discursive" consciousness. Indeed, meaning is generated precisely in the realm between the unconscious and practical consciousness. Curiously, Giddens acknowledges this (pp. 19-21), yet maintains there are repressive barriers between the unconscious and practical consciousness. There may well be, but Thompson's depth-interpretation implies that the zone between them is quite permeable; indeed, there is the temptation to portray the relationship between the three forms of consciousness as a circular one, rather than as a vertical-linear one as Giddens has done.

The point in arguing that more "agency" should be attributed to the unconscious is simply to preserve the integrity of the actor's ability to

reflexively monitor his or her own motivations and actions (including speech), and to grant the actor ability to bring the unconscious into direct relationship with first the practical, then discursive consciousness (to perform, in a sense, his or her own depth-hermeneutics, cf. the chapter on Ricoeur in Thompson). This same issue comes up in the context of motives, structural constraint and collective action to be discussed later. By making the three levels of consciousness more processual (extending Giddens's conception of consciousness) the central idea of "reflexivity" in structuration theory is thus joined, as it must be, with a critical conception of ideology, now from the perspective of the actor (extending Thompson's notion of depth-interpretation). That is, the duality of structure (where structure is constituted by agency while being at the same time the medium of the constitution) has to be linked with the duality of speech (where language as the locus of ideology and meaning reproduces ideology and meaning through its use). Use of language and reproduction of the rules of grammar that go along with it, of course, are possible precisely because of the dynamic relation between the unconscious and "practical" consciousness.

Thompson presents a systematic interpretative theory of ideology that combines both social and discursive analysis, and recognizes that the realization of speech is situationally specific. Discourse which expresses ideology must be viewed as a socially-historically situated practice, and taking Pierre Bourdieu's lead, he argues that Wittgenstein, Austin and even Chomsky were neglectful of the conditions under which particular discourses come to be constituted as legitimate, are imposed on speakers, and are successfully reproduced. A critical linguistics will offer a formal and explanatory method capable of analyzing ideology, whereby the concealment of relations of domination (and the concealment of the concealment) is understood to involve linguistic processes like transformation, which suppress and distort material contained in underlying linguistic structures. The work of Bourdieu, Ricoeur, Habermas, Castoriadis and Lefort, Pêcheux and others (including Giddens) that form the bases of discussions in Thompson, show how reflexivity could be potentially extended to involve all levels of consciousness to thus expand the notion of agency. Meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination, and meaning itself emanates from that same locus from which emanate the rules of grammar and thus of language. Relations or structures of domination, it seems, have their genesis in the interplay between the unconscious and practical consciousness.

What of agency and its relation to structure? Giddens suggests the link between them is best understood by reference to a "stratification" model of the agent or acting self. Action is motivated, rationalized, and reflexively monitored. These are processes very much intertwined. Reflexive monitoring depends on rationalization, but Giddens makes

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motivation a much more elusive process. He suggests actors are often unable to describe their motives, and so relegates motives to the realm of the unconscious. Thus, actors generate structural conditions that are largely unintended, which in turn become the unacknowledged conditions of further action. However, are most structural conditions unintended, where actors are tricked into believing they are not? In structuration theory, where does one draw the line between those intended structural conditions produced by rationalized reflexive monitoring, and those unintended ones produced by unconsciously motivated actions?

To attribute greater agency or reflexivity to actors and to be truer to the stratification model requires, again, a more open concept of the unconscious and an expanded notion of what a motive is. There are conscious as well as unconscious motives, and any act may have more than one motive as well as more than one kind of motive. Conscious and unconscious motives are themselves pluralistic, and they are hierarchically embedded with different levels of priority, intensity and specificity (constituting motives sets). Since motives are learned, they are variable and mutable with respect to time and space, and physical and cultural environment. Motivational sets or patterns are therefore not inalterably fixed in an actor, but are expressed in different ways at different times. These properties of motives suggest there may be a stronger link between motivation and reflexive monitoring of action than the stratification model admits. Because motives are learned, power (transformative capacity, and not merely the power to act), even at the level of the individual, has its genesis and basis for reproduction in the dynamic between motivation and rationalization-intentionality, and not merely (as Giddens implies) in the dynamic between rationalization and reflexivity (which would reproduce it only at the level of structure). Again, the stratification model, like the hierarchy of consciousness, must be imbued with greater dynamism than it presently is in the theory of structuration. Consciousness (all levels), motivation and reflexivity, while components of structuration, are *themselves* structured and structurally integrated. Thus, a more dynamic relation between motivation and reflexivity may be the "correcting" or controlling mechanism that works to limit unintended consequences by increasing the awareness of the conditions of action on the part of the actor.

Expanding the agency of actors carries with it other possibilities. Both Giddens and Thompson are interested in power and how aspects of it, like domination, are realized in the relation between action and structure. Social systems, institutions, and indeed organizations, are not structures in themselves, but "have" structures; they are the result of patterned interactions that have taken place over time. Actors draw from various resources to produce these patterns, which may include the interactions and the

resulting "structures" themselves. According to the theory of structuration, these resources constrain while they also enable. Power and domination are therefore immanent in social relations as well as transcendent to them; they are two resources, of many, inherent in structure and structural outcomes. However, resources — such as power — are only as enabling as actors are competent in recognizing, utilizing and exploiting them. In other words, the degree of competence also places "limits on the range of options open to an actor . . . in a given circumstance or type of circumstance" (Giddens, p. 177), not just the so-called "objective existence of structural properties that the individual agent is unable to change" (p. 176).⁴ Constraint, however, is a perceived thing, a matter of degree, personal control and power. Giddens adds, though he may not have fully realized the implications, that structural constraint "always operates via agents' motives and reasons" (p. 310). The competence of actors is entailed by the social structure, insofar as options open to them are differentially distributed according to age, sex and no less in terms of different wants, needs and interests. Some individuals and indeed groups have greater scope for action and choice than do others; asymmetrical power relations occur precisely when agents or groups of agents are able (competent) to exclude others in pursuit of interests and goals, and to limit their options. Those excluded perceive a disjunction between wanting to fulfill wants and needs and being unable to pursue options, much less to recognize a range of them. Some may even come to recognize that wants, needs and perceived options are structurally circumscribed by the *act* of wanting and perceiving — even the language agents use, as Thompson points out, sustains the circumscriptions and the relations. They lack the means to change these however, because such would require changing the very bases of interaction and agency, including that of language.

Recognition of this disjunction, of course, is neither automatic nor explicit, but actors collectively have the potential to grasp it (intervention can help actors perceive the disjunction).⁵ They have, precisely because it is with a more dynamic hierarchy of consciousness and a greater processual relationship between motivation and reflexivity that actors "sense" how their wants, interests and options are perpetuated, reinforced and limited by their very articulation. In collectively grasping this disjunction, actors gain the potential to *act* collectively. Social movements suppose a high degree of reflexive self-regulation,⁶ whose participants struggle to regain control of the resources of interaction, including language, from those who have appropriated them for their own use. The origins of this struggle reside in awareness on the part of actors that the issue is who directs the orientation of action. Structuration theory must integrate the hierarchy of consciousness with a more processual stratification model of action if it is

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eventually to include the study of social "movement." The latter is, after all, a collective phenomenon that is individually reproduced and mediated.

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Notes

1. S. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1984.
2. A. Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *The Self-Production of Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
3. A. Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); J.B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
4. The possibility of objective structural properties threatens to contradict the theory of structuration, however, since objective structural constraint negates agency and so turns the duality of agency and structure into a dualism. Thompson argues that agency and structure are not as complementary as Giddens thinks.
5. A. Touraine, 1981, *Ibid.*
6. A. Giddens, *infra*, p. 204. See also A. Touraine, "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," *Social Research*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1985; A. Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," *Social Research*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1985.

RODERICK'S 'SOCIAL' AMNESIA: HABERMAS AND THE PRODUCTIVIST PARADIGM

Brian Caterino

Rick Roderick, *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1986. 194 pp.

The critical reception of the Frankfurt School in North America is frustrating and exasperating for both the uninitiated and experts in the field. The path to understanding critical theory is strewn with landmines of wrongheaded and mean-spirited interpretations. David Held surely understates the case when he states that critical theory has had more than its share of inadequate critical literature.¹

Fortunately, the situation has recently been reversed. There are now a number of solid works on critical theory. Habermas' work especially, which has always found a better reception in North America than the earlier Frankfurt theorists, has found more serious treatment, not only in Thomas McCarthy's careful and compendious *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, but in discussion in recent works such as Held's *Introduction to Critical Theory*, John Keane's *Critical Theory and Public Life* and Seyla Ben-Habib's *Critique, Norm and Utopia*. Rick Roderick's, *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*, is, in some respects, a welcome addition to this literature. In this work, which is intended as an overview of Habermas' work for non-experts, Roderick states that he aims to avoid the "dismissive" readings of Habermas and to take Habermas' position seriously (pp. 2-3). At the same time he wants to provide a *critical* reading of Habermas based on the presumption that, in contrast to Habermas' argument, the "productivist" paradigm advocated by Marx is fundamentally sound. Roderick's book represents, in some respects, an advance over many earlier interpretations of the Habermasian project. He emphasizes the relationships and tensions of Hegelian, Kantian and Marxian perspectives. With the exception of

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Ben-Habib, his is one of the first works to discuss the *Theory of Communicative Action* in much detail. However, Roderick's attempt to cover the whole of the Habermasian corpus in the short span of 175 pages seems to me an impossible task, and bound to lead to some interpretive lacunae. In the first three chapters of Roderick's work, which are often quite good, these lacunae are minimized. Roderick generally succeeds in his attempt to take Habermas seriously. However, the final chapters of the book are problematic. Roderick's discussion of the theory of communicative action, in my view, fails to carry out the aim of providing a non-dismissive critique of Habermas. It simply does not take seriously enough the major argument of this work: the connection of meaning and validity. Finally, Roderick's conclusion needs more careful development. His defense of the productivist model against Habermas' critique fails to engage fruitfully the two positions. These flaws weaken a promising attempt to guide us through Habermas' work.

One of the strong points of Roderick's interpretation is his stress on the Hegelian dimension of Habermas' enterprise. He sides, I believe correctly, with those (like Bernstein) who stress the continuing presence of Hegelian elements in Habermas's thought. Roderick extends this interpretation beyond *Knowledge and Human Interests*, where conventionally Habermas' Hegelianism is said to end, to Habermas' later work on reconstruction (and implicitly to *Theory of Communicative Action*). Citing a little known 1976 discussion by Habermas, Roderick shows that Habermas' understanding of his later project is still informed by a self-conscious Hegelian accent. Habermas argues this along four dimensions. (1) "The reconstruction of universal presuppositions of paradigmatic types of cognition and communication." This Kantian notion is "integrated into Hegel's philosophy;" (2) The "rational reconstruction of developmental patterns for the genesis of transcendental universals." Habermas sees this as parallel to Hegel's search for a logic of development; (3) the phenomenology of self-reflection: the analysis of that process of critique that moves from Kant through Hegel and Marx to Freud; and (4) rational history, "which can explain the observational and narrative evidence of empirical regularities, not in terms of nomological theories, but in terms of the internal genesis of the basic conceptual structures."² Habermas associates this first with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, but also with the philosophies of nature and history. This is essentially a reformulation of Hegel's conception of history as history of the development of the Idea.

This is an interesting formulation by Habermas. While it may not satisfy all those who deny the Hegelian aspect of Habermas' project, it does demonstrate some of the linkages between Habermas' early and later work. Habermas sees a striking parallel between his use of a "genetic epistemology" and the notion of a logic of development in Hegel. Roderick points out

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some of the limitations of those interpretations which view Habermas' later work as a move away from a Hegelian position in toto.

Roderick does not, however, deny the presence of other elements in Habermas' later thought. He also recognizes the Kantian dimension in Habermas' thought. This is especially clear in some of Habermas' use of Weber in *Theory of Communicative Action* (though this is not discussed as fully as I would have liked). Against Hegel, Habermas argues with both Kant and Weber that Reason can not be viewed as a homogeneous totality. It is, in modern society, differentiated into heterogeneous elements (i.e., art, science and morality). Roderick does a good job, though a bit too briefly, of separating these strands of thought in Habermas. I would, however, have liked him to be more thoroughgoing in applying this analysis in the text. The interesting remarks of the first chapter are, too often, not followed up in the following chapters.

Roderick is less successful, I believe, in coming to terms with two other aspects of Habermas' thought. The first is Habermas' relationship to foundationalism. Roderick claims that Habermas attempts "to provide a 'foundation' for . . . critical social theory. This attempt directly counters the current vogue of 'anti-foundationalism'" (p. 8). Here Roderick casts his conceptual net too broadly; Habermas' position is really neither foundational nor anti-foundational. While Habermas clearly rejects the anti-foundationalist argument of Rorty, since it denies judgements of truth or validity to have value beyond a particular culture or community, his own alternative, the theory of argumentation, does not rest on an ultimate foundation or standard external to human activity. The notion of a 'foundation' can not be reduced to the claim that we can come to a rational agreement or find a basis for truth. Foundationalism is the claim that there is an unchallengeable standard of truth that is absolutely certain and beyond doubt. (These alternatives are treated in Bernstein's book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*.)

Habermas accepts neither of these alternatives. He takes up a theory of argumentation derived from, among other sources, Peirce's pragmatic theory of truth. Peirce rejected both the Cartesian framework, and relativist theories of knowledge. There is no ultimate foundation for knowledge and, hence, no claim to knowledge is beyond the possibility of challenge or change. Everything *could*, on the level of logical possibility, be other than it is. But this is not the level on which questions of truth are decided. Logical possibility has little to do with questions of truth. Truth is a relation of evidence, principles, and grounds (or in more common terms, theory and data). The force of the better argument obtains. Truth is a matter of giving reasons which can be justified in the process of argumentation. Roderick misses this pragmatic argument in Habermas. This has ramifications for his interpretation; we shall see that when Roderick takes up the *Theory of*

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Communicative Action, his inability to come to terms with this aspect of Habermas' thought leads to significant misunderstandings.

Roderick gives a good, if brief, overview of Habermas' early writings, stretching from the 1957 article "The Philosophical Discussion of Marx and Marxism" through to *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Naturally this discussion is selective, it focuses to a large extent on Habermas' relation to Marx and critical theory. Roderick contests Habermas' Marx-interpretation from a praxis-oriented point of view. He wants to claim that we can recover a dimension of Marx's theory of human activity which is non-instrumental and creative. Clearly Roderick's sympathies lie with this version of Marx.

Roderick's interpretation of Habermas stresses the development of Habermas' conception of rationality. The first generation Frankfurt School theorists incorporated, through Lukàcs, a stress on the critique of instrumental reason. This departed from Marx's stress both on a critique of political economy and his critique of idealism. Marx held that the abstract ideals of the philosophers have to be realized in the world and criticized for their abstractness. But following the analysis of "rationalization" given by Lukàcs and Weber, the increasing "rationality" of modern life lead not to a realization of the ideals of the true and just life, but to a new form of domination. To be sure, neither Lukàcs nor the Frankfurt theorists (nor for that matter Weber) accepted this truncated form of rationality prevalent in late capitalism as a reflection of Reason in the classical sense. Nonetheless, the changed constellation of forces it represented led to a fundamentally different conception of the task of a critical theory. In light of a thoroughgoing instrumental rationalization of society, which not only truncated the classical conception of rationality, but negated the possibility of resistance, the heritage of philosophy gained a renewed significance as the repository of Reason. For the Frankfurt theorists, the task is no longer to overcome philosophy — to realize it in the world: that opportunity has passed. Rather it is to maintain allegiance to the heritage of Reason as a truly revolutionary force and to criticize its deformation in contemporary society. However, Roderick holds that the Frankfurt theorists maintain an allegiance to immanent critique as the method of a critical theory which will maintain awareness of these ideals. This latter point would seem to need clarification, especially in Adorno. It is not clear the extent to which Frankfurt theorists held these ideals to be immanent in advanced industrial society. Their critique may have been "utopian".

Roderick interprets Habermas' project as a continuation of the Frankfurt School's critique of the rationality of modern society and as an attempt to redeem a concept of rationality that can ground that critique. According to Roderick, Habermas only gradually comes to see the necessity for a departure from the position of the earlier Frankfurt theorists in the direction of a reformulated conception of rationality. At first, his

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conception stays within the ambit of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. For example, in works such as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere), and in many of the essays in *Theory and Praxis*, Habermas retains allegiance to the Frankfurt School method of immanent critique (p. 43). Here, as in Marx, critique proceeded by way of comparing bourgeois ideals to their historical embodiments. However, Roderick holds that Habermas becomes uneasy with this procedure from the time of his second contribution to the Positivism dispute (translated under the title "A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism"), due to the relativistic implications of the method of immanent critique. If immanent critique takes as its standard the values of a particular society, it can not escape the charge of relativism. It must implicitly assume a philosophy of history that can distinguish between what men can be and what they currently are. Implicitly, the Frankfurt theorists relied on Marx's philosophy of history. However, for Habermas, this dependence needs to be reexamined. This, according to Roderick, is the motive for the reexamination of the Marxian philosophy of history that culminates in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Roughly, Habermas concludes that Marx's theorizing can not be taken completely as a guide today because it does not consistently make the distinction between instrumental and communicative forms of action. While Marx does make the distinction between the mode of production and the relations of production in his historical and analytical writings, he does not root this in a categorial level. At the same time, he tends to fall into a scientism that reduces human action to the form comprehensible by the methods of the natural sciences. Marx does not, in a theoretically satisfactory way, conceptualize the social dimension of symbolic activity as later hermeneutic theorists, such as Dilthey, do.

In most respects, I would agree with Roderick's interpretation. However, I would like to make one addendum which I believe has consequences for Roderick's later discussions of Habermas. Roderick does not take sufficient account of the difference between the earlier Frankfurt School's analysis of the Dialectic of Enlightenment and Habermas' use of a concept of the socio-political public sphere as a basis for his theory of rationality. The notion of a political public, taken in part from Arendt and the Aristotelian heritage, in Habermas' view, holds the potential for rationalization in the positive sense. It is constitutive of a form of rationality unrecognized in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This is not simply an issue of whether Habermas retains a notion of immanent critique. In introducing a distinct and separate socio-political sphere in which rationality is constituted, Habermas introduces a radically different notion of rationality than that found in the Marxian tradition. For the socio-political tends to be reduced to an effect of the economic, even in the work of sophisticated Marxists like those of the Frankfurt School.

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The best discussions in the book, however, are in Chapter three. This chapter discusses the transition in Habermas' thought from the theory of knowledge-constitutive interests found in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, to the later emphasis on communicative action. The exact relationship of these two aspects of Habermas' thought has not received much attention. Roderick provides a start in that direction. He summarizes the major debates surrounding *Knowledge and Human Interests*, and indicates some of the shortcomings that led Habermas to modify this position (pp. 62-73). Here, the conflict between the Kantian and Marxian dimensions of Habermas' project, according to Roderick, comes into play. Habermas can not affirm at the same time the Kantian position that the categories of thought are independent of nature, and the Marxian position that nature is the ground of mind. This dilemma, plus Habermas' unease with the Hegelian notion of a unified subject-object as the basis of the philosophy of history, led Habermas to reconceptualize both the foundations of his theory of rationality and his philosophy of history. Roderick also provides a solid discussion of major aspects of Habermas' transitional works. He has clear and useful discussions of Habermas' linguistic reformulation of critical theory, both in relation to Chomsky and in relation to Austin and Searle, and a discussion of the untranslated essay "Theories of Truth." This chapter would be useful to those struggling with Habermas' shifting perspectives.

While Roderick treats this transitional stage lucidly, the same cannot be said for his discussion of *Theory of Communicative Action*. This is both surprising and disappointing, but I believe the reason lies in the aforementioned inattention to Habermas' pragmatic argumentation theory. Roderick's discussion does not clearly focus on the sections of *Theory of Communicative Action* in which the foundations of rationality are formulated. Thus, his selection of passages for discussion does not, it seems to me, give a clear picture of this book and its central arguments for a theory of rationality. Roderick does not see the full significance of the social dimension of rationality in Habermas' work.

Essentially, Roderick attempts to deny the central premise of Habermas' theory of communicative action: the internal relationship between understanding and validity (more precisely for this discussion, the *orientation* toward agreement — *verständigungsorientieren*). In Roderick's view, Habermas exploits the ambiguity involved in the terms 'understanding' and 'agreement':

The fact that it makes sense to say I understand you, but I don't agree with you, shows that there is a difference between the two [understanding and agreement]. On the other hand, the fact that it doesn't make sense to say 'I agree with you, but I don't understand what you

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say' shows that there is a connection between the two. What is the connection? Here, one might plausibly say that 'agreement' *presupposes* 'understanding.' But the reverse is clearly not the case. I can understand what you say at the grammatical level, at the semantic level, and at the pragmatic level, without agreeing with you. Thus 'understanding' does not presuppose 'agreement' . . . Habermas' failure to distinguish these two cases weakens both the first and second step in his argument (p. 159).

Roderick wants to argue that communication is constituted not only through agreement, but through disagreement, dispute and conflict. By limiting his focus to agreement, Habermas' approach is too narrow to capture the complexity of communication.

This argument badly mistakes Habermas' position. When Habermas employs the conception of action oriented to reaching agreement, he does not put forward the claim that understanding is literally a constant unanimous agreement. Rather, he claims that the structure of rationality is discursive and, hence, that rationality does not refer to a truth beyond human intention, nor to a pure immediacy beyond works, but comes to be in the acting and speaking. We do not need to agree in order to understand one another, but we need to be related in a form of rationality that takes its bearings from the possibility of agreeing and disagreeing over reasons for action.

Habermas argues that one of the bases of rationality lies in the ability to give accounts. At any time, individuals can be asked by others (or may ask of themselves), why they act in a certain way. Intentionalists think that we have understood another when we understand the reasons why individuals acted as they did.

However, we supply (or we have attributed to us) motivational explanations only in the process of giving accounts and justifications. What makes intentional accounts 'rational' is not merely their internal coherence, but the fact that there are criteria through which others can accept such accounts. We may not have to agree with these accounts, but we have to understand them as accounts and be capable of making a judgment on the rationality of these accounts. (Are they good reasons? Is there evidence to believe such an assertion? Are the principles or grounds of the assertion valid?) This is what Habermas means when he speaks of understanding oriented to agreement. In his sense, understanding means more than being able to grasp the intentions of another. In order to do this we have to be able to judge whether the reasons given are good ones within the context of an intersubjectively constituted communicative praxis.

Roderick does not fully come to grips with this aspect of Habermas' thought. He does not, for example, discuss section 1.4 of *Theory of*

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Communicative Action in which Habermas puts forward a compelling argument that description and evaluation can not be separated. I can not fully discuss this argument here. My point is not that Roderick has to agree with Habermas, but that, if he really wishes to take Habermas seriously, he can't be satisfied with a simple dismissal of Habermas' central contention, one that isn't even accurate, but ought to interrogate critically these central arguments.

In his final chapter, Roderick attempts to provide an alternative to Habermas' use of the communication paradigm. He argues that the "productivist" paradigm used by Marx can be successfully reconstructed to account for the problems of modern society. Roderick rejects the arguments of Baudrillard and Habermas that the productivist paradigm is inherently instrumental. Actually, in *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas does not make this claim. What he does claim is that the productivist paradigm cannot successfully conceptualize the intersubjective bases of rationality. Marx's theory, then, can still provide standards for the practical transformation of society.

Roderick makes some good points against Habermas' sometimes one-sided interpretation of Marx. However, I don't believe that he provides many good reasons to accept his contention that the productivist paradigm is superior to Habermas' model. His major argument against Habermas is that the focus on 'normative foundations' of critical theory "would be unnecessary if Habermas did not accept the empirical thesis that capitalist society no longer legitimates its power by appeal to norms" (p. 165). This assertion ignores one of the major theoretical shortcomings of the productivist paradigm which the theory of communicative action is meant to redress. Habermas' search for normative foundations is not based purely on empirical questions — it is a meta-theoretical one. It addresses the "social deficit" of Marxian theory. It is meant to revalorize the socio-political dimension of life downplayed by Marx.

Here Roderick's intention to provide a "serious" reading of Habermas and the critical strategy he develops in the final chapter clash. This is much less of a problem in the first three chapters which make a genuine contribution to the literature on Habermas. Roderick is strongest when he treats those aspects of Habermas' thought that are most easily related to the Marxian tradition (including its German heritage). He is, however, clearly unsympathetic to the "linguistic turn" in Habermas' thought. Especially in the final chapter, Roderick develops an interpretation of the productivist paradigm that essentially excludes a serious confrontation with Habermas' position. I found it curious that in a work devoted to a thinker who has seriously criticized the productivist position, it would be considered sufficient to provide a few rather unconvincing criticisms of Habermas followed by a restatement of some basic Marxian theorems. If Habermas'

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position can be dismissed that easily, why devote a whole book to his thought? It seems to me that a different strategy in the final chapter would have been more fruitful. If Roderick had avoided defining the communicative and productivist paradigms in a mutually exclusive way, a strategy which leads Roderick back to the terrain of the "dismissive" readings he hopes to avoid, and had instead looked for the areas where a critical discussion could occur, this would have been a much better work. Roderick ends up denying the power of a theory of communicative action instead of coming to terms with it.

Roderick *could* have pursued this critique, in what I believe would have been a theoretically fruitful way, if he was less committed to rehabilitating Marx as *the* solution to the theory-praxis problem. He could have turned, for example, to a social theorist like Castoriadis, who has attempted to integrate the insights of a philosophy of praxis with a renewed attention to the social and political dimensions of life. He could also have looked to those within the critical theory tradition who have tried to reformulate the distinction between instrumental and communicative action.³ Roderick does not pursue this path, I believe, because it would have led too far astray from the Marxian project that is his 'idée fixe.' In the end, Roderick seems to say that Marx is all we need to provide a social theory adequate to late capitalist society. We should abandon flighty theories which study 'normative foundations' and return to hard-headed "investigations of class, the state and economy, as well as the massive cultural apparatus" (p. 173). We learn from Roderick that the "proletariat has not 'disappeared'. Rather it has been fragmented" (p. 172). Habermas' Weberian claims that modern society is differentiated into art, science and morality "only ideologically express an empirically ascertainable and contradiction-ridden form of social life, a form that can be overcome" (p. 171). If slogans were currency, Roderick would be a rich man. Would that it were so easy.

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Notes

1. David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
2. "Response to the Commentary of Bernstein and Dove," in D.P. Verene ed., *Hegel's Social and Political Thought* (1980), pp. 247-8.
3. See for example John Keane, "On Tools and Language: Work and Interaction in Habermas," *New German Critique* 6 (1975): 82-100; Axel Honneth "Work and Instrumental Action," *New German Critique* 26 (1982): 31-54. For a selection of Castoriadis in English see *Crossroads of the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

L'OBJECTIVATION ET LA SYMBOLISATION

Michel Lalonde

Michel Freitag, *Dialectique et société: 1. Introduction à une théorie générale du symbolique*. Montréal, Saint-Martin et l'Âge d'Homme, 1986, 296 pp.

Le projet de compréhension de soi plonge des racines très anciennes dans le sol de l'histoire. Avant même de convoquer l'exemple grec, on peut rappeler que les grandes civilisations historiques ont indirectement interrogé leur ordre sociétal à travers leurs débats doctrinaux et spéculatifs. Seulement cette interrogation sur le mode d'être de la société passait toujours par le détour d'un moment transcendant qui devenait le fondement ultime de l'ordre d'ensemble de la société. Malgré que la dialectique grecque ait tendu à suspendre tout recours à un tel moment, le christianisme le réintroduit bientôt sans toutefois jamais supprimer les méditations sur la nature de la socialité ainsi qu'en fait foi un survol superficiel des débats théologiques médiévaux.

Il revient, comme on le sait, à la modernité d'avoir fait l'économie d'une référence extra-mondaine quand elle entreprendra le double projet de compréhension de la nature et de la société. Mais le projet comportait en lui-même une préconception des objets qui seraient soumis à l'investigation de la Raison enfin libérée. À l'encontre de ce livre ouvert que Dieu offrait au croyant qui savait en décrypter les signes et les secrètes connivences, la nature moderne devient tendanciellement le strict univers des régularités observables dans la démarche expérimentale, constructibles dans les termes du langage scientifique (mathématique en premier lieu), déduisibles de la structure logique de la théorie. Objet même de l'interrogation scientifique, la nature est ce segment de la réalité qui n'offre plus aucune signification *a priori*, qui n'est plus habité par aucune intentionnalité, qui ne présente aucune normativité immanente. Dès lors les lois de la

nature n'existent que dans le regard qui induit des règles universelles à partir des régularités observées selon des catégories construites réflexivement.

Les lois de la nature dessinent un mode d'être qui est celui d'une implacable nécessité: monde de la détermination et du déterminé où le conséquent succède à l'antécédent selon la loi de la causalité et au fil de l'irréversibilité du temps.

Ainsi comprise, la nature s'oppose au monde social qui, tout en étant enfin considéré comme réalité *sui generis*, est tout à la fois le domaine de la liberté et celui de la norme. Les modèles individualistes-contractualistes conçoivent l'unité de la société comme constituée par le règne de la loi sous l'*imperium* de l'état, lui-même dérivée du contrat fondateur en lequel se manifeste une liberté originaire de l'Homme. Liberté qui donne elle-même tout son sens à la loi humaine (par rapport à la loi naturelle) puisqu'elle ne cesse pas d'exister quand l'homme exerce son libre arbitre et s'en écarte. Dès lors la modernité se développe sous le double règne, d'une part, de la nécessité et de la causalité propre au monde naturel et, d'autre part, de la liberté et de la normativité propre au monde social.

Sous cette perspective classique, qui s'épanouit chez Kant, le monde de la socialité ne ressortit pas tout entier à la juridiction de la science. Si l'homme en ses passions et ses instincts peut relever d'une psychologie positive (ou d'une biologie, d'une sociologie, etc.), la liberté ne peut être comprise qu'en une déduction transcendentale, moment de retour sur soi de la Raison. Le réel est encore, partiellement, investi en tant que compréhension de soi, quand bien même ce ne serait que pour y découvrir quelque norme éthique *a priori*.

On sait que les sciences humaines tendront à éliminer ce dernier carré de liberté quand, s'inspirant du modèle positiviste des sciences naturelles, elles envisageront le monde social tout entier comme domaine de la causalité aveugle (pour les acteurs) dont les lois perdront toute qualité normative au profit d'une simple régularité identifiable au sein de la théorie qui l'énonce. D'où l'aporie classique: alors que la raison des sciences sociales voulait objectiver le social en ses déterminations, elle se découvre tapie dans l'objet auquel elle devait s'opposer par sa liberté cognitive.

Pour Michel Freitag, l'option positiviste des sciences sociales doit être abandonnée parce que non seulement elle est indéfendable au plan intellectuel mais qu'elle inspire et légitime la dérive technocratique de la société contemporaine. Ce rejet critique se tourne alors vers l'alternative au positivisme: le refus de la réification des pôles sujet-objet (liberté-détermination, signification-choséité, théorie-pratique) et la reconnaissance de l'unité primordiale de tout rapport au monde (rapport d'objet ou d'objectivation selon l'expression de M. Freitag), dont l'auto-développement produit alors comme un de ses moments le dualisme

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antithétique du sujet et de l'objet et éventuellement le discours qui en pense la production. Il s'agit donc pour M. Freitag de renouer avec l'inspiration dialectique au sens hégélien en récusant cependant toute fermeture pour la dialectique de l'être, en reconnaissant l'ouverture illimitée de l'histoire. Toute interrogation sur la société ne peut être alors que compréhension réflexive de soi et aucun coup de force positiviste ne peut briser le cercle de la compréhension.

C'est à ce vaste projet que sera consacré le cycle de *Dialectique et société* (5 vols. projetés) et auquel nous introduit ce premier volume. Selon la logique d'ensemble du projet, *Introduction à une théorie générale du symbolique* s'attache au rapport d'objet en général et plus particulièrement à un de ses niveaux possibles: la pratique sociale envisagée comme rapport significatif au monde. Cependant, souligne M. Freitag, toute pratique sociale suppose une structure d'ensemble dans laquelle elle s'inscrit et, si on admet que la société a un mode d'intégration qui n'est pas réductible à l'orientation significative de la pratique élémentaire, cette structure d'ensemble a une existence *sui generis* qui mérite d'être analysée pour elle-même. Exigence à laquelle répondront les deux volumes suivants. *Culture, pouvoir, contrôle: Les modes formels de reproduction de la société* devrait distinguer trois modes principaux d'intégration sociétale: *culturel-symbolique*, dont les sociétés primitives fournissent les plus proches illustrations; *politico-institutionnel*, qui subsume sous son concept le vaste champ des sociétés politiques, traditionnelles et modernes; et enfin en quelque sorte par anticipation un troisième mode, intitulé *décisionnel-opérationnel*, qui tente de qualifier la post-modernité (post-capitalisme, post-libéralisme, etc.). Il devrait revenir au volume suivant, *Les formes de la société: Essai de typologie historique*, d'incarner historiquement les concepts précédents et d'appréhender plus finement la diversité des sociétés concrètes régies sous ces trois modes. Le quatrième volume, *La question de la méthode dans la connaissance compréhensive*, devrait confronter les thèses de l'auteur avec les courants avec lesquels il se sent quelque affinité, ne serait-ce que par une commune opposition au positivisme en sciences sociales. Enfin *La perte de la transcendance: Ébauche d'une critique de la post-modernité* devrait clore le cycle par une discussion plus détaillée des transformations contemporaines dans le mode de reproduction "décisionnel-opérationnel."

Cette *Introduction* soutient le primat ontologique et par là épistémique du rapport d'objectivation par deux voies; négativement, par une critique du positivisme, et sous un mode plus constructif, par une explicitation de la dialectique de développement du rapport lui-même et par une mise à jour de ses moments constitutifs.

La critique du positivisme, entendu en un sens très large, veut montrer que le rapport scientifique au monde s'appuie nécessairement sur des médiations pré-scientifiques qui en sont les conditions de possibilité et que

le positivisme feint d'ignorer. Soit par exemple le projet d'épuration de l'activité scientifique porté par le néo-positivisme, une des cibles de l'auteur. On sait que le néo-positivisme n'admettait dans le discours scientifique que des propositions construites à partir de jugements élémentaires d'expérience; en d'autres termes ne pouvaient subsister au sein de la science que des constats d'expérience et les propositions dérivées par une suite de tautologies (ou de déductions logiques). Le discours de la science était une suite de propositions correctement liées les unes aux autres par voie logique jusqu'au socle du jugement empirique expérimental. Or, remarque M. Freitag avec une vieille tradition philosophique, une pure et transparente sensibilité n'existe pas. Il y a toujours une pré-compréhension de la perception: structure sensorielle, structure sémantique du langage, théorie sous-jacente de l'appareillage expérimental, théorie implicite de l'univers dans lequel a lieu la perception expérimentale (postulat généralisé du "toute chose égale par ailleurs"), etc. Le constat empirique est alors *volens volens* en rapport avec un ensemble de "jugements" et de "théories" implicites. *Exit* le pur constat empirique fondé sur la simple réceptivité des sens. Dès lors le néo-positivisme vacille parce qu'il a refusé de poser le problème plus général du rapport d'objectivation quel qu'en soit le niveau: la médiation formelle bien entendu (logico-mathématique pour les sciences naturelles), mais également ses pré-conditions nécessaires, les médiations sensori-motrice et symbolique.

Mais, à tout le moins, la réduction positiviste n'a pas de conséquences fâcheuses pour le déroulement de l'activité scientifique *in vivo*. Elle ne détruit pas une signification qui serait immanente à la nature physique. La fiction du constat empirique ne détruit pas le mode d'être des phénomènes physiques qui peuvent être envisagées en leur pure choseité. En revanche l'approche scientifique classique étendue au champ de la socialité oblitère la dimension de signification et de normativité qui lui est consubstantielle. Qu'il suffise, comme le fait M. Freitag, de rappeler le précepte durkheimien de considérer les faits sociaux comme des choses qui, pris au pied de la lettre, conduirait à refuser à la pratique sociale toute dimension d'intériorité et d'intentionnalité. Ou plus précisément à considérer cette dimension comme un épiphénomène de déterminations sous-jacentes que seul le *social scientist* saura découvrir dans cette position d'extériorité auquel le conviait Durkheim.

Le positivisme en sciences sociales a des conséquences autrement plus graves qu'en sciences naturelles. Considérer la socialité comme simple champ de régularités et de déterminations à spécifier dans les termes de la théorie qui cherche d'abord à en prévoir les occurrences conduit à ignorer les catégories structurantes de l'expérience et dès lors notamment celles dans lesquelles la science s'est elle-même incarnée et construite. La science sociale scie alors la branche sur laquelle elle est assise et qui lui a donné cette

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position de surplomb.

Le constat des impasses du positivisme entraîne M. Freitag dans un examen du procès même de développement du rapport d'objectivation qui, s'il produit "à la fin" la médiation formelle propre à l'activité scientifique, n'en a pas moins produit d'abord la médiation sensori-motrice et la médiation symbolique sans lesquelles la science ne pourrait être.

Le rationalisme moderne avait progressivement restreint la liberté cognitive et la capacité d'auto-régulation à la seule raison humaine, puis dans la seule science, et rejeté corrélativement le reste du réel dans l'ordre de la détermination et de la causalité irréversible. Le fossé ainsi creusé ne put être comblé et les sciences naturelles confortées que par l'invocation d'*a priori*s kantien, qui, s'ils avaient l'avantage d'imposer le caractère médiatisé de tout rapport au monde, ne faisaient que déplacer le lieu du problème dans le jeu des facultés au sein de la raison. Mais le dualisme était maintenu. Il ne pouvait être rompu qu'en en récusant les termes ou plutôt en considérant l'opposition de la liberté du sujet et de la détermination de l'objet non comme un point de départ mais comme un point d'arrivée. Et ce point de départ ne peut être que ce "moment" où l'unité ontologique de l'être connaît sa première scission entre un "sujet" et un "objet," c'est-à-dire là où surgissent l'autonomie et l'autorégulation de soi: la vie. M. Freitag soutient ainsi le caractère fondateur du domaine vivant en tant qu'il pose des virtualités qui seront conservées et généralisées dans les moments postérieurs de la dialectique du rapport d'objectivation. Au niveau du vivant correspond la médiation sensori-motrice, ce type de rapport au monde où des schèmes de comportement sont intégrés en rapport avec des événements extérieurs, dès lors des signaux qui interviennent à titre de déclencheurs. Dans chaque schème de comportement amorcé par un signal, tel l'"odeur-de-la-souris" déclenchant le schème de la chasse chez le chat, les régularités physico-chimiques sont "suspendues" (ou au contraire "actualisées") au profit d'une autonomie de l'organisme. Cependant, dans la médiation sensori-motrice, il n'est pas vrai que le schème de comportement "attaque-de-la-souris" soit coordonné sur un plan distinct avec le schème "fuite-devant-le-chien" ou avec tous les comportements possibles du chat comme peuvent l'être toutes les actions, par exemple offensives et défensives, d'un être humain dans le champ sémantique de la chasse et de la guerre propre à une langue donnée. Ainsi l'organisme vivant jouit d'une certaine capacité d'intégration et de totalisation du monde extérieur, de soi et du comportement médiateur, mais cette capacité se trouve campée en ses limites quand on la confronte aux possibilités supérieures offertes par le symbolisme. Si l'animal peut surplomber l'ensemble des comportements élémentaires nécessaires à l'accomplissement du schème visé, seul l'être humain peut grâce au langage surplomber *in absentia* l'ensemble des actions possibles et dès lors se poser

comme le sujet commun de leur accomplissement virtuel auquel répondra le lieu commun de leur effectivité, en l'occurrence l'objectivité du monde. Derrière la coordination sémantique de toutes les actions possibles se profilera la construction, d'une part, d'une subjectivité, d'une conscience de soi, par-delà les intentionnalités contingentes et successives et, d'autre part, d'une objectivité stabilisée, par-delà la succession des objets d'action.

La médiation symbolique est donc pour M. Freitag le deuxième niveau du rapport d'objectivation. Mais une médiation qui ne peut advenir qu'en s'appuyant sur la médiation sensori-motrice dont elle ne fait que généraliser les virtualités puisque la dualisation du rapport entre un "sujet" et un "objet" en vertu d'une médiation est déjà présente dans le monde vivant, y compris dans la part de sensibilité et de motricité de l'être humain. Ainsi l'*a priori* kantien n'a pas à être postulé dans une raison universelle et intemporelle. Il est déjà présent dans le processus même de constitution d'un moment subjectif et d'un moment objectif, à charge cependant pour l'analyste qui en résume le parcours de moduler la nature des médiations au fil de la phylogénèse et de l'histoire.

Le rapport d'objectivation ainsi compris peut être extrapolé vers ses deux pôles-limites: 1. du côté de l'objet vers le monisme absolu de l'univers physique où n'existe aucune subjectivité (et donc aucune objectivité); 2. du côté du sujet vers la pure liberté opératoire du système formel (ex. la logique) qui restructure selon ses principes propres les médiations antérieures du symbolisme et du signal sensori-moteur. Ces deux pôles tracent selon l'auteur l'espace où se déploie la dialectique du rapport d'objectivation où la subjectivité et l'objectivité sont construites solidairement à travers des médiations successives qui réintègrent en leur *modus operandi* les médiations antérieures (au plan historique et épistémique). Selon M. Freitag, ce n'est que dans la médiation formelle, là où la "raison" restructure librement ses catégories, que l'objet apparaît en sa qualité de pure chose, de simple régularité alors que dans l'entre-deux des médiations sensori-motrices et symboliques l'objet est toujours investi d'une "signification" tels "la-souris-objet-du-désir-du-chat" ou le pain pour le chrétien. Le problème du rapport au monde se trouve redessiné en renouant avec l'inspiration hégélienne sans toutefois en suivre précisément le cheminement.

Après qu'ait été établi le sens général de la dialectique de développement du rapport d'objectivation, M. Freitag procède à une analyse de ce qu'il estime être les moments constitutifs de tout rapport d'objectivation. D'abord trois "moments" ou "fonctions" à portée surtout cognitive: construction opératoire (ou discrimination significative), détermination empirique et imputation objective.

La fonction de construction opératoire fait référence à un certain arbitraire dans toute modalité de rapport au monde en vertu duquel est opéré un découpage *a priori*: le spectre des couleurs dans la vue, la

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structuration sémantique du langage, les catégories d'une théorie physique, etc. Cette configuration *a priori* du rapport d'objectivation prédétermine l'espace des différences sensorielles, linguistiques ou expérimentales qui prendront valeur de "signification" dans le rapport: la différence rouge-violet, mais non pas une variation infinitésimale de fréquence au sein du violet; la différence chat-chat, mais non pas chat-Chat, la différence entre deux masses mesurées expérimentalement, mais non pas les variations de la structure cristalline, etc. C'est pourquoi la fonction de construction opératoire peut aussi bien être qualifiée par son effet: la discrimination significative, étant entendu que la "signification" a ici une portée plus large que le strict symbolisme propre au langage. Cette fonction est donc l'*a priori* kantien généralisé et modulé selon les trois médiations-types et, au sein de celles-ci, selon la diversité contingente des médiations concrètes.

La fonction de détermination empirique est, selon la formulation de l'auteur, la restriction *a posteriori* qui est apportée à l'arbitraire de la construction opératoire quand elle s'incarne dans le monde sensible. Il existe *a priori* un champ de "signifiabilité," mais la confrontation avec l'"objet" produit un seul objet signifié: une couleur dans le champ visuel, une nomination pour l'"animal-à-quatre-pattes-en-train-de-miauler," une masse mesurée, etc. La capacité d'objectivation de toute médiation déborde toujours les objets qui surgissent néanmoins dans le champ de signifiabilité pour en limiter la liberté et en quelque sorte en déterminer l'actualisation *hic et nunc*. D'où le titre de détermination empirique pour ce moment. Mais cette limitation de l'espace de la médiation s'exerce toujours dans les catégories *a priori* de la fonction de construction opératoire. Ce n'est donc jamais l'objet en soi qui détermine l'arbitraire, mais l'objet en tant qu'il est signifiable dans les termes de la fonction. M. Freitag rejoint ici la thèse classique de la phénoménalité de l'expérience, généralisée toutefois à l'ensemble des médiations possibles.

La fonction dite "théorique" d'imputation objective est ce moment du rapport d'objectivation en vertu duquel l'objet qui a limité empiriquement l'arbitraire de la construction opératoire acquiert une consistance ontologique propre. Les deux premiers moments ne peuvent advenir que si est opérée une stabilisation existentielle de l'objet; cette stabilisation ne peut être que l'insertion de l'objet dans une continuité spatio-temporelle et dans une structure "causale." En d'autres termes, il ne peut y avoir d'expérience du monde que si les données empiriques successives (telles que "signifiées" dans les formes *a priori* propres à chaque médiation) sont constamment assimilées à des schémas préexistants par lesquels l'objet apparaît comme le foyer stabilisé de ce donné même, comme la source sous-jacente du perçu. D'où la possibilité de prévision à propos de cet objet stabilisé.

"N'est objet que ce qui objet de prévision, de prédiction, et ceci quelle que soit la médiation utilisée, qui peut être celle des schèmes sensori-moteurs (le geste concret anticipe à chaque instant dans son mouvement propre la présence de l'objet en telle position, qui sera son terme) aussi bien que le langage mathématique (ainsi la formule physique qui permet de calculer la position de tel corps à tel instant)" (pp. 194-195).

Dès lors pour M. Freitag, si la critique popperienne de l'induction est valide au plan logique, elle n'atteint pas cette induction propre à tout rapport d'objectivation en vertu de laquelle les expériences successives sont assimilées sous des schèmes de continuité imputés à l'objet. Cette induction de l'expérience est une condition de possibilité de tout rapport au monde car elle institue l'espace de prévisibilité dans lequel l'objet apparaît comme réalité auto-consistante. Si l'objet *est*, c'est parce qu'est opérée une incessante induction dans des schèmes qui permettront une déduction à caractère prévisionnel grâce à laquelle il apparaîtra avec une consistance propre.

Ainsi donc il est une "théorisation" dans tout rapport au monde comme moment nécessaire de toute stabilité ontologique de l'objet. M. Freitag me semble, si on me permet de poursuivre la confrontation avec Kant, reprendre et généraliser à tous les types de médiation le principe général des analogies de l'expérience en vertu duquel "... l'expérience n'est possible que par la représentation d'une liaison nécessaire des perceptions."¹ Toutefois il est entendu que la fonction théorique d'imputation objective n'est pas réductible à une quelconque faculté de synthèse *a priori* dont les opérations seraient données une fois pour toute, parce qu'elle s'inscrit dans la dialectique du rapport d'objectivation qui a produit les médiations sensori-motrice, symbolique et formelle.

Cependant, malgré son intérêt pour mieux clarifier la nature de tout rapport d'objectivation, cette triade de fonctions n'éclaire pas spécifiquement la médiation symbolique qui est le fondement de toute socialité. D'où l'impératif de dégager deux autres moments qui, toute en conservant une portée générale, prendront plein intérêt au sein de la médiation symbolique. La fonction normative-expressive (ou idéologique en un sens très général) fait référence à la fermeture de tout espace de discrimination, au "rayon d'action" nécessairement limité de tout rapport au monde: le spectre des longueurs d'onde couvert par la perception des couleurs, le champ sémantique (ou un de ses segments) d'une langue en regard de toutes les expériences sensibles possibles, l'espace de catégorisation et de conceptualisation d'une théorie physique en regard de toutes les significations productibles dans le langage, etc. Il en découle, selon l'auteur, que l'intentionnalité irréductible qui se manifeste dans tout rapport d'objectivation va se mouvoir dans cette espace fermé selon une contrainte

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inéliminable *hic et nunc*. Le monde objectivité sera certes un monde partiel et partial, mais pour l'intentionnalité qui s'y déploie ce sera *le* monde en sa transparence et sa plénitude. Ainsi "... dans toute objectivation la structure prédéterminée du système opératoire est en quelque sorte projetée sur l'objet extérieur sous la forme de valeur" (p.206). L'ouverture interne de tout rapport est la condition de possibilité de constitution d'un objet d'expérience, mais du coup l'objet visé renvoie à l'intentionnalité agissante cette ouverture comme si elle lui appartenait en soi: comme si la coloration était un attribut intrinsèque des choses, comme si l'eau possédait une vertu désaltérante, comme si le marteau portait en lui son usage quand je saisis "naturellement" le manche plutôt que la tête, etc. L'intentionnalité agissante s'oriente en fonction d'un monde qui est la projection de sa propre ouverture *a priori*. Le terme objet du rapport exerce en quelque sorte une fonction normative puisqu'il oriente l'intentionnalité qui, de son propre point de vue, ne fait que souscrire à la "nature des choses." Dans l'effet de projection sur le terme objet est *exprimée* la structuration *a priori* de l'intentionnalité qui est en un second mouvement soumise à une orientation *normative* par l'appréhension non critique de ses propres catégories sur le terme objet.

Cette fonction normative-expressive prend tout son intérêt selon M. Freitag quand on l'envisage au niveau de la médiation symbolique, donc de l'action sociale. Car on peut y déceler une dimension idéologique immanente à toute pratique sociale dans la mesure où la structuration sémantique du langage (et plus généralement de la culture en tant que système symbolique) est projetée sur l'objet pour y agir à titre de régulateur de l'action qui ne fait alors qu'agir conformément à l'"essence" de l'objet.² L'action pourra s'orienter en découvrant sans cesse l'usage des choses et la nature des êtres en tant qu'"arrache-clou," "verre à vin," "maison des ancêtres," "ceux-qui-sont-nos-frères," "fils de Dieu" (si on me permet ces exemples un peu simples). De cet effet idéologique général découle le modèle-limite d'une société dont les pratiques s'orienteraient d'abord d'après les significations projetées sur les objets sans qu'aucun moment normatif ne soit dégagé en tant que tel (lois, commandements, maximes éthiques) et dont l'auteur nous promet un exposé plus détaillé dans le second volume de *Dialectique et société*.

Reste le dernier moment du rapport d'objectivation. Si on admet que toute expérience du monde s'inscrit dans une dialectique, réalisée par en arrière et au moins virtuelle par en avant, on doit conclure que toute capacité de construction opératoire est le produit d'une genèse réelle qui possède un sens. En effet une certaine médiation suppose une médiation antérieure comme condition de possibilité et peut s'inscrire elle-même comme condition d'une médiation postérieure, tel le langage qui s'appuie sur la discrimination sensorielle et qui peut être retravaillé dans un système

formel comme les mathématiques. Un certain cheminement "phylogénétique" et "ontogénétique" a dû être parcouru avant que soit produit le champ de signifiabilité propre à une médiation donnée. Par-delà la configuration particulière d'un rapport au monde, on doit admettre une orientation immanente à la dialectique du rapport d'objectivation. Non pas une orientation unique et nécessaire, les cheminements pouvant être multiples, mais à tout le moins la rétrospection du cheminement en fait émerger le *sens*. Cependant, soutient M. Freitag, le sens ne s'incarne vraiment que dans une modalité donnée de rapport au monde et plus spécifiquement dans la fonction idéologique, la structure de signifiabilité projetée sur l'objet représentant une coupe horizontale (ou "instantanée") de la verticalité (du "mouvement") du sens.

La dimension de sens a en outre l'originalité de n'advenir pleinement qu'avec la médiation symbolique. Si on admet que l'organisme vivant ne surplombe pas l'ensemble de ses rapports virtuels au monde, l'exigence d'une fondation de sa situation existentielle ne peut se poser pour lui. Cette exigence ne surgit pas non plus pour la médiation formelle puisqu'elle est en principe l'expression d'une autonomie pleinement réalisée qui restructure librement l'ensemble de ses rapports au monde et qui ne se rapporte qu'à elle-même. La question du sens se pose pour la seule médiation symbolique. Celle-ci est le fruit d'une dialectique du rapport d'objectivation, d'un cheminement qui a produit le rapport significatif au monde. Or ce cheminement s'est fait nécessairement dans un arbitraire inéliminable. Tel l'arbitraire du signifiant face au signifié ou celui d'une culture donnée face au monde sensible. Le cheminement par lequel un être humain peut avoir un rapport significatif avec l'être est marqué du sceau de cet arbitraire. Dès lors peut s'insinuer le doute sur le sens en tant que cheminement, dès lors peut surgir une fissure dans l'unité significative de soi et du monde. La médiation symbolique serait ainsi traversée par "... la menace constante d'une "absence de sens," de la mise à nu d'un pur arbitraire." D'où les réifications de l'ordre de la société sous les figures des "Ancêtres, des Dieux, de la Raison ou de l'Histoire" afin de déjouer le soupçon, de conjurer le doute.

On doit avouer que cette fonction de sens pose problème. En effet l'auteur semble lui accorder une interprétation double. D'une part y comprendre la fragilité de tout ordre symbolique et l'exigence d'y parer par une réification. D'autre part y puiser la possibilité de l'activité esthétique, celle-ci étant envisagée comme exploration des formes symboliques, comme "travail" sur le langage. Le lien entre le sens et ce moment esthétique n'est cependant pas très clairement élucidé et on se demande s'il n'eût pas mieux valu envisager l'activité esthétique pour elle-même, quitte à y voir un moment *sui generis*. Par ailleurs on doit convenir que cette fonction de sens ne peut être envisagée au même niveau que les fonctions précédentes,

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contrairement à ce que semble estimer l'auteur. Ces dernières étaient toutes envisagées comme des moments constitutifs de tout rapport d'objectivation, analogues en cela aux *a priori* transcendants. Or il est manifeste que la fonction de sens est davantage la récapitulation d'une dialectique qui a produit un rapport donné au monde qu'un *a priori* de ce rapport même. Il me semble y avoir ici une inconsistance relativement au statut qu'accorde M. Freitag aux autres moments.

Avec la dimension de sens est achevé le parcours du rapport d'objectivation. Même si l'ouvrage se situe à un niveau très élevé quant à l'analyse des moments constitutifs de tout rapport d'objectivation, il apparaît clairement que l'objectif à ne pas perdre de vue est la délimitation de la médiation symbolique comme pierre de touche de tout projet de compréhension de la société. Projet dont l'auteur nous promet la réalisation dans les volumes suivants de *Dialectique et société*.

La critique du positivisme a servi à dégager la primauté ontologique du rapport d'objectivation. L'analyse des médiations-types et de leurs moments constitutifs veut montrer le caractère unilatéral du positivisme mais surtout jeter les bases d'une théorie du symbolisme comme assise indispensable pour la compréhension de la pratique sociale en général. À charge cependant pour les volumes suivants de dépasser le niveau de l'action élémentaire afin d'aborder le problème crucial de l'intégration d'ensemble de la société: comme culture unifiée, comme ordre politique et aujourd'hui, semble-t-il, selon un ajustement systémique.

En attendant la suite, une question soulevée par cet ouvrage me semble demeurer sans réponse: c'est celle du caractère exhaustif des moments dégagés. La conceptualisation de l'auteur ne nous permet pas de déduire que les 5 (peut-être 6?) moments distingués épuisent le rapport d'objectivation. Par exemple ces moments ne confèrent aucune place explicite à une dimension technique de l'action. Peut-être les ouvrages suivants nous laisseront-ils voir comment une visée technique peut être dérivée de la conceptualisation générale des moments? Mais, pour l'instant, nous ignorons si on fait le tour de tous les moments et si oui pourquoi. Cette réserve ne m'empêchera toutefois pas de méditer ce livre dont le moins que l'on puisse dire est qu'il offre une pensée riche et puissante.

Sociologie
Université de Montréal

Notes

1. *Critique de la raison pure* (Paris, Presses Universitaire de France), p. 174, note 1.
2. M. Freitag distingue la fonction idéologique en ce sens très général de l'idéologie en un sens plus restreint (et plus usuel) où elle sera envisagée comme discours visant à légitimer une structure politique de domination.

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