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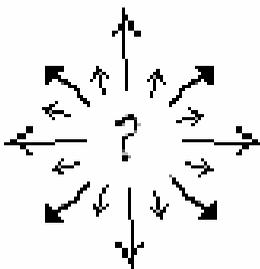
## Philosophical

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# **MORAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

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## **Academic Speech at the Ceremony of Awarding an Honorary Doctoral Degree at the Sofia University (June 2002)**

Zygmunt Bauman  
University of Leeds

Your Magnificence Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski University, my learned colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I am overwhelmed by your generosity. I accept your distinction with joy and gratitude, proud to be associated with one of the most venerable and distinguished temples of sciences and humanities in Europe – indeed, in the civilized world.

I suppose that the honour has been bestowed not on me but on the issue to which I tried hard to dedicate my thought and work – the chances of morality in our world, a confused world, desperately seeking solutions to its growing troubles and unsure where to find and how to handle them.

For many centuries philosophers tried to resolve the worrisome conflict between the interests of self-preservation and the ethical command to love your neighbour. That conflict, first opened by Cain's angry demand to explain why, if at all, he should be his brother's keeper (the question from which, as Emmanuel Levinas suggests, all immorality began), seemed to have no satisfactory solution: the pursuit of self-interest and taking the responsibility for integrity, dignity, and the welfare of other humans seemed to be at odds, and the very fact that ever new texts of the ultimate peace

treaty between them were being composed by successive generations of philosophers bore an oblique testimony to the hopelessness of the search for their reconciliation.

Indeed, when the precepts of self-interest and of other humans' well-being meet, one or the other must give way. One partner or the other, perhaps both, needs to stop short of what he would otherwise wish to do and to achieve. One must sacrifice at least a part of one's comfort or dreams; or, if reluctant to sacrifice any, must ignore the comfort and dreams of someone else standing in the way of his own satisfaction. And so, if open and possibly gory hostilities are to be avoided, each side requires an explanation for why the sacrifice of his own interests should be seen as a better solution than its alternative – proof that being good to the other, even at one's own expense, pays.

There were, essentially, but two forms in which such eagerly sought explanations were offered.

One was the severe punishment that a superhumanly potent power would visit on those who close their ears to what the great Danish moral philosopher, Knud Løgstrup, called “the ethical demand” – an awesome retribution that would dwarf the discomfort which obedience to the demand may cause, and bountiful rewards that the same power would lavish on those who neglected their own interests for the sake of others. The trouble with that explanation was that a lot of evidence to the contrary sapped its credibility as many blatantly immoral people enjoyed better fortunes than most of their pious and righteous neighbours. It denies such facts their power to refute the explanation; the whole reward-and-punishment issue had to be removed beyond the reach of empirical experience into, say, the never explored nether-world; but then accepting the proposed version required a stretch of imagination of which not all people were capable, of forcing the credulousness which not all would gladly take.

Another type of explanation suggested that being good to others is “good business”, since the beneficiaries of goodness would reciprocate the services rendered and repay the ethically upright person with trust and respect, as well as quite tangible material benefits. An apparent loss will prove to be a gain “in the long run”. That kind of explanation was somewhat better

adapted to the habits of the modern, rational mind trained to carefully calculate personal gains and losses and to measure the effects of every undertaking against its costs. It was, however, no more trouble-free than the argument it aimed to replace. The stubborn refusal of the “facts of life” to conform was also its weakness. Like in the case of the other explanation, common experience kept refuting the promise. The moment when the all-too-painfully felt liabilities turned finally into welcomed assets, it was already awesomely sluggish in coming. The evidence piled up that it was the selfish and the unscrupulous who seemed to emerge most often on top. In addition, as modernity went on modernising, “the long term” fell out of fashion. Delay of gratification turned from the sign of prudence into folly, and only those rewards which could be consumed instantly and on the spot came to be appreciated. Never before did the old wisecrack “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” come to be followed so avidly.

Philosophical imagination may be limitless, but its ability to argue away the conflict between self-interest and ethical command seemed to have a limit that could not be broken, however hard it tried. One could be excused for suspecting that this no-trespass-allowed limit was the human condition itself. The choice was indeed between being good to oneself or to others, between self-amplification or sharing space and fortune with others. It seemed that life in the company of others was a zero-sum game. It seemed that sacrificing one’s wins to save the others from losses was a foolproof recipe for defeat – and, given that few others would be willing to follow suit, for ridicule as well.

All such suspicions might have been felt well-grounded until quite recently – but they don’t anymore. What I wish to suggest to you, my friends, is that, for better or worse, we’ve now entered the times of convergence between the interest in self-preservation and the obedience to ethical command. Today, self-preservation and morality dictate the same policy and strategy. Your loss is no more my gain. Cohabitation on a full planet is not a zero-sum game. In these turbulent times of ours, we are all in the same boat now. We will sail safely together – or together will we sink.

And so self-preservation and ethics have finally met, but only because social realities, through history, have reached a moment that philosophers, through ingenuity of reason, were vainly trying to reach.

Only few wise men predicted that this would happen and that it would happen in the way it did. Immanuel Kant was one of the most outstanding among them. In 1784, more than two centuries ago, when few if any signs and certainly no symptoms visible to the residents of the tranquil town of Königsberg, where he lived and thought, augured the imminent filling up of the human planet, Kant sent to his publishers a little book titled *Ideen zu Einer Allgemeinen Geschichte in Weltbuergerlicher Absicht*. In that book, Kant observed that the planet we inhabit is a sphere and that in the consequence of that admittedly banal fact we all can move only on the surface of that sphere. Since we have nowhere else to go, we are bound to live forever in each other's neighbourhood and company. If you move on a spherical surface, you will find, sooner rather than later, that the distance shrinks as you try to stretch it. All effort to lengthen a distance between you and others and to keep it long can be ultimately self-defeating. And so *die vollkommene buergerliche Vereinigung in der Menschengattung*, Kant concluded, is the destiny Nature has chosen for us – the ultimate horizon of our *allgemeine Geschichte* that, prompted and guided by reason and the instinct of self-preservation, we are bound to pursue, and in the fullness of time reach. This is what Kant found out – but it took the world more than two hundred years of experimenting, blundering, and trial and error to find out how right the Königsberg philosopher was.

Kant's foresight has been, ultimately, vindicated – when it became obvious that the era of space (that is, the times when space was the most coveted of prizes, the prime stake in the power struggle and the cure-it-all medicine for apparent and putative social troubles) has come to its close.

Throughout that era, territory was the most avidly desired of resources, the plum prize in any power struggle, while its acquisition or loss was the mark of distinction between the victors and the defeated. But above all, territory was throughout that era the prime guarantee of security. "Security" was a territorial matter: the era of space was the time of "deep hinterland", *Lebensraum*, "sanitary belts" – and the Englishmen's homes that were their castles. Power itself was territorial and so was the privacy and the freedom from power's interference. Land was shelter and a hideout, a place to which one could escape and from inside lock oneself up, "go underground" and

feel safe. The powers-that-be which one wished to escape and hide from stopped at the borders.

This is all over now and has been over for considerable time, of which there was no dearth of signals – but that it is indeed definitely over has become dazzlingly evident only on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. The events of September 11 made it obvious that no one, however resourceful, distant and aloof, can cut oneself off from the rest of the world.

It has also become clear that the annihilation of the protective capacity of space is a double-edged sword: no one can hide from blows, and blows can be plotted and delivered from however enormous a distance. Places no more protect, however strongly they are armed and fortified. Strength and weakness, security and danger have become now, essentially, *extraterritorial* (diffuse) *issues that evade territorial* (and focused) *solutions*. However fortified and armed, *any place and any population can be truly secure only inside a secure world*; a world in which no one has reason or desire to shoot one's way to survival, or to escape from humiliation, or to see the destruction and humiliation of others. We need to repeat the immortal truth of Aristotle: outside a *polis*, only a beast or an angel can live; but in our time we need also add that no human polis can survive for long unless there is a will to re-make the world into a shared *polis*.

Nothing done today in any part of the world (however remote and secluded) can be guaranteed to exert no influence on all the rest of the planet. And nothing can be done on any segment of the globe, however powerful and fortified, without counting the consequences for, and the response of, all the other sectors. For all practical intents and purposes, we are all dependant on each other, and so we bear responsibility for each other's fate whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not. The problem (the life and death problem) is whether we accept that responsibility and make the planet our shared home and the human species, as Kant suggested we should, our joint community.

All communities are imagined: the "global community" is no exception. But imagination turns into an effective, integrating force when aided by socially produced and socially sustained institutions of collective self-identification and self-government. As the imagined global community is concerned, such an institutional network (woven of global agencies of de-

mocratic control, globally binding legal systems, and globally upheld ethical principles) is, however, largely absent – and little has been done to make it reality.

In his recent sober assessment of the current tendency, David Held observed a “strong temptation to simply put up the shutters and defend the position of some nations and countries only”. He did not find the post-11 September prospects particularly encouraging. They contain a chance to “strengthen our multilateral institutions and international legal agreements”, but there is also a possibility of responses that “could take us away from these fragile gains toward a world of further antagonisms and divisions – a distinctively uncivil society”. Held’s overall summary is anything but optimistic: “At the time of writing, the signs are not good.” Our consolation (the only consolation available, but also – let me add – the only one humankind needs when falling on dark times), is the fact that “history is still with us and can be made”.

Yes, indeed, history is anything but finished; the choices can and, inevitably, will be made. As Hannah Arendt told us,

The world is not humane just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse ... We humanize what is going on in the world and on ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human ... The Greeks called this humanness which is achieved in the discourse of friendship *philanthropia*, ‘love of man’, since it manifests itself in a readiness to share the world with other men.

The above words of Hannah Arendt could be – should be – read as prolegomena to all future efforts aimed at arresting the reverse drift and bringing history closer to the ideal of “human community”. Following Gottlieb Ephraim Lessing, one of her intellectual heroes, Arendt avers that “openness to others” is “the precondition of humanity in every sense of the word ... [T]ruly, human dialogue differs from mere talk or even discussion in that it is entirely permeated by pleasure in the other person and what he says.”

It was the great merit of Lessing, in Arendt’s view, that “he was glad for the sake of the infinite number of opinions that arise when men discuss the affairs of this world”. Lessing rejoiced in the very thing that has ever, or

at least since Parmenides and Plato, distressed philosophers: that truth, as soon as it is uttered, is immediately transformed into one opinion among many, is contested, reformulated, reduced to one subject of discourse among others. Lessing's greatness does not merely consist in a theoretical insight that there cannot be one single truth within the human world but in his gladness that it does not exist and that, therefore, the unending discourse among men will never cease as long as there are men at all: "A single absolute truth ... would have been the death of all those disputes ... [a]nd this would have spelled the end of humanity."

The facts that others disagree with us is not an obstacle on the road to human community. But our conviction that our opinions are the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and above all, the sole truth that there is (and our belief that other people's truths, if different from ours, are "mere opinions") is such an obstacle. In her essay "Humanity in Dark Times", Arendt concludes with a quotation from Lessing: "Let each man say what he deems truth, and let truth itself be commended into God."

The message of Lessing and Arendt is quite straightforward. Let us leave open the question of who is in the right. The truth may emerge only at the far end of conversation – in a genuine conversation no partner is certain to know what that end may be. Speakers, and also such thinkers who think in a "speaking mode" cannot, as Franz Rosenzweig points out, anticipate anything; they "must be able to wait" because they "depend on the word of the others"; "they require time". Someone whom a thinker in the "speaking mode" addresses "has not merely ears, but also a mouth". As William James put it in another context: "Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* truth, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of the verifying itself, its *verif-ication*. Its validity is the process of its validation."

And, as Odo Marquard rightly points out, if some interpreters aver that their version of the story is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, it will surely come to a fight. If they, however, allow the possibility of differing interpretations, they will start negotiating; and he who negotiates does not kill ...

Alas, when it comes to disputing truth, chances for such "undistorted communication" as postulated by Jürgen Habermas are slim. The protago-

nists would hardly resist the temptation of resorting to more effective means than the logical elegance and persuasive power of their arguments. They would rather do whatever they can to render the arguments of an adversary inconsequential, better still inaudible, and best of all never voiced in the first place. One argument that will stand the greatest chance of being raised in such stillborn discussion is the ineligibility of the adversary as a partner-in-conversation – due to being inept, deceitful or otherwise unreliable, harbouring ill intentions or altogether inferior and sub-standard.

Were the choice available, refusing conversation or withdrawing from debate would be preferred to arguing the case. Entering argument is, after all, an oblique confirmation of the partner's credentials and a promise to follow the rules and the standards of the (counterfactually) *lege artis* and *bona fide* discourse. It seems safer to declare the adversaries wrong *a priori*, and then deprive them of the right to appeal against the verdict.

Such an expedient of disqualifying the adversary from the truth-debate is a temptation that the stronger side finds hard to withstand. We may say that the ability to ignore the adversaries and to close one's ears to the causes they promote is the index by which the relative volumes and power of resources may be measured. Obversely, not refusing debate and the agreement to negotiate the truth are all too often a sign of weakness – a circumstance that makes the stronger side, or whoever wishes to demonstrate a superior strength, yet more reluctant to abandon its rejectionist stance.

On the side of the stronger, the refusal to talk might pass for the sign of "being in the right", but for the opposite side the denial of the right to defend one's own cause, to be listened to and taken seriously as a bearer of human rights, is the ultimate of snubs and humiliations – offences that cannot be taken placidly without loss of human dignity ...

In a private letter objecting to my consideration of the possibility of cutting the "schismogenetic chain" that tends to transform victims into victimisers (in "Categorical Murder"), Antonina Zheljzskova, the intrepid and uniquely perceptive ethnologist and dedicated explorer of the Balkan's apparently bottomless powder-keg of ethnic animosities, wrote:

"I do not accept that people are in a position to fight the urge of being killers after they were victims. You demand too much from the common

people. It is usual for the victim to turn into a butcher. The poor man, as well as the poor in spirit whom you have helped, come to hate you ... because they want to forget the past, the humiliation, the pain, and the fact that they had achieved something with someone's help, out of someone's pity but not alone ... How to escape from the pain and humiliation? – the natural thing is by killing or humiliating your executioner or benefactor. Or, by finding another, weaker person in order to triumph over him.”

Let us beware of dismissing lightly Zheljaskova's warning. The odds against common humanity seem indeed overwhelming. The weapons do not speak, while the sound of humans speaking seems to be an abominably weak response to the whiz of missiles and the deafening racket of explosives.

I willingly, though with sadness, admit. Looking around the world we share, one is tempted to dream of a better place from which to start on the road to planet-wide humanity. In one of those incisive and uncompromising Irish jokes, a passer-by alongside a river is asked how to get from here to Dublin, and he answers: “If I wished to go to Dublin, I wouldn't start from here”. Indeed, one can imagine a world better fit to journey towards Kant's “universal unity of mankind”. But there is no such alternative world, and so no other site from which to start the journey. And yet not starting it, and starting with no more delay, is – in this case beyond doubt – *not an option*.

The unity of the human species that Kant postulated might be, as he suggested, resonant with Nature's intention – but it certainly does not seem “historically determined”. The continuing uncontrollability of the already global network of mutual dependence and “mutually assured vulnerability” most certainly does not increase the chance of such unity. This only means, however, that at no other time has the keen search for common humanity, and the practice that follows such an assumption, been as urgent and imperative as it is now.



## Levinas: How to Think *Humanitas* of *Homo Humanus*?

Maria Dimitrova  
Sofia University

The above question does not originally come from Levinas' philosophy. This is the old question: what is peculiar for man as man? We don't know its ancestry, but no doubt people have been asking this question since antiquity. In his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger examines this problem again: *In what does the humanity of man consist?*

On November 10, 1946, Jean Beaufret addressed Heidegger: "*Comment redonner un sens au mot 'humanisme'?*"<sup>1</sup> Heidegger responded in December. In fact, he reworked and prepared his response to Beaufret's inquiry in 1947 for publication and the result was published as *Letter on Humanism*. The occasion for the correspondence is Jean-Paul Sartre's essay *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946). In Sartre's view, there is not once and for all a definable "human nature." Existentialism defines man not by his predestined essence—such an essence does not exist—but by his actions. Sartre insists that man's freedom to act is rooted in subjectivity, which alone grants man his dignity and is the only possible basis for humanism.<sup>2</sup> People should be judged in view of their engagements. For Sartre, humanism's focus is the individual in the capacity to be an author of deeds and works. But according to Heidegger, who rejects subjectivity and activism as a possible point of departure, humanism underestimates man's unique position in light of Being. To be human is to be the shepherd and guardian of Being. The guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as man brings the manifestation to language through his thinking. Thinking is not merely "*l'engagement dans l'action*" for and by beings; thinking is *l'engagement* by and for the truth of Being. In Heidegger's perspective, Beaufret's question, "How can some sense be restored to the word humanism?" contains an

assumption that this word has lost its meaning and at the same time presupposes a desire to retain it. Heidegger himself mentions various meanings of the term “humanism” related to different epochs of Western metaphysics: Latin, Christian, Marxist, Existentialist... In Heidegger’s view, the various “isms” are not simply empty sounds. The appearance of a new “ism” signals that a type of thinking, which gives Being the floor, is left behind and is replaced by thinking as an instrument of education and cultivation. It indicates that man has to experience his own epoch—and accordingly his own essence—more primordially. Heidegger himself proposes a new definition of “what humanism now means.” Fundamental ontology identifies the *human-ness* of *homo humanus* with *Dasein*’s authenticity, that is, with *Dasein*’s understanding of Being as responsibility for the truth of Being. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s letter to Beaufret leaves open the question about the need of a new form of humanism: “Should we still keep the name “humanism” for a humanism that contradicts all previous humanism—although it in no way advocates the inhuman?”<sup>3</sup>

The question about the *humanness* of *homo humanus* becomes a central topic of Levinas’ works. Of course, in a sense, this is the same old and banal question “What is peculiar to man as man?” But the little modification of its formulation already implies an enormous change of mood and thought. Heidegger asks, “In what does the humanity of man consist?” because for him, humanism is man’s caring to be human and not inhuman; “inhuman,” that is, being outside his essence. Levinas underlines the originality and fruitfulness of Heidegger’s approach to that hackneyed topic. Heidegger succeeded in revealing an unexpected but epoch-making meaning concealed in this so-many-times repeated question. His solution—“to comprehend Being is to have to be”—states without doubt a new and deeper level of wisdom. That is why the statement “*Dasein* is a being for whom, in his being, his own being is at stake” (*Being and Time*) is so seductive. But for Levinas, Heidegger’s wisdom is still not an original or primordial truth. It “deduces” the personal from the ontological while the personal is ethical. Levinas’ radical question is: does not the human dimension fall in the rupture with being instead of becoming a care for being? Can we really speak about man’s essence and man’s manifestation as if man is a being who cares for

Being? Certainly, such a quest leads him inevitably to a discussion with Heidegger as well as with the entire onto-theo-logical tradition.

For Levinas, if everything human is reduced to ontology, to be a man is to be in service of Being. And to be a part of Being's adventure is to obey something like the "faceless" fate. Fundamental ontology is a philosophy of power supporting obedience to the Neutral. Levinas thinks that the humanness of *homo humanus* constitutes itself first of all in the face-to-face relationship with the Other as a real and quite tangible person. The whole Self as *me* is in service not to the system of Being (available only through *mine-ness*), but in service to a concrete, here and now existing neighbor, whereby the *conatus essendi* of mine-ness is surmounted.

Most often Levinas' philosophy is considered to be devoted to the problem of the Other or the otherness of the Other. But in fact, Levinas' thought is concerned not with the Other as such but with my relation to him or her. The main issue is my responsibility for the Other and it can be extended to the substitution of the Other by me, wherein I am transformed into a hostage of the Other. The focus of Levinas' philosophy is the moral subject: the "I" in accusative case, that is, "me," who has no chance to hide behind a mask of a Third one.

Within the system of Being the Other is either an object of my interest, or a partner of my activities. She or he is already grasped in my horizon, i.e., in her or his Other's horizon. Within the sphere of being, my mine-ness and the other's otherness are to a high degree neutralized—made reciprocal and balanced. They are measured by the criterion of the Third one and in this way *Das Man* dominates the whole sphere of being. However, according to Levinas, there is "beyond being," which he also refers to as "otherwise than being". "Beyond," Levinas proposes, is the Other's subjectivity, which is Transcendence itself. In regard to this matter, Levinas was influenced by his mentor, Husserl, who believed that any transcendence (e.g., the transcendence of the outer world) is already built on the assumption of the transcendence of the Other Ego's subjectivity—that is, the subjectivity of my Alter Ego. But, for Husserl, it is *myself* posing transcendence of my Alter Ego as an opposition to my own immanence, whereas Levinas would not agree to deduce the other's transcendence from my immanence. For Levinas, one is not constituted as a different human by and within myself, one is opposed to

me not in comparison with me, one has a face in oneself (i.e., one's own separate subjectivity, absolutely transcendent and exterior). Levinas follows Sartre, who states that I encounter the other instead of inventing or constituting him. The meeting with the Other is not limited to a simple empirical event. The moral attitude to the Other, although penetrating our empirical relations, could not be reduced to the instrumental content of these relations. But for Levinas, the meeting between somebody else and me is not simply a starting point of reflection either—by reflection the Other is objectified and almost petrified. If the Other is approached as a face, i.e., as what in the visage is irreducible to visibility,<sup>4</sup> I am summoned to enter into a relation with the Other in his or her dimension of Transcendence.

The only definition of Transcendence is that it exceeds any definition. Transcendence does not allow us to include it in our framework of evaluation and action, that is, to grasp it in our horizon. Transcendence always overcomes the idea we can form of it. Transcendence is beyond my capacities to comprehend; but, then, what could be my relation to it if Transcendence always escapes my grip and I can never embrace it? Moreover, how can I understand it and even relate to it, if all human knowledge appears as inadequate to and incommensurable with it?

Levinas is confident that, as finite beings, we refer to Transcendence. In order to consider oneself as a finite being, one should possess the idea of Infinity. In order to experience oneself as mortal, one should have an idea of Immortality. But we can turn the relation upside down and inquire whether notions such as Transcendence, Immortality, Eternity, Infinity, etc., are words designed merely to create sweet illusions by negation of our own limits. Concerning this, Heidegger's sober reminder that man is being toward death (and that any surpassing of limits stops at the border of death) is very appropriate and impressive. Without doubt, the nothingness of death is the most personal and authentic frame of reference.

Although Heidegger was very convincing in this respect, Levinas nevertheless criticized him saying that for him, not only my death and time are at stake, but also the death and time of the Other. Of course, the most personal is my death and nobody can experience it instead of me; but at the same time, not less personal is my responsibility for the

Other's time and death. My responsibility for the Other makes me unique and irreplaceable. The responsibility for the Other means closeness: face-to-face, a neighborhood wherein we have to seek the humanness of the human. My care for not simply myself, but also for the Other's being, coincides with the event of sociality. The care for the Other transcends the *conatus* of *Jemeinigkeit* and this is the way of the existence of Infinity: not as an extrapolation of myself to Eternity, but at least as a shrinking of myself in order to make a room for the Other, paying attention to her or him and even, at least sometimes, sustaining her or his Otherness; first, in face-to-face relationship and then in the public sphere.

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It is necessary to repeat that the matter, in the hands of Levinas' philosophy, is not the Other or the otherness of the Other, but "me" as a moral subject. The entire newness of Levinas' work consists in a different interpretation of these two words: "subject" and "moral."

The Greek word for "subject" (*hypokeimenon*) signifies "that which underlines." Gadamer translates it as "that which remains unchanged as it underlines the process of all changes." Gadamer reminds us that Aristotle introduces this concept in his treatment of nature. Aristotle's definition could be applied to everything in the cosmos, including any animate being, and any such being who is a political/social *bios*—that is, who is a *reasonable animal*. "One may well ask," says Gadamer, "how from this original orientation, there could develop the modern concept of subject and subjectivity, with its particular connotation." For Gadamer, "The answer is obvious. It came through the Cartesian *cogito me cogitare*."<sup>5</sup>

For Levinas, however, this answer is not so obvious.

It seems that Descartes' *cogito* follows Aristotle's definition of reason as a distinctive feature of being human. However, Descartes believes that the reason is an ability, which God granted to us, and at the same time, an ability we ought to cultivate. It is not sufficient just to have reason; it is necessary to know or, more precisely, to learn how to use it. That is why Descartes wrote *Discourse on Method* and *Rules for the Direction of Mind*. It is

not enough to know truth; we need to know how we have achieved it. The world as it is present in my experience within a given culture, faith, tradition, etc., should be put under doubt and then logically proved in order to be reconstructed/constructed as *episteme* in contrast to *doxa*. The sensual reality that has just emerged should be elaborated anew in order to be true. The result will be objective knowledge, which can be achieved by anyone who uses the reason (by definition universal) implanted in each human. *Cogito, ergo sum* forms the metaphysical foundations of the unified knowledge, representing the world valid for any rational subject. The most important point of Descartes' philosophy is exactly the figure of the Subject identified with Reason itself. Descartes is convinced that we have to develop the sparkle of Reason that God has inserted in us in order to become masters over nature. God has granted us the natural light of Reason in order to distinguish between true and false, good and evil. However, God is not reduced by Descartes to the genius inside of me because God has preserved the position of Exteriority.

The connection with Transcendence is still important in the Cartesian system, but the Transcendence wastes away in Kant, where God has the status only of a Transcendental Idea. Leaving God aside, Kant becomes a pioneer of the modern conception of autonomy; that is, of the sovereign subject who is the source of the legislation which he himself has to follow. Levinas considers as a principal merit of Kant the separation of moral and theoretical reason/subject—a dichotomy which is conditioned by the separation of the empirical (sensual) and transcendental subject.<sup>6</sup> The idea of God's Transcendence has not a theoretical but a regulative (moral) meaning.

The tendency of breaking any link with Transcendence won out in Fichte's idealism. What Fichte's predecessors regarded as given from outside (for instance, Kant's thing-in-itself), Fichte already viewed as "non-I" posed by "I." Fichte's inner dialectic model is developed by Hegel and extended as an all-embracing system of philosophy and, at the same time, world history. Hegel's teaching is an apogee of Modernity displaying the process of alienation and sublation, a process which is endless progress, emancipation, history. It is fulfilled by negation in the conflict of contraries. The opposites are reconciled in synthesis, which is an extension of the

historical experience. Individuals follow their particular interests and purposes in the struggle for recognition—as such they are children of their time, but the Eternal Absolute Spirit of humanity is embodied, although behind them, in the whole process of their activity. Absolute Reason is the Subject of the entire human history. Transcendence is incarnated in the Immanence of historical development, where going forward is coming backward, or where construction presupposes reconstruction. As truth is impossible outside of the scientific system of knowledge, so too is freedom impossible outside of the State and its legislative system. The absolute and true Subject is that cunning, self-unfolding system which always recreates itself anew and uses particular individuals as its agents. It seems that Hegel includes and works out all Aristotle's definitions of the subject, proposing a great encyclopedia of human knowledge and history; but Levinas shares the accusation, now common, that Hegel's subject, as well as Modern Subject in general, is faceless. Levinas emphasizes that in German Idealism ethics is reduced to politics. Kant does not make a clear distinction between ethics and legislation. In Hegel's philosophy morality is sublated in the system of governmental law. History is a battle between masters and slaves and in this incessant state of war human beings have no faces—they are rather beings than humans.

Still at the first wave of criticism against Hegel's philosophy, the demystification of the subject as a carrier of Reason had begun. Nietzsche insisted that we should look for the "will to power" behind reason; Freud declared that the whole culture is not a fruit of reason but rather the sublimation of the libido, i.e., the rationalization of unconscious impulses; Bergson called reason "an enlightened instinct." This mood penetrated deeply into the intellectual atmosphere of Europe around the two World Wars. Modern optimism concerning the triumphant march of Reason in history disappeared, and the epoch of complete suspicion of the truth of rational beings began. As it is well known, this suspicion has extended as far as doubting the existence of any rational subject. The subject is considered as a rational being only to the degree it is perceived as a particle of a certain supra-individual mechanism or self-moved structure. As a matter of fact, in the second half of the last century the death of the Subject is declared in such a way. Postmodern philosophy attacks the main character of Modernity (the

Subject as identified with Reason), but it does not dare to deny the concept of individual as person, belonging to something like a social/political gear. Postmodern critics—sometimes openly, sometimes bashfully—challenge all categories justifying the equation between humanity, sociality, and rationality right back to its earliest sources. Levinas joins critics of Hegel’s philosophy but not in their attacks against the intelligibility of being human. He looks for another and more human form of intelligibility. Like many Postmodern authors, Levinas goes back to the roots of our current culture and world-view.

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We have a habit of speaking uncritically about the unified Judeo-Christian culture, whose origin is an alloy of Judaic religion and Greek philosophy. But for Levinas, some very important meanings were abandoned when ancient Judaism was translated into Greek. This is the case with the concept of the humanness of the human.

According to Judaism, the humanness of humans is created through the Word. The first word was order: God’s commandments. Jewish people have been chosen to respond to God’s appeal to them. The first commandment is “Thou shall not kill.”<sup>7</sup> Man is a subject of God’s testament insofar as he is responsible for and before the others.

In the Greek language, the equivalent of Judaic order is *kosmos*, where regularity reigns (e.g., the orbits of the planets). In such a perspective, the human being is represented as a *mikro-kosmos*, or microcosm, where *logos* is in power. Humans are rational animals and as such—as reason-constituted beings—they have their distinguished social/political nature. In Christianity, as in Judaism, the Word also creates the humanness of humans, but the Word is made flesh. The primordial order (“order” is understood here within the Greek sense of “ultimate structure”) has a meaning of the incarnation of the Word as the Creation. Christianity borrows the terminology of the Greeks and Romans and transforms it in order to establish itself as a core of the Western culture. In Greek, as well as in the Christian languages, the humanness of humans is understood as *nature*. In his *Preface to the Old Tes-*

*tament*, Martin Luther discusses how Christians should regard Moses: “Thus, I keep the commandments, which Moses has given, not because Moses gave these commandments, but because they have been implanted in me by nature... They are implanted in everyone by nature and written in everyone’s heart.”

Modern philosophy adopts the Christian tendency of transferring God’s place “from outside to inside,” from Transcendence to Immanence, from Exteriority to Interiority. In Hegel’s philosophy, this tendency is brought to its extremity wherein the entire Exteriority is represented as Interiority of the historical world. Transcendence manifests itself in human history.

In the Old Testament, however, we also hear that humans were born as moral subjects not by virtue of the response and obedience to God’s commandments but by trespassing them. Man becomes a moral being after eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge and starts to distinguish between good and evil. He starts imitating God; he wants to become a Lord and to be free to choose. Levinas charges Christianity and Paganism with the same sin. As Paganism creates its gods according to its measure and begins to worship the natural forces as divine, so Christianity creates the image of God in human likeness and begins to worship icons substituting the representations of the absolutely Other for Transcendence. For Levinas, authentic monotheism is incompatible with the belief in myths and any idolatry. God is Transcendence and Transcendence cannot be possessed. My definitions, symbols, and representations reduce God to my possession. Western cultures produce images of God and are convinced that as a result they know the Other. Because of this self-confidence, they began to consider themselves free and autonomous beings. On the one hand, Levinas admires Western culture for developing the conception of personality and one’s own freedom. On the other, he is discontent with Western culture because it transmits God from Exteriority into Interiority with the help of representations. One of the most influential Western interpretations of the relation between God and man endows man with being a co-creator of the Creation and, as such, is an active subject of changes of the historical world. Levinas offers his own critique of onto-theo-logical God.

In general, in Western culture, efforts have been directed to the under-

standing of human nature and the results of this can be expressed in Ortega's paradoxical words: humans have no nature—they have history; or in Sartre's words: only existence is given to humans and not their essence—being free through action, one makes out of oneself whatever she or he wants. Levinas approaches these maxims skeptically:

The concern of contemporary philosophy to free man from categories adapted solely to things, must be not content with the opposition between the static, inert, and determined nature of things, on the one hand, and dynamism, *duree*, transcendence or freedom as the essence of man, on the other. It is not so much a matter of opposing one essence to another, or of saying what human nature is. It is primary a matter of our finding a vantage point from which man ceases to concern us in terms of the horizon of being, i.e., ceases to offer himself to our own powers. The being as such can only be in a relation in which he is *invoked*.<sup>8</sup>

And also,

By relating to beings in the openness of Being, understanding finds a meaning for them in terms of Being. In this sense, understanding does not *evoke* them, but only *names* them.<sup>9</sup>

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To a certain degree, Heidegger's philosophy is an attempt to restore the broken connection between Being's history and Being's invocation, between openness and summoning.

Does humanness consist in the fact that human being is *animal rationale*? Does being human mean that one can think? If yes, what should we mean by thinking? What is Reason? Is not the common way of thinking simply a reproduction of the rubrics of *Das Man*? Heidegger suggests that by these rubrics and their repetition the passion for technology and instrumental reason triumphs. Thanks to its efficiency *Das Man* is not aware of its historicity even when it narrates world history. *Das Man* is immersed in everyday concerns and has forgotten its own being-toward-death. *Das Man*'s very thinking pretends to coincide with universal Reason, but according to authentic ontology, thinking in its essence is something very personal

and coincides with the facticity of *Dasein*'s temporal existence. Thinking is realized not in human control over the world and its circumstances, but in understanding *Dasein*'s very thrown-ness and in the resoluteness to accept one's own fate. There is no difference between *Dasein*'s understanding of Being and *Dasein*'s existence in the world. For Heidegger, the whole of Western civilization emanates from the intelligibility of Being—even as forgetfulness of Being. Being itself is inseparable from its disclosure, not because humanity is active in seeking and finding truth, there is truth, but just the opposite: because there is truth as disclosure of Being, there is humanity.

Heidegger's philosophy seems to be in contradiction to classical intellectualism without abandoning respect for reason. But for Heidegger, reason itself is not activity; it is rather an attentive listening to Being. *Dasein* is a subject of knowledge and work—builder of the world and creator of culture—thanks to its attention to the silent words of Being. In closeness to Being, *Dasein* feels itself in question, questioned by the silence of Being. The response to it is the very existence of *Dasein*—a response which is possible and chosen by *Dasein*'s resoluteness.

Of course, Levinas has written his philosophy under the strong impact of Heidegger's voice. (As it is well known, Levinas introduced the works of Husserl and Heidegger to the French public.) But Levinas looks for another intelligibility of the humanness of the subject: he seeks a meaning beyond the *esse* of being, meaning that no longer states itself in terms of Being (or beings) and is prior to Being.

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In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus says that in the life of any of us a moment comes when we have to take the burden of time on our own shoulders, whereas before that moment, time had carried us on its wings. Heidegger would correct this statement saying that *Dasein* as a being-toward-death carries the burden of time since the moment of its first breath. In his turn, Levinas would add that the moral subject brings not only the care of its own time but takes up the weight of the Other's time, too. Thanks to that double burden, human existence is diachronic.

After Husserl, we usually think of time as synchronization of the moments of life through “I think” which is itself a foundation of “I can.” But for Levinas, the moral subject exists in double temporality. My time cannot and does not coincide with the time of the Other, although the moral subject’s time expires sustaining the Other’s time. In the sphere of common time the subject persists in the nominative form as “I” and the Other is another “I” (Husserl’s alter ego); by temporalization of time the subject is in the accusative case as “me” and the Other is in the dative because of the question “for whom?” The conversation with, attitude to, and meeting of somebody else, understood in a Levinasian manner, cannot be conceived merely by Husserl’s notion of intentionality. Levinas looks for a different kind of “intentionality,” one that is more original than Husserl’s, and it is found in the sincerity of Saying. The Word, the conversation according to Levinas’ model, cannot be properly understood as a reciprocal relation between equal partners, i.e., dialogue (as it is for Buber, for example). The conversation is not a partnership since the Other is in a position of superiority: he or she questions me. But this does not mean that I am in a position of inferiority. I am the Single One<sup>10</sup> who is responsible for responding, for giving to another because he or she is one in need. As a moral subject, I am called to pay attention to the Other and thus feel myself chosen, unique, and irreplaceable. I can’t avoid the responsibility because my failure to respond is already a kind of response. If I try to hide myself and to transfer my responsibility to somebody else, this attempt would be immorality itself, a wish to ignore morality. But when as a subject I start to respond and give, I am not already somebody in a passive position, that is, somebody called in the accusative “me,” but in the nominative “I.” Saying is then betrayed by the Said, the moral subject is once again restored as an agent at the level of the life-world, wherein even the conversation is interpreted as a kind of action.

The subject as an actor is the Same: the “I” that is identity and the very work of identification. This kind of identification is, so to speak, from inside. On the contrary, my responsibility as a moral subject is a kind of deprivation of my identity. It comes to me from the side of the Other. In this way, Exteriority and Alterity are constitutive of my morality. Only as a

moral subject that replies “That’s me” can I transcend my Self toward the Other. Thanks to the encounter, or face-to-face event, the subject is withdrawn from the prison of the anonymous order that was accepted until now without questioning. This withdrawal is produced by the appeal of the Other. Even the bare presence of another appeals to my self-reflection. Called by somebody else, I distance myself from my own Ego. Herein is the starting point of the self-criticism, which is the restless process. The moral subject is never content with itself: the more it gives, the more it falls in debt; the more self-critical it is, the guiltier it feels; the better it is, the less satisfied it is for the good it has done. Further, it is important to note that the vertigo of bottomless penetration into depths of Interiority is provoked by the weight of Exteriority.

Moral meaning requires a subject bearing everything, a *sub-jectum* who is under the weight of the universe, responsible without measure, always already open to the Outside and to the Different which can never be attained. Subjectivity is then the “I” who encounters the Other in the face of another and becomes “me.” My sameness is affected, contested, and overturned by that encounter. Levinas describes the moral subject as one who has lost one’s place and as a being that opens his or her reserves for the Other in the sincerity of the Saying. The moral subject is devoted to the Other to such a degree as to sustain the Other’s presence, which is at the same time an excess over the presence. But the excess over the present, Levinas notes, is the life of the Infinite. The Other will never be attained and in this “never” the forever of time must be sought. The moral subject supports the Other’s time and what supports, says Levinas, gives way to what is supported. The moral subject is responsible even for the responsibility of the Other, whom can neither grasp, nor comprehend, nor contain, nor even anticipate. Morality of the Subject comes from the outside in spite of it, as an election or an inspiration, in the form of the uniqueness of someone assigned.

Meaning is born by speech. Reason is constituted by conversation. But for Western people, says Levinas, it is not the approach to the other person that makes sense; it is a communication of information, of what is communicated. Signification is understood as a mode of representation of being. Levinas speaks about the significance of the one-for-the-other, independent

of any content and every communication of contents. On the level of ontology, says Levinas, “for” has a meaning, which is a rupture within rationality. At the invocative level of ethics however the “for” as “one-for-the-other” is a primordial rationality.

The moral subject is constituted not according to the model of action and interaction, where each action causes a reaction (as Newton already observed concerning solid physical bodies), but according to the model of the Word and Discourse. In the conversation, being an interlocutor, I am open to the other and feel as a being called and summoned to reply. The Other, from his or her bare presence, asks me whether I am not a usurper and violator of his or her right to be—even by the “*Da*” of *Dasein*, i.e. by my claim that this is my place under the sun. The self-confident “I” doubts its own rightness and breaks the totality and circularity of self-evident, everyday interaction by being called to withdraw from reciprocity. In front of the face of the Other, my naive Ego starts to apologize and to seek justification for its own Ego-ism. For Levinas, the authentic conversation already presupposes a prayer to the Other and an apology-justification of my freedom, my spontaneity, my position, my identity, my possession, my values, and in the end—my life. The conversation is already a greeting, attention, and respect toward the Other: an initial fulfillment of justice. Levinas emphasizes that justice does not result from the normal play of injustice, that is to say, from politics, economy, legislation, and, in general, from any ontological game. Justice appears as a principle inculcated from “beyond,” invoked by generosity, goodness, and charity. These motives are understandable in their authenticity only as proximity, love, and responsibility for others.

In the debate between humanists and anti-humanists, which occupied the intellectual scene in the second half of twentieth century Europe, Levinas is definitely in the humanist camp. But in opposition to Sartre, the intellectual leader of humanists, he states that the humanness of *homo humanus* consists not first of all in my freedom, self-assertion, and right to be myself; a true humanism is concerned first of all with the rights and freedom of the Other. According to Levinas, freedom should be preceded by my responsibility for others, and “for-the-other” is the very delineation of the human.

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- <sup>1</sup> Cf. Heidegger's notion of how we can restore meaning to the word "humanism" in his *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 195.
  - <sup>2</sup> Cf. Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Anti-humanism, and Being*, (New York: Routledge, 1995).
  - <sup>3</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 225.
  - <sup>4</sup> Maurice Blanchot's definition of "face."
  - <sup>5</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 33, no. 3 (July 2000).
  - <sup>6</sup> Kant is aware that reflection requires the Subject to distance itself not only from empirical experience but at the same time to distance itself from the empirical Self as Subject of this experience.
  - <sup>7</sup> This was forgotten during Nazism and Stalinism, where the killing of innocent people was elevated to the level of State politics. We recall that Levinas himself had a personal experience as a victim of both of these regimes and his life was changed crucially because they came to power.
  - <sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 8 – 9.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
  - <sup>10</sup> Levinas' Single One is very different from Kierkegaard's Single One. Kierkegaard's subject rejects the system in the name of an immediate and direct response to God's call. For Levinas it is not myself as an Individual, but the Other, who transcends the system (cosmos, history, being). "That's me" responds to God's appeal not directly, but only through my responses to the other humans.



## On Sophistication and Morality

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With regard to students, it is held that sophistication is a virtuous quality that can be obtained as one of the residual effects of a university education. Students leaving university are assumed to have a sharper and broader edge than those who enter their respective occupations directly. Aside from the technical skills learned, we hope that students, upon graduation, will undergo a transformation of self – a transformation from the uneducated concept of self as center of the world and constructor of reality to a more fully mature, erudite self as a being amongst the world and an agent for positive change. As skills alone cannot guide one in this direction, faculties in the humanities make it their purview to draw from the lessons of the classics and the canonical literature of the humanities, which balances the vocation with the education. In the words of Jorge Dominguez, formerly of Harvard University: “A liberal education is what remains after you have forgotten the facts that you learned while becoming educated.” It is this which provides one with a level of sophistication.

The word comes from the Greek σοφιστής or sophist, a skillful man; σοφίζειν, to instruct; and σοφος, wise. It is cognate with the Latin word sapiens. A sophist was (and still is) a captious reasoner; thus, he is sly, cunning, wily, slick – the idea being artful or skillful “reasoning-around” – compare our modern English use of “wise” as in wise-guy or smart-ass. (A wiseacre is really a “wise-sayer” – *wijs-segger* in the old tongue and taken from the Dutch.) The negative nuance in “sophist” is best known from Socrates’ disparagement of them and the unscrupulous means by which they held persuasion to be of greater importance than the truth of an issue. This range of meaning from a positive to negative nuance of SOPH- by the Greeks is indicative of various cultures’ estimation of just how much

knowledge tends to corruption. The instrument necessary to harness and exercise control over one's application of his knowledge can be seen to be something apart from sophistication as understood; there is something more to it.

The word can be used negatively for some evil or wrongdoing: "The terrorists employed a very sophisticated tactic" is the crafty deceiver use; "He is a very sophisticated young man" is the positive use. If it is to be used in a positive sense, I want to focus this meditation on just what it is that differentiates the two terms rather than what is common to the two senses. It should not be the case that the quality which makes the term bad can be the same which allows it to be good. Something is lacking.

### **What it is**

We talk about sophistication in many ways. In the case of our university students, some adjectives used to describe quality in the way of sophistication in their work and academic reputation include:

- Economical – much information in a short space or amount of time; concise.
- Salient – profitable, beneficial, of worth.
- Erudite – learned, mastery of subject area, deep.
- Objective – open, not dogmatic or subjective, not biased or partial.
- Probing – penetrating, beyond the obvious.
- Insightful – finds and establishes connections and implications.
- Unique/original – does not follow what others are saying or how they say it; does not try to be a writer by imitation of the status quo.

I would offer that "sophisticated" signifies a variety of the above in combination under the commitment to truth. A student essay, for example, does not have to be long to be sophisticated. The ability of an author to make connections, uncover hidden assumptions and biases or motives, to make analogies, and his manner of expression with exacting and colorful turns of phrase are what counts. But is this an innate talent or can it be learned?

Certain people, of course, are gifted in certain areas. However, if the talents which comprise being sophisticated could not be learned, we would

be helpless to try to improve our students' skills in analysis and critical inquiry. We could no longer talk about any transformation of self. Professors have an obligation to provide students with access to what counts as sophisticated work and to make explicit why it may be deemed so, and in what way it is not in evidence in a student's own work. There arises after some time in the course of one's studies a sense of quality, of being in league with the big shots. This is the kind of learning which signals a transformation in self or character; the absorption of factual data for the professions would not alone induce this effect.

If someone wishes to become sophisticated, it must be done somewhere – and today this is done mostly at university. Depending on the era, sophistication has been taught in many different places over the centuries: the monastery/university, the king's court, the military, secular colleges, or whichever institution has currency as being of the *αριστος* or the cream of what a culture has for itself in the way of sophistication. Let us skip the question of whether sophistication is qualitatively the same in each of these institutions just mentioned since we are concerned with the student of today's university. What is of issue is the point that sophistication in a good sense involves possessing a particular style, an additional ingredient more than mere data.

Sophistication implies style, and style implies measure or proportion, notes Richard M. Weaver in his book *Ideas Have Consequences*. It is for this reason that sophistication, like society, he argues, is hierarchic in essence. It is no coincidence that societies which impose by force an absence of hierarchic measure in the name of equality or fraternity always suffer a sequent loss in style and sophistication in the social fabric.

### **Sophistication and flair**

Creativity (and the cornucopia of individual selves that manifests its variety) is, in our cultural heritage, held to be a key factor for success. We hear talk all the time about creativity being an essential quality for the job market. We hear of schools and colleges promising that they can instill creativity in their pupils and students. Creativity is looked upon as a quality that does not present a threat to the fabric and cohesion of society, but is rather one of its necessary ingredients. Students hoping to become seen as sophis-

ticated instantly recognize the need for individuality and uniqueness. Unfortunately, they tend to place too much emphasis on this aspect.

Anybody can produce flair because it is nothing more than a “shining out” from the rest. But this does not tell us much other than that a person is unlike others. Being different for the sake of being different is counterfeit individualism. It means being different as an end in itself rather than being different as the means to some end. Flair which is unprincipled and unguided this way leads to flamboyance. With these rogue colors and no principle to fly them, flair can be judged only by the whim and caprice of the status quo. Hence the dry, arid, silly MTV-claims to individualism, consumer individualism, or conformist individualism.

### **Sophistication and knowledge**

Sophisticated could indicate erudition, cleverness, depth, insight, creativity, and any combination thereof, as listed already. Prior to these designations, however, we must assume that there is a knowledge about which one is sophisticated – that is, knowledge of what one is talking about. For it is on the basis of knowledge that one can say anything at all about a topic. The “how you say it” must come after the “what you have to say”. Even with limited resources or command of vocabulary, one must still possess some measure of knowledge and thus one’s opinions/judgments about an issue can go only as far as one’s knowledge about it.

The qualities pertaining to sophistication listed above become meaningful only in proportion to competence in factual knowledge; for we would not likely esteem a person as sophisticated if he spoke eloquently of nonsense or basics only, no matter how much flair he spoke with. If sophistication depended totally on style in absence of factual knowledge, then the egalitarians would be correct in saying that no view or interpretation is better than any other; all are equal, just different. Sophistication then has an epistemic base.

Now we can see sophistication as being limited by one’s knowledge yet improvable by one’s craft and style – one’s flair. But this is still an inadequate conception of sophistication and one which is common amongst students today. In this way, Socrates despised the sophists of his time, for they practiced and taught in their schools these means of flair for persuading

in the very absence of knowledge. Their clients paid them so handsomely not because the sophists had knowledge but because they, the clients, lacked it. Thus did Goethe's Mephistopheles pay the Supreme Sophist for knowledge – but it was not knowledge of facts and languages and the mysteries of nature that he wanted; as one scholar put it, "Mephistopheles merely sought the gold, guns, and girls". What the Evil One could not have provided Mephistopheles with, at any bargain, would have been sophistication. Sophistication in the rhetorical sense of being a sophist is not craft and skill in any positive sense at all but a beguiling pose, a charade, a charlatan.

### **There is a moral basis to being sophisticated**

If we admit that sophistication involves accumulated knowledge and creative flair, it must have something else which sets it apart from its negative cousin. Many evil people possess knowledge and creativity.

I propose that our third and sufficient quality is a moral basis and that it works concurrently with a commitment to truth. One central feature of the Western Greco-Christian heritage, indeed its foundational paradigm, is the equation of morality with truth. Without an honest commitment to objective truth, style and creativity and inquiry all become subjugated to personal motives and agendas; and personal agendas, when rational (i.e., honest) debate fails them, entail the use of coercion, and intimidation – this is the tyranny of sophism in practice.

Sophistication without morality puts man against man in the pursuit to outdo the Other. "It is not true, as is sometimes said, that man cannot organize the world without God. What is true is that, without God, he can only organize it against man" (Henri de Lubac, *Drama of Atheist Humanism*). It may be suggested, with some measure of confidence and justification, that Western culture is largely becoming more and more un-sophisticated, judging from the point of view of its bizarre adamancy that morality hinders the gratification of one's desires and career attainments. In order to be successful consumers of sex and gadgets, we must be good sophists, clever at their procurement.

I believe that students can restore or at least maintain positive sophistication by reflecting on this significance of morality to a "sophisticated society". Said scholar George Weigel, in his analysis of the European Union's

priorities regarding culture in *The Cube and the Cathedral*, “European man has convinced himself that in order to be modern and free he must be radically secular. That conviction has had crucial, indeed lethal, consequences for European public life and European culture. Indeed, that conviction and its public consequences are at the root of Europe’s contemporary crisis of civilizational morale.” If we allow morality to be tossed out of the picture of education, then true, genuine, authentic sophistication goes along with it. Rather than rely on our own imagination and confidence in moral fortitude, we are beginning to prefer what Weigel calls the “dubious international security” of the kind of global mass society envisioned by many educationalists today and accepted by students on account of its attractive omission of any moral dimension to the concept of sophistication.

Sophistication which concerns merely the practical and expedient is negative – that which men can accomplish in order to “get the job done” in courts and civic debate for either putting forth or discarding some matter of legislature or group action. The expedient, however, characterizes the purview of the hoi-polloi, the din and rabble of the Tribes. Whereas expediency might be the heart of advertising or marketing or ceremony, it is not so for intellectual inquiry if this inquiry is to be free of the tyranny of the sophist and the agenda-monger. But positive sophistication need not be confined to the academic sphere. A sophisticated businessman is an example of what used to be conducted as a “Gentleman’s agreement” – and it held binding between the two parties more than did recourse to law. As most students are headed for careers in the world of commerce, which by definition means constant interaction with others, the issue of morality cannot be reasonably dismissed from any notion of keeping a sophisticated community.

Education means one who has been “led out”, i.e., of the masses: from *ex ducare* to *ē ducatus* and is allied to those leaders “duke” and “duchess”. This transcends the verb σοφίζεῖν as teaching or better “making wise” because there is an ultimate moral principle towards which logos is deployed. Those in the Marketplace, who are not *ex ducatus*, are characterized, amongst other things, by their lack of patience for nuances and distinctions (i.e., of proportions and measures, or sophistication); however, their unsophistication is all-too-frequently sneered at by society’s culture-elites pri-

marily on account of their moral disposition, *not* one of knowledge or skill or wile. An education then, if it is to impart sophistication, obliges us, students and faculty both, to train and exercise the pursuit of knowledge and moral example together in cadence – not dissonance.

The immorality of sophistic relativism (sophistos in the negative sense) depends on guile and emotivism and can emerge on top only when it displaces truth as a “social construction” or subjectively biased “narrative” of an individual or particular culture, or when it equates morality with expediency. The axioms which sophistication (sophistos in the positive sense) requires then are (1) knowledge of one’s subject, (2) moral disposition, and (3) creative, vibrant self-expression or flair. Without all three together we would do just as well to educate our students with roaming, peripatetic schools consisting in a teacher or guru and his handful of followers instead of any system of higher education which promises to produce sophisticated young citizens. Universities will fare better in their mission to create sensitive, intelligent communities by considering the importance of including, in their required liberal arts curricula, the classic texts of Greco-Christian morality, upon which this noble institution stands or falls.



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# ART AND BEYOND...

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## **In Search of Meaning**

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*Questa conferenza è stata tenuta a Londra il 27 ottobre 1999 alla Hayward Gallery nel quadro delle manifestazioni culturali che hanno affiancato l'esposizione di Lucio Fontana. Ringrazio il prof. Simon Glendinning dell'università di Reading, organizzatore dell'incontro, per il suo cortese invito e l'aiuto prestatomi nella elaborazione del testo inglese.*

This paper was given in London on October 27, 1999, at the Hayward Gallery, as one of the cultural events that accompanied an art exhibition by Lucio Fontana. I thank Prof. Simon Glendinning of University of Reading, organizer of the meeting, for his kind invitation and for the help provided in preparing the English text.

### **Introduction**

The questions before us concern the nature of our interpretations of works of art. In this talk I will present my position on this subject with reference to the thought of a twentieth century philosopher who has been my philosophical master and main point of reference: Paul Ricoeur. In one of my books, I attempted to trace the development of his whole philosophy. My focus there was his conception of the human subject and the interpretive processes through which that subject "finds itself." It seems to me that this issue of self-interpretation has a profound relationship to questions about the aesthetic experience and interpretation of art. I will try to explain why in the

following passages. In order to do so, however, I need to introduce some of the basic features of Ricoeur's view of self-interpretation. It will only be at the end that I will be able to say something about the issues of interpretation and objectivity that Prof. Simon raised in his introduction.

### **Self-Interpretation**

For Ricoeur, self-interpretation, the process in which a self aims to grasp or understand itself, does not aim at discovering or describing something which is already there, settled and fixed prior to the act of interpretation. This is not to say that the self is pure fiction. As finite beings, we do not create ourselves but find ourselves in the world. Nevertheless, the processes through which the self finds itself are interpretive processes and they inform (and are reciprocally informed) by what is interpreted. The self-interpreter—and ultimately we are all self-interpreters—can be thought of as a reader who is continually instructed by listening to the text he or she is reading. And, let me say in passing, we should construe “text” here as widely as possible. Not only should we include the texts, written or spoken, that we receive from our historical, artistic, literary, or religious tradition, but we should also include those texts which we ourselves make when narrating our lives, or when in the course of our acting and suffering. In this context, human actions too may be considered and read as texts. We develop as we read: in self-interpretation, we help to produce what we find as we go in search of meaning.

“In search of meaning”: the search for meaning and meaning *as* search—this formulation offers something like a summing up of Ricoeur's thought. And what I want to suggest is that in developing an account of this search for meaning he provides nothing less than a general, systematic philosophy of the creative imagination; hence, as we shall see, the importance of works of art for him as well as the interpretation of art.

In Ricoeur's two major works of the seventies and eighties (*Living Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative*), the development of such a philosophy of the creative imagination is centered on the power of metaphor to re-describe reality poetically and the power of narrative to imitate action creatively, giving individuals and communities their “narrative identity.” The idea of narrative identity that he develops in these writings is then used in an

account of personal identity in his more recent book *Oneself as Another*, a book which Ricoeur himself considers to be a recapitulation of his whole *oeuvre*.

For Ricoeur, metaphor and narrative are two privileged manifestations of the creativity proper to language in general. Language in its creative essence embodies a thrust toward that which lies beyond language and towards a “something further” which always remains to be said. For this reason, our search for meaning is never perfected or completed but always opens up to what one might call a dimension of furtherance. This dimension of furtherance does not, however, signify or foreshow a failure to come to grips with the world; it is rather the condition for an effective theoretical and practical involvement in it. Moreover, even when our march toward the fullness of meaning has advanced a long way forward and would seem about to reach a terminal goal, we remain still a *homo viator*, a traveler. We act and suffer, and in our acting and suffering, our inter-acting and compassion, we are constantly called upon to invent; that is, to find and produce the meaning of our lives (the word “invent” contains this double sense).

In the age of modernity, self-understanding has typically been construed as the attempt of a conscious subject to achieve total self-transparency. For Ricoeur, like many thinkers of more recent times, this is a narcissistic pretension which has to be given up. Ricoeur does not see this as giving up on the project of self-understanding as such. On the contrary, what remains is the on-going search for a finite, partial meaning, a meaning which is, as said before, “invented”—that is “found and produced.” What is at issue here is not consciousness making itself transparent, but the interpretive praxis of a living subject immersed in the world and the concreteness of signs and languages. Thus, to use the term favored by Ricoeur, philosophy of consciousness must become a never-ending hermeneutics.

## **Hermeneutics**

What then is hermeneutics? Ricoeur states his basic idea in this way: “There is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols, and texts.” It is thanks to this triple mediation (by signs, symbols, and texts) that self-reflection can be emancipated from the idealistic narcissism of traditional philosophy.

First, there is mediation by means of signs: the recognition that all human experience, made up of perceptions, desires, emotions, encounters with the other, is articulated linguistically. Second, there is mediation by means of symbols. According to Ricoeur, in his works of the 1960s such as *Freud and Philosophy* and *The Conflict of Interpretations*, symbols concern expressions with a twofold meaning, where the evident meaning is the vehicle for the hidden meaning. At this time Ricoeur had defined hermeneutics simply as the interpretation of symbols. He now sees this definition as too narrow. Nevertheless, we can still acknowledge that the passage through mediation of symbols is a crucial factor enabling us to ground our self-understanding in the inheritance of those cultures and traditions where our roots are located. Third, and last: mediation by means of the text. In the text, discourse has relative autonomy with respect to the intentions of the speaker, the reception of the original hearers, and the circumstances governing the first utterance. The text, one can say, can do without (can function in the absence of) its author and its intended recipient. Thus placed before the text, one has an experience of distancing, a taking of one's distance that allows one to gain a different understanding of oneself and the world.

Even this very brief outline of the triple mediation should dispel any suggestion that Ricoeur's hermeneutics presumes a hermetically sealed "universe of texts," a world closed in upon itself with "nothing outside." For Ricoeur, the characteristic of living discourse is that it always opens beyond itself towards the future, towards other communicating subjects, and towards the world. This openness is perhaps most evident in the use of metaphor and narrative. In metaphor, there comes to light an unsuspected power for restructuring and re-describing the world. An equivalent power is also manifest in the capacity for narrative to remold and transfigure human action. Ricoeur uses the Greek term *mimesis*, in the sense of a creative imitation, to capture the creative power of "configuration" and "refiguration" at issue here: configuration by giving order and form to the work; refiguration by opening a new approach to the world through the work and thus disclosing new aspects of the world. Thanks to this power of *mimesis*, textual works can produce in us a new praxis, a new life.

According to Ricoeur, then, to understand oneself is to understand

oneself through a triple mediation—through the signs, symbols, and texts in which we live. And what is “arrived at” by way of this interpretive process is not self-transparency but a self *other* than that which undertook the reading. The movement of hermeneutics is thus circular or spiraling. Or, again, the movement that belongs to the self-interpreter’s “search for meaning” is a hermeneutic circle.

The idea of a hermeneutic circle has been developed by various philosophers and belongs to a very ancient tradition. Ricoeur puts the idea in the following way:

The polysemy of a text invites multiple readings. This is the moment of the hermeneutic circle between the understanding initiated by the reader and the proposals of meaning offered by the text. The most fundamental condition of the hermeneutic circle is the sense that all interpretation places the interpreter *in media res* and never at the beginning or the end. We suddenly arrive, as it were, in the middle of a conversation which has already begun and in which we try to orientate ourselves in order to be able to contribute to it. (*From Text to Action*, 32-33)

I have given you Ricoeur’s words, but in doing so I do not simply deliver a *meaning* to you, as if in giving you his words I were giving you a kind of object. Rather, through what I give you, you are thrown into his text, and you bring to it an understanding which initially orients you and which can further develop as you listen. The hermeneutic circle exists wherever there is interpretation—that is, everywhere.

To summarize, when the self-interpreter has shaken loose from the narcissism of complete self-transparency and travels the spiraling road of hermeneutics instead, what is found is not something which was simply there already. What is found has been “invented”; that is, it is a self both “found and produced” in the act of interpretation. And through the triple mediation of signs, symbols, and texts the meaning that is revealed by such interpretation is never something finished and complete, but always infinite, partial, and historical. As I said above, the processes through which the self finds itself in the world are interpretive processes, and they are constantly informed by the world and languages of the time that make them possible and which they can, in turn, transform.

## Interpreting Art

As should be clear from this sketch of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, the power of language (and in particular the power of creative imitation or *mimesis*), is central to it. It's not surprising, then, that he attaches considerable significance to literary and poetic works of the imagination. But what of non-linguistic, non-narrative works of the sort we find in this exhibition? What light can Ricoeur's hermeneutics cast on our appreciation and understanding of, for example, painting and sculpture? What role do such events play in forming and reforming ourselves and our world? Does Ricoeur really provide a *general* philosophy of the creative imagination as I claimed at the beginning?

In my view, the answer to this question is: Yes. It is true that Ricoeur devotes hundreds of pages to literary works and only a few pages to non-linguistic works of imagination. Moreover, what references he does make do not come in his central works, and in most cases what he does say only mentions or alludes to painting and sculpture, music, photography, and architecture. Nevertheless, the crucial point is that he wants to apply his ideas about texts, about *mimesis*, and about refiguration to every kind of work of human creativity.

In fact, it is not so much a matter of applying the idea of *mimesis* to non-textual creations as of enriching our understanding of it through reflection on non-textual art works, particularly non-figurative art works. Thus, in Ricoeur's view, by looking at non-figurative art we can come to understand that the real function of *mimesis* as creative imitation is not simply to produce *copies* of things. Rather, it is to give us a new and unfamiliar view of them. And it does so primarily through the way the work of art reveals, not things, but emotions and moods. Paradoxically, therefore, it is the non-figurative art which helps us to understand the mimetic function of language and texts, and not the other way round.

The non-figurative art also shows what Ricoeur calls the "double nature of sign" better than traditional figurative art: the double movement of withdrawing from the world and irrupting into it. That is, it is in virtue of a work's capacity to break away from the everyday world that it can refigure. Think here of the difference between art-photography and the ordinary use

of photography. Clearly, the difference here is not a matter of figurative accuracy. Rather, it is precisely those respects in which artistic photography is not simply a matter of the pure reproduction of things, but that it reveals the deepest facets of an object.

The point is that truth in non-figurative art is clearly not a matter of its adequacy to reality but always something like revelation. Ricoeur's claim is that this function of "going beyond" representation is actually the character of every kind of art, including figurative art. Again, *mimesis* is not a matter of "copying reality," but always something like "productive revelation." Moreover, what is thus revealed by art is never simply things or an image of things. Beyond representation, every work of art expresses a mood, or state of attunement that is a singular and unique experience. Now, "to *express* a mood" here means to give *form* to it—a form that is itself something singular and unique, to give form to it in such a way that what is expressed can be *communicated* by the work, or in the work, to *all*. In this way, the work of art is a unique conjunction of singularity and universality. To use the language of Kant's philosophy we could say that the work of art is not the result of a *determining* judgment (a judgment which applies a rule to a particular case) but of a *reflective* judgment (it is the particular case that looks for its rule and finds it in a capacity for universal communication).

It is perhaps at this point that we can begin to see the deeper connection between the experience and interpretation of works of art and the quest for self-understanding. Indeed, in the conjunction of unique singularity and universal communicability that characterizes the work of art, we are given a privileged model for thinking about the singularity and universal value of the person. Just as every work of art, so also every self is a unique and singular connection of singularity and universality.

We can speak of universality in a dialogical sense. As I have indicated, the search for meaning always arrives in the middle of a conversation which has already begun. The meaning of our life must be communicable to other people and in turn becomes evaluated by them. There is no place for solipsism or arbitrariness in this conception of interpretation and personal identity. Indeed, in a certain way we can speak of objectivity in this context too. But objectivity here is of the same kind as we might speak about in relation to the production of literary, plastic, figural, chromatic or musical forms;

that is, where we say that the work “says” or “tries to say” something to others. Objectivity is grounded on inter-subjectivity and it makes no sense outside the living processes of communication and dialogue.

Objectivity here concerns the interpretation of “what is said” in or through a work’s production. And since we have in our communicative processes many methods to distinguish and evaluate statements, we can also speak of good and bad interpretations. Of course, in everyday life and language it is relatively easy to assess and criticize what people are saying. If I say “It is raining” we will typically take this as a remark about the weather, and we know what to do to establish whether it is raining or not. Unfortunately, the task is never so easy in art criticism or in our talk about personal identity—but it is not impossible. We always bring something to our engagement with a work of art and we are never simply alone. We have traditions of criticism and assessment and so on, traditions which can inform, and be transformed by, our experience and appreciation of a work of art.

We can speak, then, of bad interpretations, and, in fact and in principle, the only remedy against a bad interpretation is a new and better interpretation. Of course, this seems to hold out the promise of a final, completely correct interpretation or perfect translation. And that is an illusion. What hermeneutics teaches us, however, is that although there is no definitive interpretation of a work of art, no final and perfect translation of a text, this does not mark a shortcoming or failure on our part, but a condition of possibility that these things can take place and have any meaning at all.

# Natural Meaning in Art

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## I. Portraying Feelings

Part of what is valuable about art is that it can bring about an affective response.<sup>1</sup> A common method for causing this kind of reaction is the portrayal of emotional experiences.<sup>2</sup> However, when we consider the depiction of feelings, we are not perceiving the individuals themselves undergoing them. Furthermore, usually these experiences never occurred. Thus how do we recognize depicted emotions, particularly when they are fictional? A work will successfully portray feelings provided that they can be recognized. Therefore the question of what are the means we employ to identify them is central to any art that uses emotions to engage the viewer.

It is through certain dimensions of a work that feelings are portrayed and thereby recognized. They are those components, either verbal or non-verbal, that are informative of an emotional experience. Often they are concerned with an individual's behavior or the circumstances surrounding it. Examples are depictions of facial expressions, gestures, and postures. I will call the kind of entity being depicted an "emotion cue."<sup>3</sup>

An emotion cue is any event or state of affairs that carries information about a person's feelings.<sup>4</sup> We use them in everyday life to comprehend another's experience. I will establish that this ability provides our means for identifying feelings that are portrayed. I will propose an analysis of these cues and bring out the importance of the distinction between a token of a cue and its corresponding type. We will find that the concept of a type of emotion cue is particularly relevant.<sup>5</sup> My analysis will show how we employ information about them to recognize portrayed feelings. The following discussion will thereby increase our understanding of our affective response to art.

## II. Emotion cues: natural meaning

Emotion cues often occur in an individual's behavior. An example would be John crossing his arms; (1) is a claim about this cue's information:

(1) That John crossed his arms provided some evidence that he was tense.

Note that in order for this statement to be true it is necessary that John crossed his arms. However, it is not necessary that he was tense. Thus (1) requires that its left member "John crossed his arms" be true but not that its right member "he was tense."

(1) mentions an emotion cue that gives some indication of a person's feeling. In addition, there can be a set of one or more cues whose information is sufficient to justify the belief that an individual had a certain emotion. When a cue's information constitutes justifying evidence, the cue means that the individual experienced the feeling. Thus we can recognize a person's emotion if there is a set of one or more cues that mean that they experienced it.

(2) is a statement of this kind of meaning: That John asserted enthusiastically "I won" meant (m) that he was pleased. Following Paul Grice, I will call it "natural," i.e., meaning (mm). It is to be distinguished from non-natural meaning, i.e., meaning (mm).<sup>6</sup> Examples of this latter kind are supposed to occur in statements about the linguistic meaning of words, e.g., "John is a bachelor" means (mm) "John is an unmarried, adult male."

## III. Tokens of emotion cues

(2) is a statement as to the natural meaning of a token of an emotion cue, namely, John's asserting enthusiastically "I won." In order for (2) to be true, it is necessary both that John asserted enthusiastically "I won" and that he was pleased. Thus unlike (1), (2) requires not only that its left member be true but also that its right member.<sup>7</sup>

One reason it requires that both members be true is that it is equivalent to a claim of justification that has this requirement. The claim is "That John asserted enthusiastically 'I won' justifies the belief that he was pleased." Note that like (2) in order for this statement to be true not only must John have made the assertion, it is also necessary that he was pleased.

Consider, however, the linguistic meanings of (2)'s members. They are non-natural. According to this kind of meaning it is possible for John to have asserted enthusiastically "I won" and yet he not be pleased. This possibility in conjunction with the fact that (2) is equivalent to a claim of justification are what make the meaning mentioned in the statement natural.

We have been concerned with an individual's actions and their kind of meaning about his or her feelings. In contrast is what someone means in performing an action. Grice considers this kind of meaning to be non-natural.<sup>8</sup> (3) is an example:

(3) In asserting enthusiastically "I won" John meant (mm) that he was pleased.

While it requires its left member, it does not require its right.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the statement is not equivalent to a claim of justification. It follows from the preceding analysis that this is a reason the meaning in (3) is not natural. Thus we must distinguish between what a person meant by their behavior and what their behavior meant, in particular about their feelings.<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. Types of emotion cues

Some works of art are non-fictional. The feelings they portray occurred. Thus the tokens of emotion cues depicted were the case. It follows from my analysis that these cues meant that the individual experienced the feelings.

However, generally the particular experiences that art portrays are fictional. Thus the tokens of emotion cues depicted never occurred. Consequently these depictions are not of cues that have natural meaning. Nevertheless, these depictions perform a function important to the success of a work. They direct us to what does have natural meaning with regard to fiction. These are the types of emotion cues of which the work's cues are tokens.<sup>11</sup> The kinds of feelings that the work portrays are those meant by these types. We will see that the concept of an emotion cue type and its natural meaning are central to accounting for how art depicts feelings. Thus they are significant for explaining how we recognize emotions that are fictional.<sup>12</sup>

(4) is an example of a statement of the natural meaning of a type of emotion cue, e.g., someone asserting enthusiastically "I won":

(4) Someone asserting enthusiastically "I won" means (m) that he or she is pleased.

It shares certain essential features with (2). It is equivalent to a claim

of justification, namely, “Someone asserting enthusiastically ‘I won’ justifies believing that he or she is pleased.” Furthermore, it follows from the linguistic meanings of the two members that it is possible for the first member to be true and the second to be false. As with (2), these two features together are the reason that the meaning in (4) is natural.

However, there is an important respect in which (4) differs from (2): as a claim about a type of emotion cue, (4) does not require that either member be true, specifically that someone is asserting enthusiastically “I won” or that someone is pleased.<sup>13</sup>

This characteristic brings out two dimensions of statements of the natural meaning of emotion cue types that are significant for identifying artistic emotions. One is that the feeling that these statements mention is a type. The other is that the statements can be true with respect to a work of fiction. As a result they can give us information about the types of feelings the work portrays. I will show why these dimensions are relevant for explaining how we recognize depicted emotions.

## V. A relationship between the meanings of types and their tokens

We saw that the natural meaning of emotion cues is to be distinguished from the linguistic and thereby non-natural meaning of words. However there is a feature which emotion cues and words share that is especially relevant for our analysis. For just as there are tokens of emotion cues and their types, there are tokens of words and their types. A token of a word and its type have the relationship that the meaning of a token is whatever the type means.<sup>14</sup> For example, consider the meaning of the tokens of “pleased” in (2), (3), and (4). It is the meaning of the type “pleased.” Thus, we recognize the meaning of a token of a word as a result of knowing the meaning of its type.

There is an analogous relationship between a token of an emotion cue and its type. The kind of feeling that a token means is the one the type means. Consequently with emotion cues as well, we recognize the kind of feeling that a token means by using our knowledge of the meaning of its type.<sup>15</sup>

Assume that a particular work of art is supposed to portray certain feelings. This requires that we be able to identify them. It follows that the work must contain depictions of tokens of emotion cues whose types mean these feelings. These depictions, then, direct us to the types and thereby to

our knowledge of their meaning. This information enables us to identify the feelings portrayed.

## **VI. Art's use of information about types of feelings**

The preceding analysis of the natural meaning of emotion cues explains how we can recognize the kinds of feelings in a portrayal of a fictional emotional experience and thereby respond affectively. In conjunction with the depicted tokens of cues, we identify these feelings by using our information about the meanings of the tokens' types. The feelings these types naturally mean are the kinds the work portrays.

We noted that since statements of the meaning of types of cues do not require either member to be true, they can be true with regard to a work of fiction. Thus they can provide information about the types of feelings portrayed. They tell us what these feelings are when the work depicts tokens of cues whose types are mentioned in the statements. The work's depictions in conjunction with these statements are information we can employ to identify the types of emotions the work portrays. This explains a manner in which fictional art can be informative of feelings as well as the kind of evidence it provides.<sup>16</sup>

Our recognition of the types of feelings portrayed can be sufficient to cause an affective response. For example, the thought of someone being highly depressed can make us feel sad. Note that this kind of emotional reaction to a work of fiction does not raise the much discussed paradox.<sup>17</sup> Our response is not to tokens of feelings, much less to ones that we believe never took place. Instead, we are reacting to types of feelings that we know.<sup>18</sup>

As in the case of a paradox, a work of fiction is causally contributing to our response. However unlike with the paradox, our reaction does not require any beliefs that we do not accept. Thus there is no antinomy.<sup>19</sup> The result is a process by which art employs emotion cues to bring about an affective response through our recognition of fictional feelings.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Feagin and Kendall Walton, for example, have argued for this view. Feagin points out that responding with feeling to a work is an important part of appreciating it. See her *Reading with Feeling: The Aes-*

*thetics of Appreciation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1; and Walton's "Fearing Fictions", *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. LXXV, no. 1 (January 1978), 6. An historically significant antecedent of this interpretation is found in the claim by Jean-Baptiste Du Bos in the early eighteenth century that the first goal of poetry and painting is to move us (*Le premier but de la poésie et de la peinture est de nous toucher*). Du Bos' thesis influenced extensively the developments in eighteenth century French art that led to the emergence of modernism in the nineteenth. Three hundred years earlier in *De Pictura*, Alberti maintained a similar interpretation for history painting. Du Bos argues for his thesis in his *Réflexions critique sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), introduction by Dominique Désirat (Paris: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1993), esp. 276f. René Démoris' insightfully discusses Du Bos' influence in his *Chardin, la chair et l'objet*, (Paris: Éditions Adam Biro, 1991), 21-28.

- 2 Alois Riegl discusses the point that "Recognizing emotion in a work of art presupposes a higher degree of subjectivity (inner experience) in the viewer." See his *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt, trans. (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 1999), 75f.
- 3 I am following a usage common in the psychological literature. See, for example, Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, "Head and Body Cues in the Judgment of Emotion: a Reformulation," *Perception and Motor Skills*, vol. 25 (June, 1967): 711-724; the essays in *Empathy and Its Development*, Nancy Eisenberg and Janet Strayer, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) as well as Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 4 For a discussion of the concept of one entity carrying information about another, see Jon Barwise and Jerry Seligman, *Information Flow: The Logic of Distributed Systems* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. section 1.4 "The Grammar of Information Flow," 12f.
- 5 A question in the ontology of art is whether types are eternal. My analysis does not depend upon a resolution of this issue. As I will show, all it requires is that when a viewer experiences a work of art he or she has

available at that time information about those types of emotion cues whose tokens are depicted. See Julian Dodd, "Defending Musical Platonism," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 42, no. 4 (October 2002): 380-402 and works referred to therein for discussions pertaining to answering the above question.

Dodd (ibid., 381f.) and others take the identity of a type to be determined by the set of one or more properties that a token must have in order to instantiate that type. I accept this interpretation with the provision that not all properties identify a type. Certain ones must be excluded. An example is the property "being a type that is not a token of itself." If it were used to identify a type, a Russellian paradox would be the consequence. For, let T be the type all of whose tokens satisfy this property. The result is the contradiction that T is not token of itself and thus satisfies the property if and only if it is a token of itself. Thus perhaps all types are identified by properties, but not all properties identify types. See W. V. Quine's discussions of Russell's paradox for set theory, in particular "New Foundations for Mathematical Logic," in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2d ed., (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 80-101.

- <sup>6</sup> Grice introduced the distinction between these two kinds of meaning in his article "Meaning," *The Philosophical Review*, LXVI, no. 3 (1957), 377-388; reprinted in his *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 213-223.

In "Meaning Revisited" Grice speaks of what I am calling emotion cues as "special cases of natural meaning." They are "the initial natural case." His analogous examples are "forms of behavior: things like groans, screeches, and so on, which mean, or normally mean, that someone is in pain or some other state." (See *Studies in the Way of Words*, 292)

My purpose is to show how the concept of the natural meaning of emotion cues can be used to explain the means by which we identify artistic feelings. I am not proposing a critical analysis of Grice's theory, particularly of his interpretation of natural meaning. That is the subject of a forthcoming article. Furthermore my discussion will not include

what Grice takes to be the natural meaning in statements of the form “A means (meant) to do so-and-so (by x),” where A is a human agent. Steven Davis analyzes the type of meaning in such a statement in “Grice on Natural and Non-Natural Meaning,” *Philosophia*, vol. 26, nos. 3-4 (March 1998): 405-419.

- <sup>7</sup> A statement of natural meaning requiring its right member as well as its left is the characteristic Grice calls “factive.” See *Studies in the Way of Words*, 291 and 349.

My analysis of statements of the natural meaning of a token of an emotion cue draws from Fred Dretske’s interpretation of a signal and its information. See his *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983), particularly chapter 2, “Communication and Information”; as well as other works such as *Précis of “Knowledge and the Flow of Information,” The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 1983): 55-63; and *Perception, Knowledge, and Belief* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

- <sup>8</sup> “Meaning,” *Studies in the Way of Words*, 214. For an analysis of the acceptability of Grice’s original interpretation of the concept of what someone meant in performing an action, see my “Meaning and Intention,” *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 12 (1988): 1-11.
- <sup>9</sup> More specifically, (3) requires that John asserted enthusiastically “I won.” However, it does not require that he was pleased, i.e., what he meant.
- <sup>10</sup> Grice discusses this distinction in “Meaning Revisited.” He notes that what an individual meant by his action can be voluntary; whereas what his action meant cannot. (See *Studies in the Way of Words*, 292.)
- <sup>11</sup> For every token there is a corresponding type. This relationship of correspondence is determined by the earlier mentioned (fn. 5) set of one or more properties that a token must have in order to instantiate the type. The set and the resulting relationship enable the token to direct us to its type.
- <sup>12</sup> In the late seventeenth century (1688) Charles Le Brun proposed an influential analysis of different types of facial emotion cues in his *L’expression des passions et autres conférences; Correspondance*, introduction by Julien Philippe (Paris: Editions Dédale; Maisonneuve et

Larose, 1994). Philippe suggests that in Le Brun's lectures there is a meeting between painting and philosophy ("*une rencontre entre la peinture et la philosophie*") (ibid., 8). Jennifer Montagu discusses the historical significance of Le Brun's analysis in *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). An example of contemporary work on types of facial emotion cues is found in *Emotion in the Human Face*, Paul Ekman, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 2nd. ed.).

- <sup>13</sup> Two grammatical differences between (2) and (4) are a necessary part of my analysis in which (2) is a statement about a token whereas (4) is one about a type.
- (2) That John asserted enthusiastically "I won" meant (m) that he was pleased.
- (4) Someone asserting enthusiastically "I won" means (m) that he or she is pleased. One difference is between their nominal expressions "That John asserted enthusiastically 'I won'" and "Someone asserting enthusiastically 'I won.'" The former is a derived nominal and thereby refers to a specific event. The latter is a gerundive nominal. This kind of noun phrase can refer to either a type of event or a token of it. (4)'s gerundive nominal is expressed in a general form (along with "means" and "is" in the tenseless present) to insure that its reference is to a type (see Noam Chomsky's discussion of these kinds of nominal expressions in "Remarks on Nominalization," *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, Roderick Jacobs and Peter Rosenbaum, eds. (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Company, 1970), 184-221).

The second difference is the contrasting roles between the pronouns that correspond to the above nominals. Since (2) is a statement about a token event involving John, "he" refers back to him. It is an example of what P.T. Geach called a pronoun of "laziness." On the other hand as part of the description of the natural meaning of a type, "he" and "she" in (4) do not refer to any specific individual, i.e. a token. Thus they are not pronouns of laziness. Rather, they are examples of pronominalization with non-referential indefinite antecedents. See Geach's *Ref-*

- erence and Generality* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 151f; as well as Barbara Hall Partee's discussion in "Opacity, Co-reference, and Pronouns," *Semantics of Natural Language*, Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, eds. (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 415-441.
- <sup>14</sup> This relationship is perhaps what Grice has in mind when he speaks of linguistic meaning as "timeless." (See "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," 89f., "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word-Meaning," 119f., and "Meaning," 217, all in *Studies in the Way of Words*. Jon Barwise and John Perry propose a theory of how linguistic tokens receive meaning from their corresponding types in *Situations and Attitudes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983).
- <sup>15</sup> Barwise gives a more extensive argument for this thesis in terms of types of situations in his "Logic and Information," *The Situation in Logic* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1989), 37-57.
- <sup>16</sup> James J. Gibson discusses other aspects of the information art provides in "The Information Available in Pictures," *Leonardo*, vol. 4 (1971): 27-35, reprinted in *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson*, Edward Reed and Rebecca Jones, eds. (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982).
- <sup>17</sup> See, for example, the introduction and several discussions of the paradox of fiction in *Emotion and the Arts*, Mette Hjort and Sue Laver, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- <sup>18</sup> More specifically, we are responding to our concept or thought of what the types of feelings are like. Our reactions to feeling types supports the thesis of *Thought Theory* that "thought contents can be the cause of emotions" and that "thought contents can generate genuine emotion." See respectively Peter Lamarque, "How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?" in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 296, and Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 81.
- <sup>19</sup> For a discussion of "paradox," "antinomy," and other related concepts, see Quine's *The Ways of Paradox and other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1966).

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# **POLITICS AND ECONOMY: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN**

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## **Powers of Resistance to the New Postindustrial Order: Hardt/Negri and/vs. Jameson**

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In their book *Empire*<sup>1</sup> the American literary theorist Michael Hardt and the Italian leftist activist and political scientist Antonio Negri warn us of the arrival of a new menacing but still barely visible world order gradually replacing old nation-state imperialism after the latter's apparent demise. But is it not paradoxical to talk about post-imperialistic empire? Those who think so, they imply, have made the mistake of associating the particular oppressive techniques and logics of capitalism with capitalist oppression in general. Indeed, it is perhaps only natural to look for more sinister heirs to imperialism, for post-imperialistic globalization has obviously not turned out to be a brave new moral order (except in some Huxleyan sense). The postmodern capitalism of Empire, Hardt and Negri contend, has a lot to do with old imperialism namely as an apparatus of social oppression; what has changed (indeed a great deal) is only the *form* of subjugation and exploitation. The radical decentralization and informatization of production and consumption (which has duped some thinkers into believing that capitalism, together with its mechanism of exploitation theorized by Marx, is gone never to return) has bred a more merciless, imperceptible, yet less brutal and more vulnerable apparatus of control (if resistance is carefully and thoughtfully deployed).

Although the authors in general accuse postmodern philosophy of misjudging the world situation, they aspire to employ the term “postmodernism” as a designation of the corresponding historical period they try to theorize. (It would have been utterly ungrateful not to do something like that in view of their actual conscious association, collaboration, and obviously heavy debt, sometimes acknowledged but often not, to some of the main postmodernist political thinkers around—namely, Deleuze/Guattari and Foucault.) Indeed, it is inconceivable that their book should not make such references, for anyone broadly familiar with the contemporary intellectual scene has come to realize that a specter has been haunting all modernist philosophy—the specter of postmodernism. Deprecated as the dead-end of capitalism or just a new mimicry of the old modernity, or celebrated as a new progressive world with infinite creative potential, it has become clear that postmodernism just cannot be ignored either as a historical postmodernity, an ideology, or a vision for a new ethical, cultural, and social deal. Aspiring Marxists-Leninists (especially Leninists, looking for yet further stages of capitalism after its last refusal to collapse) view the postmodern as the next stage of capitalism which should be clearly identified and analyzed, and whose dehumanizing tendencies, identified by Marx long ago but now appearing in new sinister guises, can and must be opposed. But anyone (like me) who delights at any new “neo-Marxism” as a potentially viable competitor to the arrogant neo-liberal fusion of state and market cannot, after reading another brilliant analysis of capital’s triumph, fail to ask the ultimate question: is the alternative (if there is one) workable or is it just another utopia demanding too much of the intellectually enfeebled and brainwashed individual? This is, I think, the problem that had been plaguing all critical theory, especially since the collapse of state socialism between 1985 and 1989. Many otherwise inspired and brilliant analyzers (e.g., Baudrillard) do not even broach the question of resistance, while others deal with it half-heartedly. Here we might notice that although the chapter on “Alternatives within Empire” and the part on “The Decline and Fall of Empire” are not the best sections of Hardt and Negri’s book; their theoretical insights, subjected to certain interpretation, can be the basis and inspiration of a much more concrete and detailed practical program of political action.

Here it would be very pertinent to look at Nick Dyer-Witheford's 1999 book *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*,<sup>2</sup> a considerable part of which can be taken as an apology and concrete elaboration, as serious as it can be, of Hardt and Negri's more abstract treatments. His project, as their own ultimate alternative vision, amounts to nothing less than a global non-capitalist society which they do not hesitate to call "communism." Dyer-Witheford speaks about "a different future based on the common sharing of wealth—a twenty-first century communism."<sup>3</sup> He indeed prefers to call it "commonwealth"<sup>4</sup> but only to avoid the negative associations of the former word. (As for Negri, in 1990 he and Guattari published an English translation of their book *Communists Like Us*.) Dyer-Witheford finds fault with the various Marx-inspired alternatives to liberalism but finally gives his sympathies to thinkers such as Negri and Hardt (and their own inspirations, Guattari and Deleuze), which he puts at the center of the so-called "autonomist Marxist" school centered around the French journal *Futur Antérieur* and propelled in addition by figures like Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Jean-Marie Vincent.<sup>5</sup> He takes it upon his shoulders to translate those masters' "characteristic abstraction" into real-worldliness:

[W]hile Negri, Guattari, and Deleuze envisage these struggles [between the global rule of capital and various oppositional groups] moving toward the constitution of a non-capitalist society, they offer only limited hints as to what this alternative might be. They clearly see it... as an explosion of difference—a dissolution of the global command of profit.... However...these theorists have very little that is concrete to say about how such a self-organized society might operate.... [T]he aim should be to create a space where a diversity of social, cultural, and economic ways of being can coexist.... In spite of difficulties, we need to consider which within a plethora of possibly emergent non-capitalist ways of life are desirable and worth fighting for. So it is to these points that I turn....<sup>6</sup>

Thus Dyer-Witheford announces his ambition to a philosophy of practice. Here one must distinguish two, even three, separate tasks relevant to such theorizations. The first task is the one Marx himself so miserably failed

(or would have failed if he thought it necessary, pertinent, essential, or possible, which he rightly did not): namely, to *describe* an alternative future whose underlying logic will be different than that of capital. He boldly suggests that there is not one but many such possible descriptions out of which he has the ambition to select one, probably the best (which turns out a bit more radical than the rather modest one suggested in the *Communist Manifesto* but in no case anything to be labeled “revolutionary”). The one to be selected directly involves making sure that it is not idealistic or utopian—which, in addition to being simply logically possible, involves taking into account the kind of creatures humans are, the types of needs they would have, and the behaviors they would be likely to exhibit, the types of authority they would willingly subject themselves: in short, some account of “human nature.” (For instance, one might suggest that a good society is one where there is universal love, but this alternative is unrealistic in view of general human dispositions manifested throughout evolution and history.) The good news here is that Marx’ account of human nature is rather minimal and not so different than the liberal one, emphasizing freedom and the satisfaction of various material and spiritual needs.

The second task concerns the type of political action necessary and relevant to achieve or at least make some progress towards the final vision. This is indeed the much more difficult and essential task which must supplement the former one if it is to be considered, especially in this historical moment, anything more than wishful thinking. Dyer-Witheford accuses various thinkers (e.g., Baudrillard) for neglecting it, and I would speculate that the reason they did neglect it, despite being conscious of it, was that they just did not see significant reasons for hope. Dyer-Witheford, as I argue alongside, must perhaps not have been so optimistic. Given his subscription to the Marxian thesis of the “real subsumption” of all spheres of life under capital, his sweeping alternative visions, and indeed many of his concrete suggestions of how to resist this subsumption, seem doomed. That explains the much more reserved and abstract stance taken by Hardt and Negri, yet in general the two books reinforce one another. Let us note that Dyer-Witheford’s book was published before *Empire* and his analyses draw mainly on Hardt and Negri’s preceding book *The Labor of Dionysus: A Cri-*

*tique of the State-Form*<sup>7</sup> and various essays. This, however, does not make their analysis obsolete since whereas *Empire* might be more systematic and focused, its political program, being quite abstract, badly needs to be supplemented by more concrete prescriptions.

One is, however, surprised to find in these two books only occasional mention of another colorful figure—the literary and cultural critic, critical theorist, and self-proclaimed “critical Marxist,” Fredric Jameson, whose primary task through the years has been quite similar if not the same: to unmask the new order and, secondarily, to suggest ways of resistance. (Indeed, Hardt and Negri’s silence is all the more curious given that Jameson is Hardt’s colleague at Duke University’s English department and a co-editor of an anthology of his works I will also bear in mind in this paper). Jameson tries to theorize, along Marxian lines, “post-modernism” as the cultural expression of the current historical period (i.e., the “high postmodernity” since the 1950’s) of capitalist development. Being disposed to analyzing culture, he focuses on art, literature, and architecture to criticize subtly the depoliticizing, unhistorical, relativist, and reactionary tendencies of postmodernism as the “cultural logic of late capitalism.” His thought unashamedly aims at a kind of “totalization” through confronting capital’s own totalizing tendencies, even in the face of his rejection of the possibility for a total system in favor of a more historicist approach. Dyer-Witford’s criticism of Jameson (whom he mentions only disparagingly) is of the same kind as that of Negri’s; Jameson is, however, much guiltier:

These various postmodern/Marxist conversations [viz. Jameson’s, David Harvey’s, and Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, and others defending some combination of Marxism and postmodernism]... lack a crucial dimension.... [A]ll are virtually silent on the question of opposition to such an order.... Derrida’s reassessed Marxism is undermined by his insistence that... communism is an ever-deferred futural project... Jameson suggests that postmodern culture has to be seen dialectically both as mystificatory veil over the realities of contemporary exploitation and a field of emancipatory potential, but says almost nothing about how this latter potential might manifest.... These silences signify a major problem... [which is that] Marxism cannot under contemporary conditions locate agents of contestation and practices of opposition....<sup>8</sup>

Dyer-Witheford claims to be able to solve the above problem. Hardt and Negri themselves are not so bold, giving Jameson some credit (although mentioning him much less frequently):

We certainly agree with... Jameson, who see[s] postmodernity as a new phase in capitalist accumulation and commodification.... (*Empire*, 154)

“Postmodernism,” Fredric Jameson tells us, “is what you have when modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good.” (*Empire*, 186)

We might say, then, following Fredric Jameson, that postmodernization is the economic process that emerges when mechanical and industrial technologies have expanded to invest the entire world... and when the formal subsumption of the non-capitalist environment has reached its limit... [A]ll of nature had become capital. Whereas modern accumulation is based on the formal subsumption of the non-capitalist environment, postmodern accumulation relied on the real subsumption of the capitalist terrain itself (*Empire*, 272)

These quotes along with the absence of any credit for Jameson in their discussion of alternatives all imply that, should Hardt and Negri have concentrated on criticism, their criticism of him would be in the same vein: his poverty of alternatives. Superficially, the most Jameson could offer is the cultivation of certain utopian impulses, a special engagement in utopia. In the dialectical manner typical of him, he presents utopianism not as some kind of “opium of the masses” but rather its *employment* as perhaps the only way of resistance open amidst capital’s “real subsumption” of life. His alleged weakness concerning alternatives may indeed be his realization that the ways of resistance others offer are too naive and contradict the thesis of real subsumption. My exclusive references to Jameson’s work will be his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*,<sup>9</sup> a programmatic collection of essays written between 1984 and 1990, and the above-mentioned *Jameson Reader*.<sup>10</sup>

So, for the rest of the essay I will be concerned with juxtaposing and taking sides on the respective ways of resistance to the new post-

imperialistic capitalist order (demonstration of whose existence is outside my scope of concern and will therefore be generally assumed) as proposed by Hardt/Negri and Jameson. Its working thesis is that, perhaps paradoxically, although Jameson pays much less attention to the explicit question of resistance, his account thereof is more cogent, realistic, and less utopian (in the bad, un-Jamesonian sense of utopia) in view of the most relevant features in the theoretical description of the new order.

For both Hardt/Negri and Jameson, there is a strong case that modernism, understood as the ideology and practice of modernity, is compromised beyond rehabilitation. So it would not make sense to try to “complete its unfinished project” (as, for instance, Jürgen Habermas took great pains to do). Jameson remarks that Habermasians today mistakenly think that [since] the revolutionary ideals of the bourgeois system—freedom and equality—are properties of real societies and “still present in the Utopian ideal image or portrait of bourgeois market society, it would be enough to improve the real ‘model’ for the ideal portrait”.<sup>11</sup> Far from being a simple matter of pitting good versus evil, the question of resistance is rather about what good we could wring out of the overwhelming evil of the rule of capital. Although the emerging postmodern alternatives are indeed rarely new worlds of freedom and emancipation, for our authors they have indeed self-disguised as such, helped by militant neo-liberalism. The celebrators of postmodernism, as everyone else indeed, have abandoned brute force as no longer productive, and are instead trying to court the disillusioned victims of the old Enlightenment—of which, unfortunately for them, there are not very many. They in fact have been right to ask why it is necessary to try to patch up the old sack of modernism and prolong its death pangs instead of discarding it for something brand new. Put simply, for those the old modernity is bad and the postmodern order is good, whereas for Habermasians it is the other way around.

It is not that simple for Hardt/Negri and Jameson; for them the postmodern regime is not only another monster spurned by agonizing modernity and characterized by a new ubiquity and self-perfection of its repressive apparatus, but also by a new vulnerabilities we should learn to identify and attack. But there is no way back to modernism: it cannot be redeemed since its negative and positive aspects are inextricably coupled. They therefore con-

struct new cultural and theoretical perspectives—“late capitalism” and “Empire” respectively—which renounce modern humanistic Enlightenment discourse, despite their inescapable continuities with it. For all of them postmodernism, or late capitalism, is just an historical period, but one in which every aspect of life and all human relations has been totally and hopelessly captured by the inexorable rule of capital. This capture has been the final effect of a sweeping and unprecedented dialectical movement in multinational capital necessitated by the media technology and expressed in culture. History, they seem to suggest, moves through breaks and ruptures, and the present rupture, well revealed in social reality (Hardt/Negri, Dyer Witherford) and the artifacts of culture (Jameson), is indeed a major one.

Although Hardt and Negri adopt the political/economic perspective, while Jameson prefers to analyze culture, both sides paint a rather dismal picture of the new historical situation witnessing the “merger” of all spheres of life and the decentralization and deterritorialization of former “social centers.” So there is no incoherence in suggesting that the result of the analysis of both approaches—the social-economic one of Hardt and Negri and the artistic-cultural one of Jameson—is essentially the same since in the postmodern fusion of former oppositions there remains only one curious entity to be analyzed from various viewpoints. This makes the difference between the old perspectives obsolete so whatever one is adopted (indeed we cannot help adopting one or the other) the results should be the same. For instance, since in postmodernism culture is economized (i.e., radically commoditized) and economy made part of culture, the analysis of the one should also reveal the workings of the other. Further, the distinction between types of things (commodities vs. cultural artifacts, images, relations) has nowadays become fuzzy. Reification (which according to Marx is the transformation of social relations into things), therefore, is not experienced since it has become our second nature.<sup>12</sup> But the extent to which this is the case is concealed by the fact that the “things in question have themselves changed beyond recognition.”<sup>13</sup> Much in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari (who attack capitalism in the generalized figure of Oedipus), they claim that even the unconscious has been colonized by the culture industry to such an extent that the only way to

react, if one ever realizes one's situation, is perhaps to simply "follow the vicious circle" in a Heideggerian fashion and hope for a higher totalization. Jameson attempts to live up to that and "still be cheerful" in a Kierkegaardian fashion, while Hardt and Negri are more optimistic and really think that something significant and capable of counter-action has escaped.

In terms of a general ideological orientation, then, both Hardt/Negri and Jameson can be designated as neo-Marxist postmodern theorists of *totality*. But is it necessary to revive such an obsolete concept. It could well be argued that the new pseudo-liberal order brands any perceived threat as "totalitarian" mainly to conceal its own totalitarianism. But there can be good and bad totalities. For Hardt and Negri totality is recognition of the "single logic of rule"<sup>14</sup> under which the various vestiges of the old nation-states synchronously operate. As such it is the factual totality of the "big picture."

Jameson's picture, however, is more dialectical. He implies that the concept of totality, if conceived under the traditional concept of unity, will be wasted as something that could potentially be put to work against the logic of capitalism. This becomes even more important in the face of the dearth of recourses in the maelstrom of capitalism where we find only the freedom to act in accordance to its relentless logic, where every thought is always already an exchange value. In this situation there is no hope for radical alternatives in the sense of Dyer-Witheford and Hardt/Negri. It is clear that the small-scale endeavors recommended by Dyer-Witheford (not-for-profit community radio stations, etc.) would not make a dint on the capitalist system. It is equally clear that larger-scale social endeavors will quickly be spotted and the perpetrators held accountable. We need not, however, entertain Orwellian scenarios of state henchmen using spying and closed-circuit surveillance even of people's sleeping cubicles to hunt down the perplexed and use psychologically sophisticated inquisitorial methods to bring them to their senses. The system wants to uphold the *prima facie* impression of justice, aided by the perceived lack of state oppression, even a justified one. There are no concrete institutions to practice oppression, no need for any kind of Iran-style "ministry of the promotion of good and eradication of evil," no need for anyone to dirty their hands and have compunctions. As in a nightmarish Baudrillardian picture where the hitherto distinct spheres of life have disappeared by interpenetration and amalgamation, the system has

eliminated its recognizable apparatus of repression simply by diffusing it—which is to say that the system has itself become an immense apparatus of repression. Due to psychological conditioning involving the use of appealing rhetoric of freedom the institutions are no longer recognized as oppressive, or oppression is seen as a necessary piece of evil, a small price to pay for the overwhelming good of freedom and prosperity. It has been long recognized that slaves could be made to believe that they are free, but no one before has ever matched Empire's success in this.

All of our authors agree that the system's cleanup operations have programed itself into the very fabric of the system. The system, of course, has beneficiaries; it rewards those who directly contribute to it with the greatest advantages. Yet, strictly, the system does not work for them; rather, they work for the system. They are quickly deprived of status should they cease contributing or try to frustrate the logic of the system. If we assume that the most successful efforts at defying the system could come from those who know its workings well (at least from an administrative point of view), things look even more discouraging since those have the least incentive to oppose the system and it would be wishful thinking to expect self-abnegation (not in the least because they would not be convinced in the system's immorality). It seems we should await a spontaneous break or crash to deprive those agents from their benefits and force them into thinking of the system's logic as oppressive and evil. I emphasize spontaneity since sustained effort to bring about such a disruption is not likely to be successful—as our authors and many others such as J. Kenneth Galbraith, a political scientist and activist with Marxist leanings, have realized. Necessary for any successful revolution (Galbraith's examples include the French and Bolshevik ones) is the internal corruption of the system; yet the present system has never been stronger, both materially and ideologically. As we hinted above, any potentially serious effort to defy the logic of the system—although, in light of the above analysis, we cannot quite imagine what is to count as a potentially productive effort—is bound to be spotted and incorporated by the system.

It is difficult to imagine how such an effort at resistance would lack a public aspect, yet every bigger public endeavor would have to be duly regis-

tered, numbered, filed, and approved according to the bureaucratic procedures of the system. All particular measures recommended by Dyer-Witheford are of that sort: from small-scale public ventures relying on information technologies (first, of course, somebody would have to educate the public how to use Internet in a non-capitalist fashion, e.g., to organize themselves as labor rather than for shopping, gaming, and entertainment) to fancy schemes of resource allocation (relying, again, on the capacity of the public to organize as it recognizes its common interest) to flagrant defiance of laws, such as transgression of copyright and even the abolition of intellectual property, states' repudiating dept even at the risk of intervention, etc., all highly unpopular measures giving the state the occasion to crack down on the offenders.<sup>15</sup> This is underlined by some ambiguous faith in the redeeming powers of the multitude, but it is not clear how the new concept of multitude is supposed to help ground such concrete oppositional projects. The manner of these easy recommendations is not so faithful to Hardt and Negri, who laud the capacities of the working multitude mostly in an abstract fashion, on the background of its future grand struggle to become a political subject and to effect a new subjective configuration of labor by a teleology that would permit it to increase its power gradually.<sup>16</sup>

The unrealism of schemes similar to Dyer-Witheford's, stemming from the otherwise recognized invulnerability of the system at the present moment, suggests that the effort against the system should not be such as to allow the system to recognize that it is being attacked. It cannot involve propositional truth—i.e., explicit statements of what is “true” or “false,” going against the system—for any suspicious proclamations that threaten to rise above empty words and engender some action will be condemned and squashed by the official propaganda, much to the delight of the public. (Empire, of course, proclaims freedom of speech in this case, but it forgets to explain that what it means is freedom only of speech.) Propositional truth has long been colonized by capital in the form of ideology. Empire has determined, to its own advantage, capitalizing on well-sounding abstract principles (equality, democracy, human rights, etc.) to be fed to the public, and what is to count as true and false. Such a situation calls for responses that Empire cannot classify (perhaps ones that it cannot even recognize) and subsume under its categories and thus identify as dangerous. Experimenting with irrational impetuses which one

may not even understand might be a good beginning. (Here one is reminded of a strange, recent phenomenon in which large groups of unrelated people show up at a place posted on a website to behave in a particular way, e.g., to scream, cuckoo, or just be silent, and then disperse as if nothing happened. Dyer-Witheford would certainly celebrate these actions as ones defying the capitalist logic, yet it is unclear how they would contribute to the cherished radical change to communism.) While Dyer-Witheford's solutions are too concrete and local (and condemned to remain so, and thus insignificant or impossible to conceal from the system), and Hardt and Negri's are too abstract (depending on the mysterious powers of the even more mysterious multitude, avoiding concrete recipes for action), Jameson, I think, manages to recommend responses combining abstract principles modeled on a regulative ideal vision of final progress and emancipation with guidelines to concrete action that would not be identified by the system as a threat and so has a chance to come to embody those principles. This reminds one of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and "The Aesthetic Dimension" (1978) where he argues for the liberating aspect of art through a sort of Freudian sublimation. This artistic sublimation, however, is no match for the imperial brown shirts: Empire completely subordinates all cultural spheres, including the "artistic" and the "aesthetic," to its logic, and its market mechanism provides the means to such sublimation and even encourages it as far as it stays under conceptual, ideological control. It ensures the involvement of the final product of sublimation (the work of art) in the system of exchange so that its "author" would get her deserved "due" according to the authorized ways of remuneration.

Certain heavy-metal music genres, for instance, feature the most violent, anti-social, anti-bourgeois, anti-Christian, and anti-establishment lyrics and attitudes one can find. Other genres celebrate heroic utopian new worlds, and still others deeply engage themes such as death, gore, evil, gloom, despair, profanity, and decay, in clear reaction to the facelessness and primitivism of the present. (One could think of the band Halo's 2001 album *Guattari: From the West Flows Grey Ash and Pestilence*, which, unfortunately, has nothing officially to do with our Félix Guattari.) This bombards us with a loosely improvised raw, uncompromising, and disturbing avalanche, resulting from their peculiar sound "demixing" process. One may

hope this might scare the system and trigger an open repressive reaction, in which case one would have a good reason to scream loud and complain that she is being suppressed, victimized, and her rights infringed; but alas: the system renders the apparent challenge harmless by internalizing it. It does not consider the attack to be against itself and even celebrates it as evidence of free speech, an important ideal professed by the system to be in favor of its subjects. Free speech, of course, is defined in such a way as never to be able to harm the system. Indeed, as we said, the system is enough decentralized as to be represented by no institution; in this case the anger against it (the “rage against the machine,” as an important punk-metal band named itself) would be one against a ghost, an unproductive anger.

Furthermore, access to heavy metal depends on its distribution, which in turn depends heavily on its publishing and marketing—yet the market is Empire’s primary tool of control. This, of course, does not mean that heavy metal is completely useless as a form of defiance—far from it. Dyer-Witheford places his hopes on the new technologies although he does not make it sufficiently clear how those can come to be used for liberation rather than control. Jameson, who (akin to Heidegger) indeed treats post-modern technology (which he conceives in terms of breakages and breakdowns in the manner of Deleuze and Guattari<sup>17</sup>) as a major ally to the new imperialism, contributing to the machinization of the body, etc. Were he acquainted with heavy metal, he might recommend it as a promising utopian practice in this age of hopelessness. Certainly we should continue to listen to it at least for its potentially liberating aspect. In an age where slaves enjoy being oppressed and there is not much recognizable as liberating, if we could, as if by some Hegelian “ruse of reason,” sustain practices that are at least potentially emancipatory, one day they might actually contribute to liberation. I think, along Jamesonian lines, that scathingly anti-social heavy metal is one of those. Otherwise “decent,” even religious, people find themselves attracted to it not because they explicitly conceive it as liberating but because they enjoy it (although they cannot explain why), yet it gives them potentially powerful emancipatory anti-imperialistic powers.

With all his faults and obsolescence, however, Marcuse could be regarded as an inspiration to Jameson. He argues against the objectivist Marxist aesthetics which recognizes that under capitalism art is necessarily alien-

ated from real life and therefore seeks to ground the reaction potential of art in a new *content* which has to mirror reality—essentially, the so called “socialist realism.” This picture fails to live up to the intricacies of the reality it is supposed to capture; it fails to recognize that all “content” is subject to propositional description and therefore colonizable by the imperial ideology which is specialized in manipulating propositional contents. Marcuse thus recognizes that only a non-propositional aesthetic *dimension* could escape the analytical grasp of the new Empire, yet fails to suggest what this dimension is and how it might be achievable today. Matters seem even more complicated once one realizes that *desire* must be an essential component of art, yet he argues that desire is influenced by social structures. Jameson, I think, makes progress on this picture using the concepts of utopia and totality; he expands it and makes it relevant to contemporary high-tech imperialism. He himself recognizes and celebrates this “expansion” of Marcuse: “[in the sixties] Marcuse virtually becomes the name for a whole explosive renewal of Utopian thinking and imagination.”<sup>18</sup>

The main challenge for Jameson, then, is to articulate the nature of this non-propositional irrational impetus required for the successful defiance of Empire. He suggests that it may well, if not exclusively, appear in the form of an invigorating hypothesis, an abysmal thought that is essentially utopian. One could discern an underlying Hegelian inspiration: both history and goal-oriented human action work in mysterious ways, yet the unintended end result is progress. Here the redefined concept of totality comes to help. This totality is one that ultimately comprises the whole human experience in which the component parts are inextricably linked. In the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari, yet stressing political and ethical dimensions at the expense of metaphysical ones, Jameson conceives of an “open totality” to be strived for, composed of differences, discontinuities, anomalies, and contradictions not subsumable under a unity. This is opposed to the “closed totality” of capitalism which also features and feeds on internal differences, discontinuities, antinomies, anomalies, multiplicities of forces, breaks and crashes, but is ultimately subsumed under the order of a central controlling force—in this case the complicated but inexorable logic of capital which arrests the emergence of anything contrary to itself. In this sense the celebrated phe-

nomena of cultural diversity and tolerance, which allow Empire to claim that it is better than regimes labeled as “totalitarian,” is only superficial. The totalitarian regimes follow a simplistic logic inimical to creation of wealth but conducive to social unity. The complicated logic of the market allows for the creation of potentially unlimited wealth, and is therefore all-too-often tempted to “civilize” the “totalitarians” by sheer physical force, as it is rarely able to do by the more civilized means of persuasion and replaces social unity by an even stronger one, when maintained well: the unity under the regime of exchange.

Underlying every possible practice of resistance must then be an “open” totality which is not recoverable within any unity. Jameson does not dig into the metaphysical aspects of this totality (such as its being which aspects, I suppose, would be no more intractable than those of any metaphysics whatsoever), but concentrates on its methodological, epistemological, and aesthetic qualities. But if a totality like this is to be normative, it should be stripped of the barren formality of moral tradition. It should offer unlimited possibilities for interpretation of phenomena in the context of the social forces that shape it. That no complete inventory of those directions and forces seems possible is indeed a positive feature of the totality in question. It suggests that no logic could manage to subsume and define the system’s inexhaustible dialectic. This means that there could be genuine production of the new, defined as phenomena that cannot be deduced by rules and axioms specified beforehand. Totality is thus not vulnerable to the forces of empirical representation (as argued also in the *Political Unconscious*, 1981), and therefore will always be beyond our, and Empire’s, propositional grasp. It is created by the peculiar operations of “cognitive mapping” and “transcoding” in which we “frame equivalents... [for phenomena] in other codes and theoretical languages.”<sup>19</sup> This ensures that the fuzzy totality will never yield a stable meaning corresponding to the referent, and the creative process will always be an act of interpretation emphasizing the aesthetic over the systematic dimension (explaining Jameson’s preoccupation with art and literature). Jameson conceives of Marxism (whose main virtue is its analysis of industrial capitalism) as the most appropriate methodological orientation to do justice to this approach. For him Marxism is neither a philosophical system nor a political ideology, but essentially a “dialectic” whose “ideal...is not the invention of a better philosophy...but rather the

transformation of the natural and social world into a meaningful totality such that ‘totality’ in the form of a philosophical system will no longer be required.”<sup>20</sup>

Jameson’s “dialectical historicist” approach acknowledges the futility of a central method of interpretation in the situation of “full postmodernity” where the very multiplicity of theories has rendered them something like closed-group ideologies. The only approach, then, to connect them up one with the other into some form of totality is through mutually transcoding them. As suggested above, this process of totalizing is indeed a positive one. It gives rise to discontinuities, antinomies, and contradictions born by the unpredictable efficacy of the new. For instance, postmodern reality is often described in spatial terms, making architecture the quintessential milieu for illustrating postmodern concepts through real-life metaphors. Postmodern space is characterized by disorienting the subjects by jamming their ability to “map” into it and position themselves within the decentered communication networks. Jameson’s favorite example (Baudrillard’s, for instance, would be Disneyland) is the glass-skin Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. He contrasts this building, celebrated as “popular” by its architect John Portman and others, with modernist buildings such as those by Le Corbusier.<sup>21</sup> It features broken, formless, and depthless space without convenient entrances and exits that engulfs and disorients the visitor as it seems to be governed by a new kind of logic intended to present the interior not as part of the city but as a complete self-sufficient mini-world (although it offers images of the city distorted through glass windows).

Jameson takes this “hyperspace” to be the “analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds... to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.”<sup>22</sup> It seems that the hope placed by Dyer-Witheford on the new information technologies seems unfounded. Empire makes sure the technologies are not used subversively. So it becomes scary when one realizes (which few do) that Bonaventure is indeed a metaphor for the human situation in the new imperialism. Baudrillard would go further to claim, in the article “Disneyworld Co.” that the world had become a giant Disneyland. Empire has been very successful in rendering us

incapable of global orientation. In such a situation the subject cannot even initiate a process of understanding toward some sort of wider consensus since all laws governing the process are relativized or marginalized to particular monadic sites from which no organized resistance could emerge. One cannot be sure if her “conceptual scheme,” so to speak, is shared widely enough. (It seems that once-revolutionary writers like Habermas have given up all hope, recommending recipes amounting to no more than comfortable living within the existing liberal regime. It is this ill realism that makes those, at least for me, so irrelevant and uninteresting.)

Jameson’s solution in terms of transcoding and cognitive mapping, then, though perhaps desperate from the point of view of its calculable chances for success, seems reasonable in the absence of anything better. It enjoins that one should not seek representation of some sort of reality but strive for a sense of orientation in a posited world of others by engaging in various esthetic practices and theoretical projects. This process is indeed imperfect and never complete, but this is indeed an advantage. The transcoding activity is not to be classified along the scale leading from no representation at all up to full representation; it is essentially different than representation. The creation of representations is unbridled, in the sense that they must not comply with any propositionally describable reality; the activity must lead to its own sur-reality, challenging any schematic propositional logic yet being able to move emotionally, to be lived, to “get under one’s skin.” Surely not just any postmodernist collage would be able to do that. Whether or not this gets accomplished would depend on how the representation without object would be able to stir up the dormant powers and symbolism in the individual, whose origins—drawing from ever complicating Marxist theses about the omnipresence of one’s material circumstances—could be only social. Empire is trying to extinguish those powers and turn individuals into assembly-line clones with well-defined wants and needs. In this sense the cognitive mapping always has a political dimension, and the goal is to invoke it and turn it against the system in the form, at least initially, of disgust. Here one cannot help thinking of director David Lynch’s postmodernist nightmares such as *Eraserhead* (1977), which the *Monthly Film Bulletin* called “a movie which must be rather lived than explained”; the same could be said about *Twin Peaks* (1992). There have been elaborate efforts by self-titled connoisseurs to enlighten the perplexed what is

going on in those movies—a step that would be welcomed by Empire. In the avant-garde documentary *Lumière & Co.* (1998), Lynch himself says that the goal of cinema is to create new worlds. His undisputed accomplishments in that come to suggest that the best way to turn these worlds against the new imperialism is to make sure its logic cannot monopolize their interpretation.

Jameson himself, as a literary theorist, places much hope with the *allegory*—a figurative technique in which the presumed subject of analysis is kept out of view but is represented by another resembling it—marking “the crisis of the older aesthetic absolute of the Symbol” and characterized by “a generalized sensitivity to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous..., to Difference rather than Identity.”<sup>23</sup> Transcoding operations, he says, are “the allegorical projection of the structure of the analysis models.”<sup>24</sup> The success of an allegory is, however, by no means entirely arbitrary. There is a primordial connection between the two realities and languages, “[f]or alongside a perspective in which my language comments on that of another, there is a somewhat longer vista in which both languages derive from larger families that used to be called *Weltanschauungen*, but which have today become recognized as ‘codes’.”<sup>25</sup> Allegory, of course, as a familiar device, is anticipated and channeled by the new order; indeed, it promoted it as a replacement to the more rigid representational techniques it itself rendered useless in its subversion of the modernist absolute values no longer needed. So to turn allegory back against the order is not a trivial business. Jameson addresses it at length alongside the more general question of how exactly to “map a totality,”<sup>26</sup> a glimpse into which I tried to provide here but to which I must return later (indeed in a further paper).

To take stock, all of this should suggest that there could be a viable analysis along the lines of Marx’s doctrine of the real subsumption to counter the rightist “end of ideology” theories—for instance, à la Fukuyama and Daniel Bell—celebrating Empire and its alleged lack of alternatives. Such an account must diagnose the situation as falling within a certain historical period (situated by no means at the end of history) and tackle the question of the possibilities of resistance in a postindustrial situation in which every aspect of life is subsumed under the rule of capital and in which resistance cannot come from outside the system while it would take an impossible

transcendence of the available resources for it to come from within. I suggested that Jameson fully recognizes this limitation and so his vision of a return to a certain kind of utopianism of totality is more realistic, while, e.g., Hardt's and Negri's reliance on the mysterious multitude, accompanied by strong anti-utopian sentiments, and Dyer-Witheford's concrete practical recommendations could at best be conceived as, if not wishful thinking, then, respectively, abstract theorizations and prescriptions for some distant future.

A successful identification of the ways open to resistance will require an accurate analysis of the new order, which may not necessarily be a defense of it, as it may or may not compare it to rival orders. Our authors indeed tend to accept the general Marxist diagnosis that the system breeds its own corruption, i.e., that capitalism will be weakened or will collapse, to use the classical phrase, under the weight of its own internal contradictions. But Jameson is much representative of the treacherousness of taking such a line all too literally. Although Marx was sober enough to recognize that revolution cannot succeed without this internal self-weakening, he was still naive to think that the process is more or less straightforward. (This is, though, hardly his fault, for the power and chameleonic peregrinations of capitalism in the information age were beyond anyone's imagination in his historical situation.) Our authors are much more informed to recognize that the system has learned to mutate in order to benefit from its own internal crashes and emerge even stronger, at least for a foreseeable and theorizable future. This means that it would be useless to assail the new Empire in the brutal old ways, by inciting armed revolutions or provoking or rejoicing at economic crises. Rather, more sophisticated ways of resistance should be developed, ones using the system's own resources and logics and aimed at discovering its vulnerabilities. The system should be brought down from within by strangling it back internally with finesse, so to speak.

The difference between the Hardt/Negri/Dyer-Witheford trio and Jameson is that the former team is unduly optimistic about the possibilities of resistance. The ultimate form of resistance is, of course, revolution, which has traditionally meant bringing about radical changes towards improvement, if necessary by force, in the social-economic ways of a society. It is too bad that namely this essential conception has been compromised beyond redemption in the face of the seeming triumph of liberal capitalism and the collapse of obvi-

ously corrupt and rotten regimes self-claimed to embody successful revolutions. Thus moderate conservative apologists (like Anthony Quinton) have some right to argue (statistically-empirically, from the French or Russian revolutions) against revolution in general on pragmatic grounds: they are too difficult to organize, too risky and unpredictable, and grossly counterproductive; in other words, they never succeed in what they promise. Yet the picture underlying such critiques is a gross though common oversimplification of Marx' theory of revolution which Jameson tries to put aright. As he observes, the Revolution (*sic.*) is the central concept of any Marxian "unity-of-theory-and-practice". He states that

we need to abandon to iconology everything that suggest that revolution is a punctual moment rather than an elaborate and complex process.... Social revolution is not a moment in time but it can be affirmed in terms of the necessity of change in what is a synchronic system, in which everything holds together and is interrelated with everything else. Such a system then demands a kind of absolute systemic change rather than piecemeal 'reform'.... [T]he system demands the ideological vision of a radical social alternative to the existing social order. We must imagine revolution—as something which is both a process and the undoing of a synchronic system—as a set of demands which could be triggered by a political or a punctual event such as a Left victory in an electoral struggle or the dismantling of colonial authority.... These waves...emerge from ever deeper layers of the hitherto silenced and deprived population.... The most basic issue... is not whether the concept of revolution is still viable, but...whether, in the world system today, it is possible for any segment of integrated sections to uncouple and de-link...and then to pursue a different kind of social development and a radically different type of collective project.<sup>27</sup>

A basic question implied in the larger concern of how revolutions are possible in the present age of hopelessness is about the revolutionary agent. *Who* will resist the system and affect the revolution? For Marx, as it is well known, the political subject of resistance and revolution was the working class, the industrial proletariat who must otherwise choose between starvation and selling its labor to the owners of the means of production. As Dyer-

Witheford observes, however, there is now consensus that not only class but the very idea of a single work force has met a “technological nemesis”: the working class has disintegrated through a familiar process of automaton and informatization which is seen as capital’s post-Fordist restructuring in response to class struggles.<sup>28</sup> In general, the problem of what will take the place of class has been severe. As observed above, Hardt and Negri (together with theorists such as Paolo Virno) place their hope in the hands of the multitude, a new metaphysically fuzzy social-political subject, adapted from Spinoza, as an agent of global change.<sup>29</sup> Jameson, on the other hand, prefers to stay more faithful to Marx and so adapts the notion of class to a category resembling a small atomistic group (here we could recall Sartre’s analysis of groups in his monumental *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960). Unlike the multitude, which “produces autonomously and reproduces the entire world of life...constructing a new ontological reality” and “produces itself in singularity...by inverting the ideological illusion that all humans are interchangeable...[s]tanding the ideology of the market on its feet,”<sup>30</sup> the new entity can have much smaller ambitions and could act and think only locally. Jameson suggests that leftist laments over the death of class (as perhaps any lamenting) are useless. He pictures postindustrial cultural aspects as irreducibly more heterogeneous than anything modernity had known. Those find their expression within group-based cultural localities within the capitalist system.

Groups are the carriers and symptoms of the irreducible multiplicity of forms of life in late capitalism. The new neo-ethnicity and micro-politics based on the group’s ideology of difference is the only way to hope for consensus as a prerequisite for resistance.<sup>31</sup> Jameson implicitly attempts to cure the lack of a well-defined historical subject on the individual level by putting forward, à la Deleuze and Guattari, the fragmentary and schizophrenic one who has lost all capacity for radical critique due to the abolition of critical distance by commodification and the proliferation of images by the media. He realizes that it is a difficult task to identify ways of resistance open to such an entity yet places his hopes in a Marxism that will enable it to use its schizophrenic experience for transcoding foreign conceptual schemata into ones which will be potentially detrimental to the system. On a wider scale, he suggests that the new phenomena are analyzable by a Marxian po-

litical economy which works through the determination of culture by group praxis. The hope is that capital's frustration of the possibility for inter-group consensus and understanding, leading to the disappearance of inter-group life-worlds, may indeed foster richer local *intra*-group cultural lives, marked by totalizing utopian visions, ultimately to frustrate the rule of capital. This double character of information-age capitalism is fully recognized also by the Hardt/Negri/Dyer-Witheford tandem who, in addition, claim to identify and even guide the new ways of resistance (becoming perhaps a new communist party). It seems, though, that, while Hardt, Negri, and Dyer-Witheford emphasize outward action, however marginal and impotent, for Jameson emancipation can come only from within the "lifeworlds" of alienated groups or individuals. As he says, "the concept of alienation has rigor when specifically used to articulate various concrete privations of working-class life...at a specific historical moment... It surely does not amount to much, however, as a general designation for (bourgeois) spiritual malaise."<sup>32</sup> Those agents must try to construct meaning through cognitive mapping in a thinking process which is genuinely utopian as it is not representational.

The concept of utopia is, for Jameson, already implied in postmodern cultural forms such as dystopian science fiction novels and films (as, for instance, Philip Dick's novels, the films *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*) as an expression of a desire for collectivity. In those forms the good or bad "system" is readily presented more or less vigorously, enabling people to orient and formulate strategies for action.<sup>33</sup> The postindustrial system, however, is not given to us in this way, which may indeed be a good thing for it enables us to construct it hermeneutically almost anew. Now, if one wants to be able to use utopia for liberation purposes, one must theorize a Marxian framework that situates the system within a larger historical context. Jameson's recommendation to engage in Utopia (capitalized, as a positive concept) is, like in Marx, tantamount to a confession of ignorance concerning the future ideal or state of affairs, although entertaining such a *regulative* ideal reflecting a timeless domination of the lifeworld over the system is a better choice, in terms of emancipation potentials, than sanctifying liberal information capitalism as an "end of history." Such a framework would enable us to get clear about the irreparable deficiencies as well as the

strength of this order and realize that our only hope in this dreary time of need. To use a Heideggerian designation (*dürftiger Zeit*) of the epoch when truth has been concealed from Being, which is to be revealed only in poetry, by traditional metaphysics speaking in propositions, is to counter it with our own vision of totality. Utopian mapping is supposed to stimulate our sense of possibility to imagine such a totality. The limited success of this type of thinking (despite, or rather because of, the piles of cultural production of science fiction and fantasy) is due to the almost total commodification of life. Jameson, however, makes the reasoned suggestion that we could transcode the images of fantastic worlds media capitalism spews on us as “entertainment” to distract our attention and keep us into submission to possibilities concerning our own world. While he does not claim that utopian transcoding thinking would immediately change the world (indeed, at the present situation of unchecked rule of capital, nothing can) he might have well identified the only manner of resistance possible at the moment, and one which might bear rich fruit in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 190 – 191.

<sup>7</sup> University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Dyer-Witheford, 170 – 1.

<sup>9</sup> Duke University Press, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> Edited by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 292.

<sup>12</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 314.

- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.; for instance, brand images have become mysterious things that sell and are consumed like tangible commodities. Further, *being* in a shopping mall is itself “consumed” along with the things bought there.
- <sup>14</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xii.
- <sup>15</sup> Nick Dyer-Witheford, chapter 8.
- <sup>16</sup> cf. *Empire*, sec. 4.3.
- <sup>17</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 335.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 160.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 120.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 334.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 38 – 45.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 44.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 167.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 120.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 394.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 399 – 418.
- <sup>27</sup> This is part of Habermas’ third thesis from his 1996 article “Five Theses on Actually Existing Marxism.”
- <sup>28</sup> Dyer-Witheford, 79.
- <sup>29</sup> A defense of Spinoza’s “multitude” against Hobbes’ “people” with reference to globalization is the exclusive topic of a recent book, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (MIT Press, 2003), by the Italian political theorist Paolo Virno.
- <sup>30</sup> *Empire*, 395.
- <sup>31</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 318 – 9; 340ff.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 89 – 90.
- <sup>33</sup> Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, *Jameson Reader*, 382ff.

## **Economic Difficulties Awaiting our Grandchildren: A Retrospective on Keynes**

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In the years of the Great Depression in the world and in the U. S. in particular, there was a wave of pessimism, and many thought that capitalism had reached its end and that even worse was yet to come. It was at this time and in this atmosphere that John Maynard Keynes, the distinguished British economist, published an essay called “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren,” where he extrapolated economic growth and concluded that humankind was well on the way to solving the “economic problem”, the struggle for subsistence, that had hitherto been its most pressing concern. He foresaw that in about a century, people would be working less and enjoying more, spending more time in leisure, arts, and literature.

Three quarters of a century have already passed since Keynes’ essay and although he got the econometrics fairly right (in terms of his predictions for global GDP per capita), that golden age of less toil and more leisure seems today as far off as ever. In this paper, I shall look at his arguments, and try a comparative analysis with today’s statistics and trends. I will argue that working hours did fall until about the 1970s and have been on the rise ever since and that, unfortunately, they will not fall significantly in the foreseeable future despite the global increase in production and productivity.

### **Keynes’ essay**

Keynes first presented “Economic possibilities for our Grandchildren” in several lectures around Britain in 1928 and the final version appeared in print in 1930 as the world was going through the Great Depression. Keynes deliberately did not dwell on the Depression, but took a long-term view in-

stead. My purpose in this essay is akin to his approach: not so much to speculate but forecast the future.

What can we reasonably expect the level of our economic life to be like a hundred years hence? “What are the economic possibilities for our grandchildren?”<sup>1</sup> In his essay, he calculated correctly that the living standards then had increased fourfold since medieval times and predicted that with the run-rate they would increase by another four to eight times over the next 100 years. Although there may be flaws in the arguments he gave as to why the said increases occurred and would occur, he got the numbers fairly correct as the global output has indeed risen four times in the last 75 years and is expected to rise further, putting his “four-to-eight times in 100 years” projection very much in place.

As a result of such increased production, Keynes foresaw reduced working hours (some 15 hours per week), more time spent in leisure, arts, sports, etc. He thought that the amount of production output that we have today would be enough to solve economic problems (i.e., the struggle for subsistence) for the first time in history. This would be the greatest achievement of humankind as “the economic problem, the struggle for subsistence, always has been hitherto the primary, most pressing problem of the human race—not only of the human race, but of the whole of the biological kingdom from the beginning of life in its most primitive forms.” He “looked forward, therefore, in days not so very remote, to the greatest change which has ever occurred in the material environment of life for human beings in the aggregate.”

### **The present situation**

The puzzle that Keynes’ essay presents is that although he was right in the econometric forecast, the conclusions which he thought would follow logically never materialized. Working hours, if anything, have been on the rise globally. They had been falling until the 1970s, but then the trend went nearly as rapidly into reverse, despite a continued healthy growth in national output. Statistics for the western world, and especially for the Anglo-Saxon countries, clearly pointed to increased working hours: “Most Americans work longer hours now than peasants did in the Middle Ages, and the working class does not seem to be on the verge of being freed from the struggle

for subsistence.”<sup>2</sup> Real wages per hour have declined by more than 13 per cent for Americans, but they also seem to be enjoying fewer vacation days over time. The Bureau of Labour Statistics reports that, even after three years at a job, Americans average just 10.2 annual vacation days. In 2000, 20 million workers did not get a single day of paid vacation. “Today Americans work, on average, a month longer each year than 20 years ago.”<sup>3</sup>

Australia presents a similar picture. Beder<sup>4</sup> cites a 1998 study, reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which found only 24 percent of workers work a standard 40-hour week, compared with 44 percent twenty years ago. The difference has been attributed mainly to overtime, often unpaid, with 30 percent working more than 49 hours per week compared with 19 per cent in 1978. In Australia, 43 percent do not get paid for their overtime.

In the UK, a report published in October 2003 by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development shows that the average working week for women has increased by three and a half hours to its current level of 33.9. The average working week for all workers stands at 39.6 hours and the proportion of those who work more than 48 hours a week has increased from 10 per cent to 25 per cent during the past five years.

Contrary to the general trend in the Anglo-Saxon world, continental Europe was able to reduce working hours between 1970 and 2002. Hours were down most of all in France (23.5 percent) with its legislated 35-hour week. Germans worked 17.1 per cent fewer hours, according to a new analysis of 19 countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Yet, it now seems to be changing for continental Europe also. France’s new finance minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, complained that the 35-hour week, introduced in 1997, was a financial disaster, costing the state huge sums. The 35-hour week returned to the forefront of the political agenda in France over the summer when several companies reached deals with trade unions that would require workers to work longer for the same pay or else face factory closures. The French government is expected to propose changes to existing legislation.

Germany also removed its voluntary 35-hour scheme recently, arguing that it was making the country less competitive. Companies have been moving their production to Eastern Europe and Asia, where labor is cheaper, and the International Monetary Fund (in the *Financial Times* on 4 August 2004)

warned those in the Euro zone to work more hours, calling for decisive leadership from the European Union to help free up labor markets and encourage longer working hours in the Euro zone. It seems then that continental Europe is also on the way to joining the Anglo-Saxon world in terms of ever-rising working hours.

### **Analysis**

Research at Kyushu University has indicated that working longer hours may put workers at an increased risk of heart attack, and research at the University of Illinois indicates that couples working longer hours are more likely to have marital problems and divorce. Most Americans do indeed complain about their stressful daily schedules and their inability to balance work with other activities, and most say working less would help relieve many of their difficulties. Finally, it is also true that with today's production and productivity levels, we can be better off than our grandparents by working 15 hours a week only. Why, then, the long hours?

Some reasons that are frequently cited as to why we work long hours include job insecurity, unequal distribution of wealth, increased competition necessitating performance-related pay, outsourcing, and increased/enhanced needs that simply did not exist in Keynes' time. "Job insecurity is a major reason behind the rising working hours of middle manager and professionals. Two top business schools, Harvard and Stanford, have shortened their management courses because "potential customers are fearful of spending too many weeks away from their jobs."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, "Although average living standards have continued to rise, the living standard at the bottom twenty percent of income distribution has stagnated or declined for the last 30 years."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, increased competition requires minimizing costs of production, and employers typically prefer, for various reasons, one over-working worker and one unemployed to two standard-time workers. Finally, we have now a variety of new needs that were non-existent in Keynes's time. Surprisingly, these are not the type of needs that Keynes labeled "relative needs," but in due course they have become "absolute needs" (e.g., one cannot survive in America without a car).

Although I am in agreement with the reasons above, I would like to dig further beneath the surface. We should realize that the working hours

were decreasing steadily from the 1800s, when many people in the western world worked 70 hours a week, to 50 hours last century. The declining trend continued until about 30 years ago as noted earlier.<sup>7</sup> To me, the single reason why the working hours are on the rise again is globalization. With globalization, two things are happening that are responsible for the reversal: labor moves to countries where it is valued more; production moves to countries where labor is cheap. Both sorts of mobility have become relevant in the last 30 years and it is this impact of globalization that Keynes could not have seen. Today, the leisure-loving French do not have to compete with their compatriots only (who are also protected by the 35-hour labor code) but also with the Algerian immigrant who is ready and more than willing to work 15 hours a day for half the pay. What is more, even if the government succeeds in preventing black market labor and limits on immigration, the French companies are all too ready to move their production to Eastern Europe or Asia, where labor is just as qualified, cheap, and abundant. This puts the French in almost direct competition with millions of workers globally and they have no choice but to work hard, just as the government has no choice but to increase the working hours.

The corollary of this is that the democratic regimes that were able to protect the working class by way of securing labor codes are no longer relevant in the face of globalization, which by definition recognizes no borders and no sovereigns. One sovereign will reduce the working hours, but the global forces will move the production to another one who has not done so. Hutchins and Milchen noted that “U.S. laborers have increased their output per hour by 30% since 1973...[o]ur average hourly wage in 1998 was US\$12.77 instead of the US\$18.40 we would have received simply by sharing in the benefits of our increased productivity.” Widerquist says “many working Americans are constantly two paychecks away from homelessness,” and Rorty points out,

the bourgeoisieification of the white proletariat which began in World War II and continued up through the Vietnam War has been halted, and the process has gone into reverse. America is now proletarianizing its bourgeoisie.... The question now is whether the average married couple, both working full-time, will ever be able to take home more than US\$30,000 a year.... But US\$30,000 a year will not permit homeowner-

ship or buy decent day-care. In a country that believes neither in public transportation nor in national health insurance, this income permits a family of four only a humiliating, hand-to-mouth existence. Such a family, trying to get by on this income, will be constantly tormented by fears of wage rollbacks and downsizing, and of disastrous consequences of even a brief illness.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Some 80 years before Keynes, Karl Marx had foreseen in his labor theory of value that wages only compensate workers for the value of their labor power (their capacity to labor), which is equivalent to the value of the commodities required to reproduce it—essentially, subsistence or resources just sufficient enough to keep workers alive. This theory implied that workers' wages would always tend to a subsistence level. He also argued that in the face of automated production, the only way to keep rate of profit satisfactory was to increase the pace of production or to reduce wages, resulting in the "pauperization of the proletariat." We should keep in mind that the typical working week in Marx's time was 70 hours under terrible conditions. The pay was often so poor that children and expectant mothers also had to work. In many places, part of the wages was paid in the form of cheap liquor, and women were obliged to supplement their earnings by prostitution.

Until the 1970s, however, Marx's predictions, for the most part, did not materialize. Working conditions, including wages, improved significantly. As Stevenson aptly notes:

Piecemeal reforms have significantly modified the economic system of capitalism, beginning with the British Factory Acts, which limited the worst exploitation of workers and children, and continued with National Insurance, unemployment benefits, the National Health Services (in Europe, though not in the United States), and steady progress by trade unions by increasing real wages and decreasing working hours. In fact, many of the specific measures proposed in the *Communist Manifesto* have long since come into effect in the so-called capitalist countries: graduated income tax, consolidation of much economic control in the hands of the state, nationalization of some major industries in some countries, free education in state schools. The unrestrained capitalist system as Marx knew it in the mid-nineteenth century has ceased to exist in

the most developed countries—and this has happened by step-by-step reform, not by once-and-for-all revolution.<sup>9</sup>

A similar observation by West points to the same phenomenon:

Whether in the totalitarian guise of fascism or in the more democratically accountable form of the New Deal in the USA (a mixture of Keynesian economics and neo-corporatism), what Frankfurt theorists variously termed “monopoly” or “state” capitalism demonstrated an unforeseen ability by means of more extensive state intervention to overcome the limitations of nineteenth-century liberal capitalism.<sup>10</sup>

All this had been achieved by the power of both state and democratic regimes, which entitle every individual one vote irrespective of social class—the importance of which Marx failed to see and in fact played down.

With the advance of globalization from the 1970s on, however, the sovereignty of the states, hence the power of the workers, has been weakened. Global multinationals do not have to abide by local legislation to the extent they can move elsewhere. This strips the working class of the protection of the labor code. The increased production and productivity will not be shared with the working class, whose rights are not properly protected. Therefore, we should expect our grandchildren to work even longer hours if no social change takes place in the mean time.

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren,” in *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963), 358-373.

<sup>2</sup> K. Widerquist, “Economic Possibilities for our Grandparents,” *USBIG discussion paper*, no. 65 (December 2003). <<http://widerquist.com/usbig/25JAN-FEB2004.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> D. Hutchins and J. Milchen, “Americans Working More, Earning Less,” *Reclaim Democracy*, <[http://reclaimdemocracy.org/labor/unpaid\\_over\\_time\\_rules.html](http://reclaimdemocracy.org/labor/unpaid_over_time_rules.html)>.

<sup>4</sup> S. Beder, “Working Long Hours,” *Engineers Australia* (March 2001), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Beder, *ibid.*

- <sup>6</sup> Widerquist, *ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> If we go back to pre-industrial times, we would be surprised to find out that in most societies life was slow and leisurely, and the hours of work required to meet the simple needs were for fewer than we spend today. According to anthropologists, hunter-gatherer societies were able to meet their needs and enjoy an adequate diet with 20-35 hours work per week.
- <sup>8</sup> Richard Rorty, *Achieving our Country*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 83-84.
- <sup>9</sup> L. Stevenson, and D. L. Haberman, *Ten Theories of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 145-146.
- <sup>10</sup> David West, *An Introduction to Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 56.

## **The Structural Brakes of Manipulation or the Constructed Outside**

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An often cited example of the limitations of perception goes like this: if we all wake up tomorrow and everything is ten times bigger than it was, we would not know it. The key word here is obviously “everything”—that is, including ourselves together with our perception apparatus. This simple example speaks to the impossibility of detecting change if everything is changed. In other words, the change concerns only the absolute parameters but preserves intact the initial relationships between things, the proportions, the relative values, structure as a whole. If we take this as the worst possible ideological manipulation model, in which, theoretically, the sensibilities and perceptions of the manipulated subject are altered together with the worsening conditions of reality (a reality from which he is not supposed to differentiate himself), we end up with absolute manipulation. What would make such manipulation absolute, if it were possible, is the fact that the interference of the system into the mind of the individual would be undetectable and thus bearable; in fact, not only bearable, but possibly satisfying from the point of view of the subject, who would have developed a subliminal need for the system, as may be the case with the contemporary Western living style of insidious hyper-consumption.

And yet, how can we distinguish between a subject’s conditioned need for the system (expressed through multiple needs for what the system produces) from what the subject “really” needs? Marcuse, for example, defines true and false needs as objective categories,<sup>1</sup> based on the universal value of human freedom and the universal immorality of exploitation. But this formulation cannot solve the question of the ease and apparent freedom with

which the consumer can and does adapt to the wealth of so-called “late capitalism.” It is no longer a question of the physical demands of capital on the worker’s body. Now the issue is the uncritical acceptance of the calculated satisfaction provided by the dominant order (a satisfaction which is not merely material but cultural and intellectual as well) to the extent that it can lull the intellectual into thinking he is being critical when he is only voicing an already legislated discontent. Even though Marcuse’s categories were not designed for the description of this problem, it seems that they still hold and, what is more, that they are indeed objective—albeit in a way that Marcuse would have probably found it difficult to approve of. But to claim any kind of distinction between true and false needs, we need to find a way for the subject to become conscious of his own manipulation—in other words, the question of the reality of needs is mainly a cognitive problem.

The subject cannot, as Marx pointed out, begin with consciousness: “man... possesses ‘consciousness’; but, even so, not inherent, not ‘pure’ consciousness. From the start the ‘spirit’ is afflicted with the curse of being ‘burdened’ with matter.”<sup>2</sup> If the reference of this statement is, perhaps heretically, transcribed from the base to the superstructure, it no longer will be a question of matter and spirit, of the role of nature versus the role of society, but a question of society against itself. Taking the natural, physical needs for granted, what can we say about the needs of the intellect, about the “true” and “false” cultural output of a society which has (let’s assume) solved the problem of simple physical maintenance of its population?

In total manipulation, many theorists indicate that we cannot distinguish a point where the conditioning of the subject begins (point zero, so to speak). As Althusser puts it, “individuals are always-already subjects”;<sup>3</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno express a similar concern: “The need which might resist central control has already been suppressed by the control of the individual consciousness.”<sup>4</sup> This “already” is pervasive in Marxist thought; Marcuse’s version of it is the term “introjection,” defined as “a variety of relatively spontaneous processes by which a Self (Ego) transposes the ‘outer’ into the ‘inner’” and the result is “an absorption of ideology into reality.”<sup>5</sup> If that were the case, taken to its theoretical extreme, the individual would merge completely with the social and the subject would not be able to

define certain needs as personal (that is, unconditioned and “natural”) and other needs as contingent (dispensable and artificial). In fact, Baudrillard says that “from the perspective of the satisfaction of the consumer, there is no basis on which to define what is ‘artificial’ and what is not.”<sup>6</sup>

This statement seems intuitively wrong, because there are social and ideological constraints which the subject should not adapt to, situations where the “naturalization” would impose unnatural limitations on the mind. Experience also shows that total manipulation is impossible, at least through the work of what Althusser calls “ideological State apparatuses”<sup>7</sup> (which would include contemporary mass consumption), as distinguished from the brutal political force of State apparatuses—granted, the latter could conceivably apply physical force to condition the subject’s thoughts and even perceptions (e.g., in *1984*, where the protagonist really begins to believe that he physically sees what his tormentor wants him to see). But this is not the issue here. Assuming a non-intrusive, subtle, ideological manipulation of needs by the system of consumption, how can the subject draw a line or make a distinction between his own, already manipulated reality and another possible, objective reality, or “the truth”?

Manipulation aims at a totality, a system, a structure free of internal contradictions and inconsistencies. In their definition of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno unambiguously call it a *system*: “a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part.”<sup>8</sup> Baudrillard also has something to say about the systematic way in which the culture of consumption carries out its ideological reconnaissance and subversion of the subject: “Consumption is the virtual *totality* of all objects and messages presently constituted in a more or less coherent discourse”<sup>9</sup> (italics mine). Internal consistency is, in fact, Baudrillard’s main requirement for a successful simulation model; it is most explicit in his quotation from Brecht, where the non-beer would be incongruous without a non-cigar—the reality of either one would disrupt the smooth operation of the illusion.<sup>10</sup> Any illusion can be successful and convincing (realistic) only if it is self-consistent and allows no internal flaw.

However, if we start from the premise (not arbitrarily chosen) that total manipulation of thought and perception is impossible, we arrive at the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that there must be clues to the illusion which are visible from within the illusion itself, so that the subject will al-

ways find an inconsistency, a flaw in the system. (In an apparently dubious but actually (and inadvertently) quite insightful rendering of this problem, the movie *The Matrix* deals with the transition from illusion to reality in the following way: the protagonist has to swallow what could only be an illusory, virtual, computerized pill which then turns out to be an element of reality as well. The ambiguous status of this one element here helps establish the connection with reality, or the place where the illusion breaks down.

Baudrillard claims that the distinction between illusion and reality in a simulation model is no longer tenable. In his annihilation of this dualism he postulates a structure which has become ephemeral, internalized by the subject, and still extant only in the syntax of consumption, which is perfectly operational without semantics (this is simplifying matters a bit; to be more precise, Baudrillard denies consumption even the status of syntax, preferring to call it simply a “code”<sup>11</sup>). The point is that consumption acts as a system and is no longer an individual act: “the system of objects,” Baudrillard says, “imposes its own coherence” on society.<sup>12</sup> Even needs are no longer predicates of the individual consumer: “taken one at a time, needs are nothing... there is only the system of needs.”<sup>13</sup>

It seems very tempting to argue against Baudrillard on this point, since his own criticism obviously belies his claims. In practice, it is possible for the individual to criticize the system using the tools of the system, to differentiate oneself from the mass culture one has already consumed and from the ideologies one has irreversibly inhaled. In practice, the absolute adaptation or manipulation is a fiction, just like any other completely self-contained model. The question is: how is it theoretically possible for the subject to become aware of his own manipulated nature in order to reject it? In other words, what is the mechanism by which the subjective can have an inkling of the objective?

These questions are not rhetorical. Stated in the terms of a cognitive problem, they find one very convincing answer in Žižek’s *Tarrying with the Negative*:

Every tension between notion and reality, every relationship of the Notion to what appears as its irreducible Other encountered in the sensible, extra-notional experience, already is an intra-notional tension, i.e., al-

ready implies a minimal notional determination of this ‘otherness’... [t]he subject has in itself the measure which allows him to distinguish between what are merely ‘subjective impressions’ and what ‘objectively exists.’ What appears in and to our experience as extra-notional surplus, as the ‘otherness’ of the object irreducible to the subject’s notional framework, impenetrable to it, is always-already the fetishistic, ‘reified’ (mis)perception of an inconsistency of the notion to itself.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, the subject does not have a flawlessly consistent subjective notion of reality, and it is precisely that flaw, the compromised totality of the picture, which tells each individual consciousness that there must be more to it, that there is an objective reality in addition to and beyond the picture in the subjective mind. In a sense, Žižek would agree with what Baudrillard had already proposed—that the simulation model, in this case from the subjective point of view, has to be self-consistent, perfect in its internal relations, immutable in its proportions in order to maintain the illusion—and this would be impossible. Any inconsistency within the notion, the subjective perception of the model, would reveal another reality behind it or, Žižek would say, *the* reality. In other words, the subject can never completely lose his bearings in reality and surrender the dualism of real/illusory to an omnivorous simulation because, it seems, there is always an outside. And if the simulation allows for a perception of an “outside,” then it does not function as a simulation in the Baudrillardian sense any more; it ceases to be all-encompassing and self-contained and becomes merely one term in a binary equation, the other part of which is presumed to be nothing less than reality.

Paradoxically, the problem with ideology, as Althusser points out, is that it “has no outside.”<sup>15</sup> Ideology is not supposed to allow the subject a position from which he can speak an unconditioned language. What would make simulation impossible, though, is the claim that there is always an outside, made visible from within the system by the existence of at least one element which would betray the dichotomy (illusion vs. something else) and define the alternative (going back to the initial example, that would be one element which would not grow ten times larger, and in this way would make the change visible—a testimony to an outside, or previous world).

There are a few places where the source of a flaw in the subject's perception of the system can be sought. One would think that, perhaps, the development of new material conditions of production, according to the classical Marxist model, would precede any changes in the superstructure, so that the subject could "see it coming" before being adapted to the new conditions. That is to say, there is a necessary delay, and it is only after this temporal suspension that ideology has the chance to police, in a gentle way and after the fact, the absolute adaptation of the mind to the already altered parameters of the body. But this theory, however powerful in its implications, remains a straightforward, stylized model of a much more complex and self-perpetuating relationship between base and superstructure. As many theorists (especially those from the Frankfurt school) have observed, ideology rarely lags behind enough to leave the mind untransformed and unconditioned by the time the new conditions are in place. In other words, ideology is never there merely to justify what has preceded it and to instill and discipline the reception and internalization of the economically established relationships. On the contrary, needs manifest themselves so as to be satisfied by the upcoming economic order, as if the subject has wished the new economic conditions into existence. Horkheimer and Adorno call this "the circle of manipulation and retroactive needs."<sup>16</sup> The reification of the subject by the culture does not follow the emergence of the culture but is uncannily simultaneous with it. The subject is never in a chronologically advantageous position to observe the emerging economic conditions "from the outside" or "from before."

So the clues must lie somewhere else; and it seems that an answer could be had by posing a question. The problem defined from the beginning has been the omnivorous *form* of consumerist discourse, which can tolerate and incorporate any content and use it for its purposes of hegemony. If everything is reified, reduced to the syntax of consumption, then the semantics no longer matters—it is no longer a question of meaning. Criticism, for example, can be criticism of content, but as long as it occupies a non-critical position within the structure, as long as it rides on a structurally inoffensive medium, as long as it fails to rupture the smooth operational routine of the whole, then it is formally un-critical; the system has absorbed it and is per-

haps using it as a Baudrillardian simulacrum of the third order, which is in an apparently disruptive but actually constructive relationship to the system. Horkheimer and Adorno give the following example: “Whenever Orson Wells offends against the tricks of the trade, he is forgiven because his departures from the norm are regarded as calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system.”<sup>17</sup> A similar example would be a television commercial with content ostensibly critical of television commercials but which can still function as a commercial. Marcuse complains that “such modes of protest and transcendence are no longer contradictory to the *status quo* and no longer negative.”<sup>18</sup>

This means that criticism, along with all other products, is not read as criticism, or, more precisely, *because* it is read it enters discourse which it is trying to denounce; it becomes a Derridean metonymic piece of a larger structure, and this structure is the culture of consumption. As Baudrillard would see it, every individual piece of the structure functions for the ulterior motives of the syntax of the whole, according to its place in relation to the other pieces (with the purpose of continuing the discourse, to relate, to exchange ideas), and not for the intrinsic motives of semantics (the use-value of thought): “what is consumed are not objects but the relation itself.”<sup>19</sup> All possible content will then necessarily become a confirmation of the dominant, universal form.

Therefore, the solution, the gap between the subject and environment which would allow for an awareness of an inconsistency within the totality of consumption must be sought at the level of form, not content. Since we are, as Baudrillard says, “becoming functional”<sup>20</sup> or part of what he calls “a relentless function,”<sup>21</sup> that is where we should look for the solution. In other words, it can be shown that totality is structurally impossible (even though it is sometimes tempting to equate totality with structure itself).

That is to say, in the face of the enormous, anonymous, subtle, almost impalpable but very palatable, always willingly accepted and inoffensively pervasive system of mass consumption, it is possible that the individual subject does not need any special critical insight or qualification other than his position as a subject within the system to resist this overwhelming and painless wave of manipulation. Even as he invites it, buys it, consumes it, gets pleasure from it, he cannot be totally immersed in or conditioned by the

structure and this is possible (unavoidable, really) by virtue of his occupying, structurally, the position of the subject; that is, the only non-structured point in the whole from the point of view of the subject. This is what would allow one to see a flaw in an otherwise completely self-consistent illusion since the incision into the totality comes precisely from the subjective position from which it is viewed. As Žižek puts it: “there is no neutral ‘zero-point’ from which society can be conceived as a Whole.”<sup>22</sup> It does not matter much how far the commercial machine can see or how deep it can reach into the individual mind—if that mind cannot become conscious of itself (that is, as a phenomenon and noumenon at the same time, which is impossible<sup>23</sup>), then the mind will never be able to see itself as part of the totality. In Žižek’s more elaborate phraseology, “the spot of the... picture is thus strictly constitutive of the subject; the subject qua subject of the look ‘is’ only in so far as the... picture he is looking at is inherently ‘incomplete.’”<sup>24</sup> This is the equivalent of the simpler claim that the eye cannot see itself. From the point of view of the individual totality will be incomplete because it will not seem to include that individual.

This does not have to be a question of reality or illusion—it is immaterial whether the person is actually part of the system according to the system; it is enough for the subject to be incapable of seeing his own place in the totality. The subject can never be completely subsumed under the structure, because he is structurally unable to believe in totality. For the subject, totality will have a flaw by definition.

This goes against more optimistic (pessimistic?) Marxist theories which see the only salvation in the honing of the critical capacities of the subject, in his education and in his enlightenment. But the question here is, given any subject (not necessarily one versed in advanced Marxism), a subject who enjoys consumption, and given the most powerful and least conspicuous hegemony available so far in history, is there a way to prevent the total collapse of the subject, a complete extinction of the self, to prevent the true needs from turning into false ones? There seems to be a way, although it goes against some mainstream Marxist formulations. What was the main problem for and with earlier Marxist models was the impossibility of grasping totality, including one’s own place and role in it as Lukacs’ idea that

“for if from the vantage point of a particular class the totality of existing society is not visible... then such a class is doomed to play only a subordinate role. It can never influence the course of history in either a conservative or progressive direction.”<sup>25</sup> The task of the intellectual avant-garde, Lukacs continues, is to point out that “the superiority of the proletariat must lie exclusively in its ability to see society from the centre, as a coherent whole.”<sup>26</sup> The impossibility of such an omniscient perspective seemed detrimental to the very premises of the Marxist tradition; it now turns to the theory’s advantage since the inability to acquire a notion of totality is the only thing that can save the subject from that totality.

The subject still has a specific perspective—this is guaranteed by the consensus of virtually all theories, which grant the subject at least a “false consciousness,”<sup>27</sup> or an illusory sense of freedom: “Everybody is guaranteed formal freedom.”<sup>28</sup> It is formally irrelevant whether this freedom is real; as long as we postulate a subjective sense of freedom or a false consciousness, the subject will never be capable of viewing or apprehending a totality—there will always appear to be a gap somewhere in the fabric of the absolute since an objective perspective, they believe, is not possible (“objective perspective” being a contradiction in terms). Therefore, the system will never be internally consistent, as long as the subject is within it; and the whole idea of manipulation in the first place is to keep the subject and his perception within the system. As the whole loses consistency, any structure (including Marxism itself) which depends on absolute order and a notion of totality loses credibility and will necessarily invite speculation as to what remains “outside”—even if there is no outside. In this case, doubt itself, in a mildly Cartesian but mostly Baudrillardian way, will create an outside. The irony is, there does not even have to be a real outside, because the suspected inconsistencies in the totality are generated by the perspective of the subject, i.e., from the inside. That is how the subject can construct an artificial “outside,” even though the ideology can construct an artificial “inside” to confine the subject. And just as ideology cannot look at anything without presupposing itself, the subject cannot consider ideology without the perception of inconsistency and incompleteness in his integration into the totality.

The more successful an illusion is, the sharper the sense of individual autonomy it has to instill in the subject. The most advanced simulations in

the real world, in fact, depend on intensifying the subjective perspective and not on obliterating it. For example, computer games enhance the illusion of live action not by creating a sense of a complete objective world, but by enhancing the *subjective* point of view of the player and, in a way, limiting his perspective. By excluding, in effect, part of what would otherwise have been a complete but flat picture, the visible field acquires new depth, and that is the depth of the subject, paradoxically achieved by narrowing, and not expanding, the viewer's perspective. If the player is to feel as if he is inside the game, and not just watching the little figures move on the screen, he has to sacrifice part of his vision (the one having to do with his own position in space) but for which he is amply rewarded. The same goes with theory.

Structurally, then, "true" and "false" needs are indeed distinguishable because the minimal distance between inside and outside is kept. But the "true" needs do not have to be "natural" as well, in the sense of grounded in some solid "reality." On the contrary, when the subject creates a notion (possibly non-existent) outside of ideology, this notion is itself virtual and definitely artificial. However, the constructed "outside" structurally functions (i.e., regardless of the content of reality) as one of the true needs, a need inherent (minus the connotations of specific content) in the subject by virtue of the position he occupies. The "outside" then is both true and artificial, and it can be distinguished from the artificial but false needs, which the system wants the subject to internalize. In other words, the Althusserian idea of an ideology without outside is above all the expression of the wish of ideology itself, which creates a virtual, artificial, ostensibly outside-proof sphere, where everything has to exist on the inside and be internalized by the subject. But the subject responds to that by constructing an outside (equally artificial and functional) because now the struggle against the system has to be taken to the level of form. What Baudrillard says about use-value and exchange value can be applied to true and false needs as well—they do not differ in terms of quality because their content-value is equated (that is, use-value and true needs lose their content) or even negated in "the structural articulation of the two terms."<sup>29</sup> What matters now is how these terms relate to each other structurally. But it is precisely this relation which helps differentiate the two terms so that they remain "two" and are not for-

mally interchangeable, even though their content may well be shifted from one to the other. In other words, an ideology can preach anything, but regardless of the quality of its ideas, it would never be able to erase the notion of an alternative to itself, an “outside.” (This has, perhaps, a negative side as well since it makes utopian visions as impossible as any other self-contained system.) The subject is the eternal skeptic, forever bound to seek something else, something more than what he already has. And that makes ideology forever *insufficient*.

The concepts of inside and outside then may be seen as formalistic, reified, objectified in the sense that the “inside” does not really denote any content but only the structurally ambiguous position of the subject within the structure. Still, these two concepts can be distinguished and, in turn, help distinguish between true and false needs. We can say that these categories are objective, as Marcuse maintains, but only in the sense that they are not arbitrary. The essentialist claim of Marxism that true needs must necessarily be “natural” is more questionable and will depend on a precise definition of nature, which does not seem available at this time in Marxist thought. In short, clues to the illusion from within the illusion are possible, and they (in a way curiously parallel to the solution shown in *The Matrix*) are also illusory. On the other hand, these clues can become as real as any simulated reality merely by virtue of the observation that the totality is *consistently* flawed from the point of view of the subject, and this consistency confers a reality on the inconsistency of any ideology.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, “The German Ideology” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 158.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 176.

<sup>4</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Marcuse, 10 – 11.

- <sup>6</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 40.
- <sup>7</sup> Althusser, 142.
- <sup>8</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 120.
- <sup>9</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 22.
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 81.
- <sup>11</sup> Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 19.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.
- <sup>14</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 20.
- <sup>15</sup> Althusser, 175.
- <sup>16</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 121.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.
- <sup>18</sup> Marcuse, 14.
- <sup>19</sup> Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 22.
- <sup>20</sup> Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 29.
- <sup>21</sup> Baudrillard, *Gulf War*, 31.
- <sup>22</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), 125.
- <sup>23</sup> Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, 18
- <sup>24</sup> Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*, 89
- <sup>25</sup> Georg Lukacs, "Class Consciousness" in *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 52.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.
- <sup>28</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 149.
- <sup>29</sup> Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 101.

## **A Critique of Anarcho-Capitalism: Examining the Public Good and the Legitimacy of the State**

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What makes the state legitimate? Is the state justified on the grounds that it provides public goods? Do goods provided by the state outweigh restrictions placed on individual liberties?

If the state is characterized as at best a necessary evil, then we must justify its existence by demonstrating that we do indeed need it. The state will inevitably infringe upon our freedom to do as we will, so in order for us to feel that such infringements upon our liberty are legitimate, we must accept that the state has some legitimacy. If the state could be seen as a provider of some good (that would not otherwise be provided in the absence of the state), then perhaps this would render the state and its liberty infringements legitimate.

Do we need it to maintain peace and order, or to protect our society from foreign terrorists? Is it necessary to protect the environment or to maintain the necessary conditions for the market to function? These needs are satisfied as public goods, because they are not consumed by individuals. They are consumed by the public. The free exchange of goods in the market can efficiently distribute private goods because private goods such as a pizza are consumed by private individuals. However, a public good is consumed publicly. According to Michael Taylor, "A good is said to be public if it is characterized by some degree of indivisibility or 'jointness' of supply, that is, if consumption of any unit of the good by any member of the public in question does not prevent any other member of the public from consum-

ing the same unit, or if, equivalently, any unit of the good, once produced, can be made to every member of the public.”<sup>1</sup> Social order, defense, clean environment, and market regulations benefit everyone, while a slice of pizza (a private good) benefits only the one individual who consumes it. While the state is certainly not necessary for the production and consumption of pizza, perhaps it is necessary for the production and consumption of public goods.

Political philosophers argue over the role of the state, the source of its justification, and whether or not it has any justification at all. Anarchists (both communitarian and capitalist) argue that the state is not justified in order to provide public goods. In this essay we will see that the preservation of the environment is a public good which the anarcho-capitalists are not able to provide. I will also examine the anarcho-capitalist plan to maintain social order with some comparisons to the ideas of communitarian anarchism. I will take the arguments of Michael Taylor as representative of communitarian anarchism, and those of David Friedman, Jan Narveson and Murray Rothbard as representative of anarcho-capitalism.

For the anarchist critique of the state to carry full force, the anarchists must present a reasonably attractive alternative means of providing public goods. This means that the communitarian anarchist must avoid advocating a homogenous society that is dominated by the sort of pressures towards social conformity which would threaten autonomy at least as much as the authority of the state, and simultaneously they must avoid presenting nothing more than a utopian dream world. The anarcho-capitalists must avoid advocating a society which destroys the environment and is torn apart by economic inequality. Faith in either mutual aid or the market is necessary for anarchists, but it is not sufficiently convincing to those that do not share the faith.

Anarchism is motivated by a belief that individuals are rational and fully capable of ordering their lives in a peaceful and productive manner without the intrusive force of the state. For many the state is a necessary evil, but for anarchists it is an unnecessary evil. The state is seen as evil because it interferes with the rational autonomy of individuals. The state embodies a supreme authority which imposes itself on individuals and prevents them from exercising their fully rational autonomy. An individual has autonomy when he or she

is able to arrive independently at moral judgments, or utility expectation calculations, and able to act freely based on these judgments. Anarchism advocates individual exercise of reason and moral judgment at all times (of course it is not easy to determine when an individual such as a child or a person with mental handicaps fails to fit into this scheme, nor is there any way of knowing who could possibly have the authority to say who is and who is not fully rational). Anarchists believe that individuals ought to be free to exercise their own moral judgments, and that it is possible for a whole society of individuals to live together peacefully without the supreme authority of the state imposing its judgments.

Anarcho-capitalists envision a society in which public goods are made private, or at least that publicly funded goods are made private. The transition from our present society to an anarcho-capitalist society would involve trying to make public goods private. In order for a public good to become a private good the benefits from consumption of a good or service must fall only upon those that pay. For example, if protection of person and property from foreign terrorists is provided only for the people that pay for this service, then this security becomes more of a private good. However, security is rarely a private good, since there are generally residual benefits to those that did not pay for the service but benefit from having violent deviants rounded up and removed from society.

I believe that security is a public good which would require some elaborate and, perhaps, irrational schemes in order to make it into a private good with no residual benefits. For example, if first-class travelers paid for armed security personnel to staff the first class section of a plane during flights, there would be residual benefits to those in economy class that did not pay for this security. The absence of hijackers in the front of the plane is a benefit that those in the rear of the plane cannot help but enjoy. The passengers in first-class were protected because they paid for the protection and the remaining passengers were able to ride with security for free. The only way to prevent such free-riding would be to position the passengers with security in one section of the plane so that in the event that hijackers took over the plane the passengers with security could jettison, hijacker free, from the rest of the plane in an escape pod. This is an absolutely absurd arrangement, and it illustrates the absurd lengths that supporters of market principles

might go in order to avoid recognizing public goods.

Anarchists are motivated by a desire for autonomy, but autonomy alone does not provide a good life. A hermit has autonomy, but few of us choose to be hermits. In order for anarchism to be an appealing theory it must show that the goods which we enjoy today will also exist in an anarchist society. One such good is the environment. I believe that the environment is a public good, but the anarcho-capitalists disagree. The anarcho-capitalists argue that the only public goods are the market and social order. They also believe that the market is self-ordering so that only the public good of social order needs to be provided. According to Jan Narveson,

“The libertarian [anarcho-capitalist] will properly insist we need only the market, with its public good of peace, which makes possible the further but private goods in which prosperity and, in general, individual flourishing consists. The idea that there are lots and lots of strictly public goods in which prosperity consists is a Leftist illusion, not a demonstrable fact.”<sup>2</sup>

My task here is an attempt to interpret the environment as strictly a public good.

It would be foolish to deny that the environment is a good, but it can be viewed as a good in different ways. The anarcho-capitalists conceive of the environment as a private good. The environment is seen as consisting of divisible resources that can be consumed by some individuals while excluding other individuals from the consumption of these resources. It would be easy to argue that the environment can be a private good if we identified the term environment with the objects (oil, coal, iron, etc...) that are in the environment. But if environment refers to the soil, air, and water in which we find these objects, and which can be consumed over and over again, then perhaps the environment is not a private good. For example, it seems to me that clean air is indivisible, and that your breathing clean air does not prevent me from breathing clean air. It would be absurd to claim private ownership of the air and try to sell it to customers. The absence of toxic chemicals in the air or water is a benefit that we can all enjoy, and which nobody can be prevented from enjoying. If we understand the environment as the soil in which all of the world's vegetation grows, the air which we breathe, and the

water that cycles through the hydrosphere, then the environment is a good to the extent that it is free from pollution. The absence of pollution is a good, and I believe it is a public good.

The anarcho-capitalists do not deny that the absence of pollution is a good, but they do seek to prevent pollution through private means. Anarcho-capitalists believe that the absence of pollution is a good thing for each private individual that enjoys the absence of toxic chemicals in the air or water. Thus the state is not necessary for anarcho-capitalists to prevent pollution. The anarcho-capitalists believe that private property and the free market are the solution to pollution problems. They see the environment as divisible and therefore believe that the environment should be divided up into pieces of private property. According to David Friedman, "The pollution problem exists because certain things, such as the air or the ocean, are not property."<sup>3</sup> The anarcho-capitalists argue that extending property ownership and property rights will reduce pollution problems. They believe that if individuals are given economic incentives to protect the environment, there will be a better management of the environment. Since the government does not profit from its "ownership" of the air and water in its territory, it does not have any incentive to properly manage them.

According to Murray Rothbard, "Government officials have no economic incentive to preserve the purity and value of the rivers."<sup>4</sup> But of course, government officials do have "economic incentives" in the form of a desire to be re-elected and maintain their salaried position. If the political incentives to protect the environment are greater than the political incentives to allow the pollution, then governments will have an economic incentive to protect the environment. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to assume that the only possible reason for acting to preserve and protect the environment could be economic incentives. Human beings may be rationally motivated to act on incentives which are not at all economic. The fact that governments have failed to prevent pollution is not in itself justification for making all of the environment private property. Perhaps the solution is to replace incompetent government with competent government. It is certainly true that governments have failed to prevent massive destruction of the environment and it also seems as though governments have contributed to its destruction. However, privately owned corporations have also contributed so; neither

state nor private property has a positive historical record of protecting the environment.

Anarcho-capitalists propose that the environment could be protected by private ownership of forests, lakes, rivers etc. It is assumed that those who own rivers will have a rational self-interest in keeping them clean so that the property retains value. However, the economic value of the property may not come from preventing pollution. It may come from consumption. Capitalist ownership of property is not motivated by a desire to hold on to value, but rather it is motivated by a desire for profit. The value of the property is a merely static holding. The daily living standards of the individual capitalist are paid for through profit, and profit comes from production and consumption. The person who owns the Fraser River would not be satisfied with simply owning a clean and valuable river. The river needs to produce value in order to be profitable. The river would be more valuable if used to produce hydro-electricity, for transportation, salmon harvesting etc. When the person owning a neighboring river sees how the Fraser River is being exploited, then this other river will likely be further exploited in order to compete with the owner of the Fraser River. This competition will not lead to a struggle in which river owners seek to have the cleanest river, but rather lead to a struggle in which each attempted to use and abuse the river towards the greatest payoff. The profit would likely be greater if the river was used to transport toxic and radioactive waste from a nuclear power plant into the ocean than it would be for producing some pleasant natural scenery.

If the people living near the river expect a greater utility from a clean river than they would from a radioactive river, then they may be charged by the river owner to ensure its continued cleanliness. The anarcho-capitalists argue that if a clean environment is a good thing, it is a good thing for some particular individuals. These individuals that wish to see the environment protected may be charged a fee to ensure that it is in the interest of the property owner to meet certain environmental standards. However, the owner of the nuclear power plant may have more money than the people that live next to the river. The nuclear power plant owner may outbid the residents and the river owner would be motivated to allow the radioactive waste to be dumped into the river. Even if the residents have the money and want to outbid the

owner of the nuclear power plant they would be at a considerable disadvantage given the possibility of free riders in the neighborhood. It would be difficult to prevent free riders from enjoying the absence of radioactive materials. A person may enjoy living cancer free, but he may also claim to be indifferent and refuse to pay the river owners fee. If the river owner obliged everyone to pay the fee, then this would be a tax which may require some individuals to be forced to pay. There is no point in abolishing the state and then coercing individuals to pay fees to corporations. The need to preserve individual autonomy means that the anarchist society must find a way to deal with free-riders without resorting to coercion.

Friedman argues that in the anarcho-capitalist arrangement pollution would occur only when the polluter pays for the damage. The result is that we have financially beneficial pollution. When the costs of polluting are higher than the benefit then it does not pay to pollute and the pollution does not occur. When it is profitable to pollute, then the pollution will occur. The pollution that violates property rights, including an individual's right to good health, is weighed against the economic benefits that the pollution provides (greater productivity etc.) The harm that is done to individual property rights must be compensated. This satisfies Friedman because he believes that "The proper objective for controlling pollution is to make sure that it occurs if and only if, the damage it does is less than the cost of avoiding it." This looks like question begging. We all accept that in a modern society some pollution is inevitable, but why should we accept that the criteria for tolerating pollution are strictly economic gain? Perhaps we should set environmental standards according to what will produce a healthy human population. Perhaps we should be trying to maintain biodiversity or an ecological balance for future generations. Why would anyone feel obliged to maintain environmental standards according to what yields the greatest profits?

The anarcho-capitalists also contend that extending private property rights would provide an incentive for developing alternative technologies that would reduce pollution. If industry must compensate victims of its pollution, then it will seek means of producing goods with less pollution in order to reduce its compensation costs. The production of electric cars might be more profitable if it were possible to sue automobile manufacturers for producing machines that fill the air with pollution. Internal combustion

automobiles could end up facing lawsuits similar to the ones that tobacco companies have already faced. However, the result of the law suits against the tobacco companies was not a change of cigarettes to clean harmless cigarettes. It seems very likely that the automobile manufacturers would be forced to pay out compensation, but a switch away from the internal combustion engine might be more costly than it would be to pay out compensations. The result of this arrangement would be more expensive cars with the same amount of pollution. Automobile manufacturers could pay compensation to pollution victims and simply absorb the costs by charging more for the cars.

I think that extending private property rights might provide some incentive for developing alternative technologies to reduce pollution, but governments can also provide incentives for developing technologies for reducing pollution. Governments can add pollution taxes to automobiles that have an internal combustion engine which would make electrical cars more attractive. Governments punish industries that pollute beyond established standards, and reward industries that reduce their pollution. In the anarcho-capitalist arrangement the corporation can choose between polluting and paying compensation, or developing alternative technologies. The problem is that the motivation is strictly based on the principle of “what will produce the greatest profit?” The result might be a drastic increase in pollution and an increase in the costs of some consumer goods. For most people this would not be a better arrangement.

The anarcho-capitalists use a definition of pollution which is skewed in favor of their solution. Pollution is thought of by them as the transfer of harmful matter or energy to the person or property of another, without the latter’s consent. This leads to their solution: that “The libertarian (anarcho-capitalist)—and the only complete—solution to the problem of air pollution is to use the courts and the legal structure to combat and prevent such invasions.”<sup>5</sup> The problem with the anarcho-capitalist definition is that pollution and the environment do not exist as stable self-contained units. The idea that the environment can be owned in self-contained pieces of property is a misunderstanding of what exactly is meant by the term “environment.” The environment is a public good, because it cannot be divided up into separate

units. A river owner may decide to pollute his river, but his river will empty into someone else's ocean. Ocean currents will spread the pollution and mix it with other pollution moving it from one ocean to another. The pollution will be carried through evaporation into the clouds and it will fall as rain on other people's property. The anarcho-capitalists propose that property owners could sue polluters, but how will anyone know who to sue? If acid rain falls into my lake, how will I know who made the pollution and therefore who I should sue?

It would be very difficult to sue a polluting corporation given Rothbard's definition. He states that the liable party is the individual responsible for the transfer of the harmful matter or energy. However, it would often be the wind or the rain that was responsible for the transfer of the pollution. If Rothbard wants us to take his scheme seriously, he should at least define the liable party as those who produce the harmful matter or energy. If I drink water that contains toxic chemicals produced by a factory far away, it would be difficult for me to show that the factory owner transferred the toxins into my property. However, even with the understanding of pollution as the production of harmful matter or energy, there would still be problems with this scheme.

Nobody can be excluded from the benefits of clean air and it is impossible to trace the source of the polluted air that causes harm. Friedman argues that people who are harmed by air pollution should be able to sue for damages. I doubt that this would work. If I get cancer from breathing in chemicals through the air, who am I going to sue? How can I prove which factory or power plant was responsible? I may get cancer from a combination of small doses of pollution from several different sources scattered far away from me, and I would likely have no idea who was responsible. I expect that in this anarcho-capitalist arrangement corporations would be doing their best to hide the truth of their pollution from the public; tobacco companies were able to conceal the harm they were causing for a long time. It would seem rational for polluters to conceal and deny their acts of pollution. It would be very costly and difficult for an individual to sue a major industrial corporation that has polluted the air or water. If there are numerous competing companies making and selling all sorts of products which harm the environment, then there would be an endless line of people seeking

compensation. Perhaps the anarcho-capitalist plan for the environment would stifle all industries and businesses with the exception of the arbitration business.

The anarcho-capitalist faith in the sustainability of industry in such an arrangement is probably due to a very limited conception of responsibility. For example, it may be possible for cigarette companies to make a profit after paying out damages to governments providing health care but if damages were also awarded to all of the individual smokers and the second-hand smokers, then the costs would likely make profit impossible. Similarly, industry may be able to produce steel profitably by burning coal and paying compensation to the small number of people living near the factory who suffer directly from the pollution, but what about all the people living miles away who suffer from acid rain? There may be millions of victims of acid rain. What about the people suffer from global warming? If industry is held accountable for all of the damages directly or indirectly that it causes, then industry as a whole might be unprofitable.

The anarcho-capitalist solution to pollution involves using the courts to enforce property rights. "The remedy is simply for the courts to return to their function of defending person and property rights against invasion..."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this is not the most appropriate solution because of the misplacement of priorities. In this arrangement corporations are free to run their business in a way which threatens the life of individuals as long as they are prepared to compensate their victims. This would resemble the situation we have now when automobile manufacturers tolerate, as an acceptable risk, design flaws which might result in fatalities when the cost of recalling and repairing the cars would be more costly than paying out damages. Should our standards of safety be set strictly according to principles of corporate profit? It maybe a rational arrangement for the automobile manufacturer, but it is not necessarily the most desirable arrangement for the victim. Most people would rather not die as a result of some toxic chemical spill in the local water, even if their family receives compensation.

Perhaps financial compensation through law suits is a rational arrangement, but this arrangement does not require the abolition of government and the extension of private property to cover the whole environment.

There does not seem to be any rational necessity for governments to stand in the way of individuals suing corporations for polluting. If it is possible to win lawsuits against cigarette manufacturing companies, then perhaps it would be possible to successfully sue other companies that produce toxic chemicals that poison people. The existence of governments did not prevent the tobacco companies from being sued. In fact, many governments have sued tobacco companies in order to compensate for health care expenses. Completely changing the political arrangement into an anarcho-capitalist society seems to be totally unnecessary in order to use the courts for anti-pollution purposes.

How does arbitration occur in an anarcho-capitalist society? The anarcho-capitalist system would depend largely on private arbitration (in conjunction with private security) and this private justice would be very costly for the poor. This sort of private arbitration might favor those with more money over those with less money. In our present legal system it is clear that the rich can afford more justice than the poor. If there was no socially funded minimum legal representation for the poor, then the arbitration system would be even more unjust than it is now. Rothbard advocated settling disputes through a privately owned arbitration corporation. But this might result in a system in which “justice” was for sale. Arbitration corporations may find it more profitable to rule in favor of the claimant with the most money. Rothbard does not believe that this will happen because the arbitration corporation would be dependent on establishing a good reputation so that it would be able to attract the maximum number of clients. The capitalist argument is that profit comes from many sales, not from one or two big sales. Many sales come from a good reputation. A good reputation comes from good service.

The idea that corporations would be held accountable by their reputation in the market ignores the ability of corporations to manage public opinion. The only system of “checks and balances” that could limit corporate power in an anarcho-capitalist society would be the force of consumer’s opinions concerning the ability of corporations to provide good service. However, competition in the market place does not involve a struggle to provide the best product for the lowest cost. It is more of a struggle to create the belief or appearance that one’s product is the best quality for the lowest price. For example, it is often more profitable for a corporation to spend

money on marketing shoes through purchasing the endorsements of athletes than it is to make a better shoe at a lower cost. Competition need not involve making better shoes. It might simply be a competition to see who can better influence public perception of a company or a product. This means that a private arbitration or security company may use its resources to influence public opinion rather than to provide better service. A large corporation may be able to shield itself from market accountability by owning sufficient media. With sufficient media exposure a corrupt private arbitration or security company could dominate public discourse and successfully conceal its flaws. Rothbard argued that competition amongst security companies would insure efficiency, low price, and high quality. But there is no reason to assume that competition will always insure efficiency, low price, and high quality. Competition may only provide the *appearance* of efficiency, low prices, and high quality.

Everything depends on the competition in the market keeping companies honest. The need to maintain a good reputation is considered the foundation of preserving one's customers and therefore the foundation of profit. Perhaps in a small community individual actors in the market could be held accountable. However, free market capitalism cannot contain the growth of corporations. Even if the anarchist society began as a small community, if the market is free, then there will always be a tendency towards growth and the impersonal relations of mass society. As corporations get larger and the number of their customers stretches into the millions, they are less likely to sympathize with any individual's concerns. In our present slightly free-market society, we find many occasions when a private company does not seem to be catering to the every whim of its customers. In many cases the failure of corporations to address the concerns of consumers adequately has prompted government intervention. Without a government, would corporations keep a watchful eye on each other or would they act as egoists concerned only with their own bottom line? Incompetent, intolerant, and insensitive corporations are common even in highly competitive sectors of the economy. If the absence of government regulations resulted in increased trends towards monopolization, then accountability in the market would be further reduced.

There are essential services, such as emergency rescue or emergency health care which should be provided for all. The profit motive might not be the best way of ensuring that everyone receives essential services. It would be unfortunate if individuals suffered because in an emergency situation a security company refused to help those who had not paid. There are also practical difficulties with depending on the reputation of a corporation responding in an emergency. For example, I buy fire protection from fire protection agency X. When my house is on fire there are plenty of workers from fire protection agency Y available, but none from fire protection X. Fire protection Y does not help, because I did not pay them. This presents a problem. It is not sufficient to say that fire protection X failed to provide adequate service and I should switch to fire protection Y. I have lost my house. I cannot afford to lose a house in each emergency while market competition determines the best quality provider of fire protection. In the event of an earthquake would the private rescue companies help only those who had paid? Would the private rescue corporation that I paid for provide the best possible service? We cannot afford to live through several earthquakes making notes of how each private rescue corporation operates. Purchasing a pizza involves the risk that I will not choose the best pizza provider and I will end up with an inferior pizza. However, I can make a note of the poor quality of pizza at a substandard pizza parlor and go some where else next time. When purchasing an essential service I do not want to experiment with the free market to find the best service.

The anarcho-capitalists believe that the desire of corporations to maintain a good reputation is sufficient to ensure that adequate services will be provided in emergency situations, even to those that did not pay. According to Rothbard “private companies would cultivate goodwill by making it a policy to give free aid to victims in emergency situations and perhaps ask the rescued victim for a voluntary donation afterward.”<sup>7</sup> This sounds even more optimistic than the communitarian anarchist’s faith in mutual aid. At least the communitarian anarchists argue that the people of a community share some sort of altruistic bond that would explain why they would act together for a common good. Rothbard’s claim that in emergency situations private security companies would help victims regardless of who purchased protection runs against the anarcho-capitalist understanding of human rea-

son as ultimately egoist in nature.

I assume that Rothbard believes private security companies will be acting egoistically because they want to establish a positive reputation or to cultivate good will which will result in more business. However, this would create a serious free-rider problem for security companies. After all, it is only in emergencies that we really care about security. Why should I pay for a private fire protection company if in an emergency they will help me in order to cultivate good will? The only way that good will would pay dividends for the private security company would be if customers developed a loyalty to the company. If I continue buying fire protection from the same private fire fighting company that rescued me out of good will (regardless of the prices available on the market), then they will have profited from me and they will have acted as egoists. However, if I act as an egoist and I continue to go without fire protection hoping for more good will, then any act of good will on the part of the fire protection company would not be a rational egoist decision. If consumers choose their security company based on feelings of good will, they will not be acting as the rational egoists that anarcho-capitalism is supposed to be based upon. It appears as though Rothbard believes that the owners of companies will act as egoists, but the consumers will not.

I doubt that in an anarcho-capitalist society individuals would relate to each other strictly as egoists. The anarcho-capitalist vision of a market driven security force assumes, amongst other things, that a sense of collective identity is unessential. Humans are seen as egoists. Where a collective identity is recognized it is assumed to exist as a matter of the sum total of a collection of individuals making a free choice, which does not conflict with individual autonomy. But in the real world individuals tend to identify with groups without making any conscious rational choice. Individuals may identify themselves with a particular religious faith, an ethnic group, a hockey team, or a brand of cola without taking the time to scrutinize the pros and cons of such an identity. Group loyalty is not generally seen as a bad thing, but it could have harmful or de-stabilizing consequences in an anarcho-capitalist society. People may identify themselves with a security agency and a security agency may cultivate a sense of collective identity in the form

of “brand loyalty.”

This is a problem for anarcho-capitalists, since they will only be able to decide whether or not they are egoists. They cannot decide that others will be egoists. If a group of people in an anarcho-capitalist society form a collective identity, then it will affect the egoists and the stability of the whole society. For example, all those individuals that purchased insurance from security corporation X (scX) may be subjected to a tremendous amount of advertisements extolling the virtues of scX, and detailed information about how scX has made the world a better place. In order to drive security corporation Y (scY) out of business, scX encourages loyalty amongst its consumers. According to their own promotions, scX is a ray of sunshine bringing joy to the world, while scY is run by negligent and incompetent buffoons. ScX also claims to have roots in the neighborhood, and that it is the responsible choice for all those individuals in the neighborhood to show their loyalty to scX which has fought for their well being. On a certain day each year members of scX are encouraged to sing songs celebrating the achievements of scX and remember those that gave their life for scX. In response, scY claims that scX is run by a bunch of fascists and members of scY are encouraged to act as rational, utility calculating egoists. However, this is an affront to the dignity of the members of scX and they only become more entrenched in their collective identity. Collective identities would likely evolve out of the desire of corporations to cultivate good will or a positive reputation. The result is that the market is unstable, and there is always a threat that a state will emerge, or that the security corporations will be engaged in turf wars.

Rothbard confesses that in an anarcho-capitalist society the threat of wars between security agencies is possible, but he asks, “isn’t it painfully clear that the number of people killed in isolated neighborhood ‘rumblings’ or conflicts is as nothing to the total mass devastation of inter-state wars?”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is, but isn’t it even more painfully clear that civil wars are sufficiently unpleasant, that we ought not strive towards creating the sort of arrangements which would make civil wars more frequent? Rothbard also observes that “if company A battles with company B, the most that can happen is that the respective customers of each company may be dragged into the battle—but no one else. It should be evident, then, that even if the worst

happened, and a libertarian [anarcho-capitalist] world would indeed become a world of ‘anarchy,’ we would still be much better off than we are now, at the mercy of rampant, ‘anarchic’ nation-states, each possessing a fearsome monopoly on weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>9</sup> But if we live today with the remotely possible threat of inter-state wars, then we are better off than we would be in the almost certain condition of neighborhood “rumbles.” In an anarcho-capitalist society it is possible that my neighborhood will become a battle ground of small arms fire, but Rothbard assures me that mass bombing, nuclear destruction or germ warfare will not be used because the security companies would be blown up in the holocaust—and presumably that would be unprofitable. Of course the governments employing weapons of mass destruction would also be destroyed, but they are more likely to engage in such destruction because of the persistence of collective identities. It is the belief that the “nation” will live on even if we are killed which motivates the mass destruction of inter-state wars. However, if an anarcho-capitalist society developed conflicting collective identities it may be even more dangerous and violent.

Although it is an enticing thought (the absence of nation-states or weapons of mass destruction, to do away with government in order to bring peace) I do not believe that anarcho-capitalism would provide peace. The anarcho-capitalists are not able to provide sufficient reason to believe that their society would be a peaceful society. Why risk the possibility of descending into a situation that resembles a civil war, in order to gain some autonomy? When anarchism is presented as a choice between autonomy and order few choose anarchism. Only when anarchism can offer autonomy and order does it appear to be an appealing theory.

It is widely assumed, by both communitarian and capitalist anarchists, that social order is a good thing, and that it is a public good. However, it may be a bad thing for some and a good thing for others. If some people in society are suffering due to social arrangements which the social order is preserving, then they may feel that social order is not a good thing. This is particularly important regarding anarcho-capitalism since there would undoubtedly be a tremendous amount of inequality in a totally unregulated, free-market capitalist society. An anarcho-capitalist society would remove

the sort of minimum social provisions distributed by the welfare state that give the poor an interest in the social order.

Anarcho-capitalism is attractive as a theory of how individuals could live in a society as autonomous agents rationally choosing their destiny. However, it might be impossible to maintain this autonomy and this society. An individual might support the move towards an anarcho-capitalist society with the hopes of becoming one of the property owners free from the burdens of state intervention. When these hopes fade and the individual finds himself as an impoverished vagrant, then it would no longer be rational for this individual to continue to support the anarcho-capitalist arrangement. There would be higher highs (associated with being a property owner that does not need to pay taxes or worry about state interference with individual autonomy) and lower lows (a property-less worker that has no state subsidized economic security). It would seem to be rational for property owners to support anarcho-capitalism, and it would be rational for those that do not own property to oppose anarcho-capitalism. However, many property-less workers support free market political policies. From this we can conclude that an important factor for each individual's choice would be whether they are risk-averse or risk loving. Some property-less workers will risk absolute destitution in an anarcho-capitalist society in order to have a chance at being one of the wealthy property owners. We could imagine that the people of a country were asked in a referendum "would you like to alter the present arrangement into an anarcho-capitalist arrangement?" A utility calculation might show that there is a risk involved in this choice. As a result of changing our present society into anarcho-capitalism individuals may be better off, or they may be worse off. However, they may see the choice as a gamble in which they could vote for anarcho-capitalism, and if they failed to become rich, then they could always reverse their previous decision and oppose the anarcho-capitalist arrangement. Each individual may feel like the welfare state is an obstacle preventing them from climbing into a higher economic position. They may decide that they would like to try and succeed in the market without the interference of the welfare state. If they fail in their attempts at becoming wealthy, then they could demand a welfare state.

Narveson stated that, "If potential parties to agreements perceive proffered terms as distributively unfair, then they should not enter into those

agreements.”<sup>10</sup> But we might not know how “fair” or favorable the distribution would be until after we agreed to the arrangement. Once in the arrangement it must be possible to leave, or else one’s autonomy will be undermined. If the anarcho-capitalist society was established with the consent of all, then it would not be violating any individual’s autonomy. However, if the continuing existence of the anarcho-capitalist arrangement was deemed intolerably unjust by many of its members (because they failed in their quest to become wealthy property owners and now they want a welfare state), then these individuals would have their autonomy violated by the persistence of this arrangement. An anarcho-capitalist society could not simply allow individuals to vacate the society when they deemed it to be no longer their preferred arrangement. Individuals might want to be allowed to consent to anarcho-capitalism, then change their mind and leave, and then reverse their decision again and return. This would be like allowing people to run up a big debt, declare bankruptcy, and start all over again.

If individuals in the anarcho-capitalist society consented to the arrangement (from some sort of Rawlsian original position), and then they were allowed to leave the society when they became poor, then the anarcho-capitalist society would lose its reserve army of labor, or it would have to violate the autonomy of the poor to keep them in place.

In a capitalist society we cannot all be property owners. Capitalism thrives on the belief amongst those without property that some day they or their children will be property owners. However, this is a dream that must go unfulfilled for many individuals in order for the capitalist society to perpetuate itself. If each individual in the capitalist society was given the opportunity to test him or herself in the absolutely free market, and then those that failed were allowed to leave, then we might be left with a society of factory owners with no workers.

An anarcho-capitalist arrangement would never be stable. Either the poor will need to be coerced into accepting their poverty, or they will demand changes to the arrangement: the greater the poverty that any individual suffers from, the less he has to lose from disturbing the social order. While I may expect some utility benefits from abstaining from the use of violence and thereby contributing to the peace, I may also find that there is

an even greater payoff by killing someone and taking his property. An anarcho-capitalist society would have many desperate and impoverished people and the desperate act desperately. Social order in a capitalist society will be maintained only through the use of force. For the poor it makes no difference that they are forcibly deprived of the fruits of the earth by a private security corporation rather than a public state.

Would it be rational for an individual to be so concerned with autonomy that he would sacrifice the material provisions of the welfare state to be hungry, homeless, and autonomous in a toxic, waste ridden anarcho-capitalist society? For some, life in an anarcho-capitalist society would be freedom, and for others it would be a miserable cancer stricken poverty. According to Frederick Hayek, "Above all we must recognize that we may be free and yet miserable." I believe that this is the best summary of anarcho-capitalism. As difficult as it is to justify the state, I think it is even more difficult to justify anarcho-capitalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Narveson, *The Libertarian Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 196.

<sup>3</sup> David Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 102.

<sup>4</sup> Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (New York: Collier, 1978), 269.

<sup>5</sup> Rothbard, 275.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>10</sup> Narveson, 196.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, vol. 1, *Toward an Existentialist Theory of History*, 1997, 340 pp., \$ 24; vol. 2, *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*, 2005, 390 pp., \$ 25**

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The modern person, unlike the postmodern one, possesses an extremely acute sense of history. Not only epochs and events are organized and dated within historical time, but even the Universe has its own history. Such concepts as evolution and revolution, progress and regress, becoming and development, etc., together with the orientation toward the future, and not to a golden age, are typical of the modern way of thinking. In late modernity, however, this same way of thinking triggers a multitude of antinomies. These usually emerge as conceptualization of our sense of history and of the irreducibility of historical rationality to “pure reason.” The debates on this issue begin in 19th century, but they continue with increased intensity into our own day.

Two of the key names in these debates are Sartre and Foucault. But if the first still tries to find a solution, reconsidering the controversies of modernity, Foucault, for whom Sartre is one of the best known philosophers of his father’s generation, tries to cast aside the whole paradigm of modernity with all its intrinsic aporias, although, finally, he remains linked with it. This link is not just reactive – in the way a historical nominalist reacts against the statements of his-

torical universalism, but is more complex. It is evidence of intolerance, and at the same time, of the attachment to some of the major canonical modern assumptions, which, chased away through the door, come back in through the window. That is why the task of comparing these two positions, which Thomas Flynn has embarked on, is not at all easy. However, he has succeeded, thanks to his wide erudition and profound knowledge of the Continental tradition as a whole and of contemporary French philosophy in particular. His professionalism is of the highest quality and commands respect.

Modern society, which proclaims itself as the society of change, ceaselessly compares itself to the previous, pre-modern or traditional community. And this is the only option open, since the discourse of change implies juxtaposition, which comprehends both the same and the different. Hegel's grandiose construction of World history focuses on this issue reconciling identity and difference in the Whole, that is, in the System – a new concept borrowed from then triumphant scientific discourse. According to Hegel, what is characteristic of the System is that it is always the result of reconciliation. To him, the analytical logic of the natural sciences is not in a position to grasp this result, which is the whole of the history, and only the dialectic has the full right to claim the title of the logic of history. Both Sartre and Foucault borrow the widespread notion of the system and concentrate their efforts to show the process of its creation and recreation. However, Foucault speaks not about the System, but about a multitude of systems or a number of formations with their specific structures and laws, determining the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups, while Sartre still wants to show the process of the formation of the System with a "human face." According to Sartre, the dialectic is not a faceless historical necessity, but an intrinsic dimension of human activity. He keeps the dialectical method, but abandons the Absolute Spirit, which – allegedly – manages by cunning to follow its own purposes behind people's intentions. For Sartre, the human being is condemned to be free, which means that each individual alone chooses how to respond to circumstances. Therefore, no sign, either here on earth or up in heavens, can provide one with direction. The human being deciphers the signs alone as he pleases, and invents man on its own. The man is not the product solely of the conditions but a subject of a singular history and that history had to produce an event through

them and against them... The man-event is the totalizing and totalized expression of defined structures in society... and at the same time he is irreversible event that bears in it the mark of all prior events...<sup>1</sup>

Individuals endure history and at the same time make it. Marx's corrective to the Hegelian invisible hand of history accompanies Sartre in all his works. However, in Sartre's philosophy, every individual choice, and not only the actions of classes – for example of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie – are important for the outcome of a given situation. Each personal decision is, in fact, a new beginning. Existentialism “humanizes” dialectics. Flynn aptly observes that Sartre substitutes “exemplary biography” for “total narrative” and stresses that a properly existentialist theory of history respects the role of biographical factors in any adequate historical account. It must capture or, better, reproduce those experiential dimensions of choice, risk, and responsibility that mark the event as properly human.<sup>2</sup> As Flynn points out, Sartre affirms the primacy of praxis recovering the hazardous aspect of every human undertaking – it is necessary to take risks and to invent. Subjective decisions change the pace of history. Freedom disrupts history and does not allow foresight based on previous experience, on a kind of a priori sketch, or on some repeatable determinants. To Sartre, freedom is the opening up of History. Dialectics and humanism, however, are Foucault's main adversaries. This is stressed as a leitmotif in Flynn's comparative analysis. In many places, Flynn quotes Foucault's ironic assessment of Sartre: “*The Critique of Dialectical Reason* is the magnificent and pathetic attempt by a man of the nineteenth century to think the twentieth century. In that sense, Sartre is the last Hegelian and, I would even say, the last Marxist.”<sup>3</sup>

Like some other pioneers of post-modernity, Foucault argues that the figure of Man is the center of the modern episteme. In Foucault's view, Sartre's existentialism is sealed within this narcissism. Foucault rejects not only the constituting role of the transcendental subject but also the constructive role of the empirical subject. Flynn brilliantly reveals Foucault's attitude toward Sartre and to the modern type of discourse in general. To Foucault, the subject is, in reality, a subjected agency. “What is already dying in us (and whose death our present language carries) is homo dialecticus – the being of departure, of return, and of time... That man was a sovereign subject and the servant object of all discourses about man that have taken place for a

long time, especially those about alienated man. And, fortunately, he is dying beneath their chatter.”<sup>4</sup> In Foucault’s view, autonomy (in the Kantian sense) is a mirage and his intention is to show what is disclosed after the mirage is dispersed. He writes that “it is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man’s disappearance. For this void does not create ... a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of space in which it is once more possible to think.”<sup>5</sup>

Flynn suggests calling Foucault the philosopher of spatialized reason in history, unlike Sartre, who deserves the name of the philosopher of temporalized reason. Flynn’s comments are guided by the understanding that for Foucault the field of experience is the space enclosed by three axes – namely, knowledge, power, and subjectivation. Then, the corresponding axial reading can be the key to Foucault’s entire project.<sup>6</sup> According to Flynn’s interpretation, the three axes have conditioned the three modes of Foucault’s analysis: archeological, genealogical, and problematical, respectively. Perhaps because Flynn’s intention is “to think with Foucault about Foucault,” he sees the form of experience in Foucault’s ocular as a prismatic one, while according to Sartre, Flynn insists, the model of experience is the pyramid.

In the light of Flynn’s study, the anti-humanist principle of Foucault arises from the post-structuralist conviction that a mutual incompatibility between the being of language and the being of man exists. Constituting the space between words and things, discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. There is a special kind of power – the power specific to discourse – to represent the order of things. As Flynn stresses, Foucault speaks of mapping discursive formations, rather than recounting their descent.

It is a common place that one of the most significant merits of Foucault is his consideration of power in an unexpected way, that is, positively. In his opinion, “we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms. In fact, power produces reality. It produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. Not only knowledge but the individual as well belongs to this production.”<sup>7</sup> Flynn very clearly explains that the genealogical approach to history in Foucault’s works focuses on power and the non-discursive just as archeology attends to the discursive. Genealogy has as its goal to uncover the

relations of power that underlie our most disinterested practices. Its model is struggle and strategy, not meaning and consensus. According to Flynn, the professed aim of Foucault is to free history from the grip of phenomenology and from its thesis of “constituting consciousness,” which supports the idea of historical continuity. Continuous history is the correlate of consciousness. Foucault has become for many “an apostle of discontinuity,” but quoting his direct statements as well as referring to his writings as a whole, Flynn shows that Foucault’s interest is directed to “differences without identity,” that is, to transformations rather than simply historical breaks and incommensurability. Foucault does not tolerate totalization in any form and opposes linear progress; hence, the accumulation of dialectical development. Transformation is not one-dimensional change, nor advance through returning to the origin, nor preservation, nor transcendence, but a disjunction and replacement. Flynn’s conclusion is that Foucault resists the thesis about “original choice” in History and the Sartrean hermeneutics that seeks to reveal it.

Foucault does not agree with the anthropocentrism of the modern discourse, where he situates Sartre too. Foucault’s thought is against any pan-centrism. As Flynn successfully puts it, the “Self” in Foucault’s philosophy remains prismatic, his historical intelligibility polyhedral, and his “experience” non-foundational and derivative. Flynn finds an appropriate emblem for the style of each of the two thinkers he compares: the map for Foucault and the diary for Sartre.

With the help of a comparative study, Thomas Flynn manages to reconstruct the implicit theories of history employed by two of the leading French intellectuals of their respective generations. As the author says, “[in] many ways and for most of us they personify the cultural movements of existentialism and post-structuralism,” and in a wider perspective they appear as the key figures of twentieth century humanism and positivism respectively. Flynn himself has traveled many times over the explored territory and has delved deeply in order to reveal some spots of Foucault’s thought which have remained in darkness or semi-darkness until now, as well as to re-examine Sartre’s stance with the aid of some materials unpublished in Sartre’s lifetime. Since Flynn wants to reconstruct the theories of history of both Foucault and Sartre, he fulfills this intention not by applying a biographical method, as probably Sartre would recommend, nor by using cartography as a method, ac-

ording to Foucault's suggestions, but by tracing the changes of philosophical categories and their links within conceptual networks. Actually, Flynn provides an outstanding commentary on the both positions.

Let's mention that in such a way – by texts and commentaries, by comments on commentaries and new texts, and new commentaries about new texts, and again commentaries on texts about texts, and so on – philosophy has been made, taught, and transmitted throughout the centuries. Flynn carries out very well this mission of shrewd commentator, because as a great connoisseur, he succeeds in exposing Sartre's and Foucault's views (at first glance para-doxical for their contemporaries), showing the doxa agains whose background they emerge and can be understood and evaluated. Flynn shows how Sartre and Foucault confront the doxic clichés, motivated by the desire to pay homage to truth and freedom: for Sartre, the truth of freedom, and in the case of Foucault, the freedom of truth, as Flynn summarizes.

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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol. 1, *Toward an Existentialist Theory of History*, 300, note 16.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol.1, 150

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol. 2, *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*, 377, note 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cited by Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol.1, 326 note 36.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol.2, 312

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

**William L. McBride, *From Yugoslav Praxis to Global Pathos: Anti-Hegemonic Post-Post-Marxist Essays*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001, 249 pp., \$ 81\***

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The present book by William L. McBride is included in Rowman & Littlefield's ambitious and promising series on New Critical Theory under the general editorship of Patricia Huntington and Martin J. Beck Matustik. It consists of sixteen essays and a book review, written between 1983 and 1999, which cover, among others, issues such as global injustices, the New World Order, rethinking democracy in the light of the Eastern European experience, consumerist cultural hegemony, and the globalization of philosophy. The essays collected in this book are an exceptional contribution to the reanimation of the long-forgotten topics of classical Critical Theory as well as a successful attempt to instill some hope into the scholars who still find this trend of thought relevant. They also serve as prolegomena to any future social and political criticism from a philosophical perspective.

McBride develops a solid argument, denouncing and refuting the common clichés circulating in the Western media after 1989, as well as in those philosophies condemned to be forever embedded in unilateral schemes of understanding. In some places, his criticism seems to take its subject too seri-

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\* Besides to Mr. Karim Mamdani, I wish to extend credit and gratitude to Mr. Dudley Brad Wane for his editorial assistance in the construction of this commentary.

ously, but this impression is soon dissipated by a number of ironic insertions, eloquently exemplified by his remark about NATO's "humanitarian" war against Yugoslavia: "Perhaps someone in NATO had the constructive idea that, with so many factory jobs eliminated by the bombing, the next generation of Serbians would have greater opportunity to train for alternative employment as psychiatrists such as Julia Kristeva and Radovan Karadžić."<sup>1</sup> The ideological formulas that the author argues against are the ones that replace the "scientific" ideology of former times, enforced by the secret police<sup>2</sup> and other oppressive agents of the state apparatus. Although, as McBride acutely observes, these restrictive measures affected relatively small segments of the population in the socialist regimes, targeting mainly intellectuals. Even in these cases, there was an elaborate antidote in the form of Aesopian language and code, which was used extensively both by the rulers and the ruled in the fields of politics, art, philosophy, and everyday communication.

The Eastern European anti-ideological immunization, however, proved to be very fragile. The expression popular today, which refers to the Communist propaganda machine as "Everything they [the Soviet ideologues] said about us was false, and everything they said about [the West] was true,"<sup>3</sup> was coined after a long period of post-Marxist disillusionment. In retrospect, the civic enthusiasm of the first post-communist years was really amazing. Everyday consciousness refused to accept that there is a "bias inherent in most or all theories that is rooted in the social structures of a given time and place and that expresses itself in theorists' justifying and defending those structures in which they have a private interest."<sup>4</sup>

McBride calls the distortion of the difference between reality and imagination "real illusion."<sup>6</sup> The real illusion PR functionaries apply the old methods of historical materialism to preach the inevitable necessity of history<sup>7</sup> in a more sophisticated way. "The implication of this sort of attitude is that history is dictating a form of economy and related practices, including consumerist cultural practices, that must dominate the future, and that it is unacceptable, perhaps even immoral, to try to thwart the tide of history."<sup>8</sup> Seen against this background, it is no surprise that the position of the world's democratic governments and majority public opinion were structured "as if the Balkan world as it was in the months prior to July 1991

somehow never fully or really existed, and as if the sanguinary events that followed had always been quite inevitable.”<sup>9</sup>

Real illusion has not only an ontological status but solid moral grounds, enjoying the support both of common sense per se and of moral theory built on common sense reasoning.<sup>10</sup> The New World Order landscape is both real and morally justified. To get even a modest hint of “how out of joint things are”<sup>11</sup> one needs difficult-to-obtain information capable of opening a crack in the hard surface of real illusion. Few of us knew in March 1999 that there was a secret appendix to the proposed Rambue agreement, providing that the whole territory of Yugoslavia be occupied by NATO forces, since even the German Parliament did not know this when it voted for the Bundeswehr to join the anti-Milosevic military operation.<sup>12</sup> Nor was democratic public opinion informed that the conflict in Macedonia was caused not by the local Albanians but by visiting Kosovo forest rangers and fire-commanders. Over and above such information, in order to make any sense of the current political conundrum, one needs McBride’s perspicacity to identify real illusion as a “hypocritical mask”<sup>13</sup> or as a “smokescreen and destruction.”<sup>14</sup>

McBride mentions the ironic character of the post-1989 world in several places. One of the most impressive examples is the irony of failed democratic procedures such as the democratic referendums held in Bosnia, which had devastating effects,<sup>15</sup> as well as a number of other democratic practices that precipitated the deterioration of living standards in Eastern Europe and caused further civic apathy among the citizens there.<sup>16</sup> McBride notes that irony is only the joyful surface of the New World Order, hiding some other more somber underlying levels. Parody is another powerful tool to understand what is going on in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav world. As he reasonably argues, “the imposition of free enterprise capitalism by shock therapy resulted in societies that are far from civil by anyone’s definition.”<sup>17</sup> Actually, these societies are parodies of what is meant by “civil society.” They mobilize citizens for such civic activities as fighting crime, drug abuse, and violence against women – problems that did not exist or that barely existed in the time before civil society itself emerged. Another parody, which McBride characterizes as cruel, is “give war a chance.”<sup>18</sup>

Irony might also allude to misery and parody to cruelty, but they still preserve the human, although evil, face of reality. But humanity begins to

evaporate irrevocably through the fissures of sarcasm,<sup>19</sup> revealing the ugly face of the grotesque.<sup>20</sup> Sarcasm arises with the transformation of the human being and citizen into a consumer, and the equation of human dignity and happiness with making money.<sup>21</sup> This leads to “a very limited vision of human possibilities, based on a deliberately jaundiced, cynical, and fixed conception of the human condition. It assumes a universal egoism.”<sup>22</sup> In this context, justice is reduced to distributive justice,<sup>23</sup> in which the much more crucial virtual enslavement and humiliation are not taken into consideration,<sup>24</sup> while “‘democracy’ and even ‘human rights’ are made to serve as code words for the real value that perdures: economic efficiency for capitalist profit.”<sup>25</sup> This reasoning reaches its extreme in what McBride refers to as a logic of sadism, and is embodied in the statement: “if Milosevic has sanctioned mass expulsions and executions of Kosovans opposed to Serbian rule, then there should be no inhibition about inflicting open-ended suffering upon those who, by a supposedly democratic majority, have elected him as president.”<sup>26</sup>

Francisco de Goya once said that the sleep of reason brings forth monsters, and McBride shows that the petrification of irony brings forth grotesqueries. His book gives rise to the question of whether, at the turn of this century, reason can be awakened and life restored to irony. Moreover, how can we dismiss newly emerging ideologies and unmask growing real illusions? And, finally, if this is possible at all, who ought to play the role of the ancient Heracles at the Augean stables? The last century entrusted this task to intellectuals. Is this still possible today? As McBride skeptically points out, the solidarity of intellectuals in carrying this load “is in the process of dissolving, largely as a combined result of disillusionments over the apparent failures of the past century’s revolutionary movements and of the pressures to conform to the values, such as they are, of the contemporary hegemonic global commercial ‘culture.’”<sup>27</sup>

With the help of sufficient broadcasting money,<sup>28</sup> even the crudest deceptions leading to absurdities can grow into sound ideologies and convincing real illusions, following the classical dialectical materialism principle in which “quantitative change suddenly passes at certain points into qualitative transformation.” Of course, this tends to be a slight exaggeration (at least I hope it is). Philosophers of liberation<sup>29</sup> as well as ordinary professors, writers, journalists, priests and many others join their voices for the cause of justice and human val-

ues inspired not by rigid principles but by inherent respect for other human beings. For McBride, “the only praxis that seems realistically possible for us now lies in highly localized opposition to existing hierarchies and, above all, in the life of the spirit;” this is tenable because “our One World is still very much in flux, and, contrary to the ‘orthodox’ interpretation of Marxism of the recent past, the future is open.”<sup>30</sup> Mercifully, it seems to McBride, there is still evidence against MacIntyre’s “new dark ages.” At its core is the rebirth of practical philosophy. The author does not hide his hopes in this direction, although he is entirely aware that “no clear-cut success and probably much failure will be the lot of those who undertake to participate in it.”<sup>31</sup> The example of Marx’s practical philosophy is still alive and a productive start can be made by relying on Marx’s profound interpretations of current practices,<sup>32</sup> and by avoiding philosophy’s “self-mystification.”<sup>33</sup> McBride suggests, together with Carol Gould, that the next step is to work for the creation of a “spirit of community” based on respect for human freedom.<sup>34</sup> And I would add, respect for human dignity, which contains, besides human freedom, a caring attitude toward the other, something McBride also values highly.<sup>35</sup> He identifies the “spirit of community” as an ideal, which deserves being striven for as part of the mission of the new practical philosophy.<sup>36</sup> Although in agreement with the achievements of Marxist philosophy, McBride does not reduce his understanding of practical philosophy to it. He views it in a much broader and more universally open way, admitting that any philosophy “characterized by high intelligence and seriousness of purpose”<sup>37</sup> is worthy of having a place under the sun and can contribute to “the evolution of a global human culture of the future that would be neither hegemonic and consumerist nor without hope.”<sup>38</sup> It might be safer to pursue some sound skepticism and to cool down one’s enthusiasm in this respect... What leaves no doubt, however, is that *From Yugoslav Praxis to Global Pathos* will serve as an inspiration to free-minded intellectuals on the both sides of the Atlantic.

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<sup>1</sup> William L. McBride, *From Yugoslav Praxis to Global Pathos: Anti-Hegemonic Post-Post-Marxist Essays*, 201. McBride invokes Kristeva within the context of his disapproval of the famous French philosopher and psychoanalyst’s attempt, in the pages of *Le Monde*, to derive the Serbian population’s support for Milosevic’s government from dogmatic

differences between Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy.

- 2 Ibid., 105.
- 3 Ibid., vii.
- 4 Ibid., 93.
- 6 Ibid., 123.
- 7 Ibid., 20.
- 8 Ibid., 179.
- 9 Ibid., 20.
- 10 Ibid., 52.
- 11 Ibid., 121.
- 12 Ibid., 214.
- 13 Ibid., 81.
- 14 Ibid., 203.
- 15 Ibid., 106.
- 16 Ibid., 107-108.
- 17 Ibid., 94.
- 18 Ibid., 194.
- 19 Ibid., 182.
- 20 Ibid., 178.
- 21 Ibid., 100.
- 22 Ibid., 63.
- 23 Ibid., 45.
- 24 Ibid., 47.
- 25 Ibid., 203.
- 26 Ibid., 202.
- 27 Ibid., 195.
- 28 Ibid., 194.
- 29 Ibid., 49-50.
- 30 Ibid., 67.
- 31 Ibid., 15.
- 32 Ibid., 9.
- 33 Ibid., 71.
- 34 Ibid., 83.
- 35 Ibid., 63.
- 36 Ibid., 83.
- 37 Ibid., 233.
- 38 Ibid., 236.

**Albena Bakratcheva, *Visibility Beyond the Visible: The Artistic Discourse of American Transcendentalism*, Sofia: The New Bulgarian University Press, 2006, 372 pp., in Bulgarian**

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Albena Bakratcheva has produced a passionate and erudite account of the formation and development of American Transcendentalism from an artistic, but also to a great extent philosophical, perspective. She has interwoven in a lucid text the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional sources that gave rise to this unique syncretic movement. This book is a brilliant example of how a scholar, belonging to a “neutral” European culture,<sup>1</sup> can successfully practice a method of interpretation, both rational and intuitive, in order to penetrate into the depths of a seemingly remote tradition.

In her writing, Bakratcheva outlines the original source of the term “transcendental,” shedding light on its transformation in mid-nineteenth-century American usage. She situates this notion in the nexus of Puritanism, Enlightenment Rationalism, and the specific New England view of life, emphasizing the impact made on the Transcendentalist movement by Unitarianism. Special attention is paid to the overcoming of the fashionable mood of British Romanticism, proving, in the result, the intellectual maturity and practical adequacy of the Transcendentalist approach. The author views inspiration and piety as the kernel of the creative endeavor of the Transcendentalist group members, leading to the emblematic concepts of “the poet-priest” and “the American scholar”—a synthetic unity of artistic and intellectual zeal, religious devotion, and unorthodox life style.

Summarizing the essence of Transcendentalism, Bakratcheva observes

that “within the New England context, bearing the apparent tendency of being personified by and bound up, to the maximum degree, with the Puritan tradition of the American East, [this notion] unfolds its irrationalism in relatively clear opposition to already insufficient philosophical and religious statements ...”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Enlightenment Rationalism leaves its mark on American life at that epoch in a number of outstanding achievements, the most significant of which is the Declaration of Independence. But its negative impact is no less important, in the form of a reaction on the part of Puritan spirituality against Rationalism, a reaction that led to religious enthusiasm, which in turn facilitated the appearance of Transcendentalism.<sup>3</sup> So it is not surprising that Ralph Waldo Emerson sees an affinity between poetry and religion and even believes in the presence of the sacred within the act of poetic creation.<sup>4</sup> In such a way, the poet-priest, a perfect combination of talent and missionary vocation, gains direct personal access to God.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, the poet-priest is an embodiment of the identity of the divine, artistic, and moral that serves as foundation for the Transcendentalist world outlook.<sup>6</sup>

The poet-priest is regarded by Emerson as “The American Scholar” or as “The Transcendentalist,” whose credo is “Protestantism without church, spiritual leadership without pulpit, and democracy of and for the spirit.”<sup>7</sup> The free creative intellectual maintains a direct link between transcendental spirituality and the spirit of the place, always meaning by place New England.<sup>8</sup> This is the reason why Emerson, as Bakratcheva aptly points out, is self-confident enough to sing in his *Nature* a hymn to “new lands, new people, and new thoughts.”<sup>9</sup> According to Bakratcheva, Emerson, following this direction, accepted, in a productive mode, the ideas of Coleridge and Carlyle, developing them with an eye to their relevance for America. He succeeds in doing so “either by putting a stronger accent on the poet-priest’s prophetic vision, charging it with the dimensions of American spatiality; or by enthusiastically connecting his conviction of the native dignity of man with the intellectual climate of the America of his day, inspired by the belief of Jackson’s democracy in the unlimited potential of humanity; or by concentrating on nature as the symbol of the spirit, which he sees as a sheer immense ‘Poem.’”<sup>10</sup>

Bakratcheva seems to be fascinated by the most radical transcendentalist, Margaret Fuller, to whom she pays long tribute, dedicating sixteen pages full of respect and admiration. But the core of Bakratcheva's book is focused on the life and works of Henry David Thoreau. The author stresses Thoreau's achievement in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* to realize a unity made up of a theory of creativity, artistic practice, and life style – the daydream of all transcendentalists<sup>11</sup> – as well as to find the most adequate artistic expression for the identity of Me and not-Me. Against this background, a total transformation of time-perception takes place: time becomes an intellectual and spiritual value, leading to the substitution of value characteristics for temporal ones.<sup>12</sup> The same tendency, however, on a more mature level, is developed in *Walden*, which “offers not an escape, but the greatest and most elating revelation: an open Universe, always new, vivid, and giving life.”<sup>13</sup> Bakratcheva records how Thoreau's pre-Socratic perception detects the fragmented and perishable character of everything visible. In a Kantian fashion, Thoreau's transcendentalism introduces aesthetic wholeness into the disorganized space of perception in order to reach the state of firm intellectual health and the poetic heights of “consensus, harmony, and love.” Nature, for the transcendentalists, is inseparable from humanity and the notion of the common good. That is why Thoreau criticizes the industrial revolution, not from a disinterested ecological position, but as a moral being deeply involved in the human-nature relationship. Bearing this in mind, Bakratcheva reasonably argues that “Thoreau praises the wilderness, but this is not the wilderness of the moose or the Indian – this is the wilderness, elevated into a cult (‘cultivated’) by the cultivated new-comer.”<sup>14</sup>

*Visibility Beyond the Visible* proves to be an astute and profound narrative about one of the most thrilling and inspiring periods of American artistic, intellectual, and moral life. Bakratcheva succeeds in unfolding the main aspects of the Transcendentalist movement from a unique perspective, which profitably combines literary and philosophical approaches, making a significant contribution to Bulgarian and world American studies.

- <sup>1</sup> Albena Bakratcheva, *Visibility Beyond the Visible: The Artistic Discourse of American Transcendentalism*, 339.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

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