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The Antiphilosophers

STEVEN L. BINDEMAN

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For Jill

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Preface: Badiou's Concept of Antiphilosophy

The contemporary French philosopher Alain Badiou has devoted a significant part of his work to the theme of antiphilosophy (while at the same time claiming that he is himself "anti-antiphilosophy").[1] He has centered his attention on the work of three postmodern antiphilosophers: Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Lacan. Antiphilosophers, he says, are awakeners, the ones who force other philosophers to remember that if they are true to themselves they will always be out of step with and mistrusted by the powers that be. They know they must speak with the voice of authority, arrogantly, seductively, even violently when necessary. They know that once their ideas become incorporated into academic knowledge their voice will cease to have power. They also know that "they must make their life into the theater of their ideas and their body into the place of the Absolute."[2] In other words, the radical thinking of the antiphilosophers is a deeply personal act, not without risk. In fact, their belief in the integrity of personal experience will often be the main source for their attacks on the abstract nature of philosophical discourse.

Badiou notes three joint operations for antiphilosophers: (1) they criticize philosophy for claiming the category of truth for itself and for constituting itself as a theory; (2) they assert that philosophy cannot be reduced to its fallacious theoretical exterior because it then reveals itself as an act, consisting of a series of fantastical stories about "truth" which are nothing more than clothing, propaganda, and lies; and (3) they direct their own work against such philosophical

acts in favor of newer and more radical acts which destroy their predecessors while clarifying their noxious character.[3] Antiphilosophers thus reduce traditional philosophy's use of categories to mere language, characterize its emphasis on truth and system as the pretensions of a will to power, and claim a more radical stance for themselves.

Badiou also advances the claim that "each antiphilosopher chooses the philosophers that he intends to make into canonical examples of emptied and vain speech."[4] The critically engaged work of the antiphilosopher thus exists in a context which is relative to and directed both for and against particular philosophers and their particular situations. While he provides examples of classical antiphilosophers working in this vein, such as Pascal for/against Descartes, Rousseau for/against Voltaire and Hume, and Kierkegaard for/against Hegel,[5] he also focuses on the work of three modern antiphilosophers who launched an attack on the entire philosophical tradition: Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Lacan. Here we find an even purer form of antiphilosophy than ever before, because the totality of their work is based on instances of violent subjectivity which are directed at the destruction of the entire philosophical tradition and its enclosure of life by truth.

In order to understand the fundamental themes of the antiphilosophical view of philosophy, Badiou turns to Lacan, whose work he believes "is a necessary condition of the renaissance of philosophy"[6] today. Following in Freud's footsteps, Lacan considered philosophy to be a form of psychosis. More specifically, he saw philosophy as a discourse of mastery based upon its complete disavowal of what he called the fact of symbolic castration.[7] "Symbolic castration" is Lacan's term for when an individual experiences the gap between who he or she really is, and the symbolic mask that makes him or her into something other than this. The subject is thus cut off from the real "I" by projecting something else into the world at large.[8] In other words, the mastery of the world that philosophers assume for themselves is based on the lie they make when they think they have complete access to the truth about anything—an assumption involving their refusal to acknowledge that they are lying to themselves in the first place.

The role of the antiphilosopher, then, for Badiou consists in alerting philosophers to the unavoidable contemporaneity and non-permanence of their discourse. Philosophers might otherwise believe themselves capable of producing substantive truths of their own, whereas such truths can only come to them from the outside, namely from the non-philosophical practices such as science or art or politics or love that are for Badiou the four material conditions for philosophy, and from which it is always suspended. Philosophers in his view must avoid the temptation to "suture" themselves to any one of them, or risk cutting themselves off from the other conditions—and thus from real life as well.

With his concept of "suture" (from his *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (2013)) Badiou names the operation whereby philosophy, instead of giving equal weight to each of its four conditions, cancels itself out by delegating its powers to just one of them. As examples, he refers to science during the positivist suture of philosophy, to politics during the Marxist-Leninist suture, to poetry with Heidegger, and to love and friendship within the works of Levinas and Derrida.[9]

Philosophers must also take into consideration the *compossibility* of the four conditions, by studying for example the intersection of art and love in the novel or by recognizing how traditional philosophical concepts like truth or the subject are actually external abstractions from the composite reality to which they refer. In fact, Badiou defines philosophy as the creation of a "space of compossibility" for heterogeneous truths. In his view, it is not simply a question of registering truths by how successfully they are applied in praxis but rather of thinking their compossibility in the historical present. He borrows this term from Leibniz, for whom the notion of compossibility referred to a world without contradictory elements, since in his view not even God could bring into existence a world in which there is some contradiction among its members or their properties.[10] Compossibility for Badiou indicates the theoretical possibility of joint truths existing within the indeterminacy of real-life events. Thus, real-life truths for him are not simple abstractions but complex heterogenous contingencies.

In Badiou's view the philosopher must always pay heed to the antiphilosopher because the antiphilosopher guards against the philosopher's temptation to allow any one of the four conditions to dominate the others and risk falling into a dogmatic pattern of thinking. When philosophers address the four conditions in a genuinely philosophical manner, though, they will learn to refer to inaesthetics rather than art; metapolitics rather than politics; transitional ontology rather than science; etc. While concepts like science, aesthetics, and politics refer in Badiou's view to mere objects disconnected from reality, inaesthetics, metapolitics, and transitional ontology relate more concretely to the complexity of event-based reality.[11] "Inaesthetics" accordingly is Badiou's term for a way of relating to artistic creation that does not create a mere object but an immanent and singular event; the other terms function similarly for him.

"Philosophy is always the breaking of a mirror," says Badiou. "This mirror is the surface of language, onto which the sophist reduces everything that philosophy treats in its act. If the philosopher sets his gaze on this surface, his double, the sophist, will emerge … The sophist is the one who reminds us that the category of Truth is void," he adds.[12] This means that if philosophers look into the mirror that is the surface of language they will see only empty words. Badiou at once embraces both the traditional modernist notion that truths are genuinely eternal and unchanging,

and the postmodernist notion that truths are constructed through historical processes. If truth remains but a linguistic or rhetorical effect of mere historical context, however, then there will be no escape from the "prison-house of language."[13]

Badiou ends up proposing a triangulation between philosophy, sophism, and antiphilosophy. One way of understanding this triangulation is by grasping the role of the sophist and the antiphilosopher as necessary educators of the philosopher. Both sophism and antiphilosophy are rival discourses that put philosophy to the test. Where, then, lies the difference between the two? If antiphilosophy and sophistry are indiscernible mirror images of one another, what is the source of their conflict over questions of language, being, meaning, and truth? The answer lies in the fact that unlike sophism, antiphilosophy is still a form of philosophy. While the sophist just wants to win an argument, the antiphilosopher still wants to understand the nature of things which lies at the root of all experience.

The antiphilosopher's turn to the ineffable, lived experience—as it is lived in its own unique moment—is a turn that proper philosophers will never take because of their dependence on meaningful discourse. The opening up of an inner voice with its own private language is similarly inaccessible to them. If this inner voice is allowed to remain dormant, however, the philosophical enterprise again runs the risk of settling into dogma. Recognizing the decisive role of the listening and speaking subject constitutes another feature that is typical of antiphilosophy, since the experience of creating a philosophically radical idea not only gives precedence to the personal truth over and above the impersonal one, but also seems to be the kind of experience that cannot be transmitted except in a near-autobiographical style.

Alongside Badiou's work, Boris Groys with his *Introduction to Antiphilosophy* adds an additional dimension to the subject by choosing to emphasize the "anti" aspect of antiphilosophy. He compares it to the anti-art of the dada movement, specifically with the "readymades" of Duchamp, which seemingly marked the end of art because they demonstrated that any ordinary object could be exhibited as a work of art. Although it may have seemed at the time that art institutions would lose their legitimacy and become obsolete, when the readymades were assimilated into the history of art their radical otherness as found art objects that resist commodification was canceled out.

For Groys, antiphilosophers are essentially readymade philosophers, because what they provide is readily produced yet still offers an alternative to the truth-production of traditional philosophers. Antiphilosophers ascribe philosophical value to certain already-existing practices which they then interpret as universal. Examples of this for him include Marx's concept of the modern economy, Mauss's work on the rites of gift giving and returning, Nietzsche's discovery of the will to power, Kierkegaard's focus on anxiety, Heidegger's focus on boredom, Bataille

and Bakhtin's belief in tears and laughter, and McLuhan's theme of the electronic media.[14]

While these completely ordinary practices operate against the exclusive discipline of traditional philosophy (with its dependency on logic, mathematics, and rigorous thinking) they enable antiphilosophical practice to find its foundation in the universality (and instability) of everyday life. Antiphilosophers thus produce evidence from all sorts of common experiences, practices, objects, and attitudes. When they remove things from their original context and place them into new contexts, these disruptive acts enable them to create new meanings. Groys concludes that antiphilosophy is actually the final, absolute stage of philosophy—because instead of creating mere texts like traditional philosophy, antiphilosophy "instructs us how to change our mind in such a way that certain practices, discourses and experiences would become universally evident … [and it thus] offers the only possible path for its [philosophy's] survival."[15] (Groys's work here complements Badiou's nicely, since ultimately they both acknowledge the interdependence of the two approaches.) Unlike traditional modes of philosophical thinking which seem complacently insular in comparison, antiphilosophy is willing to get its hands dirty—and the undermining of truth's authority *is* disruptive.

In his essay "An Absurd Reasoning" (from *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*) for example, Albert Camus responded deeply and personally to this disruption of the order of things. He insisted that a world without truth inexorably leads to the issue of suicide remaining the one and only truly serious philosophical problem. "One kills oneself because life is not worth living," he wrote.[16] He too, like antiphilosophers before and after him, thought that philosophy needed to respond authentically to the problem of nihilism. Not interested in the usual social or personal reasons for suicide, he focused instead on its relation to individual thought: "Does the absurd dictate death? … It is always easy to be logical. It is almost impossible to be logical to the bitter end … Is there a logic to the point of death?"[17] The absurd condition leads us to the deserts of thought. Born of the confrontation between human need and the unreasonable silence of the universe, the leap into the absurd leads to the challenge of living in constant revolt against social and political conformity. Within the absurd condition one discovers the same scorn with which Sisyphus had become master of his own absurd fate, by scorning the inevitability of time's passing and living only in the moment, refusing to accept certainty about anything.

For the other antiphilosophers as well, how to cope with the lack of absolute certitude in a world devoid of eternal truth is the fundamental issue, and it is against this very notion of certitude that they are united. The problem of certitude is closely related in their minds to issues of crisis, lived experience, the

eclipse of truth, and the undermining of traditional conceptions of space and time. What's wrong with certitude is that it leads to dogmatism, and it is thus complicit with modes of thought that are totalizing (an insight developed by Levinas). Wittgenstein in fact devoted a whole book to the subject (*On Certainty*), focusing on the theme that we really don't have a consistent idea of what we mean by the concept since we use it in so many different contexts. Any claim for certainty also introduces the need for developing a whole system of related ideas in order to justify its authority. The related issue of truth also required just such a system for Nietzsche—since for him truths are just dead metaphors, mere lies that will always benefit the few over the many.

However much we might need truths, the antiphilosophers teach us that we should never allow them to have too much authority and control over our lives. As Deleuze and Guattari insisted, the best we can do with truths is to allow them their sway for a short while—as long as they remain useful—and then discard them in favor of others. With this new approach to the functioning of truth the antiphilosophers visualize a new world order, one which operates under more flexible sets of rules than ever before. While the term "antiphilosophy" suggests that the practice of philosophy is being challenged in some way, what is really being challenged is not philosophy itself but its authority as the provider of eternal and unchanging truth.

The search for a radical act of transcendence may require the antiphilosopher to redefine truth rather than to jettison it altogether. What matters most then is the experiential content of the speaking subject. As Levinas would say, the attempt to express the act of transcendence in writing (in contrast to speaking) concerns not what is said but the effect of what is said, and this implies a putting down of the Said because it lacks the authenticity of the Saying. With this privileging of rhetoric over logic, of the Saying over the Said, Levinas suggested that what really matters is the subjective change that an idea can produce in us rather than anything objectively measurable, and since this effect is beyond the scope of mere logical formulation we need to find alternative modes of access to this domain, other than the writings of traditional philosophers. It is to the antiphilosophers that we turn for help with this matter.

Notes

1. See the section "Anti-antiphilosophy" in Peter Hallward's *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, pp. 20–24.
2. Badiou: *Wittgenstein as Antiphilosopher,* pp. 67–68.
3. ibid., pp. 75–76.

4. ibid., p. 9.
5. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds,* p. 425.
6. Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p. 84.
7. See Bosteels, 2011, pp. 6–7.
8. See Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, p. 34.
9. See Bosteels, "Radical Antiphilosophy," p. 32.
10. See "Leibniz's Modal Metaphysics," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
11. See Badiou, 2004, p. 10.
12. Badiou, 2009, p. 25.
13. This is the title of a work by the Marxist philosopher Frederic Jameson, with which he referred to the ahistorical bias of the French Structuralist and Russian Formalist approaches to linguistic systems.
14. Groys, *Introduction to Antiphilosophy,* p. xi.
15. ibid., p. xiv.
16. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, p. 10.
17. ibid., pp. 10–12.

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The Subtractive and Nihilistic Modes of Silence: Heidegger and Beckett, Wittgenstein and Giacometti. Originally published in *Life Creative Mimesis of Emotion: Analecta Husserliana* Volume 62, 2000, pp. 117–131, 2000 Kluwer Academic Publishers. With kind permission of Springer Science + Business Media.

Liberation and its Constraints: A Philosophical Analysis of Key Issues in Psychiatry, *Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research* 1(5) pp. 502–509: QuantumDream, Inc., Copyright, 2010. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Heidegger and Wittgenstein: The Poetics of Silence. Lanham: University Press of America, 1981.

Introduction: The Four Central Themes of Antiphilosophy

Postmodernism and Antiphilosophy

Badiou's work on antiphilosophy helps to create a new point of view for studying philosophers who are fundamentally critical of the tradition. While previous attempts at uniting them have gone under the names existentialism, phenomenology, postmodernism, poststructuralism and the like, shifting the focus to antiphilosophy emphasizes certain common themes that were less visible from these other perspectives.

Postmodernism first appeared as a philosophical term in Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979). He had based his theory on Wittgenstein's idea of the "language game," which essentially meant that since different groups of people might use the same language in different ways, this would lead to their looking at the world in quite different ways as well. Ultimately, this notion in turn leads to the dismantling of the belief in a single, overarching view of the world, because it asserts that the time for dominant narratives has vanished. This means that there is no single narrative, no privileged standpoint, no system or theory that overlays all the others. This confluence of narratives is the essence of postmodernism.

By challenging the belief in dominant discourses, postmodernism provides hitherto marginalized and subordinate groups with a voice of their own. It also calls for a re-evaluation of all power structures. In doing so, postmodernism

challenges the centralized authority of these structures, which have their origins in Enlightenment and Romantic ideas. Consequently, ideas about class, gender, and religion, as well as the authority of sexual, ethnic, and situational norms, are all challenged—and ultimately the very notion of identity itself is undermined too, because postmodernism teaches us that our identities are entirely constructed. This changes the central concern of philosophy from self-determination to other-determination—unless we deny the very notion of identity in the first place. The antiphilosophers are in fact united against the great cornerstones of western metaphysics: time, self, universe, and God[1]—insisting that there is no way to reach beyond any of these words to the thing itself.

Since no system of meaning can have a monopoly on the truth, we begin to realize that the very notion of truth itself is a choice rather than a fact. In the future, we shall have to *create* truth rather than discover it, and do so only through a system of meaning of our choice.[2] The antiphilosophers believe that they have discovered here a significant fault in the foundation of all traditional philosophical systems. This is because once the absolute authority of all truth claims is questioned, the integrity of any system based on their authority is undermined as well. This is where the importance of antiphilosophical thinking arises, because antiphilosophers address the issue of how to relate to the resultant chaos.

By laying the groundwork for an openly antiphilosophical combat against the traditional philosopher-type, Nietzsche was the first philosopher to introduce the theme of antiphilosophy in an explicit manner. Here is the passage where he introduces the term:

> What does a philosophical existence mean for us today? Isn't it almost a way of withdrawing? A kind of evasion? And for someone who lives that way, apart and in complete simplicity, is it likely that he has indicated the best path to follow for his own knowledge? Would he not have had to experiment with a hundred different ways of living to be authorized to speak of the value of life? In short, we think it is so necessary to have lived in a totally 'antiphilosophical' manner, according to hitherto received notions, and certainly not as a shy man of virtue—in order to judge the great problems from lived experiences. The man with the greatest experiences, who condenses them into general conclusions: would he not have to be the most powerful man?—For a long time we have confused the Wise Man with the scientific man, and for an even longer time with the religiously exalted man.[3]

With these remarks, Nietzsche introduces several themes that are still of central importance to antiphilosophical thinking. The most fundamental of these themes is the recognition that the great problems of philosophy need to be judged from lived experience and not from mere theory. Nietzsche also suggests that the truths

of science and religion are equally irrelevant as reliable sources for recognizing the real value of life.

Nietzsche's focus on the lived experience is consistent with the antiphilosophical emphasis on the "difference" side of the identity/difference relation, which is itself in direct contrast to the traditional philosophical emphasis on identity. For example, when a human being is defined in terms of his or her identity, he or she is seen in an objectified manner, and is susceptible to being understood as being a mere "thing," to be manipulated according to the needs of a variety of interests. Because a person is *knowable* in terms of their identity, the infinite complexity of their individual experience is negated by this fact. On the other hand, when the same human being is characterized in terms of their ongoing life experience, the infinite complexity of their situatedness in the world is brought to the fore—they are a *subject*, no longer to be seen as a mere object. In this context, the antiphilosophical point of view is a reaction against one way of seeing human beings in favor of another. Heidegger's decision to use the term "Dasein" (meaning "being-there") in place of the term "man" is consistent with this point of view.

Antiphilosophy and the Four Historical Realizations That Sustain It

In his article on radical antiphilosophy, Bosteels presents what are in his view the basic features of Badiou's notion of antiphilosophy:

> At least for the modern period, these invariant traits include the following: the assumption that the question of being, or that of the world, is coextensive with the question of language; consequently, the reduction of truth to being nothing more than a linguistic or rhetorical effect, the outcome of historically and culturally specific language games or tropes which therefore must be judged and, better yet, mocked in light of a critical-linguistic, discursive, or genealogical analysis; an appeal to what lies just beyond language, or rather at the upper limit of the sayable, as a domain of meaning, sense, or knowledge, irreducible to any form of truth as defined in philosophy; and, finally, in order to gain access to this domain, the search for a radical act such as the religious leap of faith or the revolutionary breaking in two of the history of the world, the sheer intensity of which would discredit in advance any systematic theoretical or conceptual elaboration.[4]

In addition to elaborating on these features, we will expand on or diverge from Badiou's work in several ways. Our approach to the antiphilosophers themselves, for example, differs from Badiou's. Instead of identifying those specific philosophers against which each of the antiphilosophers defines their critical agenda, we

have elected to compare complementary pairs of antiphilosophers who are not only contemporaries of one another but address similar issues as well. This methodology helps to keep the critical agenda of the postmodern antiphilosophers, which is directed more often at the modernist philosophical tradition in general than at particular philosophers, clearly in view. Furthermore, while Badiou limits his attention to three postmodern antiphilosophers, we have widened the scope to include additional figures from the same postmodern period who maintain similar points of view. In fact, with the exception of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche whose working lives were separated by thirty years, we will show how each of the complementary pairs of antiphilosophers under study here did their most significant work during the same shared two decades, with the group as a whole moving progressively from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century.

In the course of this work we will demonstrate how the central concerns of each antiphilosopher can be paired effectively with another contemporary antiphilosopher. We will begin with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and show that while they were not exactly contemporaries they are commonly thought of together as the founders of existential philosophy. They shared a belief that philosophy needed to return to the reality of lived experience and turn away from systematic and absolutist forms of thinking. Turning to Husserl and Freud, who did their most significant work during the earliest years of the twentieth century, we will demonstrate that while they each developed distinct theories about the structure of consciousness, they both taught that we don't perceive the world directly but only through the mediating mechanisms of either intention or desire. This was an insight which led each of them to the realization that consciousness is a process that has only an indirect and distorted relationship with the world. In the case of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, who arguably did their most significant work during and in the wake of the first world war, we will see how they shared a common concern with the workings of language at its limits, attempting to avoid the pitfall of metaphysical explanation while limiting themselves to the description of different kinds of meaningful experience. We will then see how Benjamin and Horkheimer/Adorno, living during and in the wake of the second world war, all shared a belief that reason itself had become corrupted during their lifetimes, that it had taken on certain irrational elements which they theorized were the source for the disintegration of their society. In the case of Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty, who did much of their work in the two decades following the second world war, we will show how they both rejected traditional metaphysics in favor of their belief in the primacy of the lived experience, with Bachelard moving away from his faith in the authority of experimental science and towards the integrity of poetic dreaming, and with Merleau-Ponty turning away from metaphysical dualism and towards his insistence on the primacy of perception and the resultant realization of the singular

body-subject. Bringing together Levinas and Derrida, whose main works belong to the latter half of the twentieth century, we will notice a similarity between Levinas attempting to solve the philosophical problems of identity/difference and self/other and ending up creating an entirely new way of looking at ethics and at language, and Derrida in turn inventing the term "deconstruction" to describe his own way of working past the limits of language and ending up additionally undermining the logic, clarity and purpose of all writing in favor of the integrity of speech—a position also endorsed by Levinas. Finally, bringing together the concerns of Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari, whose work owes its impetus to the student revolts of the late 1960's and afterwards, we will explore how they developed the strategies they believed were needed to identify and undermine the forces of power and domination which they found inherent in modern society, embedded in the discourse of modern empirical and behavioral psychology (Foucault) and in the dysfunctional and manipulative actions of the media (Deleuze and Guattari).

We will investigate in this work how the antiphilosophical point of view is sustained by four distinct historical realizations: (1) The realization that a real crisis has occurred in the history of civilization; (2) The realization that to remain relevant philosophy must be able to reach and to engage with the reality of lived experience; (3) The realization that the authority of truth has been undermined and its devaluation is a key part of the postmodern experience; and (4) The realization that the traditional modernist conceptions of space and time have been completely transformed during the postmodern era, leading to the need for philosophers to address our relationship to physical reality in radically new ways.

The reality of the lived experience and the undermining of the authority of truth will be shown to be the two fundamental positions of antiphilosophy and thus its two primary attributes. The secondary attributes of crisis and of the transformation of space and time conceptuality can be seen as following from them. For example, once the authority of truth is undermined, the status of moral values is also put into question, and this leads to the recognition of a forthcoming crisis in terms of the threat of nihilism. The eclipse of truth also leads to the undisputed centrality of the concepts of space and time becoming problematic as well. Similarly, once the fundamental importance of the lived experience is established, the objective framing of the world in terms of space/time coordinates is challenged, and this in turn leads to a crisis in the nature of the sciences.

The Crisis

Each of the antiphilosophers saw a crisis coming—or believed that we were already experiencing one. The crisis has to do with specific aspects of the modernist world

view, which is dominated by the expanding authority of scientism, or the belief that science provides the best methodology for solving all human problems.

Kierkegaard saw that modern life created the threat of nihilism because in its everyday monotony it was essentially boring. He believed that whether you devoted your life to art, ethics, or religion, you couldn't avoid this realization. Only by pushing at the limits of the confines or boundaries of your life could you discover the freedom to take a stand against it. The crisis for him was societal, spiritual and psychological.

Nietzsche also recognized the threat of nihilism. He understood that the categories which we use to measure the value of things have become meaningless to us because we now see them merely as fictions. If we can't find new ideas to take their place, we will find ourselves falling into a nihilistic wasteland.

Husserl believed that the origin of the crisis could be found in the sciences, since the empirically grounded realism upon which the sciences are based cannot provide the necessary grounding that human knowledge requires. Without this grounding, we are headed into barbarism. Husserl in fact used this very term in his 1934 "Vienna Lecture."[5] At this time in history, many Europeans (including the Nazis it should be noted) were convinced that Europe faced not only a political crisis but a crisis at the core of its very civilization. Husserl believed that once science and philosophy were properly grounded in intentional phenomenology, the "weariness" that he found so prevalent in the Europe of his day would be overcome and a newly acquired "life-inwardness and spiritualization" would take its place.[6]

Freud experienced the same historical conditions for nihilism as Husserl, and asserted that as a result all of humanity had become neurotic. Freud recognized that if the demands of the instincts were not met, an increase in chaotic psychic energy at the level of culture and society would result. While his remarks were motivated by his own experience of living through World War I, they could just as easily be applied to the historical conditions that would soon lead to the second world war as well.

When Wittgenstein attempted to show in his *Tractatus* how language "mirrors" the world, he felt obliged to explain further that this mirroring was only superficial, and that what was really important was beyond the reach of human speech altogether. This led him to recognize how the domain of the sciences was extremely limited since it could never encompass this higher level, and to understand how facts and values would forever remain separated. His subsequent realization that the sciences lacked a solid foundation led him to believe that there was a crisis in the discipline.

Heidegger believed that we have become complacent about the self-evidence of truth and consequently about the nature of "man" as well. This complacency

in his view was nihilistic because it was consistent with the one-track thinking of engineering and technology. "One-track thinking" is his term for a form of pragmatic reasoning which understands everything in terms of cause-and-effect relations, and leads to the belief that no one can be held responsible for anything. He was convinced that with his philosophy he too was fighting off the demon of nihilism.

Benjamin believed that Germany, during the Weimar period between the wars and just before the Nazis took power, had reached a social and economic crisis that was not just unique to itself. He determined that the more people were driven by narrow private interests, the more susceptible they were to mass instincts. These instincts, in turn, caused them to become increasingly alienated from any possibility of revolutionary change, and to become more hostile than ever to the underclasses. This crisis also revealed an unconscious awareness of the isolation of individuals from each other. Even if the class struggle remained, he theorized, the real question had become whether the bourgeoisie would either self-destruct or be overthrown. He noted an ecological crisis as well, due to the misguided modernist belief that technology could be used to establish human mastery over nature.

Horkheimer and Adorno asserted that the modern era had brought with it an increasing awareness that reason itself was in crisis. While enlightenment philosophy guided by instrumental reason was supposed to have initiated historical forces for disenchantment and demythologization, these forces, which they referred to as the "dialectic of enlightenment," had resulted in confusion rather than clarity. Horkheimer and Adorno were fearful that mankind, following the dictates of rationality, was not advancing toward freedom but to barbarism instead. They discovered the roots of this barbarism in what they called reason's disease, namely the belief that reason should be used to dominate nature. A common theory of the time was that if reason were ever applied in this way it would operate as a counterforce to myth. But they soon realized that since knowledge provides the key to power, and power is used to dominate—not only nature, but also the subject—then this form of power would ultimately be applied to the domination of other people. When all spheres of life become rationalized, they concluded, they become available for domination—with the consequent loss of freedom leading inexorably toward catastrophe. Horkheimer and Adorno clearly hoped that their own critique of enlightenment reasoning would provide the power to halt this regression.

Bachelard believed that modern scientific theory was in crisis because it had become weighted down by its own historical preconceptions. This included for example its assumption of a fixed point of view, a theory which wasn't open-ended enough to account for the emergence of the new discoveries of Einstein and Heisenberg among others. In order to account for the discontinuous "surrationality" of the

emerging reality, reason too could no longer be understood as absolute, unchanging and timeless, but needed to be re-thought in a more open-ended way.

Merleau-Ponty replaced Descartes's fundamental idea that "I am a thinking thing" with the realization that consciousness, the world, and the human body are all intricately intertwined with one another. He thus replaced mind-body dualism with an intersubjective, dialectical conception of consciousness. By doing so, he avoided the pitfalls of dualistic thinking, focusing instead on his conception of the embedded body-subject already in the world. Because the world and our sense of self continue endlessly to change and to affect one another, the elaboration of this ongoing correlative activity is not only inexhaustible, it is also, as *perception*, the basis for all knowledge—and as a model for scientific investigation it is a far more appropriate reflection of the dynamic nature of reality according to the new physics than Descartes's more traditional and more static model.

Levinas noted the fundamental split between totalizers and infinitizers as the basis for a crisis in contemporary philosophy. Totalizers develop systems of ideas that provide answers to everything and dominate other people's lives. Their way of thinking leads inevitably to war and genocide. Infinitizers, on the other hand, are proponents of infinite subjectivity instead. Their transcendent experience of the radical difference of the Other "decenters" their universe, and as a result they became totally dedicated in their ethical responsibility to the needs and demands of the Other over and beyond their own.

Derrida claimed that the whole tradition of metaphysics, which has dominated Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks, reflects a "logocentric" bias. This point of view privileges the spoken word over the written word, and gives rise to a philosophy which values the superficiality of visible presence over the depth of hidden absence. It is dominated by the illumination of reason, and belies the reality of the postmodern world, which is the realization that the thing itself is essentially ungraspable. In response to this condition of unknowability, which in his view amounts to a crisis in modernist thinking, he developed his philosophy of *deconstruction,* which is an intertextual approach to thinking that never finds itself at an end.

Foucault characterized the crisis in terms of what he called the power relations of truth production. Not only in his view do all notions of truth hide lies, they need to be recognized at the practical level of lived reality in terms of who benefits from their application. Truth is never merely an objective mirror of the world, but a standard or social norm that establishes who holds power and who does not. From this Nietzschean perspective he attempted to undermine the systematic, totalizing, and hierarchical aspects of modernism, by turning his attention to the various forces of dominating discourse in the fields of medicine, psychology, jurisprudence, sexuality, education, and criminology.

Deleuze and Guattari were interested not only in recognizing and describing the mechanisms of power but also in developing concepts that would help to dismantle them. They hoped that their work together would help individuals to learn how to camouflage themselves with "nomad thought." With this style of thinking, which refuses to be summarized in any definitive way, the existence of individuals as "desiring machines" could be destabilized. In consequence, they could no longer be targeted and manipulated by marketing interests that are increasingly pervasive in all postmodern, postindustrial societies.

The Lived Experience

Each of the antiphilosophers recognized how traditional philosophy was limited by its inability to reach the experiential reality of the lived experience.

Kierkegaard realized that his own unique understanding of philosophy would only make sense from an experiential point of view. His "philosophy of inwardness" was his attempt to speak to this inner voice. He could only do this however by pushing his thoughts about life to their limits. Only at the boundaries of thought, through confrontation with the absurdity of things, does the inner voice begin to open up on its own and bypass the outer self's need for comfort and conformity, in search of deeper truths. Kierkegaard first noticed this inner voice through his study of Plato's dialogues, with his discovery that the dialectical course of these dialogues only made sense if Socrates's listeners were able to work their own way beyond the straightforward meaning of their dialogues with him. He also learned that Socrates's use of irony showed that nothing important could be taught in a direct manner. Thus was born his own method of indirect communication.

Nietzsche constantly communicated his deeper thoughts through the use of irony, exaggeration, contradiction, aphorism, fable, and other rhetorical devices. Since he insisted that behind every truth is a lie, he felt it was necessary to present his own truths in an indirect way, through the illuminating pathways of self-examination and self-overcoming, into the transcendent places where his thoughts and insights direct his readers. Without his faith in the creative abilities of his readers, Nietzsche's philosophy would remain either pointlessly obscure or superficially fascist in nature.

Husserl believed that the lived experience was the essential grounding that philosophy needed. The key problem for him was how to reach it in a rigorous way. His essential idea in this regard was his phenomenological epoché, which required the subject to disregard all of his or her preconceptions of any object in order to recognize that it can exist meaningfully only through the temporality of conscious experience. This means that the external world too exists only in this way, and has

no ontological reality outside our consciousness of it. Furthermore, consciousness itself can have no meaning in isolation from its object, since consciousness for Husserl is always *of* something.

Freud believed that once we took the lived experiences of the mentally ill into account, medical practitioners would be obligated to stop assuming that since their patients were sick they no longer merited the status—or rights—of independent human beings. Since scientists at this time saw themselves not as mere persons but as objective instruments of nature, this was an especially hard preconception to overcome. Because Freud was able to overcome this kind of prejudice, he was the first to recognize that neurotic behavior was goal-directed, and not merely pointless and meaningless. From this basic insight he was able to determine how neurotic behaviors are symptoms, whose origins can be traced back to the fears and anxieties of childhood.

Wittgenstein's remarks about silence would not resonate the way they do were it not for his assumptions about the lived experience of language users. His distinction between showing and saying also points to this kind of experience, because the lived experience can only exist beyond the limits of language. When he says that a rule cannot by itself tell a person how to follow it correctly, he is recognizing the role of the lived experience in how we use language. Nor can the rule fully determine which specific actions are necessary to follow it. For Wittgenstein, the indeterminateness of the lived experience plays an important role in language games in general.

For Heidegger, the lived experience of Dasein is at the center of his analytic of Being. He learned of its importance from his studies with Husserl. His central work *Being and Time* is completely grounded within this kind of experience. Recognizing that assumptions about the identity of the term "I" and the objectivity relating to the term "man" transform the constantly shifting complexity of the lived experience into a static presence, he rigorously avoided using the term throughout his works in favor of his term "Dasein," with which he referred to the situated quality of human existence. Because Dasein is primordially thrown into the world, its lived experience is prior to everything else it encounters.

Benjamin had a unique perspective on the lived experience. He believed that the effort to articulate the past does not entail recognizing it the way it actually was. Rather, it means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a given moment. While historical materialism for example needed to hold on to this static image of the past, the lived experience appears to us only as a fleeting moment. Thus, whatever image of the past we have, it might be vastly different from our mediated perception of what we *think* the lived experience was. A similar split between static image and fleeting moment can be found in Benjamin's concept of *aura*. He

believed that original works of art retain an "aura" which has largely become lost in the world of modern technology. At the same time, however, he also celebrated the possibility that in film, the most technologically advanced of modern art forms of his time, modernity had facilitated the accomplishment of liberating the object from its aura. Furthermore, since film consists of nothing but fleeting moments, its reality cannot be found in the "auratic" static images from which it is constructed. This disappearance of aura in film in his view facilitates its potential for use as propaganda, since once the constructed artificiality of the film disappears, critical distance from its message is difficult to maintain.

Horkheimer and Adorno believed that a major legacy of the Enlightenment was an undue faith in the capacity of instrumental reason to universally resolve all of humanity's problems. Because the lived experience of the individual person is beyond the reach of such thinking, though, its importance has become marginalized in the modern world. While separating thinking from feeling was supposed to maximize efficiency and enable us to master nature without destroying it, instead it has left us with a world of social domination rather than social liberation. Only by becoming actively and critically engaged with the contradictory nature of the world around us can we escape from the force of its dominating discourses.

Bachelard recognized that the palpability of the lived experience of human beings had been completely overlooked by modern science. Early in his career he noticed how the rationalist categories of classical science were becoming increasingly useless, because they could no longer account for the new science's discoveries of the indeterminate nature of reality. Bachelard ultimately recognized that the scientific enterprise should no longer be conceived of as a closed world. He turned instead to the lived experience of poetic dreamers and to their subjective experience of things, as an alternative to the "objective" notions of science which he believed no longer functioned in the way they were intended. In his view they had become too static to describe effectively the constantly shifting nature of the new scientific reality.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of the primacy of perception enabled him to situate the lived experience of the embodied perceiver at the center of human knowledge. He provided a solution to the mind/body problem by turning away from the classical notion of objective space as the container of the world in favor of the notion that the human body already exists *a priori* in lived space. Since the nature of this lived space will only later be determined by subjective awareness, this means that in Merleau-Ponty's view we engage directly with the world through our bodies first, and only then do we consciously experience the world in relation to ourselves. In this way, consciousness is produced from our bodily engagement with the world around us. This interactive view is in direct contrast to the classical view, which states that consciousness is totally separate from the world of objects.

Levinas believed that the totalizing effects of systematic philosophy inevitably lead to war and destruction, so he was careful to place the force of his ethical thinking within the infinitely open domain of the lived experience instead. Levinas's ethics, grounded in the originary experience of the face as a living presence, is an embodied ethics. This means that we *feel* the primordial demands of otherness in the face-to-face encounter before we even begin to understand them. His ethics is thus a felt experience before it is a rational one.

Derrida's reflections on the lived experience centered on the experience of presence. Although a thing must be present in order to be described in a definitive way, its essential difference from other things is still in his view logically prior to its identity. This prioritizing of otherness over unity affects the experience of presence by splintering it into the two halves of presence and absence. This splintering also makes the thing an "impossible presence," as something which becomes present because of what differs from it. When we apply this point of view to language, we get the idea that in language there are only differences—without positive terms to anchor them. Consequently, every concept is essentially inscribed in a chain within which it refers to another concept and through it to yet another, in a system-wide play of differences. This means that intuition is never able to establish a concept's meaning and that the significance of any sign is purely arbitrary, depending on the system of differences within which it is located. We are stuck, in his view, with a philosophical language that presupposes presence but is itself undermined by *différance,* or the ongoing deferral of definitive meaning. He did not foresee a way out of this difficulty.

Foucault recognized how the integrity of the lived experience had been a goal for phenomenological inquiry, and that it had reached its culmination with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the perceiving, embodied self. Foucault, however, questioned whether such an inquiry went far enough. Consistent with his method of attempting to delve further than others into the nature of things, he asked himself whether experience itself has a history. As he said in an interview, "(A)n experience is always a fiction: it's something one fabricates oneself, that doesn't exist before and will exist afterward."[7] One of Foucault's main concerns as a consequence of this insight was to develop an account of experience in which the conscious subject loses primacy, a phenomenon which he would refer to at the conclusion of his masterpiece *The Order of Things* as the death of man: "As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end."[8] With this theme he was referring to the growing tendency in modern objective scientific research to turn "man" as conscious subject into "man" as depersonalized object.

Deleuze and Guattari directed the force of their philosophy at their recognition that the lived experience of people living in postmodern society has become

completely neurotic. We have become, in their view, mere "desiring machines," and to protect ourselves from the contradictory and psychologically damaging marketing forces that surround us we need to learn how to become "bodies without organs" in order to avoid their reach. Truth and understanding for them are not benign but malignant forces, representing the constructions of power-relations that need to be dismantled rather than analyzed.

The Eclipse of Truth

For each of the anti-philosophers, the phenomenon of truth was a particular challenge. They were all concerned with examining and questioning its pervasive authority.

For Kierkegaard, truth was a process and not just a goal. With his writings he attempted to create inner turmoil in his readers, forcing them to confront the absurdity of the human condition, whatever their situation in life. He wanted them to reach the boundaries of their thinking through self-reflection. Confronting the abyss, they would be faced with the choice between nihilism or a leap of faith. With their attempt to avoid nihilism they would accordingly proceed from their current state of consciousness to the next higher level—passing from the aesthetic life to the ethical, or from the ethical to the religious. Each leap to faith however is not a reasonable act but one taken out of desperation.

For Nietzsche, truth was a problem rather than a solution. He believed that every statement about truth hid a lie. On the one hand, he proposed a form of perspectivism which stated that there are no truths per se, just different perspectives of seeing, knowing, etc. so that the more perspectives we have in relation to any one object, the closer we get to its truth. But instead of arguing that it follows that all statements of truth are necessary partial notions, Nietzsche insisted that truths are all mere fictions or illusions—in other words, lies. This also entails the realization that with all statements of truth, the will is involved—in Nietzsche's terms, the will to power. It's not a matter of what is true or right, but of who benefits.

In Husserl's view, truth could be found only within the field of internal time-consciousness uncovered by transcendental phenomenology. We don't know things per se, we know things only in terms of how they are constituted by intentional consciousness. Since true judgments must carry with them an absolute or "apodictic" certainty, Husserl reasoned that this certainty can be reached only when statements about truth are reduced to their essential properties. This is the task of the phenomenological reduction, which brackets off to the side all judgments about

the object which are pre-conceptual, including, for example, the very idea of the real world. What's left, the pure essence of the thing, is necessarily true.

For Freud, the unconscious was the true psychic reality; as real and as unknowable as the external world. We ignore it at our own peril, since those who are unaware of their own feelings risk becoming puppets of them. Echoing Nietzsche, he believed that philosophy, like religion, wrongly clings to the illusion that it can provide a complete and coherent picture of the universe.

Wittgenstein's approach to truth changed over the course of his career. In the *Tractatus* he asserted that truth was found when language mirrored the world in a grammatically correct way. This was his "correspondence theory of truth"—if an elementary proposition is true, then the state of affairs to which it is directed exists. He also believed that there is a strong connection between sense and verification—that the meaning of a sentence is to be found in how that sentence is verified against reality. Later on, in his *Investigations* period, he came to believe that language was more complicated than this. In place of his earlier vision of an ideal language which would reflect the world if used correctly, he proposed the theory that language exists in all sorts of different contexts, each with its own rules. He called these situations "language games," and saw words as tools which perform their functions according to the rules of whatever game is being played. In his later works, he also outlined different kinds of knowing and different levels of certainty.

Heidegger's treatment of truth centered on the ancient Greek transformation of their understanding of truth, from *aletheia* or unhiddenness to *to agathon* or the highest good. The earlier term referred to the philosophies of the early Greek thinkers, like Thales and Heraclitus, who created metaphors from nature to describe their understanding of the unity of all things (such as Thales's notion that all things are like water, and Heraclitus's that all things are like fire). The later term referred to Plato's formulation of truth in his dialogue *The Republic*, in which he introduced his notion of truth as the highest good—which he compared to the light given by the Sun. Heidegger characterized the difference between the two notions as being between truth as an event or discovery and truth as the most self-evident thing in the world. He believed that the latter notion was the ultimate origin for the modern predicament of nihilism, since it led to a feeling of complacency regarding the nature of mankind that demeaned the authority and moral responsibility of the individual. The former notion of truth, as event or discovery, finds truth in the clearing that opens up in Dasein through its experience of authentic works of art.

Benjamin's approach to truth occurred mostly within the context of his study of art. His concern was with the truth content of a work of art, which he linked to its "material content" which exists at the beginning of the work's history. He

accordingly viewed as "mere commentary" any art criticism which focused on the anachronistic features of its material content. He contrasted this with his own form of criticism which called for the destruction of the outer material layer in order to allow the work's inner truth content to be grasped. Since the task of this criticism is to make the truth content of the artwork an object of experience, it concerns itself not with the life or intentions of the artist, but with that semblance of life that the work itself possesses by virtue of its mimetic capacity for representation. In his view, what distinguishes art from the mere semblance of nature is its capacity for critical violence, which is its ability to interrupt the harmony it has with nature.

Horkheimer and Adorno were concerned with what they believed was the modernist corruption of both language and its original relationship to truth. They recognized that mass communications systems like radio had facilitated the rise of Fascism in the same way the printing press had enabled the Reformation. They theorized that while ancient conceptions of speech had to do with distinguishing truth from falsehood, modernity had introduced a new function for speech, since through modern technology it could be directed directly at the psyche, the unconscious drives of individuals, and bypass the reasoning process altogether. They noted for example that Hitler's speeches did not make truth claims, but instead invoked ritualistic elements that put its listeners under a magical spell which culminated in their love for Führer and Fatherland. If logic and reason led directly through technology to Fascism and unreason, they figured, then we need to learn a new logic—and they felt they had found this in Critical Theory.

Bachelard's understanding of truth was based on the epistemological challenges brought forth by the new physics. The complexity of non-Euclidean geometry and of post-Newtonian physics showed him that reality and truth could no longer be understood as absolute, unchanging, and timeless. Truth was no longer something you could discover through application of the scientific method. The best you could do would be to infer truth through a non-Cartesian epistemology. Instead of moving backwards, with ever greater simplification, to the residual "I think," Bachelard's quest for truth would move ever forward, toward greater complication. If reason could no longer grasp the true nature of reality, he would turn to the more open-ended approach of "surrational" creativity instead.

Merleau-Ponty restricted his notion of truth to the phenomenon of bodily knowledge. He based his philosophy on the idea that we are rooted in the world of perceptual experience. Truth, then, is not something "out there" disconnected from us. Since we are already situated in the world, the world and our sense of self continue to affect each other, and the elaboration of this interaction is what constitutes the basis for all knowledge. Modern painting and modern thinking

have shown us a new kind of truth, one which is not based on its resemblance to things. This is a truth that is beyond the reach of ordinary language. Only the indirect speech of metaphor and art has the power to express this inner truth of things, from out of the depth of their silence. The moment of this truth coming to expression, which Merleau-Ponty called "the originary," occurs as an explosion, breakthrough, or dislocation. When our experience of the originary breaks things up, the things themselves are revealed to us at the level of pre-predicative experience, in all their uncanniness.

For Levinas, language, truth, and justice were intertwined. We discover truth in the context of the face-to-face relation. Injustice is the kind of discourse that violates the freedom of the Other. This freedom is violated through the systems of measurement and control maintained by absolutist forms of thought under the name of morality. Truth and justice are not abstract notions for him but are expressions of duty and obligation discovered in the face-to-face relation. Furthermore, justice is not an abstract notion but is found in the expression of duty and obligation discovered in the face of the Other. When ethical discourse is grounded in the face-to-face relation, the freedom of the Other is respected and preserved, and absolutist systems are thereby renounced. The problem, then, is how to respect the uniqueness of the person with whom I am engaged, while using the universal concepts of language. For example, in language, the Other is referred to as a thing, since only the "I" can be the subject. The answer is found in what Levinas calls "substitution," where I substitute myself for the Other; this is a state of being subject to the Other that is prior to freedom, consciousness, and even identity.

Derrida believed that the primacy of the spoken word gives rise to a philosophy of presence that defines the essence of metaphysical thinking. He posited over and against this system a deeper language of primary writing, a language of absence, a trace language that displays the game of the world as the play of differences. He thus privileged the continuously deferring aspect of understanding over its controlling and defining side. Because the absolute meaning of a thing is forever deferred, Derrida viewed the individual thing as essentially ungraspable. We therefore can only act, even with regards to justice, in the darkness of non-knowledge and non-rule. The light that reason provides is useless in the kingdom of the blind.

Foucault found it necessary to dig below the surface of history in order to "de-subjugate" local knowledge. He was not against knowledge or truth *per se*, he was against the way institutions use scientific discourse about truth to augment their power. The "disciplinary power" of these institutions is directed inevitably at the creation of "docile bodies." He therefore suggested that philosophy should not restrict itself to mere reflection on the nature of truth, but should be asking, what is our relationship to truth? And once we discover what this relationship is all about, how should we behave?

Deleuze and Guattari also recognized how societal institutions of all kinds employed systems of truth and morality to impose their will on the disenfranchised. They pursued two related questions: how to contribute to the necessary dismantling of these systems, and how to live otherwise than what these systems demanded. They developed a philosophy of "nomad thought" to refer to their refusal to settle down in one place to one set of consistent ideas. This is a style of thinking which avoids using or being used by controlling discourses, and instead looks to create fields of force wherein old habits of thinking and living break down in favor of new combinations and new connections. This form of thinking attempts to create "smooth spaces" where constantly shifting "molecular" beings, or "bodies without organs," can avoid being identified and manipulated by the system at large.

Space and Time

For each of the antiphilosophers, space and time no longer served as absolute entities, or even as theoretical constructs necessary for the understanding of human experience. Instead, they conceived of these terms in radically different contexts which challenged the authority of the tradition and opened up new ways of thinking about the world.

Kierkegaard restricted his focus on space by turning away from the epistemological questions of external space, and towards the moral concerns to be found in the inner space of the human mind. He believed that philosophers had paid too much attention to "spatialized" time, which focused on external objects and privileged the freezing, visualizing aspect of space. Against this tendency, he chose instead to emphasize the internal, subjective, thinking experience of time's passing. Kierkegaard's numerous narratives were intended to provide examples of how meaning might be wrested from the passing moments of people's lives.

Nietzsche's concern with space and time centered around his experience of eternal recurrence and his formulation of the will to power. While the will to power wants control and dominance by owning the truth of things, it also fights against the impermanence of time's passing. The eternal return on the other hand is the result of changing one's passive acceptance of time's temporality by actively *willing* that any single moment recur again and again, thus willing that all the other events in the chain of time recur as well. By doing this, the human will overcomes itself and creates a realm of new possibilities. By breaking the chains of time the will discovers freedom, and this makes the event one of psychological and philosophical renewal. Furthermore, by describing the eternal return in terms of the circularity of time, Nietzsche used a spatial concept as a metaphor for time's

transcendence by the will. And when he wrote "since Copernicus, man has been running from the center into X,"[9] he used another spatial metaphor to refer to the open-ended, decentered quality of man's nature. For Nietzsche, self-overcoming is possible only when ordinary conceptions of space and time are transcended.

Husserl was especially interested in the phenomena of space and time, which he described as experiential structures of our own situated embodiment. The temporality of human consciousness remains one of his most fundamental ideas, since it illustrates how our relationship to the world is not direct but mediated by consciousness. In identifying three components of time-consciousness at any single instant (primal impressions of the present as now, retentions of the past, and protentions of the future), Husserl was able to show how we, dynamically rather than passively, inhabit a "horizon of the future" in which we project our retention of the past in an anticipation of its continuance into the future. Husserl's conception of space was similarly constituted by human consciousness. We thus experience lived space as an oriented space whose directional axes—left/right, above/below, in front/behind—are gauged from our own lived body as the central "here" from which everything else is out "there" and from which things are relatively "near" or "far."

Because Freud's general focus in his therapy sessions was on the workings of the unconscious as they appear in the production of dreams, he was interested in how the hysterical memory produces distortions of temporal sequence and time-dilation or contraction. Similar hysterical productions of spatial considerations would include space-time asymmetries as well as aphasic disorders evident in the language of the patient. Such analysis indicates an understanding of space and time as relativist notions which exists in contrast with the absolutist framings of classical thinking.

In Wittgenstein's view, the concepts of space and time are, strictly speaking, nonsensical. Following Einstein, he noted that time is what is measured by a clock, and space is what is measured by a ruler. The whole modern conception of the world, he believed, was founded on an illusion, which is that the so-called laws of nature are also explanations of natural phenomena. Time for Wittgenstein doesn't exist and neither does space, in the same sense that the eye is not able to see itself in the visual field: we simply have no reference point from which to verify these conceptions.

Heidegger, like Husserl, viewed space and time as experiential structures. His treatment of time, for example, was based on Husserl's concept of the horizon of the future. In Heidegger's view, though, time has to do with Dasein's anxiety about death. Authentic thinking about death leads to Dasein's wanting to have a conscience, and "anticipatory resoluteness" is his term for how Dasein relates to

death as a meaningful possibility for itself. He contrasted this with the fearful way most people talk about the subject. Anticipatory resoluteness is based on Dasein's temporality and is the authentic mode of care. Heidegger was not concerned with clock-time here, in which time is measured by self-contained nows laid out in the order of past, present and future; instead, he emphasized how Dasein inhabits its temporality in a three-dimensional clearing in which time is experienced as space-time. Space, like time, is inhabited by Dasein. Dasein thus transforms empty objective space into articulated subjective place. Heidegger used the term "dwelling" to describe this relationship, but what he meant by this term was far more than our connection to the Earth. Dwelling for him refers to Dasein's relationship to "the fourfold": to Earth and sky and to gods and men. Heidegger also urged a non-exploitative relationship between Dasein and these four poles.

Benjamin viewed the loss of presence, which he believed occurred with the mechanical reproduction of works of art, in terms of the original work having been embedded in its particular space and time. While it is true that with the reproduction of original works of art images became available to greater numbers of people than ever before, along with this greater availability the "aura" of the original work (which he called "a strange weave of space and time")[10] got lost. Its image might be "ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, [and] free,"[11] but its uniqueness, and its having been embedded in the fabric of tradition, belong only to the original work. With the mechanical reproduction of art, what the public gains in intellectual appreciation it loses in visceral experience.

Horkheimer and Adorno viewed absolutist notions of space and time as representative of the totalizing perspective that was characteristic of Enlightenment thinking. This is a frame of reference that insists that everyone must be, think, and act according to the same standardized measures at all times. It fosters the notion of identity and privileges it over difference. It is thus a kind of thinking that resists the Other, which it insists must be purged from the system in order to preserve its "purity." Even dialectical thinking, which might seem to present a methodology for breaking out of such a system, itself poses a potential danger since it too tends to privilege the One over the Other through the process of negation. Under Fascism, for example, progress became regression through ideology: thus did the Nazi's gladly use the modern technologies of film and radio to control their population while at the same time rejecting the progressive cultural values of this same modernism. Only by confronting such contradictions and by creating non-identity for ourselves through critical thinking can we learn how to resist such totalizing systems.

Bachelard's approach to space and time was based on his realization that the classical understanding of these terms no longer functioned effectively in the

world of modern physics. The open-ended, constantly shifting character of the new science required a new epistemology, which he called "poetics." If the world could no longer successfully be examined logically and objectively, then we would have to learn how to examine it psychologically instead. He thus turned to his new method of the psychoanalysis of objects, with which he refocused his attention on the physical world in terms of earth, air, fire and water as the four elements of the imaginative experience. In his works *The Poetics of Reverie* and *The Poetics of Spac*e he illustrated how to stop time within the poetic moment, and how to transform our relationship to space through his imaginative investigation into poetic dreaming. The intimacy and specificity of the resultant experiences of everyday objects that resulted from these inquiries are clearly beyond the reach of traditional scientific modes of experience.

Merleau-Ponty's approach to space and time was completely informed by his commitment to his conception of the primacy of perception. Once space and time are conceived of through bodily experience, their ontological nature is transformed from abstract entities to inhabited experiences. He thus contrasted his notion of "lived space," which is the first-person account of the space around each of us whereby one's own body is the main point of orientation, with the notion of disembodied, objective space of classical mechanics. "Place" can no longer be reduced to a position in objective space, but is now seen as something ambiguously experienced by the lived body, which is itself oriented in a constantly changing and shifting way. Similarly, "lived time" is experienced as part of the pre-reflective lived experience of the temporal flow of bodily consciousness.

Levinas too saw the need to look beyond the classical notions of time and space. He wasn't interested in clock time or in the study of history. He wasn't interested in geometric space, either. Instead, he restricted his interest concerning time to his own notion of the event of transcendence, which interrupts the flow of time. Transcendence is a human affair, a lived experience which has to do with one's encounter with the Other in the face-to-face relation. It introduces a decisive break in the historical status quo, too, redirecting it towards questions of justice, self-sacrifice and equity. Transcendence invokes the experience of the infinite within the immediate moment, a lapse in time in which one discovers "substitution," or "one for the other." This goes beyond Husserl's notion of the living present, because Levinas insisted that this lapse in time initiates the ethical call for being-for-the-other that transform the self, a call that is beyond being or essence. In his later works, Levinas also viewed space within the framework of his ethical framework. After rigorously differentiating place from geometric space, Levinas conceived of the idea of "here" as a primal event, because it constitutes the basis for the position of the conscience within the subject.

Derrida's conception of différance calls into question the possibility of ever having complete knowledge of time and space. The term "différance" suggests both the deferral of ultimate meaning for such concepts as well as the differing between the terms themselves and the things to which they refer. Derrida's way of thinking also calls attention to how time never stops and thus continuously defers one moment to the next, while space separates and distinguishes between proximate things. In this way he emphasized how the ideas of being and presence, which are central to Western culture, have been authoritative without being stable. He also suggested that this same instability applies to the self-presence of consciousness as well. He concluded that all forms of thinking need to take into consideration the impossibility of certainty.

Foucault's focus on time and space was directed at the various ways modern institutions use disciplinary power to develop and maintain regulations and routines in order to control the populations of prisons, schools, armies, factories, hospitals and the like. These institutions create systems of repression and behavioral change that restrict the space and regulate the time of their populations, in order to create "docile bodies." These kinds of spaces are "heterotopias" because they lend themselves to several layers of meaning. They create a parallel universe which contains undesirable bodies in such a way as to make a real "utopian" space possible. These institutions function at both real and ideal levels because while they accept a diversity of all sorts of "real" people, through their operations they create ideal subjects whose behaviors are so restricted that they become as individuals virtually indistinguishable from each other.

Deleuze and Guattari took seriously Foucault's concerns about the abuse of power, also seeing it as one of the consequences of the institutional regulation of space and time. They recognized that this is what modern institutions do. They also recognized that no one in postmodern society can escape the reach of these institutions. The main problem for them became, how can we protect ourselves from the dysfunctional situation that has been created? They answered that we must become like nomads, and create "smooth spaces" for ourselves, where we can't be tied down and controlled by these forces. We also need to learn how to avoid the "striated spaces" which are under State control. We need to learn how to create "rhizomes," which are forms of thinking which can help us to make connections in unpredictable ways. Such thinking can serve to protect us from the power of "State thought" with its totalizing philosophy and organizing bureaucracies. Against the determinative causality of Aristotelian thinking, they introduced the creative process of actualization, which does not have to follow a ready-made plan. Instead, it allows for the possibility of spontaneous organization within a conception of time constituted by heterogeneity and difference rather than continuity and causality.

The endpoint of such creativity is the philosophical production of new concepts, which can structure our thinking and perception in whatever ways are needed at the time.

Notes

1. See Bosteels, 2008, p. 163.
2. ibid., p. 164.
3. Quoted in Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, pp. 1–2.
4. Bosteels, 2008, pp. 162–163.
5. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* p. 299.
6. ibid., p. 299.
7. Foucault, 2000, p. 243.
8. Foucault, 1970, p. 387.
9. Nietzsche,1968, p. 8, sect. 1.
10. Benjamin, 1999, pp. 518–519.
11. Berger, 1990, pp. 32–34.

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CHAPTER ONE

Two Responses to Nihilism: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

Introduction

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were both 19th century humanist philosophers whose work taken together forms the foundation for the philosophy of existentialism. Because of their belief that philosophy needs to return to the reality of lived experience and away from systematic and absolutist forms of thinking, they are also the first postmodern antiphilosophers.

Kierkegaard is an antiphilosopher despite the fact that what he is against is not philosophy itself, but philosophy without the philosopher. He speaks passionately against the determinism of systematic thinking. He insists that the moment of concrete existence that constitutes the actuality of a person cannot be captured within the domain of conceptual abstraction. He believes that there is something elusive about human existence that can be found only in the immediacy of a person's daily life. His "poetry of inwardness" retains a philosophical rigor all its own. His refusal to resolve the numerous contradictions he uncovers in himself and in his society demonstrates his ethical commitment to honesty over consistency. He feels compelled to rebuild his world out of the smallest details of his uprooted experience. Becoming, not being, is the decisive religious category for him, because of his belief that salvation is based on immediate pre-reflective experience and not on mere conceptual understanding. Kierkegaard's leap of faith is not rational.

What Nietzsche calls "philosophy" is neither mere interpretation, nor analysis, nor a theory of the world. If it were any of these things, it would be nothing but a variant of religion, a world-view "dominated by the nihilist figure of the priest."[1] Nietzsche proposes, against the speculative nihilism of philosophy, the completely affirmative necessity of the creative act—and thus turns philosophy into a form of artistic expression. He recognizes that his role is to announce and produce a creative act without precedent, an act that will in fact destroy philosophy. He shows us the lies hiding behind the "truths" which are the gifts given to society by philosophers.

What makes Kierkegaard and Nietzsche so different from other philosophers is they don't focus on abstract ideas but on lived experience. Their work is distinctly humanist as well, since their reflections begin with human consciousness already situated in the world. Truth was not an abstract problem for them but a matter for personal reflection.

One problem they each had was they didn't know when to stop thinking. Not satisfied with convenient truths, they proceeded further than most other philosophers into infinite reflection, within which they discovered the lies behind the truths that guide people's lives. Regarding this kind of reflection, Kierkegaard frequently referred to his method as "experimental psychology" while Nietzsche referred to himself as "dynamite."

Their styles of writing are unique as well. They realized that the deepest truths can only be communicated indirectly, thus giving their readers the opportunity for their own self-reflection. Their published writings consequently include aphorisms, fictional diaries, fictional characters, fables, parables, essays, poetry, and book reviews—and then there are the letters and journals to contend with as well. They were both committed to criticizing systematic thinking in all its forms, and their complex reasons for the arrangements of their own writings reflect this commitment. This does not mean that their writings are haphazard or piecemeal, however. When they got ahold of a topic that interested them, they would return to it again and again—often contradicting themselves in the process. In fact, resolving these contradictions is a temptation the reader should mostly resist, since both writers were not afraid to maintain such inconsistencies in their work without feeling the need to resolve them.

Living in different eras of the 19th century, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche each recognized that a crisis in modernist thinking had occurred. Kierkegaard saw it as being on the edge of a cliff, Nietzsche described it as the death of God. Both recognized that the problem had to do with the threat of existential nihilism, the belief that life has no objective value, intrinsic meaning, or purpose. Both found the roots of this problem in Hegel's dialectical philosophy, which suggested that

individual human agency was powerless in the face of the forces of history. In their efforts to disentangle themselves from this influence, they each discovered the existential foundations of their own thinking.

Creativity was an essential tool for both, for making sense of the turmoils within them and without. They each felt that the philosophical thinking of their time had become dry and overly analytical. They felt duty bound to restore artistic flair and deeply felt meaning to their philosophical efforts. The following two quotes make this abundantly clear, with each thinker trying to warn his readers of the coming catastrophe:

> It happened that a fire broke out backstage in a theater. The clown came out to inform the public. They thought it was a jest and applauded. He repeated his warning, they shouted even louder. So I think the world will come to an end amid the applause of all the wits.[2]

> Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!"—As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?—Thus they yelled and laughed.
>
> The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.[3]

There are unfortunate ironies here, with Kierkegaard expressing himself as a clown and Nietzsche as a madman. Kierkegaard became the laughingstock of his native Copenhagen after some vicious caricatures of him appeared in a local newspaper—and Nietzsche spent the last decade of his life cocooned in a state of dementia. In each case, the mask and the reality had become intertwined.

Somewhat idealistically, they each hoped their work would contribute to the making of better human beings. Kierkegaard spoke often of the "single individual"

who would assume the moral responsibility of being a true Christian and remove himself or herself from the passive herd of church followers for whom he had little but contempt. Nietzsche dreamed of a time when mankind would be but a bridge between the ape and the overman, the latter being his term for the new form of being who would be unshackled from the chains of the "slave morality" which Nietzsche believed was rooted in Christian values.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were also both involved in undermining the nineteenth century uncritical acceptance of the objective certainty of classical science. Kierkegaard believed that scientists directed their attention too exclusively on the object, not paying enough attention to the inwardness of their own subjectivity. By questioning their radical separation of subject and object, he introduced the dimension of uncertainty into the equation and linked it to the process of individuation whereby over the course of a life an individual learns to confront his or her limitations and then in consequence of the resultant desperation initiate a leap of faith. He presented this experience of uncertainty and desperation in contrast to the modernist theologian (or scientist) who knows the object of his or her faith all along. Nietzsche's contribution in this context can be seen as an extension of Kierkegaard's work. Whereas Kierkegaard urged the radical changing of one's understanding of God, of the need for taking God into one's heart, Nietzsche spoke of the exhilarating and disruptive effects of deicide, of accepting the idea that God is dead and we have killed him. The total loss of orientation that follows, however, lends itself to the opportunity for equating life with will to power, and then to the possibility of creating new values. For both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche self-transformation leads to a radically new understanding of the relation between self and world.

Part I: Kierkegaard

A Lived Philosophy

Kierkegaard is not a didactic thinker, he is an awakening one. He casts us back on ourselves. He provokes us, unsettles us, and leaves us more confused than we were before reading him. (He is not unlike Socrates in this respect.) Following his thinking is not a passive act: we have to work for our "salvation"—in fact it sometimes seems like he's trying to convert us to his vision of Christianity. However, if Kierkegaard's only goal as a writer were to enable and speak to "the single individual" who would rigorously commit himself or herself to the religious life, he could be safely characterized as a religious thinker. The trouble with this perspective is that Kierkegaard's philosophical writings are so penetratingly insightful and successful

on their own terms. The depth of philosophical insight his writings contain may be in spite of all their obsessive and even painful qualities—or it may even be because of them. It is clear though that his philosophical writings don't necessarily lead to the religious conclusion or "leap of faith" that their author so desperately grasped at in the works he wrote under his own name.

Kierkegaard employed numerous pseudonyms to express his various philosophical positions, which he believed needed to be kept separate from his "true" religious beliefs. He invented a "marionette theater" of characters behind which he could explore his splintered selves, while under his own name he limited himself to purely religious devotional writings. The fact that the pseudonymous authors all lacked religious conviction underlies the split in his thinking. Kierkegaard's philosophy was clearly a *lived* philosophy—in the sense that its major concerns and themes came from his own life. His "poetry of inwardness" has so many labyrinths, though, that it sometimes seems impossible for him or us to realize his final ideas about anything.

Kierkegaard was a troubled individual. He broke off his engagement to Regine Olsen several times, agonizing over how marital bliss would destroy his ability to philosophize. His response to critical reviews of his work published in the daily Corsair newspaper was so sarcastic and mean that its publishers felt compelled to respond with vicious caricatures of Kierkegaard's image, leaving him ridiculed and abused by the public for many months thereafter. Nevertheless he soon resumed his predilection for laying bare his soul to this same public. The Corsair affair, his breaking off of his engagement with Regine, his constant personal suffering, his religious conflicts—everything was "grist for his mill." In despair, he sometimes saw his self-reflections as a kind of sickness, with him brooding over the tale of his own miserable self.

In his philosophical writings Kierkegaard looked for pathways out of the ordinary mundanity of the everyday world. Among his numerous mechanisms for transcending the world can be found irony, humor, and silence. Irony and humor are boundary zones between forms of life for him, the first between the aesthetic and ethical, the second between the ethical and religious. The aesthete cannot get past his irony; the ethicist cannot pass beyond his painful humor—and both suffer as a result. As long as their efforts remain rational, they are condemned to their fates. An irrational leap of faith is required by each to reach the next level. Although not a boundary zone, silence relates to transcendence in a similar if more generalized way.

Irony

Irony was an especially important concept for Kierkegaard. Not only did he make it the boundary zone between the aesthetic and ethical ways of life, he also wrote his master's degree thesis on the subject, under the title *The Concept of Irony with*

Constant Reference to Socrates. The concept of irony itself introduces a rhetorical device whereby a surface meaning and an underlying meaning are recognized (at least by some) as not being the same. A double audience is usually required, separating those who grasp this secondary meaning from those who don't. (See Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern Usage.*) As one of the earliest recorded instances of irony, Socratic irony is only slightly different. What makes Socrates so difficult to grasp as a historical figure, said Kierkegaard in his introduction to his thesis, is that the most substantial aspect of his existence was his irony, which as a negative concept makes him virtually invisible. "What Socrates valued so highly," he continued, "namely to stand still and come to himself, i.e. silence, this is what his whole life is in relation to world history."[4] Socrates saw it as his life's mission to engage in dialogue with his most renowned countrymen and confront them with their own ignorance, in the face of their claims for possessing knowledge. His own claim, that he knew nothing, was itself an ironic communication. By recognizing the nature of his own ignorance (namely, by being able to distinguish between what he knew and what he knew he didn't know) he was actually more wise than anyone else of his time.

Kierkegaard was careful to distinguish Plato's ideological approach to philosophy from Socrates's more radical stance. Socrates had no theory to espouse; instead he taught through his dialectical method. He attempted to bring his opponents face-to-face with their ignorance—and to confront them with nothingness. This moment of *aporia* is essential to each of the Socratic dialogues. The Greek word *aporia* is based on two Greek morphemes, "a" meaning "without", and "poros" meaning "passage." It stands for the key moment when Socrates's opponent finally admits that he is in doubt about the state of his own knowledge.

The dialogue *Protagoras,* for example, provides an illustration of Socrates's use of *aporia*. The dialogue features a discussion between Socrates and Protagoras, who at the time was the most famous teacher around, concerning whether virtue can be taught. Protagoras was a Sophist, a teacher who taught the skills of rhetoric, or how to make the weaker argument seem the stronger. (Protagoras would have had a vested interest in proving that virtue could be taught, since he was paid for such services.) Protagoras claimed that what he taught concerning virtue was the nature of politics and the skills in managing personal affairs. Socrates responded by arguing that you couldn't teach virtue if you didn't know what it was in the first place. The discussion then centered on the issue of finding the one thing that all virtuous acts have in common. When Protagoras admitted he couldn't find this, the substantive part of the dialogue seemingly ended with Protagoras admitting that virtue could not be taught.

The dialogue then turned ironic. Socrates said what an absurd pair they were, since they had during the course of the discussion shifted their positions. He

explained that he was now arguing that since everything virtuous is knowledge, then it is teachable, while Protagoras was suggesting that since virtue is not about knowledge but only about how to *appear* virtuous, this implied that it couldn't be taught. Kierkegaard noted, however, that Socrates had ironically introduced a kind of knowledge that cancels itself. Kierkegaard's reasoning was as follows: When we look for virtue, we look for what is good in man. "Thus the good is the pleasurable, the pleasurable depends on enjoyment, enjoyment on knowledge, and knowledge upon an infinite comparing and rejecting."[5] But applying infinite calculations to a state of enjoyment hinders and stifles enjoyment itself. Just as too much reflection impedes action, too much reflection in search of knowledge kills the joy of learning. Since joy is the end result of knowledge, knowledge gained through too much reflection cancels itself through the endless and joyless effort of searching for it. Also ironic is the fact that in seeming to support Protagoras's claim that virtue can be taught, this new definition would actually destroy this position. The Sophists taught their students how to win arguments, not to love knowledge for its own sake. Socrates's true teaching was about ideas that have the capacity to change a person's life. But since you can't learn to live virtuously from theory alone, the teaching has value only when it is applied successfully. "The unexamined life," he famously said, "is not worth living." This means that if there's no joy in leading a virtuous life, then virtue hasn't really been learned.

What Kierkegaard was also suggesting with his attention to the phenomenon of irony and its use by Socrates is that nothing significant can be taught in a direct manner. He believed that the way to knowledge and understanding is through the inner life, through inwardness, and this heightened form of awareness is accessible only through indirect communication—that is, through a form of discourse that forces the listener to think things through for himself or herself. He didn't want to see Socrates's teachings appropriated in the manner of Plato or Hegel, as part of a larger system displaying the nature of perfect ideas or the movement of ideas in history. Instead, he wanted to retain the more radical, irreducible aspects of Socrates's teaching for his own purposes. Socrates's teachings only make sense if we pass beyond their literal meaning. Socrates provided his listeners and still provides his readers with an instant in time, an opening in which the human subject first becomes possible—as an inwardly focused, self-positing, free entity—in a rigorously defined way.

Nihilism and the Aesthete

When Kierkegaard came face-to-face with nihilism as a young man, it shook him to his roots. He chose, however, to "philosophize out of love of Being as the

other possibility."[6] His concept of "the single one" emerged out of his distaste for the masses and for political solutions that conceive of the universality of mankind. In *The Present Age* he bemoaned the "leveling process" of his times, which destroyed the roots that might have led to outstanding individuality and leadership, in favor of a joining of the masses together in common worship.[7] Yet as he found out for himself, the supreme isolation caused by leading the aesthetic way of life could lead to the "melancholy nihilism of irony and boredom, of anxiety and despair."[8] He discovered that a confrontation with nothingness forces the individual to take a stand and make a choice, between a despair that leads actively to suicide or passively to madness, or to a leap of faith out of the aesthetic way of life into the ethical sphere. The ethical way of life for Kierkegaard similarly leads inexorably to suffering, however, and also requires an irrational choice in order to overcome it. Since both the aesthetic and the ethical ways of life lead to despair and suffering, it would seem for Kierkegaard that the human condition is relegated to negativity. He makes this all too clear in the following aphorism from the first volume of *Either/Or*: "Marry or don't marry, you will regret it either way."[9] The aesthete's answer to this dilemma is simply: do nothing. If he resolutely chooses to do nothing, however, he will obviously regret that, too. Instead, he chooses to give himself up to every whim and fancy that attracts him, without really *caring* for any of it. In this way he finds himself following the doomed path of Don Juan.

Kierkegaard's aesthete (whom he called *A*) identifies with the character Don Juan from Mozart's opera of that name. He admires Don Juan, whose exuberant sensuality is pure immediacy, as a force of nature completely untroubled by any moral misgivings. *A,* however, is also completely aware of the fact that Don Juan's kind of sensuality only exists in and as fiction. In fact he seems to limit his own enjoyment of the sensual world to his contemplation of it in literature and music. Knowing that he can never experience his pleasures at the instinctual level, he chooses the creative path of the artist for himself instead. The final destination on this path is his decision to turn his entire life into a work of art. (This no doubt echoes Kierkegaard's view of his own life after breaking off his engagement to Regine.)

Since the aesthete finds pleasure in the moment, he is afraid that if he gives in to the commitment required by the ethical life, he will face boredom. With ever-increasing irony he is able to hide himself intellectually from the despair he feels in devoting himself to mere desires, but he can't take the next step—and suffers because of this. The ethicist similarly recognizes that suffering is an essential part of human existence, but since he too cannot make the irrational leap to the religious life, he revokes his suffering, canceling it through humor.

Anxiety and the Ethicist

In the second part of *Either/Or* Kierkegaard attempted to give voice to the ethical way of life, in which he believed could be found the resolution to the aesthete's suffering. This second stage also had its basis in Kierkegaard's own life, since his engagement to Regine Olsen gave him the occasion to reflect on the nature of the ethical life as it might ideally be found in marriage. He invented the character of Judge William to be the author of these reflections. For Judge William, the aesthetic and the ethical are the only two choices, a point of view distinct from Kierkegaard's own, since he saw a third choice in the religious life. In his essays, Judge William argues that the aesthete is too sensitive to the cultural forces surrounding him, and that his search for pleasure and harmony will only lead to moodiness, suffering and despair. The commitment to an ethical life, on the other hand, will enable one to achieve a state of good character through acts of deliberate choice and effort. Good character, in turn, will lead to self-understanding and self-mastery. The culmination of this perspective is married life, in which the individual is freed from selfish distortion.[10] We begin to notice the limits of the ethical way of life when Judge William reflects on individuals who consider themselves exceptions to the moral law. He conceives consequently of the idea of an individual whose moral actions are guided by obedience to God rather than by adherence to man-made laws. Since he cannot account for this kind of religiosity within his own system of ethics, he is at a loss. Transcendence is not for him. Religion has a definite place in his life, but his is the conformist religion of the masses, not the religion of the "single one" that Kierkegaard often evoked.

The mere possibility of the either/or creates *anxiety*. The aesthete doesn't really feel this, however, because he's caught up in the wretchedness of his denial of caring for anything. Lacking both the passion to acknowledge his feelings and the freedom to experience infinite possibility, he feels, at least on the surface, immune to the sinfulness of his life of excess. The ethicist, on the other hand, insists that since we have real freedom and real passion, then we also have real responsibility for the important decisions we sometimes have to make. This responsibility is the source of his (and no doubt our) anxiety. The choice between the aesthetic and the ethical is the choice between indifference and feeling. It has to do with the degree to which we acknowledge our humanity.[11]

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard further examined the psychological state of anxiety, this time in relation to the problem of original sin. When, in the biblical chapter of *Genesis*, God commanded Adam not to pick the apple from the tree in front of him, this command opened up the abyss of infinite possibility for Adam, and led to his experiencing the feeling of anxiety. Adam's choice, to eat

the apple from the tree of knowledge, was the original sin. This fall into sin was described by Kierkegaard as a qualitative leap, which happens at the very moment when freedom from guilt is abandoned and sin is assumed. In this instant Adam discovered sin and the difference between good and evil. While the leap is qualitative, the experience of sin is quantitative. The experience of sin compounds itself, along with a corresponding growth in guilt and anxiety.

Facing the plunge into the abyss of possible sin, Adam (representing all of mankind) experiences an overwhelming sensation of finitude, described by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* as "dizziness,"[12] and as a "gathering of possibilities of self."[13] This gathering, in turn, leads to a series of transitions, from speculation concerning possibilities, to anxiety about these possibilities, to the actuality of making a decision. In this way, the self is generated as a separate entity, as the momentary acquisition of earnestness to one's self, the connection between self-consciousness and feeling. What makes this earnestness possible, said Kierkegaard, is "inwardness, the fountain that springs up unto eternal life."[14] Finally, this inwardness will prove to be the bedrock for faith, which in Kierkegaard's view is the only path out of the state of anxiety and original sin.

Kierkegaard then asked himself how we can know whether sin is due to selfish desire if we don't know what the self is. We know what selfhood is; it's a general concept. But it's the individual self that experiences sin, not the generality of selfhood. "No science can state what the self is," he insisted.[15] In pursuit of an answer, he returned to the issue regarding the instant of transition from one state to another within the Socratic dialectic, which he had introduced in *The Concept of Irony*. He had explained there that this instant of transition belongs to historical freedom. He now explained this point further, saying that in the Platonic dialectic "the instant is non-being under the category of time."[16] In this way he was able to make his concept of inwardness be the foundation for his examination of the unique individual self.

Let's examine this more closely, since Kierkegaard's development of the relation between time and inwardness is important in relation to his development of the theme of truth as inwardness. Time is an infinite succession of moments. These moments don't technically exist, though, since we can't stop time from moving along. Since it's a process, no moment is a present, and therefore we can't delineate past, present, or future. If we try to spatialize a moment in order to control the flow and bring it to a full stop, we would be visualizing time instead of thinking it. Even if we could do this, though, the visualization of the moment would be infinitely empty of content. Yet it is precisely as something infinitely void that we can discover the present at all. We can find the present only within eternity, which is that which is infinitely void. Kierkegaard explained this in the following way:

"If time and eternity are to touch one another, it must be in time—and with this we have reached the instant … Thus understood, the instant is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity. It is the first reflection of eternity in time, its first effort as it were to bring time to a stop."[17] In the instant before choosing sin, Adam remained free. If he hadn't sinned, he would in that same moment have passed over into eternity. The instant of sin was his entry into temporality—and ultimately towards death, which was God's punishment for sin. Equally, the same instant served as the barrier that separated him from eternity. Adam's choice was for the sensuous life, for the life lived in time, for self-awareness—but also for a life filled with suffering and guilt for what he gave up.

Silence

When time comes to a stop, silence ensues. It is silence which serves as the mechanism in Kierkegaard's works for transcendence beyond the mundane world. Silence throws a person's words back on himself or herself. In Kierkegaard's words, "The present state of the world is diseased. If I were a doctor and were asked for my advice, I should reply: Create silence! Bring men to silence. The word of God cannot be heard in the noisy world of today."[18] Indeed, one of the major challenges in reading Kierkegaard is in realizing that many of his major positions are presented through indirect communication, a form of communication to which silence contributes. This is reflected by his use of pseudonyms. His contemporary readers certainly knew who the real author of these pseudonymous works actually was, but the use of pseudonyms freed up their author to express himself completely, by enabling him to silence his own voice and speak behind the masks of his pseudonyms.

Although silence is not a central concept in Kierkegaard's thought, it does occur conceptually in at least one key instance. In a noteworthy passage from *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard points out that silence has two faces: "Silence is the demon's trap, and the more one is silenced, the more terrible the demon; but silence is also the divinity's mutual understanding with the single individual."[19] Here we find both the tragedy and the triumph of silence. Demonic silence is the highest level of despair, in which the individual yearns desperately "to be himself"—but only in the puffed-up sense of a person cut off from society. Pushing against his own limits, he struggles against the world and rejects its otherness, withdrawing into his shell of introversion, shutting off speech and closing off the circle of selfhood. Such is the world of those who suffer from melancholy and depression.[20] Many artists, of course, are all too familiar with suffering. In his book *De Profundis*, for example, Oscar Wilde described with great insight his own experience of

suffering: "Suffering is one very long moment. We cannot divide it by seasons. We can only record its moods, and chronicle their return. With us time does not progress, it revolves."[21]

And yet—to a certain extent every individual wants to open himself or herself to the excitement of being at the edge of consciousness in order to hear the call of freedom. This feeling does not just belong to melancholic or depressed individuals, either; for Kierkegaard it is also a boundary line between forms of life. A chasm opens up and a leap of faith is required to get across it. "Kierkegaard is saying to every human being: stop your ears to all the voices of this finite world, listen to the silence in all fear and trembling, and the voice will come. And with it, the strength and courage to 'obey' the demands of one's most inward uniquely individual and personal vision of the Good."[22] This closing off of the voices of the mundane world leads Kierkegaard to the other side of silence, divine silence. Reaching this state of mind, however, involves a leap of faith which is also the abandonment of one's attachment to selfhood. We have to allow such a truth to come to us by letting ourselves become open to it. We have to do something opposite to thinking, we have to *feel* our way toward this divine silence.

Fear and Trembling

Still—we should be reminded of the fact that by this "divine silence" Kierkegaard was referring explicitly to the obedience of Abraham to God's will, which is the subject of his book *Fear and Trembling*. In that work (which he attributed to the pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio—signifying that it was written from the aesthetic point of view) Kierkegaard tells of the biblical story of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac to Him. By this act, Abraham is certainly closing off the voices of the finite world by stopping his ears, and searching inside himself for the strength and courage to obey the demands of his personal vision. This vision's voice, however, is telling him to kill his own child! Isn't such a voice the voice of insanity? Doesn't the individual who heeds such a voice have to let go of his reason as well as his selfhood, to do so? Even if we read this biblical passage from *Genesis* as a thought experiment or as mythology, such blind obedience still makes us uncomfortable. This is the way you feel the way, and this is the way you find the way—to divinity. Through madness. Through the leap of faith. In the words of Samuel Beckett: "… where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on."[23] Certainly, Kierkegaard's leap within the silence is anything but rational—but the alternatives for him were unbearable.

Kierkegaard asked three important questions in *Fear and Trembling* about Abraham's response to God's demand. His first question was whether a teleological suspension of the ethical is possible; he responded by saying when it comes to talking about God's ethics, it's the limited domain of ethics that has to be called into question, not God. He then asked whether there is an absolute duty toward God. Kierkegaard's answer was yes, since the moral law itself has its foundation in God. This leads to his final question, whether Abraham was ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purpose before Sarah, before Eleazar, before Isaac. Kierkegaard's response was that the wife, the servant and the son should not be allowed to stand in the way between the religious soul and God. It is beyond their competence to pass judgment upon actions performed out of direct obedience to God. In all three cases Kierkegaard asserted that for the solitary individual, the religious imperative supersedes the moral one.

The Unsayable

However—if we take a step back and remember that Kierkegaard wrote this book under the pseudonymous authorship of Johannes de Silentio, we will recognize that Kierkegaard's seeming certainty regarding this religious imperative is merely a literary (or perhaps equally inauthentic for Kierkegaard, merely a philosophical) stance. His real teaching was that there remains a certain *ineffability* at the heart of an individual's ethical life that needs to be respected—the secrets of the heart being inviolable.[24] We find ourselves at the limit of rational ethical discourse, in the realm of the "unsayable." In his journals Kierkegaard made a remark that is germane here:

> It's quite true what philosophy says, that life must be understood backwards. But one then forgets the other principle, that it must be lived forwards. A principle which, the more one thinks it through, precisely leads to the conclusion that life in time can never be properly understood, just because no moment can acquire the complete stillness needed to orient itself backwards.[25]

With his insistence that there are limits to what can be understood, Kierkegaard made a significant break from a basic tenet of modernism, that the domain of reason has no limits. His use of various devices to facilitate the crossing of boundaries and to enable the transcendence of language, however, illustrates how he believed that with persistent creative thinking it is still possible to work—unreasonably yet effectively—around these limits.

Kierkegaard's Silentio characterized the three levels of selfhood as the personal self, the civic self, and the religious self, and also referred to them as the

aesthetic slave, the knight of infinite resignation, and the knight of faith. He believed that Abraham was one of the knights of faith—because with his decision to transcend the civic world of law in favor of his faith in the divine word of God, he was a man of action.[26]

Concluding Remarks

Kierkegaard wanted us to notice the congruence between the several different boundary situations he talked about: the aesthete A's pause between the aesthetic and ethical ways of life; the ethicist Judge William's pause between the ethical and religious stages; Adam's choice between sinful temporal knowledge and joyous eternal ignorance; Abraham's pause at God's command to sacrifice his son, placing him between a religious imperative and a moral one; Socrates's introduction of *aporia* in his listeners. All of these moments are equally significant, as is the moment when we recognize our own complicit participation in them. In a way, each of these instances is the same thing, the identical moment of the dawning of self-awareness. What is key here is not really the decision given, but the opening of the conscious mind into self-consciousness that takes place. Here we find the beginning of existential philosophy—in the moment outside of time when we need to take a stand and then do so.

Part II: Nietzsche

Philosophizing with a Hammer

When Nietzsche added to his book *The Twilight of the Idols* the subtitle *or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, he was referring to the fact that his works *are* often violent, destructive, and loud—like a hammer. With his metaphorical hammer in hand he went about destroying the foundations for pretty much everything we hold dear in our lives: love, marriage, identity, nationality, truth, faith, and God. And if he didn't exactly destroy all these foundations by himself, he went a long way toward convincing us that they had already eroded on their own.

But also like a hammer, his works serve a purpose. The pragmatic aspect of Nietzsche's work is that he was attempting to pave the way for a new way to live—more honestly, without self-deception, without deceit, and without self-destroying tendencies. In order to help us to reach this destination he felt it was important to clear the way for it, and this marks the origin for his project of tearing down the foundations of modern society.

Reading Nietzsche is not for the faint-hearted. He does not give comfort. He urged the pushing of limits—in himself, and in his readers. He was constantly looking for ways to further self-overcoming. When he wrote things like "What we do in our dreams we also do when we are awake: we invent and make up the person we are dealing with—and immediately forget that we have done it,"[27] or "He who fights against monsters should see to it that he does not become a monster in the process. And when you stare persistently into an abyss, the abyss also stares into you,"[28] he was not providing comfort, he was challenging his readers to push against their limits.

The Threat of Nihilism

Nietzsche believed that if the self-destructive tendencies of our society were not stopped, we would find ourselves living in nihilism. "Nihilism," he said, "stands at the door."[29] In fact he felt it was inevitable. Nihilism means "that the highest values have devalued themselves,"[30] and that we will come to realize that the categories we have used to measure the value of our world are mere fictions. It means that the world itself is both valueless and meaningless. In response, we will just have to learn how to conceive of its value and meaning in a new way. This was Nietzsche's challenge to himself. If he couldn't conceive of a new set of values that could serve to provide fresh value and added meaning to the world, then, he believed, we would all find ourselves fallen into nihilism.

The implications of nihilism were made clear to Nietzsche from his close reading of the novel *The Demons* by the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. Depicted as the embodiment of nihilism, Dostoevsky's character Stavrogin confesses to having seduced a 14 year old girl and then driving her to suicide; he later pays a fugitive criminal to kill his mentally and physically disabled wife as well as his brother-in-law. Although Stavrogin refuses initially to repent for either of these actions, he does eventually kill himself from guilty feelings he can no longer avoid. Before doing so, he volunteers to sacrifice his life for a political cause he doesn't believe in, but this falls through. Stavrogin's actions represent an active form of nihilism. Dostoevsky believed that certain ideas can act as demonic possessors of men and lead them into nihilist beliefs, especially ideas that appear as "isms," including materialism, anarchism, and the like. Dostoevsky also believed that religious faith could provide a way out of nihilism, a point of view directly opposite to that of Nietzsche.

Another, later version of nihilism was presented by the French-Algerian philosopher Albert Camus. In his *Myth of Sisyphus* he told the story of the ancient Greek Sisyphus, who had stolen fire from Prometheus. In punishment, the gods

condemned him to rolling a huge boulder up an enormous mountain only to watch it fall back to the bottom and then have to roll it up again, over and over for all eternity. Camus called Sisyphus's situation "the absurd condition," referring to the monotonous repetitiveness of meaningless existence. While Camus's vision of the absurd represents a passive form of nihilism, he still conceived of a way out for Sisyphus. He imagined him walking down the mountain, momentarily separated from his boulder, and realized that it would be during these few moments that he would discover his own freedom and overturn his fate, by scorning this same fate. This radical act of will, one that has the power to overcome nihilism, echoes Nietzsche's own yea-saying that is a key element in his discovery of the eternal return.[31]

The threat of nihilism loomed over much of Nietzsche's philosophy. He called it "a destiny that announces itself everywhere" and saw himself as "the first perfect nihilist of Europe."[32] He insisted that "we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value our values really had."[33] The trouble with nihilism, he felt, is that it could become "pathological," awakening "the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false."[34] In this way, said Nietzsche, "the wasteland grows."[35] In Nietzsche's eyes, nihilism emerged as a threat, an opportunity, and then—a necessity.

Nietzsche found the roots of nihilism in the history of western philosophy. When philosophers finally succeeded in reducing the world into a work of fiction, he said, they opened the door to the possibility for the nihilist rule of nothingness. In a section of his book *Twilight of the Idols*, entitled "How the 'True' World Finally Became Fiction," Nietzsche outlined a six stage process in which he described how previous philosophers had gradually fictionalized their relationship to the real and apparent worlds they had created for themselves, by casting the reality of the product of the senses (namely, objects) into doubt, and thereby ultimately removing the concept of the real world from their epistemology. Passing from the chaotic world of the ancient Greeks to the unobtainable world of the Christian belief system, from the world as noumena for Kant to the positivist world of Comte, and to the world as will in Schopenhauer, in stage six Nietzsche came to the realization that nothing was left.[36]

When Nietzsche raised the question: "What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps?" he immediately answered, "But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.*"[37] He then added, with capital letters: INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA (in English, Zarathustra Comes Forth), and with this statement he recognized the importance of his own contribution to philosophy—namely, the realization that the philosophical distinction between the reality we all live in and some other "perfect" reality that is superimposed over it, is no longer an

issue. When we learn to live creatively, "beyond good and evil," there is *this* world and nothing else.

Creating the Self

The need to escape from nihilism provides the opportunity—the necessity, even—for creative thinking. New values are essential to define a new way of life. For Nietzsche, nihilism and creativity are opposites. They correspond to different *affective structures*.[38] In his self-reflective last published work *Ecce Homo* he described the coming forth of a new truth as a gradual movement from an affective state of quietude and coolness to one of "tremendous tension."[39] Furthermore, he asserted, the creative act is not committed by an individual subject or operating agent, but can only be traced back to a system of drives and affects.[40] Each affect carries its own vision of the world, its own perspective and interpretation.[41]

The self, for Nietzsche, is merely the one interpretation that manifests itself as the necessary order at a given time among all our affects. Our drives in turn originate from the most fundamental of drives, the will to power. They "oppose or subject each other (join synthetically or alternate in dominating)" and are in constant tension with one another.[42] The creative person is the one who is able to order and control his or her affects without losing this original tension. Too much "oscillation" and too little "direction" results in the interruption of creative activity. Too much direction and too little oscillation leads to dogmatism.[43] This system of drives and affects is a dynamic system in which equilibrium does not mean stasis but stability, allowing for gradual change over time in order to preserve the subject's own stability. Creativity plays an essential role in the preservation of this stability.

Nietzsche was introducing his theory of personality here. Becoming a person is a creative act, an act of the will involving the ability to keep the balance between opposing possibilities. Each potential self is based on a specific affect, namely whatever mood or feeling is being experienced at a given moment. Over time, some potentialities may take hold over the others, and there is a constant danger of allowing oneself to decline into stagnation, losing one's dynamic aspect. A person must remain vigilant, open to the possibility of being different, in order to escape this. Having a consistent personality requires time and memory; becoming a free personality requires courage; maintaining a fresh and renewable personality that is free yet consistent requires a creative will.

When the creative process leads to the birth of a new interpretation, a new system of affects takes over. This shift only takes place however because of the period of unrest that preceded it, which was itself responsible for the destruction of

the old pattern. This process Nietzsche calls "the masterly courage to dwell in creative becoming."[44] An aspect of the will to power, it is driven by two basic forces: the first is an *ascending*, constructive force which moves from multiplicity to simplicity, which wants to tie up and tame; the second is a *descending* force, one which is destructive in nature and moves towards multiplicity and thoroughness, back to nature and to the original chaos. Aberrations of the creative process occur either through the removal of the aim from willing, which leads to too much emphasis on the chaotic, or through the hardening of a given affective structure to the point of making it impossible to change it, which leads to dogmatism. In both cases the will to create is made inoperative, and both pathways lead to nihilism. So, the overcoming of nihilism involves a balancing act that operates between ascending and descending forces, committed by the will while dwelling in the creative process.

Creativity places essential limits on the will to power. If the individual agent has no limits—which is the will to power in its most fundamental form—then every day becomes an existential problem. It starts with an empty space of possibility, not yet a place. There is no ceiling, no walls and no floor. It is creativity which erects the house, and the tools it works with are found in the various languages of art, all of which operate in accordance with the opposing forces of Dionysus and Apollo (see below). In the case of philosophy, however, creativity works exclusively with words, specifically in the form of concepts. In Heidegger's words, "Language is the house of Being. In its home, man dwells."[45]

Will to Power and Eternal Return

A legitimate question arises here: what new concepts did Nietzsche himself come up with? In his view at least, the most important of these would be the will to power and the eternal return. He introduced his idea of the will to power in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, most notably in his sections on "self-overcoming" and on "redemption." The implication from these contexts is that the will to power, understood psychologically, is devoted to maintaining the necessary balance between the opposing forces that co-exist within any individual psyche. This balance is required in order for the individual to remain at his or her peak performance level. Nietzsche considered the will to power to be the most fundamental of life forces, and insisted that it is even stronger than the will to live, since a person or animal will risk its life in order to gain more power. On the other hand, it was his idea of the eternal return (also called the eternal recurrence of the same) from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that he called his "most fundamental idea."[46] He then asserted that to comprehend the thought required the embrace of *amor fati,* or love of fate: "My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that one wants to have

nothing different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity."[47] To desire to live one's life over, again and again, every moment both good and bad in the exact same way each time—not only that, but to desire that it be that way for all eternity, not only for oneself but for everyone else as well—this is what the thought of the eternal return demands.

He regarded his revelatory experience of the eternal return, which took place in 1881, during one of his walks around the lake in the town of Sils Maria in the Swiss Alps, as the most remarkable experience of his entire life. As his biographer Safranski puts it, "It was immediately apparent that his life was now divided into two halves: before and after the inspiration. He wrote in his notebooks: '6,000 feet above the ocean and far higher still above all things human.'"[48] This is how Maurice Blanchot explains Nietzsche's experience of the eternal return:

> The Sils Maria revelation is not that of Nietzsche, not that of a unique individuality arriving at a unique truth, at a unique site, at an instant of singularity and decision; it is affirmation itself, an affirmation that does no more than affirm, that affirms affirmation, and in the latter, maintains together repetition and difference, forgetting and waiting, eternity and the future. The revelation at Sils Maria not only frees Nietzsche from his limited singularity by repeating him indefinitely, it not only frees the revelation from itself since it reveals nothing that does not reveal itself without end, but the revelation at the same time commits Nietzsche to that singularity without which what would come would not already be a return, just as it condemns the revelation's insignificance to the ridiculous exaltation of its decisive importance.[49]

In Blanchot's view, Nietzsche's revelation is both *his* singular experience, private and even "ridiculous," and at the same time an experience that frees him from that singularity. The revelation of the eternal return is also for Blanchot a reflection on time. In his view, the eternal return is "an infinite game with two openings (given as one yet never unified): future always already past, past always still to come, from which the third instance, the instance of presence, excluding itself, would exclude any possibility of identity."[50] Nietzsche's experience of the eternal return is a glimpse into time as a totality. It throws time out of joint, and is thus a rift in the sense of things.

Writing on the same subject, Gilles Deleuze identified Nietzsche's experience of the eternal return as the paradox that accounts for the interplay between difference and repetition. In fact, Deleuze believed that traditional philosophy failed to take into consideration the nature of this interplay. While difference implies divergence and decentering, repetition is associated with displacement and disguising. Since the eternal return is the full expression of "the being of becoming," it means that everything is, and always has been, in a state of becoming. This is so because

if there were a final state of being toward which all things were moving, we would already have reached it—and if there were an initial state of being from which all things moved, we would never have left it. Therefore the only constant in the universe, is change. In a universe of constant becoming, the notion of being is replaced by the notion of returning.[51] Throughout his writings, Deleuze chose to emphasize the destablizing force of difference over the controlling force of repetition.

When traditional philosophers emphasize identity and time instead of difference and repetition, they make moral assumptions about the nature of truth which ultimately serve the interests of practical, political, and moral forces. Deleuze argues against the authority of this orientation with his assertion that thought is an encounter: "Something in the world forces us to think."[52] This encounter confronts us with the impotence of thought itself[53] and evokes the need for thought to create, "to engender thinking in thought"[54] as a way of coping with this impotence.

Then there is the perspective that Heidegger emphasizes in his book *What is Called Thinking?*[55] In his view, there is an inherent contradiction between will to power and eternal return. They move in different directions, and want different things. The will to power moves forward and wants control over everything. The embrace of the eternal return, in contrast, moves backward, and doesn't want to control anything—it wants things to remain the same, over and over again. The will to power as it moves forward wants to own things. The one thing it can't own, though, is its own past, its own "it was"—it can't change the necessity of time's "it was." On the other hand, the embrace of the eternal return is a will to destruction: it wants to destroy or at least to deny time's past; it wants to destroy the linearity of time. When we confront the will to power with the embrace of the eternal return we confront a will to control with a will to destroy. There is also the confrontation between the linear view of time of the will to power, and the circular view of time of the embrace of the eternal return. Can these seeming contradictions be resolved?

In effect the subject has to will non-willing. This is a *creative act* of the will. The will has to say "yes" to the "it was" of time. It has to say "yes, this is how I will it—again and again throughout the eternal return of the same event. Here, the will to power acts as a "synthesis of forces."[56] Since the eternal return implies that time is circular and not linear, when the subject gets back to the same place, it discovers that its consciousness has changed each time. And once the will learns to will backward—*this* is the highest expression of the will to power.[57] "That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being—high point of meditation."[58]

The will also wants something further. As Nietzsche puts it: "The will to destruction (is) the will of a still deeper instinct, the instinct of self-destruction,

the will for nothingness."[59] When nihilism, the will for nothingness, is confronted with the eternal return, it is itself negated. When the subject actively affirms its own reactive forces, they become neutralized and disappear. With its discovery of the eternal return, the human subject redeems itself from its past and frees up its future. By an act of will, it breaks the chain of causality that determines the everyday world of becoming, and through its artistry creates a meaningful world for itself to live in.

However, the will to power is not always confronted with the eternal return. Without this restraint, the destructive aspects of the will to power come to the fore. Nietzsche's uninhibited cultivation of heroic individualism may have been a byproduct of the spirit of his times, but it still has led many readers to question whether this aspect of his work might favor the fascist ethos, especially when it is taken out of context. For example, his formulation to "live dangerously" was appropriated by Mussolini as a fascist slogan—and Nietzsche's assertion that "what does not destroy me makes me stronger" can have a similar ring to it. His ideas in this vein have encouraged numerous dictators to imagine all too easily that their own violent actions are "beyond good and evil" and therefore free of any moral constraints. Despite Nietzsche's numerous scathing remarks against fascism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, and the like, these right-wing aspects of his work were and will continue to be mis-appropriated from it; and even if this is largely due to his sister's mishandling of his affairs (including the editing of his notes) following his mental breakdown, they remain part of his legacy.[60]

The Wanderer and the Hermit

Nietzsche's dialogue in his prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* between the Wanderer and the Hermit is relevant here. The Wanderer (Zarathustra himself) has descended from the mountains (after living 10 years in a cave) and has lost his mask, in the sense that he is no longer who he once was but does not yet know who he has become. The first person he encounters upon descending from his mountain retreat is the Hermit (a saint, a lover of God). The Hermit discovers that Zarathustra is now an awakened one. Zarathustra in turn realizes that the Hermit does not not yet know that there is no absolute truth and that God is dead. Even so, the Hermit advises Zarathustra to go back to living in his cave, because mankind is not ready to receive whatever he has to offer.

This is the basic existential condition of the interpreter of significant truths: he sheds his skin, only to find yet another layer of skin: "The snake that cannot shed its skin perishes. So do the spirits who are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be spirit."[61] But his discovery of layer upon layer of skin

(and also of meaning and understanding) is still indicative of a positive resolution of the creative act. Otherwise, if the shedding of skin were unsuccessful, what would be uncovered would not be more skin, but nothingness, the *nihil* of nihilism.

The skin metaphor connotes the possibility of self-criticism and the ability to receive criticism constructively (i.e. to be thick-skinned rather than thin-skinned). It is a sign of health, since without this ability the interpreter falls back on his dogmatic stance, and finds himself with a mask he cannot take off. When no interpretative opposition is present, no liberating criticism is possible. Dogmatism is the result. All forms of dogmatism, including for Nietzsche the Judaeo-Christian, the Platonic, the Kantian, and the scientific, are forms of nihilism.[62]

Nietzsche directed much of his ire against the dogmatism of Christian morality. He believed that within its interpretation of the world and its history could be found one of the main roots of nihilism. The Christian moral hypothesis had in his view previously granted man an absolute value around which the experience of truthfulness, as well as the experiences of suffering and evil, could be defined and recognized. It thus served for a time as the antidote to practical and theoretical nihilism.[63] Once Christian morality tried to escape to some "beyond," however, its moral interpretation lost its sanctioning, since the resulting skepticism could only lead to a moral relativism that would undermine its claim to universality.[64] Man's faith in morality was undermined as well. "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves.*"[65] Nietzsche thus understood the devaluing of Christian morality to be part of the aftermath of what he would later call the death of God.

Nietzsche identified a psychological nihilism as well, describing it as the feeling of valuelessness. This, he said, was reached "with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of 'aim,' the concept of 'unity,' or the concept of truth.'"[66] When we pull these categories out of the equation, "the world looks *valueless*."[67] Nietzsche then asked, what is the source for our faith in these categories? Why should we expect the universe to have purpose, clarity, or even meaning? Once we give up on this faith, we discover that just because we can no longer apply these categories to the universe, there is no reason to devalue the universe as well. We conclude that our faith in the category of reason is itself the cause of nihilism. We have expected the universe to be *reasonable*. We recognize ultimately that these categories are our own inventions, and consequently that they refer to a purely fictitious world. From a psychological perspective, we discover that these values were created according to a principle of utility that was "designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination—and they have been falsely *projected* into the essence of things."[68] Whatever value can be found in the world, it's we who have put it there.

Truth and Metaphor and the Ancient Greeks

Nietzsche had some very insightful things to say about the problematics of truth. In his early essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" he writes:

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.[69]

The thing about coins is, even when they retain their embossing, their worth is conventional, not absolute. When we say, for example, that something is not worth the paper it's printed on, we mean it has no value because the social relations that guaranteed it are no longer valid. Coins work the same way. Money has value only because of the social contract that is tacitly recognized by those who accept it as legal tender. Money operates as a metaphor for a certain kind of social relationship. Similarly, the languages of art and science operate as coinage within their own social contexts. What is the grounding behind these social conventions? What is the truth behind the lie? Nietzsche cannot provide an answer: "It is the inaccessible center of the labyrinth—neither mind, nor matter, nor distant spirit, nor word. It is wholly silent."[70]

Although Nietzsche distrusted truth in its modern form because of its susceptibility to dogma, he did approve of an early form of truth that was developed in accordance with its ancient Greek origins. The early Greek philosophers before Plato had visions of truth which retained their "sensuous force" as metaphors. The creative origins of these metaphors, in the sensuous world, had not yet been lost. Nietzsche believed that these early thinkers remained connected to the *real* world, to the world of sense experience, because they used such terms as water, fire, and air metaphorically to describe their understanding of *archai*, the origin or fundamental reality behind all things. (For example, Thales said that all things are water.) It was not until Plato developed his conception of Ideas as being more perfect and more real than the things they represented, that the whole construction of truth formation got turned upside down. For Nietzsche, it was the sensuous world, the world of non-being for Plato, that was the source for the creative expression of the early Greek thinkers he so admired. The Platonist world of perfect Ideas sucked the creative juices right out of the whole enterprise.

Nietzsche contrasted his appreciation of the works of what he called the "pre-Platonic" philosophers with Plato's own philosophy and what followed it. He saw Plato as the first "mixed" character in philosophy because his theory of Ideas could be seen to incorporate Socratic, Pythagorean, and Heraclitean elements. In contrast, he viewed the pre-Platonists as "archetypal" philosophers. Within this group he located Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides, Democritus, Protagoras, and Socrates. He noticed in each of them a unity of thought and character. He noted they were unique unto themselves, with no community or social class of other philosophers to contend with. Finally, they seemed to live only for knowledge and were thus "first-born sons of philosophy." Nietzsche believed that these early Greek philosophers were genuine discoverers who lived at a point in history where the needs of the time met their specific talents perfectly. He believed that it was harder for them to do philosophy than for all the philosophers who followed them, because "they had to find the path from myth to laws of nature, from image to concept, from religion to science."[71]

Before Nietzsche, both philosophy and science had repressed their use and appreciation of metaphor—hiding the fact that concepts themselves are metaphors.[72] Although Plato had famously banished poets from his ideal state, Nietzsche inaugurated a form of philosophy that, by deliberately embracing the creation of metaphors, risked being confused with poetry. In Nietzsche's eyes the opposition between philosophy and poetry is a metaphysical conceit based on the fictitious separation of the real and the imaginary.[73] When philosophers create metaphors, thought Nietzsche, they are letting language find its most natural expression. When they create non-stereotypical metaphors, ones that are not worn out and have not lost their sensuous force, this enables them to unmask the metaphors that lie behind every concept. The imagination, for Nietzsche, plays as great a role in philosophy as it does in art. Philosophy, he wrote, is a "continuation of the *mythical drive.*"[74]

In another of his early works, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks,* Nietzsche set out to trace his way back to the originary Greek philosophy, the source for all that followed it, "rescuing it from the forgotten state into which the triumph of the forces of nihilism forced it."[75] Nihilism, it seems, is not just a modern phenomenon. It persists throughout human history as a perennial threat to mankind. When, for example, leaders in the name of truth or a higher power sacrifice people's lives, nihilism threatens. In this early work Nietzsche identified two different "styles" of philosophers, the ones who write metaphorically, and the ones who write abstractly. In his view, abstraction is the source of nihilism because it encourages its users to lose sight of its sensuous origins, leading them to think of ideas as things in themselves, sometimes even assigning them the highest of

values. God for Nietzsche had historically become such an abstraction, an idea which had lost its force as currency and its currency as a force.

A system of philosophy, Nietzsche argued, must be evaluated not according to its truth, but according to its force and beauty. A metaphorical style, he explained, is indicative of an affirmation of plenitude, while a demonstrative style indicates a poverty of life. With these two styles he contrasted Heraclitus and Aristotle, Dionysus and Socrates, and Aeschylus and Euripides. In each of these cases, an initial affirmation of life in its unconscious, multiple diversity was replaced by a subsequent focus on the reflective, self-knowing individual. Nietzsche introduced the metaphor of the *abyss*[76] to signify the "pathos of distance" which he observed between these two styles of life. The abyss separates, but also engulfs, thus letting it also be a metaphor for forgetting—in this case the abyss represents the history of philosophy forgetting the creative import of the early Greek philosophers.

Aristotle was the culprit here. He had accused Heraclitus of a "crime against reason"—namely, violating the principle of non-contradiction, with his statement that "everything has its opposite along with it."[77] For Aristotle, all of these early thinkers (not just Heraclitus) wrote in a metaphorical style that displayed a lack of maturity, a state of incompleteness. He insisted that it was only with his own philosophy (including his "solution" of the one-many problem, that a single thing could at the same time contain the fact of its numerous properties by way of its "essence") that the *potential* of these thinkers was finally realized. Nietzsche of course disagreed with this assessment, believing that Aristotle's criticism had robbed them of their originality and personality. His own attempt to work his way back to recognizing the creativity of these early thinkers is thus an attempt to restore the centrality and power of metaphor to philosophy, as well as an attempt to rescue philosophy from the threat of nihilism.

Dionysus and Apollo in Ancient Greek Drama

In another early work, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche located a similar crucial turn, this time in Greek tragic drama. In tracing the shift in literary style from Aeschylus to Euripides he distinguished between a view that embraced life in all its contradictions and a view that was based on a search for certainty. He described this change as a decline in power, a shift from an approval of existence to an engineering of logical representation.[78] He also described it as a transition from song to language.[79] It was in this work that Nietzsche attempted to trace the origins of western music back to the rhythmic chanting of the satyr chorus in the works of the early ancient Greek tragedians before Aeschylus. The chorus dictated the course of action for the play, and the actor on stage responded to its dictates.

When Aeschylus added a second actor, he introduced the elements of intrigue and conflict into the spoken dialogue. This had the effect of reducing the importance (and size) of the chorus, which ultimately disappeared altogether in the works of Euripides.

Nietzsche found that while Aeschylus's approach to life was affirmative in facing the shadows of oblivion and death through sheer force of will, Euripides refused such a harsh view of life in favor of a more sophisticated analytical and conceptual approach. Euripides turned his back on the heroic view of life of his predecessor and instead developed characters with profound inner lives, tortured souls who vacillated between intellectual and emotional perspectives. Recognizing the contrast between these two approaches to drama eventually led Nietzsche to his distinction between the Dionysian and Apollonian perspectives on life, between feeling and excess on the one hand, and reason and restraint on the other. Although both perspectives are necessary aspects of creativity, Nietzsche clearly favored the Dionysian over the Apollonian. In doing so he was also favoring the artistic over the logical. For Nietzsche, human beings are fundamentally artists in their relation to the world around them. They *create* meaning and structure rather than merely finding it in nature: "For it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified."[80]

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche understood beauty as belonging to the sphere of Apollo and with the creation of beautiful forms. These beautiful forms, he discovered, do not imitate reality, they transform it; for their purpose is to disguise rather than to reveal. In the Apollonian vision of beauty, the idealized figure transforms the true one. Beauty triumphs over suffering, but only when pain is removed from nature. The truths of disintegration (disease, decay, and death) are blotted out in favor of the imagination's creation of something that is unblemished, happy, and eternal. Thus, said Nietzsche, does the "wisdom of illusion" triumph over the "wisdom of suffering."[81]

Anxiety Before the Beautiful

Nietzsche made it clear that the beautiful cannot simply be identified with pleasure, or with the Good, or Truth, or Being. Such an aesthetics is sterile, since it doesn't allow the beautiful to have any relationship to the darker elements of life, like pain, death, and the ugly. Nietzsche himself favorably emphasized a "raging disorder" between truth and Dionysian art, a dissonance that arouses anxiety in the viewer. Anyone who has viewed Goya's terrifying painting at the Prado Museum *Saturn Devouring His Son* will recognize what he was talking about here. According to Roman mythology (inspired by the original Greek myth), it had been

foretold that one of the sons of Saturn (Kronos in the original Greek version) would overthrow him, just as he had overthrown his father. To prevent this, Saturn *ate* each of his children moments after each was born. Perhaps Goya depicted this scene to show the conflict between old age and youth, or to display time as the devourer of all things. Whatever the reason, we find ourselves when viewing this painting if only for a moment within primordial being itself, where "the struggle, the pain, the destruction of the phenomena, now appear necessary to us."[82] The spirit of Dionysian art is found in the dark, in the ecstasy of the endless moment, outside the domain of time.

Nietzsche found that the feeling of anxiety is caused by the breakdown of personal identity. As part of the Dionysian experience of cognitive intoxication, though, the moment of anxiety is accompanied, strangely enough, first by joy and then by disgust. Understood as the experience of the collapse of the cognitive borders of subjectivity, anxiety goes beyond the moment of violent self-destruction and initial terror. The overcoming of anxiety becomes possible when one recognizes that it is merely a necessary stage in a process. Nietzsche compares the experience of anxiety both to that of intoxication, and to that of an initiate who has just completed a ritual. In the latter case, an initial moment of ecstasy caused by the realization of the unity of all things is followed by a return to the experience of mundane reality, leading to a feeling of *disgust* at the very thought of existence.

For Nietzsche, it was disgust, not anxiety, that was the real threat to the stability of the psyche. Disgust, in completing the destructive stage of the development of subjectivity, ushers in the most dangerous phase of existence: the threat of nihilism. In order to avoid this risk and falling into either pessimism or dogmatism, the need to proceed to another level of experience is required. The only way out is through creative redemption, and this is possible only if the right conditions are met. The subject needs to develop a world view which affirms the difference between a personal past (experienced as fate) and an ecstatically experienced perception of the universality of otherness.

In this Dionysian model, the subject is simultaneously both finite and infinite, a unique, infinitely complex being, yet still connected to the world. The two-naturedness of the god Dionysus, as both self and other, or as both finite and infinite subjectivity, is in play here. The problem for consciousness, that it is continually exceeded by chaos, is only resolved by creative action in the moment of redemption. This two-fold process, involving both creation and destruction, Nietzsche called *duplicity* (in the sense of there being a non-canceling duality between the two forces). Duplicity means that the original, dark, contradictory nature that exists between the forces of Dionysus and Apollo is preserved through

the duplicating process of creative transformation. In the same way, the two worlds of gods and men are ruled by the dark, contradictory fate which underlies the will.[83]

On Truth, Lies, and Values

The will to power is the will to truth. It wears the mask of Apollo. It wants to rein in the excessive demands of becoming, which are the desires behind the mask of Dionysus. These desires take the form of the eternal return, circling through the moments of joy and misery over and over again throughout all eternity.

Both forms of existence are lies, however. The beautiful Apollonian form is a lie because it is untrue to the character of existence, because it eternalizes the phenomenon, and because it pretends that its smooth and unblemished surfaces might belong to a real entity. The Dionysian form is a lie because it affects an illusory identity that does not only *not* belong to the entity, it doesn't even exist in the first place.[84]

If both are lies, what then? Lies may be necessary to preserve a better life. If God is dead, if there no longer exists a pre-ordained order of things, then no single truth is universally recognized, and morality no longer has the foundation it needs to guide us. The temptation then is to slide into fearfulness—nothing has value, life is not worth living, suicide seems to be the only honorable option left—and into nihilism. Or into fearlessness—there are no absolute values, I can get away with practically anything as long as I'm not weighted down by convention, all I care about is what's good *for me,* yet another form of nihilism.

Nietzsche challenges us to look long into the abyss. Do we follow the path of the overman and create a system of values to make us stronger, or do we follow the spiritual path (for him this usually meant Judaism or Christianity, and occasionally Buddhism) and subvert our own needs to the needs of others? The choice is a false dilemma, though, since there are many other possibilities for living, beyond the master morality/slave morality dichotomy, even if Nietzsche never investigated them.

Worlds, Maps, and First Principles

In his *Tractatus* Wittgenstein defined his notion of the world ("all that is the case")[85] within the empirical framework of logical coherence. Although Wittgenstein insisted that the proper way of doing philosophy was to stay within the strict domain of a perfectible language governed by the unambiguous grammatical rules concerning sense and meaning that he defined in that work, he also believed that

any investigation into more important issues (like in ethics and aesthetics) belonged elsewhere—under the category of what he called "nonsense." At this point in his development as a philosopher, Wittgenstein's solipsism was very close to Nietzsche's nihilism—a dead-end wasteland from which nothing worthwhile might grow.

Whatever inner map we have to this world, it will be written in the language of the cultural and historical situation within which we find ourselves. Whenever we try to explain our experience we find ourselves limited by the tools we use since they too are byproducts of our history. This limitation, identified by Heidegger as the "hermeneutic circle," needs to be transcended if we are ever to see the world clearly. This transcendence will involve correlating active and passive modes of thinking, and will lead to the constant inventing of new terminology.

Hermeneutics, for example, originally referred to the Protestant belief in the need to interpret the Bible by focusing solely on the words of the biblical text alone, in contrast to the Catholic tradition of reading the text through the established authority of the writings of its own biblical scholars. The term "hermeneutical circle" over time has come to refer to the challenge of getting at direct human experience by working through and past the fog of language that gets in the way. In Nietzsche's terms, we need to get past the lies. The first step is to recognize the truths we live by as the illusions they really are.

To consider the world from grounded first principles, to think about how well it would work if everything were different, is to be ready to throw away everything you know. With his "genealogy of morals" (which he also used as the title of one of his books), Nietzsche worked his way back to the first principles that he believed were the foundation for Christian morality, and found these principles in what he called "slave morality." He then asked, what would the ethical universe look like if a master morality were put in its place? Master morality is for Nietzsche the highest expression of the will to power, and leads ultimately to his conception of the overman. Mankind, he said, is merely a bridge between the ape and the overman. It is our slave morality that holds us back.

The title of Nietzsche's last book, *Ecce Homo,* merits further consideration here. Its literal translation from the Latin is "Behold the man," but its figurative meaning has to do with the fact that this was the phrase used by Pontius Pilate when he presented Jesus, scourged and crowned with thorns, to hostile crowds shortly before his crucifixion. Nietzsche saw himself as, and wrote a book with the title of, *The Anti-christ.* With this title he was ironically contrasting his own philosophy of master morality in contrast to the Christian slave morality that he believed needed to be overcome and replaced.

Nietzsche's final expression of the eternal return, on the other hand, is found in the constant renewal of self-creation. With the death of God, we are no longer

provided with any God-given maps to guide us through our individual labyrinths. It is up to us as individuals to find our own way. With the death of God, absolute values can no longer be looked to for orientation. The death of God *means* nihilism. "It means that the elemental ground of all things has turned to nihility."[86] This is not necessarily a bad thing, though. Our historical dependence on absolutes has led to artificial divisions between people, to wars and to the senseless slaughter of millions of people. In Nietzsche's words, "The old God invents war, he divides the peoples, he fixes it so men will annihilate each other (priests have always required wars."[87] It's true that without absolute guidance we are left to our own devices. Condemned to an indifferent universe, many will choose to turn back to the world of religious mythology, attracted to the charismatic and authoritarian figures who will always be there as ministers of their faiths to provide the masses with the appearance of certitude which they require. If we can find the courage to survive in such an indifferent universe, a universe without certitude, we may still thrive.

Concluding Remarks

There can be no doubt that creativity plays a central role in Nietzsche's philosophy. Questions still remain, however. For how long can a new metaphor retain its potency? Is the balancing act of the creative will, between ascending and descending forces, merely psychological, or is it historical as well? If redemption for Nietzsche is the result of embracing the eternal return through its joyous affirmation of one's life and fate, what is the historical implication of this redemption? When Nietzsche said of himself in *Ecce Homo* "I am no man. I am dynamite,"[88] what effect on the world did he imagine his life's work to have? Perhaps the task of the philosopher as artist is to wipe away the blinding layers of dust and filth that have obscured our vision of the miraculous nature of life, in order to renew our capacity for wonder.

Nietzsche clearly thought that the course of the modern world with its emphasis on logic and efficiency (what Heidegger called "one-track thinking") would inexorably lead to nihilism. He anticipated that his central ideas of will to power and eternal return would help people in the future to find the fortitude to start from nothing, and create a better world for themselves with new words, new metaphors, new concepts of their own making.

Notes

1. Badiou, "Who is Nietzsche?" in *Pli* 11, p. 1.
2. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 30.

3. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*; pp. 181–82.
4. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* p. 49.
5. ibid., p. 98.
6. Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers vol. 4,* p. 190.
7. Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, p. 52.
8. Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, p. 355.
9. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or,* p. 38.
10. See Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, pp. 71–75.
11. See Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 66–69.
12. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* p. 61.
13. ibid., p. 78.
14. ibid., p. 142.
15. ibid., p. 70.
16. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, p. 74, footnote.
17. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, pp. 78–79.
18. quoted in Picard, *The World of Silence,* p. 232.
19. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* p. 88.
20. See Ettore Rocca, "Soren Kierkegaard and Silence," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on SK,* pp. 77–78.
21. Wilde, *De Profundis,* p. 82.
22. Arnold Cone, *Kierkegaard as Humanist*, p. 303.
23. Beckett, *The Unnameable*, at the very end of the play.
24. see Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, pp. 93–97.
25. Kierkegaard, *Journals IV,* p. 61.
26. see Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* p. 46.
27. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 138.
28. ibid., section 146.
29. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 1.
30. ibid., p. 2.
31. See Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus,* p. 151 ff.
32. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* p. 4.
33. ibid., p. 5.
34. ibid., p. 1.
35. cited in Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, p. 46.
36. Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, in Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 485–486.
37. ibid., p. 486.
38. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* sect. 1.
39. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* in Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 768.
40. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* sect. 12, *The Will to Power*, sect. 485.
41. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* sect. 481.
42. ibid., sect. 677.
43. ibid., sect. 46.
44. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* in Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche,* 230.
45. Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in Krell, *ed., Basic Writings of Heidegger,* p. 217.

46. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 751.
47. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 714.
48. Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, p. 221.
49. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 274.
50. Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond,* p. 11.
51. See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* p. 47.
52. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* p. 139.
53. ibid., p. 147.
54. ibid., p. 147.
55. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?,* p. 92–95.
56. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 51.
57. See Strong, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* p. 232.
58. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 617.
59. ibid., p. 55.
60. See for example Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist,* pp. 4–8.
61. Nietzsche, *The Dawn,* in Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche,* p. 92.
62. See Tomasi, "Nihilism and Creativity in the Philosophy of Nietzsche," p. 4.
63. See Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 10.
64. ibid., p. 7.
65. ibid., p. 9.
66. ibid., p. 12.
67. ibid., p. 13.
68. ibid., p. 14.
69. in Pearson, ed., *The Nietzsche Reader,* p. 117.
70. Miller, J. "Dismembering and Disremembering in Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,'" in O'Hara, *Why Nietzsche Now?* p. 51.
71. Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* pp. 3–5.
72. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor,* p. 17.
73. ibid., p. 17.
74. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 53.
75. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor,* p. 18.
76. ibid., p. 20.
77. Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, referenced in Kofman, ibid., p. 52.
78. Soromenho-Marques, *Ontological Nihilism*, p. 3.
79. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor,* p. 19.
80. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* in Kaufmann, ed., The *Portable Nietzsche* p. 54.
81. ibid., p. 17.
82. ibid., p. 104.
83. See Peter Durno Murray, *Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality,* pp. 74–84.
84. See Sikka, "On the Truth of Beauty: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Keats," p. 247.
85. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* p. 7.
86. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 228.
87. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, in Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche,* p. 629.
88. in Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 782.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Break with Science: Husserl and Freud

Introduction

Although Husserl and Freud in the first decades of the 20th century each developed distinct theories about the structure of consciousness, they both taught that we don't perceive the world directly, but only through the mediating mechanisms of either intention or desire. They both also understood consciousness to be a process that, because it takes place over time, has only an indirect and distorted relationship with the world to which it relates.

Husserl's quest for and emphasis on the central importance of the "lived experience" places his work within the category of antiphilosophy. He believed that philosophy can become a real science, but only if it operates under the discipline of transcendental phenomenology. He claimed that ordinary science operates under what he called the "natural attitude" and that it rests on assumptions from empirical philosophy which are insufficiently grounded. Although he dreamt of a community of phenomenologically-trained philosophers who, sharing common assumptions, would together make inroads towards the mastery of human experience, his phenomenology is still a form of antiphilosophy because it is based more on information gleaned from actual human experience than on ideas obtained from abstract academic scholarship. Husserl is a liberating thinker because he provides the tools

for phenomenologists to write about unicorns and cave dwellers with the same degree of rigor and sympathy.

Freud is an antiphilosopher because psychoanalysis proper emerged only when he crossed the discourse of science with the discourse of literature. This crossing occurred because his rigorous scientific program of combining neurology and psychology could only be sustained through the addition of the literary exploration he initiated with his case studies. With his dynamic model of human experience and his emphasis on talk therapy, he put a halt to the dehumanizing of the mentally ill. He helped society to recognize that the mentally ill patient is still a living subject, someone whose goal-directed inner life is not totally unlike the inner lives of normal people, just more confused.

Classical realism is based on the two beliefs that the world "out there" exists and that it is separate from us. Freud and Husserl taught us, though, that what we see is connected to what we've been taught to see. In fact, before 1900 almost all scientific thought was based on four related assumptions, or principles. The first was the principle of determinism, which stated that nature proceeds by a chain of events from cause to effect. It left no room for uncertainty in nature. The second was the quantitative principle, which said that our ideas become clear only when described by numbers. This meant that only what is measurable is susceptible to scientific analysis. The third was the principle of continuity, which expressed the belief that all movements in nature are gradual. This meant that the suddenness of a flash of lightning, of a volcanic eruption, or of an explosion, was only apparent. If any sequence seemed abrupt, it was only necessary to divide it into smaller sections, since time is infinitely divisible. The fourth was the principle of impersonality. This meant that the scientist saw him or herself not as a person but as an instrument of nature—without passion or prejudice.[1]

These principles show us that our perceptions of reality are affected by preconceptions that are built into the language we use. We'd like to think that once these assumptions have been acknowledged and removed, a profound clarity would be left behind. This, however, is an illusion. A comparison of Husserl's and Freud's theories on the structure of consciousness demonstrates that they both recognized that consciousness does not connect to reality in a direct or immediate way. Whether consciousness connects to the world through intention (Husserl) or through desire (Freud), in both cases the connection is mediated by perceptual processes which are constituted only through the ongoing interplay between consciousness and time.

Both Husserl and Freud initially thought of themselves as pure scientists, using methods that were intended to reveal objective truths about psychological states. During the latter part of their careers, though, they found themselves

increasingly skeptical about the possibility of achieving such certainty. Husserl recognized the impossibility of completing the correlation of the passive and active modes of intentional consciousness while Freud realized that an observer can never completely overcome the interpretative aspect of perception (which may make him more of a literary figure than a scientific one). For phenomenologists this problem became known as the hermeneutic circle, the idea that all modes of judgment and interpretation are unable to completely transcend their historical context because, whenever anyone applies interpretive tools to describe a particular reality, they are limited by the historicity of those tools. This does not mean that the circle is a closed one, however, since there is always the possibility of someone finding the creative will to transcend the programming. Similarly for psychiatry, attempts to define consciousness in purely physicalist or neurobiological terms are confounded by the realization that the determination of such measurable states is never final but unavoidably and constantly affected by subjective experience.

Part I: Husserl

Husserl's life project was a response to the same crisis that motivated Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He too believed that Western civilization was in crisis because humanity had forfeited its identity, with human beings becoming mere objects in a sea of objects. All three philosophers shared a belief in the central importance of lived experience, believing that once humanity's inner nature was restored to itself it would return to the path which it had lost, toward supremacy and control over its environment.

Unlike his more existentially-inclined predecessors, Husserl's response to the crisis was both methodical and systematic. The grounding of truths in experience, he believed, called for a new method which would be capable of describing the various ways human consciousness constitutes meaning, through the pre-reflective acts of perception, imagination and language. He referred to his method as "phenomenology," because it focused on how the world appears to human consciousness and was based on the belief that meaning can only be apprehended as the *phenomena* of consciousness. Husserl aimed to demonstrate how the world is a lived experience *before* it becomes an "object," i. e. something which we are required to learn about in some depersonalized and objectified manner.

With his phenomenological method, Husserl attempted to replace the traditional dualistic relation between subject and object historically known as *substance,* with a more fundamental relation between the two in which they would no longer be seen as divided into separate entities. He called this new relation the *phenomenon*.

Since meaning is constituted only through consciousness, the world for Husserl can only be understood as necessarily *for* consciousness—and consciousness is always *of* something. The human mind is an *intentional* activity, always moving beyond itself towards reality—"to the things themselves."

In this way, Husserl wished to wipe the slate clean and provide a radical beginning for philosophy. He wanted to enable people to learn how to see the world with new eyes and as it really was, as an original, lived experience, before any learned conceptions of it or prejudices about it could get in the way. He believed that when philosophers attach too much importance on either the subject (through idealism) or the object (through materialism), they run into problems. Idealism leads to the individual consciousness being cut off from the world, and eventually to ideas becoming perceived as more important than individual people. Materialism on the other hand leads to a conception of science that Husserl referred to as "the natural attitude," which credits as real only that which is physically given, i.e. that which is measurable. This positivist orientation either denies the life of consciousness altogether or it isolates the "fact" of physical reality from the experiential realm altogether. By ignoring its roots in the intentionality of consciousness, science loses sight of its own historically situated origins. Husserl truly believed (at least, early on in his career) that with his phenomenological method he had provided the grounding that science lacked.

Establishing Phenomenology as a New Beginning

In order to reach his goal of providing a radical beginning for philosophy, Husserl had to work his way back to it. This involved five steps. The first step involved a bracketing or suspending (*epoché*) of the natural attitude. This means that all the empirical and metaphysical assumptions about the natural world—all conceptions of a reality "out there" and independent of our consciousness—are set aside. Meaning appears to us only through phenomena. We don't need to make judgments with regards to its origin in truth or in fiction. This step is necessary if we are to get beyond the many assumptions created by the natural attitude, which sometimes masquerades as "common sense."

The second step requires that consciousness must be recognized as *intentional*: it is always *of* something and has no independent existence. This step is necessary if we are to avoid the duality of the subject/object split, a philosophical conundrum which has no clear resolution. This means that when idealists like Plato and Descartes start with the primacy of ideas created by the mind, they can't account for the real world of sensible objects. On the other hand, when materialists like Aristotle and Locke start with the primacy of the senses and the world of sensible

things, they can't account for consciousness. Husserl's solution was to provide a more radical understanding of the essence of subjectivity, recognizing it as the source of all meaning and being.

The third step involved dividing the intentional structure of perceptual consciousness into two aspects: between the *noema*, the object itself as it is perceived through its different adumbrations over time; and the *noesis*, the various acts of perception directed at the object. He called the process of resolving their relation to one another the *noesis/noema correlation*. This step is necessary because the apprehension of meaning by the perceptual consciousness is never an immediate grasping but involves a series of judgments.

The fourth step consists of recognizing how the perceptual experience displays a phenomenologically deep structure constituted by time-consciousness. At any given moment there is an awareness of retentions (acts of immediate memory), original impressions (acts of immediate awareness), and protentions (acts of immediate anticipation). In other words, the apprehension of meaning takes place within the structure of internal time-consciousness.

Finally, the fifth and last step involves the recognition that our becoming aware of the deep structure of internal time-consciousness through the *phenomenological reduction,* which is the end result of the bracketing of the *epoché.* This means that since the one thing that cannot be bracketed is the flow of consciousness within time, then the deep structure of internal time-consciousness is what perceptual consciousness is reduced to. It also means that being has been reduced to the *meaning* of being. This reduction to the temporality of consciousness is necessary because of the gap that persists between the flow of consciousness on the one hand and the perceptual object of consciousness on the other. In other words, there exists a gap between the various noetic acts directed at the perceived object and the various noematic meanings of the perceived object that continue to be constructed and re-constructed over time. Since a series of judgments is necessary to cross this gap, we can only access the complete meaning of the object as if it functioned like a limit in calculus, getting close enough for practical purposes to "the object such" without ever actually grasping it.[2]

The Theory of Intentionality

In order to illustrate how the mental process of intentional consciousness works in practice, Husserl in his book *Ideas I* gave the example of a person viewing a blossoming apple tree in a garden. He explained that we need to distinguish between three things: the act of perception, the perception itself, and the tree itself. In the natural attitude, we could say that a real person enjoys looking at a real tree. More

precisely, however, we should say that the tree exists for us in the transcendent realm of spatial actuality, while our perception of the tree and our liking of it are psychical states belonging to a real person. We might want to say that what is perceived is the actual apple tree, but this would not be accurate. The transcendent actual tree is quite different from our noematically created sense of the tree, and the psychological states of remembering, believing in, and judging the tree are quite different from the noetic acts directed at it. The main difference between these perspectives is this: in the natural attitude, within the real relation between a real person and a real tree, there still exists the psychological possibility that the person might be mentally impaired, so that the tree might be a mere hallucination. In that case the real relation between subject and object would be destroyed, leaving only a perceptual relation with nothing actual to which it might be related.

In contrast, we can examine the viewing of the apple tree from the point of view of the phenomenological attitude. We now view the tree "under parenthesis," having exercised the *epoché* with regards to it. The actual existence of the real relation between perceiving and perceived (as well as between liking and liked, judging and judged, etc.) is now excluded from consideration. What remains is a purely phenomenological situation with the same relations as before, except these relations are now received only as *pure immanence,* as they appear within the transcendental stream of mental processes, completely separated from any claims to their actuality. Everything otherwise remains the same: the same apple tree, the same blossoms on it, the same liking of it, etc. The only difference is that instead of insisting that we are describing our perception of the tree itself, we now say that we are describing our perception of the tree *as* it is being perceived under one of its noematic aspects. The task of phenomenology is to describe this immanent 'tree' as it is given to consciousness itself. The immanent tree is not a mere copy of the real tree; instead, it's all that's left after the reduction. We don't start with an objective world out there for subjective consciousness to discover. For phenomenology, the world is reduced to that which appears to consciousness; it's already there as part of the perceptual noemata with which consciousness is made. We no longer just see *things*, we engage with the meanings that make up the world around us and guide our continuing relationship with it.[3]

Husserl identified three interrelating modes of intentionality: perception, imagination, and signification. He gives the example of how we might intend the meaning of Dürer's engraving T*he Knight, Death and the Devil.* On the level of signification, we read the title of the engraving and intend a meaning for the work: in terms of the Knight we posit the symbol of courage and faith; for the Devil we posit the symbol of temptation and despair; and for Death we posit the decision to allow victory to the Knight or the Devil. We remain at this conceptual level until we begin to perceive the engraving before us. Initially, all we perceive of the

engraving is its existence as a mere thing, a mass of black lines on paper. The perception only becomes meaningful as an aesthetic experience when it is combined with the signifying intention of the title to yield an imaginative intuition of the three figures in the engraving. The Knight, the Devil and Death only now appear to our imagination in the form of a "fictional quasi-presence."[4]

The Three Reductions

In *Ideas I,* Husserl developed some of the most fundamental ideas of his transcendental phenomenology, including the theory that the subject views himself or herself not as a part of nature but as pure consciousness. He reached this insight through his elaboration of his phenomenological, eidetic, and transcendental reductions, progressively delimiting the subject matter of phenomenology. With the phenomenological reduction, we are asked to "bracket" or disregard the question of the real existence of a particular phenomenon, in order to focus on our mental experience of it instead. At the next level, namely the transcendental reduction, we are asked to eliminate all empirical or naturalist conceptions, in order to realize the intentional constitution of things, their condition of having sense only as things for consciousness. The third, eidetic reduction moves from our consciousness of individual concrete objects, to the realm of pure essences. We are asked to examine a particular object and then imaginatively to change it in some way. We are then required to figure out what cannot be changed or eliminated within our imaginative reconstruction, thereby achieving an intuition of the "*eidos*" or essential structure of the thing itself. We thus move progressively from our mental experience of the object, to its intentional sense as an object for consciousness, to the realm of pure essence.

Once the world is reduced to the realm of pure essence, we are left with the realization that it can only be constituted through the transcendental unity of consciousness. Although the world is nullified, consciousness itself is not affected. It alone remains certain and indubitable. Consciousness, then, is absolute being. It is not a phenomenon like other things. Instead of being a mere thing, it is that which confers being on all other things. It alone constitutes the world. In this way, Husserl is led to his idea of the transcendental ego, by asserting the primacy of transcendental subjectivity.[5]

Internal Time-Consciousness

Husserl also investigated what goes on in our imagination while we are conscious. He asserted that we have a direct perceptual awareness over short intervals of the changes and persistence of objects and processes in terms of any changes or lack

of change that occur within them. He also recognized that we are aware of the ongoing flow of the various streams of consciousness as they occur. For this to be possible, he theorized that it must involve past phases of consciousness being retained in the grasp of later phases.

Husserl explained these different phases in detail by providing an example of the "wonder of time-consciousness" disclosing itself to him as he hears the rumble of an approaching coach:

> The perception of the sound in the perception's ever new now is not a mere *having* of the sound, even of the sound in the now-phase. On the contrary, we find in each now, in addition to the actual physical content, an *adumbration* … If we focus reflectively on what is presently given in the actually present now with respect to the sound of the postilion's horn, or the rumbling of the coach, and if we reflect on it just as it is given, then we note the *trail of memory* that *extends* the now-point of the sound or of the rumbling. This reflection makes it evident that the *immanent thing* could not be given in its unity at all if the perceptual consciousness did not also encompass, along with the point of actually present sensation, the continuity of fading phases that pertain to the sensations belonging to earlier nows. The past would be nothing for the consciousness belonging to the now if it were not represented in the now; and the now would not be now … if it did not stand before me *in that consciousness* as the *limit of a past being*.[6]

In this account, Husserl identifies three components in the composition of consciousness at any single instant: *primal impressions*, *retentions*, and *protentions*. Primal impressions are the live, actual experiences that occupy the momentary now. No sooner does a primal impression occur, it slips seamlessly into the past. But it does not vanish from consciousness altogether; it survives in the form of a retention, which presents it *as* past. Retentions, however, are a distinct form of consciousness. They are not ordinary memories but are the "adumbrations" of a continuity that in the direction of the past terminates in the sensation-point while in the direction of the future becomes blurred and indeterminate. As new primal impressions dawn, the initial impression continues to be retained, but as it becomes increasingly more distant in the past it eventually fades from consciousness altogether. From then on, it can only be accessed through ordinary memory. Protentions, in turn, are the future-oriented counterparts of retentions. In some cases—e.g., when we are perceiving or remembering a familiar sequence of events—they can be quite detailed, but often they consist of nothing more than an *openness* to the future, an expectation that *something will happen*. Or as Husserl puts it: "The waking consciousness, the waking life, is a living-towards, a living that goes from the now towards the new now."[7] Heidegger would later refer to this phenomenon as "anticipatory resoluteness," although he was referring more specifically to Dasein's authentic way of treating death as a meaningful possibility.[8]

Our protentions grow out of our past experience. While we retain a stretch of past experience, it has within it a "horizon of the future" in which we project the style of the past onto our anticipation of its continuance into the future. When fresh experience meets our expectations, our protentional experience grows as a result. Every retained stretch has a protentional tendency. Husserl's account of the growth of our protentions is actually a genetic account of the formation of our perceptual interpretations, since it anchors the schema in the flowing life of consciousness. Rather than being something external to the life of consciousness, however, the perceptual interpretation grows out of it, as part of its intentional-fulfillment structure. Our protentions thus express what we intend to see, by shaping the interpretations that direct the perceptual process.

Protentions also function in our pre-reflective awareness, as part of the flow of consciousness. Every momentary consciousness is therefore inherently both a protention *of* what is to come and a retention *of* what has already occurred. The "of" indicates the self-awareness of this flowing, either away from or towards the conscious self—which is essentially no more than the consciousness of these transitions.[9]

Intersubjectivity

Intersubjective experience plays a fundamental role in Husserl's phenomenology as well. His examination of it addresses how we constitute ourselves as objectively existing subjects. It also relates to our constitution of other experiencing subjects and to our constitution of the objective world as well. Intersubjectivity comes into play when we experience *empathy*. It occurs in the course of our conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects, in the course of which we put ourselves into the other's shoes. The main problem about intersubjectivity for Husserl is that since we begin our reflections with the human subject's solipsistic self-awareness, the problem arises, how can we justify our belief in the objective reality of other people as conscious beings in their own right? In other words, how do we get from "my world" to "our world"?

Husserl answers as follows: in order for me to simulate another person's perspective of the world, I must assume that their world more or less coincides with my own. Even when I realize that the various aspects under which the other subject represents the world must be different from mine since these different representations depend on different egocentric viewpoints, I still assume that the coincidence between their world and my own exists. For this realization to work, however, I must presuppose that the objects forming my own world exist independently of my subjective perspective; they must, in other words, be conceived of as part of an *objective* reality.

According to Husserl, however, this does not mean that the objective world thus constituted through intersubjective experience is to be regarded as completely independent of all the aspects under which I represent the world. Another condition for the possibility of intersubjective experience is the assumption that by and large the other subject structures the world into objects in the same way I do. I exist therefore both as subject and object at the same time, just as the other does. But, how do we move from "my world" to "our world"? How can Husserl account for the intersubjective experience of the lifeworld, when so much of phenomenological analysis takes place within the seemingly closed bubble of internal time- consciousness?

I realize that in order for the other subject to be able to ascribe intentional acts to me, he or she has to identify me bodily, as a flesh-and-blood human being with an egocentric viewpoint necessarily differing from their own. Once I realize that my egocentric perspective is just one among many, and that from an external point of view I appear merely as one physical object among others, I realize *through empathy* that my identity at any given time applies both to myself and to others, since they too have identities not completely dissimilar to my own. I also recognize how each of these others goes through a similar thought process. Husserl's understanding of intersubjectivity thus points to the existence of many transcendental subjects, all coexisting in the lifeworld and actively constituting it together.[10]

Phenomenology's Legacy

With his phenomenological investigations, Husserl was able to reach a more radical understanding of how we relate to the world around us than any of his predecessors in the field of philosophy. He showed us how all our engagements with this world are lived experiences. The term he developed for this active engagement was "lifeworld" or "Lebenswelt," which was intended to portray the sense of a constantly shifting realm of meanings within which people interact with each other. Although common sense (or what he called the natural attitude) tells us that we are born into a world that is itself the source of all meaning for us, Husserl's phenomenology shows us that strictly speaking this is not true. We are born into a lifeworld where nothing (*nihil*) objective is given to us, and our ultimate challenge is to make our experience, which consists of all the disconnected meanings we live with, be a fruitful one.

Because of its focus on lived experience, phenomenology has proven to be a very liberating methodology for a diverse number of practicing philosophers, psychologists, literary theorists and art theorists, among others. It provides a highly structured and rigorous approach to a wide variety of experiences which

were previously inaccessible to sustained and serious analysis. In an essay on Husserl's theory of intentionality, Sartre pointed out its liberating aspects in the following way:

> Husserl has restored to things their horror and their charm. He has restored to us the world of artists, and prophets—frightening, hostile, dangerous, with its havens of mercy and love … everything is finally outside, everything, even ourselves. Outside, in the world, among others. It is not in some hiding-place that we will discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the town, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a man among men.[11]

Even if his followers have not always found it necessary to follow the comparatively narrow confines of Husserl's own conception of phenomenology, they have benefited from the rigorous and committed example he provided.

Concluding Remarks

It can be argued that Husserl picked up where Nietzsche left off. Like Nietzsche, Husserl believed that naturalist objectivism, with its doctrine of mechanical causes, is the primary impediment to philosophical progress. Such an orientation, he believed, is not only naïve, it is self-contradictory because it rests on the idea of consciousness as both autonomous yet at the same time its own projection. The only way around this impasse is to recognize how objective science needs to be subsumed under a science of pure consciousness. Husserl's goal with his newly minted "phenomenology" was to rigorously define consciousness as a purely reflective, self-active relational activity. "To the things themselves!" he cried, and with his doctrine of intentionality he asserted that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. With Husserl's move toward pure subjectivity, he found an ontological basis for grounding logical truth.

By splitting the "I think" of the cogito into two related parts, the object as it is being perceived (the noema) and the different acts of perception directed at the object as such (the noesis), Husserl established a methodology of inquiry that ultimately remains regressive, with objective closure forever beyond its reach. The logical impossibility of completing his project was corroborated in the field of mathematics during the last decade of Husserl's life by Kurt Gödel, who, with his "incompleteness theorem," established that all logical systems of any complexity are, by definition, incomplete, because the consistency of the system as a whole is not provable within the same system. In other words, each system contains at any given time more true statements than it can possibly prove with its own rules. This means ultimately that the entire modernist formula, the desire to circumscribe all

knowledge within rationalist boundaries, is bankrupt. In the ensuing years, however, phenomenology would emerge (in a more open-ended form than Husserl envisioned) as the preeminent philosophy best equipped to deal with the postmodern implications of this bankruptcy.

Part II: Freud

A Sick Society

Freud too responded to the crisis that was initially felt in Europe during the middle to late nineteenth century. At the end of his book *Civilization and its Discontents,* written in 1929, he reflected on the question whether our civilization would survive, whether *eros* as a life-affirming culture or *thanatos* as a culture of death would win out. The question was not an idle one, as anyone who reflects on the impending history of the two world wars fought in the first half of the twentieth century will surely realize. Even our current indifference to an ever-worsening ecological environment of global warming and climate change shows how the crisis continues to endure today, in yet another context. The problem, again, is nihilism, currently appearing as a socio-political and cultural reality. Freud's own reflections on the question concerning the ultimate survival of civilization led him to the startling diagnosis that the whole of humanity had become neurotic under the pressure of civilizing trends. He admitted that such a diagnosis was easier to understand with regard to individuals, whose sanity could we weighed against the norms of their society. Without such an outside perspective, he feared, his diagnosis about civilization as a whole could be seen as just another manifestation of the prevailing psychopathology.

But nihilism creates its own socio-pathologies. It is a "cancer of the spirit"[12] that affects our identity as human beings. We remember Kierkegaard's conception of a "sickness unto death" which leads to the disintegration of the modern self. We remember Nietzsche's conception of the "will to power" which, intended as a cure, was tainted by the destructive forces within his own culture so that it was misinterpreted to mean the exaltation of willful mastery and domination, thus exemplifying the very same self-destructive character of nihilism that it was intended to overcome.

A New Approach to Abnormal Behavior

Freud's approach to adult abnormal behavior is noteworthy because he was the first to recognize that it was goal-directed, and not merely pointless and meaningless. From this basic insight he was able to determine how neurotic behaviors

are symptoms, whose origins can be traced back to childish fears and anxieties. This new point of view led him to understand the fundamental importance to therapeutic practice of the early life of children and ultimately to his discovery of infantile sexuality. Based on this discovery, he was able to work out a developmental theory of personality that consisted of five psychosexual stages, each of which was determined by the unconscious channeling and release of sexual and aggressive energy that issued from either the constructive sex drive of *eros* or the destructive death drive of *thanatos*. He then conceived of the human personality as the dynamic interaction of three parts, consisting of the id, which follows the pleasure principle and demands immediate gratification; the ego, which follows the reality principle and attempts to place limits on the demands of the id; and the superego, which places moral demands on the ego and thus indirectly on the id.

Freud insisted that there was an empirical correlation between the occurrence of certain types of events in early childhood and the development of corresponding traits in adulthood. Thus, the exhibition of obsessive cleanliness in adulthood might be traced back to a certain kind of toilet training which caused traumatic feelings in early childhood. This view, however, requires further theoretical details to explain it, namely the concepts of repression, sublimation, and the unconscious itself. Since certain thoughts or memories are too painful for consciousness to endure, it represses them. When humans seek pleasure, for example, sometimes their drives cannot find an acceptable outlet, and, forced to adapt to external societal rules, they sublimate these drives, redirecting them instead of acting on them. Both repression and sublimation leave traces in the unconscious, which is itself nothing more than an unobservable theoretical construct. Defending against the pain of external reality, the ego may experience conflict, which, if unresolved, can lead to its disability in neurosis, or even total withdrawal in psychosis. The mature ego also accepts the demands of both the id and the superego, but it is able to translate the demands into socially acceptable terms that are no longer destructive. The development of this mature ego is the goal of psychoanalysis.

Sex Drives and the Demands of Culture

In his later years, Freud turned to the broader issues of society, and provided explanations of dreams, culture, and religion that were still in accordance with his psychoanalytical theories. He continued to maintain that fundamental tensions exist within both the instinctual sexual drives of the individual and within the demands of culture. For example, he came to believe in the importance of talking about dreams in analysis because the dream exhibits a tension between its manifest content and its latent content and illustrates the mechanism of repression.

According to Freud, the manifest content of a dream is what it's apparently about, but it's actually an expression in symbolic form of its latent content, in which there appears an unconscious wish or motive. For whatever reason, the wish was too unacceptable for the conscious mind to acknowledge it, so it appeared in the dream in symbolic form. Freud similarly explained the world of cultural achievement by suggesting that when the demands of the instincts are not immediately gratified, they contribute to an increase in psychic energy, which is released in sublimated form in the creations of art and science. Freud's take on religion was that it perpetuates infantile behavior patterns pertaining to guilt and forgiveness. He also believed that religion was a product of wish fulfillment and thus was a dangerous sort of illusion because it operates against the power of science to determine the difference between reality as it is and reality as we'd like it to be.

Although Freud always believed that a physiological and biochemical basis for his discoveries must exist, his real contribution was how he was able to think of motives and desires in a new way, through his construction of the unconscious. Behaviors that were hitherto recognized as mere physical movement were now conceived of in a goal-directed way. Moreover, the very idea of an unconscious motive need not be just about motives of which the agent might be unaware, since it could also have to do with motives that the agent refuses to acknowledge in the first place.[13] In fact, Freud would later call the theory of repression, which is rooted in this refusal, "the pillar on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests."[14]

Part III: Freud after Husserl

Freud and Hermeneutics, or Ricoeur on Freud

Freud's contribution to modern thought is increasingly recognized not in the scientific frame within which he attempted to place it, but as a kind of phenomenological analysis of human consciousness. In fact, Ricoeur's investigation of psychoanalysis from the point of view of phenomenology was initiated in part to provide a response to the many critics within the scientific community who had accused psychoanalysis of being unscientific (a charge also made against phenomenology and hermeneutics). Ricoeur's response was that "psychoanalysis is not a science of observation; it is an interpretation, more comparable to history than to psychology."[15]

Ricoeur explained that what turns psychoanalysis and phenomenology toward one another is the philosophic act with which phenomenology begins, namely the "phenomenological reduction." By an act of bracketing or withholding of judgment we *reduce* our natural attitude, which presupposes a literal reality that we normally take for granted, to the realization that our relation to the world around us

is intentional, not to be separated from the meaning we attach to it. Furthermore, this meaning is neither transparent nor fixed. "Thus," he wrote, "phenomenology begins by a humiliation or wounding of the knowledge belonging to immediate consciousness."[16] Since both Freud and Husserl were students of Franz Brentano, it is useful to note Brentano's claim that every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the medieval scholastics called the intentional or mental *inexistence* of an object, what might be called its immanent objectivity.[17] This means that every mental phenomenon—real or imagined—includes something as object within itself. But since this object as such can never actually be reached by perceptual consciousness, we can't know anything about it with absolute certainty.

To clarify this situation Husserl divided the intentional structure of perceptual consciousness into two aspects, between the *noema*, the object itself as it is perceived through its different adumbrations over time, and the *noesis*, the various acts of perception directed at the object, and he called the process of resolving their relation to one another the *noesis/noema correlation*.

Ricoeur explained this in the following way: "One describes by disengaging the (noetic) intention and its (noematic) correlate—the *something* intended, the implicit object in ritual, myth, and belief."[18] While we direct our attention towards the object in different ways, in turn it gradually shows itself to us one side at a time. As we continue to engage with the object, its meaning for us gradually changes.

Ricouer later drew a connection from Husserl's phenomenology to Freud's idea of the unconscious when he wrote that "Intentionality concerns our meditation on the unconscious inasmuch as consciousness is first of all an intending of the other, and not self-presence or self-possession. Engrossed in the other, it does not at first know itself intending."[19] This means that the "lifeworld" (from which the unconscious draws its energy) appears to consciousness unreflectively, even before consciousness appears to itself. It becomes necessary to separate the actual lived relation to the object of consciousness (the noesis) from its refraction in representation (the noema).

This in turn leads to the idea that a phenomenological confrontation with the Freudian exegesis of symptoms is possible, once they are understood as noematic refractions that can be traced back (at least in theory) to their noetic origins in actual lived experiences. Not surprisingly, though, both Husserl and Freud showed a marked regressive tendency with regards to their search for a constitutive genesis.[20] This is because the movement from symptom to cause in psychoanalysis is like the movement in intentionality from a single perception of a thing to the perceived thing itself: in both cases there is simply no clear end to the process.

What Ricoeur proposed instead was a form of hermeneutical inquiry, a meditation on symbols that starts with the fullness of language and of meaning already in place. "Is not such an explication of a meaningful contingency," he argued,

"what psychoanalysis proceeds to carry out? Is it not sufficient to extend to desire and its objects this explication of layers of meaning, this investigation of an 'original founding'?"[21] Ricoeur's hermeneutic meditations on symbolic language, the central focus of his life's work, are an engagement with those limit situations (like death, suffering, and evil) that are ultimately not reducible to explanations which are either transparent or logically consistent.

Freud was one of the earliest thinkers to show how it was possible to comprehend life—and the texts written about it—on several levels. In his view, linguistic signs carried webs of associations along with multiple hidden meanings. Although his general theory was based on only six case histories, they were so well written that they qualify as great literature. But were they are also great science? The anthropologist Clifford Geertz would have called these case studies "thick" or "deep" descriptions, "in which a single event, artifact, or ritual … is treated as a prism by which an entire culture … is exposed."[22] Since psychoanalysis and anthropology share a subjective sensibility with which their practitioners go about decoding, interpreting, culling, and unpacking their respective areas of comprehension, we can characterize each of them as hermeneutical approaches. We might then suggest that Freud with his psychoanalysis created a hermeneutic science of meanings.

Freud Deconstructed, or Derrida on Freud

We discover an even more radical engagement with the work of Husserl and Freud in the work of Derrida, who uncovered what he called a "logocentric" bias at the heart of Western metaphysics. From this perspective, all notions of meaning are forced to conform to a rationalist logic based on principles of identity and non-contradiction. This is a system in which it is assumed that language provides a transparent window on reality, or that a sign adequately represents its signified meaning. Derrida also associated this system of assumptions with speech. In its place he introduced a strategy of disruptive readings of canonical texts, a strategy which he called "deconstruction." This involves both the process of tracking the unraveling of meaning that is going on in the world at large, and the process of discovering how each and every speech act contains the seeds of its own negation, owing to the impossibility of any meaning staying true to itself for an extended amount of time. Derrida believed that Western metaphysics mistakenly privileged speech over writing and clarity over ambiguity.

Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's fundamental concept of the transcendental ego can be seen in this light. While Husserl's dream for phenomenology was to reach the things themselves, Derrida demonstrated how impossible this goal actually was by examining Husserl's analysis of the experience of an interior

voice that hears and understands while one speaks. Derrida pointed out that this experience was the source of the metaphysical illusion of the idea of personal identity. We might think that this pure identity of the self is real—and reachable—but the temporality of consciousness indicates that such an idea has its basis in a series of differences between past and future traces of things no longer or not yet present. "Self-identity is thus undermined by alterity," he explained.[23]

Derrida took this prioritization of difference over identity even further, not only with his preference for writing over speech but also when he elaborated on his equating of metaphysics with worn-out metaphors. With his exploration into how concepts arise after metaphors fade away, we can see his deconstruction as a process of unmasking concepts in order to lay bare the hidden play of meanings that lies beneath the surface of a text. The metaphysical activity of transporting meaning or carrying it beyond its original place (inherent in the Greek etymology of the term metaphor as *meta-phorein*) is evident in the movement between the various polarities that can be found within the interpretative process that itself masquerades as "objective" conceptualization. While the traditional quest for meaning will try to keep the poles separate, Derrida's strategy was to point out their contamination of each other, to open up a text in order to show up the ambiguities that persist at its limits.[24]

Derrida's (1978) analysis of Freud's notes on the child's toy known as the "mystic writing pad" or "Wunderblock" exemplifies his critical approach to metaphorical reasoning. Freud attempted to show how the structure of the psychical apparatus could be represented by a writing machine. Derrida framed the discussion in terms of Freud's decision to bring together two separate psychic systems: memory and perception. Freud ultimately associated memory with writing and dreaming, and he associated perception with speech and with immediate consciousness of the present moment. Earlier in his career, however (from his Project text of 1895), Freud had attempted to explain memory in the manner of the natural sciences, as "quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles" represented by the "differences in the facilitations of the psyche-neurons,"[25] but by 1925 (when he wrote these notes) he was thinking about memory in terms of writing and dreaming. In both cases, though, Freud knew he needed to retain two main features for memory, the permanence of the memory-trace and the infinite renewability of the receiving substance.

With his discovery of the mystic writing pad Freud believed that he had found the perfect analogy to describe these necessary features of the memory system and explain their relationship to one another. The writing pad consists of three layers: a transparent sheet of celluloid, a much thinner grey translucent sheet of waxed paper, and a slab of dark brown wax attached to a paper foundation. One writes

with a wooden or plastic stylus upon the first layer but the imprint is actuated only on the next layer. This material in turn leaves a faint but perceptible trace on the waxen surface below, a trace that can be seen if one were to lift up the sheet of plastic and examine the wax surface. This whole process was Freud's attempt to provide an analogy for the way the psychic system receives sense impressions from the outside world and remains unmarked by these impressions even as they pass through it to the unconscious. Freud was also trying to show that "the appearance and disappearance of the writing" is similar to "the flickering-up and passing-away of consciousness in the process of perception."[26]

The pad, for Freud, was exactly analogous to the perceptual apparatus of the memory system. Most importantly, he insisted on the protective nature of the celluloid sheet which protects the waxed paper below just as the mind possesses an external layer to protect itself by "diminishing the strength of the excitations coming in."[27] Secondly, when we lift the entire covering sheets off the wax slab, the writing vanishes, and this for Freud was precisely how the perceptual system operates—because the layer which receives the stimuli forms no permanent traces. Finally the wax slab itself represents the unconscious, including, as Derrida emphasized, its temporal nature, since Freud pointed out the impossibility of reducing the multiplicity of sensitive layers of the pad to a single act at a given moment. In other words, it takes time for the memory to erase its past traces in order to preserve the illusion of the "virginity" of the present moment. "Writing," explained Derrida, "is unthinkable without repression,"[28] noting how Freud insisted that at least two hands are needed to work the entire apparatus, one hand writing on the surface of the pad, and the other periodically raising the covering sheet from the wax slab[29] and thus demonstrating how the functioning of memory is neither automatic nor undistorted.

None of us, said Derrida with regards to Freud's example, apprehends the world directly, but only retrospectively, since our sense of that which is beyond ourselves is the product of previous memories, previous writings. "Writing," he added, "supplements perception before perception even appears to itself."[30] Freud's analogy of the mystic writing pad, then, was for Derrida a model of the primacy of writing over the immediacy and presencing of speech. This was noteworthy because for him we can never experience the world in any other way than as after the fact, through the traces of previous experiences and through the signifiers that are in effect the condition of our being. "The subject of writing," he wrote, "is a *system* of relations between strata: the Mystic Pad, the psyche, society, the world."[31]

Derrida turned to Freud's analogy to make the point that although we might act as if each of our memories is a direct recollection of experience, in fact each is polluted by the traces of previous experiences that are either well entrenched

in the unconscious or persist in the preconscious as residuals of cultural programming. While for Freud there is always the possibility of constructing a new personality once the old causes of neurosis are exposed to analysis, for Derrida these traces can never disappear completely. For him, it's simply not possible to determine completely and with final authority who is thinking, writing, or speaking; the psyche might produce a stream of various identities but they are neither consciously nor intentionally produced. Complete self-identity remains forever out of reach.

Freud's Dominating Discourse, or Foucault on Freud

When we turn to Foucault we find in his work a sustained investigation into the dominating discourses of a variety of human sciences, including psychopathology, medicine, criminology, and sexuality. With his "archeologies" of knowledge (note the similarity to Nietzsche's "genealogy of morals) Foucault initiated a "science of science," an exploration into the theoretical conditions for the possibility of science, in which he attempted to reveal what he called the "positive unconscious" of knowledge.[32] Behind the apparent rational discourses of linguistics, biology, and economics, he developed the idea that "man" itself was the product of a specific epistemic epic, namely modernism. Far from being the creator of scientific codes of discourse, "man" was revealed as a category created by these codes. And there was nothing behind these codes but more codes. If modern science once served to objectively legitimate the idea of an autonomous individual consciousness (replacing God and nature with Kant's transcendental ego), Foucault's postmodern science dismantled this construction, exposing the unconscious structural laws that ultimately predetermine what we had previously deemed to be the free activities of human consciousness.

For Foucault knowledge is neither innocent nor neutral. Behind the assumption of disinterested scientists, Foucault identified some of the various ways whereby repressive institutions monopolize the truth. These institutions define what is normal, and the kinds of behavior that transgress these limits they categorize as being "deviant." Asylums define various sorts of insanity, clinics differentiate between the sick, prisons classify different sorts of criminals, while legal institutions have the final say concerning whose sexual behavior is deviant or perverted and whose isn't. Foucault ultimately characterized these covert epistemological codes as a hidden history of power, serving the need for social control through discipline.[33]

Foucault recognized his central concern as a search for "a new economy of power relations."[34] He saw his central task as the analysis of specific rationalities of power. His method was to investigate the antagonisms of the strategies that he

saw operating in the fields of madness, illness, crime, and sexuality—he later added death to this list. Thus, to find out what our society means by sanity he thought we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity, etc. More generally, in order to understand what power relations are all about, we should investigate the forms of resistance that arise to counter them. For example, in recent years we can discover opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, and of medicine over the population. These struggles are not only anti-authoritarian, they are also not so much against a particular group as they are against a series of techniques. They are in fact directed against the form of power that categorizes individuals as "subjects"—in Foucault's sense of the term, that is. Accordingly, Foucault identified two senses of this term "subject": subject to someone else's control, and tied to one's own identity by conscience or by self-knowledge—and both meanings suggested for him a form of power that subjugates the individual. Foucault further identified three types of struggle: against ethnic, social, and religious domination; against exploitation; and against that which ties the individual to him or herself and submits him or her to others in this way.

Foucault also found the idea of confronting Freud with Husserl to be of interest. In his introduction to Binswanger's *Dream and Existence* (1994) for example, he noted the contemporaneousness of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1899) with Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). He noted how psychoanalysis had taken the dream symbol as immediately valid, confounding the achievement of meaning with the induction of indices—while not taking into consideration the distinction between them. Even if indices like tone of voice, volume of words, use of silence, even verbal slips can guide us when the words themselves elude us, they are not the same as words, since by itself an index has no signification.[35] Husserl in contrast was able to separate the strict meaning of what a person says from the way the person expresses it. Foucault believed that while "Freudian analysis could see only an artificial connection between meaning and expression in the hallucinatory nature of the satisfaction of desire, phenomenology … enables one to recapture meaning in the context of the expressive act which founds it."[36] But then Foucault went on to say that "Phenomenology has succeeded in making images speak; but it has given no one the possibility of understanding their language."[37] This is not only a criticism of phenomenological psychology; it is a recognition that fundamental difficulties in meaning apprehension lie at the limits of language.

The limits of language are encountered in Freud's writings most strongly in dreams, which are, said Foucault, "at once the symbolic code of psychology and its grammar,"[38] since they provide both the expressive mode of desire and the method

for deciphering its meaning. By giving the dream such a privileged place in the realm of psychology, however, Freud, in Foucault's view, ignored its place in imaginary experience and thereby underestimated its inexhaustible character, so evident in the writings of mystics and in mythology.

The Structure of Psychic Language, or Lacan on Freud

Lacan's basic thesis is that the unconscious is structured like a language. He also believed that Freud was insufficiently aware of how this was implied by his own theory and practice. His innovative appropriation of Freudian theory demonstrates that he was more interested in what happens at the edge of language than he was in scientific clarity or in the formation of a perfect theory. The fact that he wrote in a way that often resembled free association, employing a style full of puns, jokes and contradictions with extensive use of metaphor and irony, reinforces the realization that he resisted having his work systematically exploited and shows how his approach to human experience was essentially antiphilosophical. Lacan believed this approach was necessary in order to protect his thought from the dogmatism and authoritarianism that in his view had plagued Freud's work after his death. He insisted that his own work could never be completely understood, since to understand it would be to reify it and this would misconstrue him because misunderstanding is a key part of understanding. Lacan's anti-systematic approach to knowledge derives from the concept of "bricolage," taken from the French word for a handyman's toolbox.[39] The term was introduced by the structuralist anthropologist Levi-Strauss, and refers to the ability to have at one's disposal a box full of random tools to fulfill a broad variety of tasks—to use anything that works. Lacan's reading of Freud's texts can be seen in this context as a joining together of a heterogenous variety of sources—a toolbox of ideas—from philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics, as well as psychoanalysis.

From his early study of Husserl's phenomenology, for example, Lacan discovered the concept of intersubjectivity and realized that it might be applicable to his own developing understanding of how the self is formed. According to phenomenological theory intersubjectivity is what enables the self to relate to others, as subjects of experiences that are not otherwise directly given to it. The experience of intersubjectivity takes place in Lacan's view either through the conscious experience of others' consciousness (which he learned from his study of Husserl), or through the unconscious dimension of language. When Lacan began to understand that language could function unconsciously *and* intersubjectively, he came to believe that the self could be formed through the imprint of the symbolic functioning of language on the developing psyche.

Accordingly, Lacan's first important paper (1936) was on the importance of the *mirror stage* in the early development of a child's personality, and it was written in response to what he found to be ambiguities in Freud's theory of the formation of the ego. Lacan asked the question, when does the realization of the undifferentiated self first occur? From earliest infancy, or during a time of symbiosis that starts with the self being initially unable to differentiate itself from the objects that surround it, and ends when the organizing frame of psychic life emerges? For Lacan it was the latter, and his understanding of the importance of the mirror stage in the development of selfhood suggests that "the construction of the subject is not the result of pure perception but needs the image of the body as intermediary."[40]

Freud had suggested in his essay "On Narcissism" that the infant's libido makes an investment in the dialectical relationship between the self and the objects (including other people) that surround it, and that the adult's relative normalcy or pathology has to do with how successfully this relationship was resolved during the earlier time. Freud was also implying that ego-formation was a closed system, that the capacity for successful self/object differentiation was already in place within the infant's psyche, independent of any parallel development in the child's symbolic structures.[41] For Freud, "the ego has the task of self-preservation"[42] and therefore functions instinctively.

In contrast, Lacan viewed the ego as something outside the self, something that needs to be learned. A clarification of the semiological sense of the term "subject" (as distinct from "individual" or "self") is necessary here. From this semiological point of view, human reality is understood as an unconscious cultural construct. Consequently, notions such as what is private to oneself and of a self synonymous with consciousness are called into question. The mechanism of desire is similarly understood to be culturally instituted. The phenomenon of consciousness is thus de-centered and devalued, seen only in its receptive capacity. Lacan conceived of the unconscious, in turn, not as an inarticulate and chaotic region but as a signifying network, one that is split off from both needs and drives. The subject's entrance into the symbolic order and the formation of the unconscious take place in his view through the single signifying event of the mirror stage.

Lacan illustrated this event through the story Freud told of his grandson, both in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. After explaining that the child at 18 months was in no way precocious, knowing only a few comprehensible words and how to be a "good boy"—by not disturbing his parents at night, by obeying orders and by never crying when his mother went out for a few hours—Freud discovered that the only use the child made of his toys was to play "gone" with them. He went on to explain this further:

> One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him for instance, and to play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o-o." He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful "da." This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return.[43]

Freud had earlier hypothesized that the "o-o-o-o" sound the child made had been an attempt to articulate the German word "fort" meaning "gone." Here, in this second instance, the addition of the word "da" (meaning "there") confirmed his theory that the child was playing "fort-da," a version of hide and seek. In a footnote to the story Freud added the following comments:

One day the child's mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met with the words "Baby o-o-o-o!" which was at first incomprehensible. It soon turned out, however, that during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making *himself* disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image "gone."[44]

Like Freud, Lacan read the "fort-da" episode as an allegory about the linguistic mastery of the drives. However, while Freud connected this with the binding activity which helps bring the preconscious into existence, Lacan associated it with a signifying transaction from which the unconscious is established through the play of differences between the two terms.

Lacan took his analysis of the event a step further. He remembered that when Freud told the same story in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud indicated that the first few times the child played the game, he spoke only the first term "fort" (as "o-o-o-o"). Lacan referred to this solitary signifier as the "unary" signifier, but also as that which interferes between the drives and meaning, something that is both nonsensical and irreducible. These conditions are in complete contrast with the binary system of the complete game ("fort-da"). With this second signifier, in Lacan's view, a number of momentous events occur: the creation of meaning, the exclusion of drives, the formation of the unconscious and the emergence of the subject into the symbolic order (otherwise known as the field of the Other), and the inauguration of desire.[45]

In order to clarify this issue, Lacan developed his theory that the foundation for the development of personality takes place during the mirror stage of psychic development, when the young child first sees and identifies him-or-herself in a mirror. Lacan claimed that this experience formed the basis for what he ultimately called the *imaginary order*. (He ultimately went on to uncover three experiential

orders in all: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real.) The *otherness* of the image the child assumes in the mirror stage, he asserted, creates a potentially negative dimension in the child's existence. I am never, in Lacan's model, fully "myself" because the relationship within which my ego comes into being is a relationship with an image that is *not me*. This "not me" emerges as an unattainable ideal. Lacan noted how this experience could lead either to a feeling of jubilation due to a sense of mastery through the recognition of one's identity, or to a feeling of negativity closely aligned with feelings of alienation and meaninglessness

Driven by the fantasy of the "fragmented body,"—(not fully itself)—the ego undergoes three distinct phases of development, of imaginary, narcissistic, and specular identification—leading to the assumption of the protective armor of an alienated identity in which the ego identifies with the Other. The ego emerges here as the result of the conflict between the child's perceived visual appearance in the specular image of the mirror and his/her narcissistic emotional experience of that image. The child's alienation from his/her imaginary self introduces the imaginary element, while the figure of the adult (as the big Other, the one who carries the child) introduces the symbolic element. In this way, the imaginary self deals with the restricted spheres of consciousness and self-awareness.

When Lacan subsequently developed his theory of the *symbolic order*, he began to view the imaginary in a different light, as the realm of experience structured by the symbolic order. He no longer focused his analysis on the imaginary realization of the subject integrating its fragmented states into a well-rounded ego, but on the symbolic plane instead. It became apparent to him that the imaginary realm involved a linguistic dimension. This means that sensory-perceptual phenomena (like images and experiences of one's own body or the lived emotions of the thoughts and feelings of others) need to be recognized as shaped primarily by socio-linguistic structures and dynamics.

Following Saussure's theory of linguistic structure, Lacan divided the whole of language into oral speech and written language; linguistic signs, correspondingly, were divided into signifiers and signified. The *signifier* becomes the foundation of the symbolic order, while the *signified* and signification are seen to belong to the imaginary order. He came to believe that language has to have both symbolic and imaginary aspects, with the analytic experience unfolding at the joining of the two. "The goal in analyzing neurotics," said Lacan, "is to eliminate the interference in symbolic relations created by imaginary identifications."[46] A significant part of the analytic experience thus becomes "nothing other than the exploration of the blind alleys of imaginary experience."[47]

In the later part of his career, Lacan began to focus on the role of the real in the life of the psyche, as the realm of authentic and unchangeable truth. Unlike

the symbolic order which is constituted in terms of oppositions like "presence" and "absence," he had always maintained that there is no absence in the order of the real. In his own words, it was "without fissure."[48] He now, however, recognized that the symbolic order introduced "a cut in the real," and that the process of signification was "the world of words that creates the world of things."[49] The order of the real emerges as that which is outside language, something impossible to imagine and impossible to integrate into the symbolic order. Ultimately Lacan recognized that the order of the real can be experienced as a traumatic gap in the symbolic order—as in the case of someone experiencing a natural disaster. One of the main methods of Lacan's reality-oriented psychoanalysis became in consequence to drain the traumatic experiences of the real into the form of the symbolic order through free association. The analyst searches the analysand's discourse for sounds, words, or images of fixation, and through a dialectical process of inquiry brings them into the regular metonymic flow of the unconscious symbolic order.

The relation between metaphor and metonymy, especially in dream analysis, is key to understanding the role of language in Lacan's re-working of Freud. A metaphor is the illumination of one part of experience by another. It is the connection of dissimilars through analogy, by substituting word for word, image for image, sign for sign, and through the process creating a third thing, e.g. a gold sunset, strands of laughter, etc. Metonymy, on the other hand, is the evocation of the whole from one of its parts, by a connection such as effect for cause, function for structure, abode for person, the desired for desire. From the Freudian notion that the subject is not master in his own home (because it is inhabited by the id), Lacan drew the idea that the divided subject can be represented by a chain of signifiers in which the level of the message uttered does not coincide with the utterance itself. Lacan's biographer, Elisabeth Roudinesco, explained his conception of the "divided subject" in the following way: "Man is determined by words in the form of a language speaking in its place."[50] A few pages later she explained this further: "The chain cohabits with conscious speech in accordance with the model of a moebius strip: One passes without interruption from one surface to another without any impression of change … Through language, the unconscious subscription was simultaneously present and absent. On the one hand, it promoted the symbolic existence of the subject; on the other, this was not at its disposal. The unconscious was thus an 'other' text to be read with certain indices."[51]

Lacan himself made this point when he announced that "the unconscious is the discourse of the other."[52] This linguistic situation involves a complex interplay between the abstract category of otherness, the concrete actual other person, and the alter ego. This constitutes a lived experience rather than something that can be known abstractly.

When we look for the workings of the unconscious in dreams, in Lacan's view we need to pay special attention to the structure of language. When the dream in general is characterized by the activity of *transposition,* for example, this activity emerges as an endless sliding of the signified beneath the signifier. This relationship, which has its origins in Freud, has two dimensions: *condensation,* referring to a structure made up of the metaphorical process of the superimposition of signifiers (connecting two dissimilars, like saying that time is money); and *displacement,* referring to a structure made up of the metonymical process of a swerving of meanings (the part for a whole, like referring to a woman in the 1930's or 1940's as "a skirt"). Consequently, in the case of metaphor a symptom is determined as the substitution of a corporeal signifier for another repressed signifier, while in metonymy unconscious desire is caught as the "desire for desire."[53]

We find that within the unconscious, metonymy plays the more important role. The displacement of metonymy is a result of the mirror stage. Although the child first recognizes his or her reflection in the mirror as a complete substitution for him-or-herself (acting as a metaphor), the child soon realizes that the reflection is of an Other, a displacement of the self (acting as a metonym). Thus, since language is split between *signifier* and *signified*, it primarily operates as metonymy. Language understood as metonymy always leaves a gap, since no complete meaning can be attained. Language, though, since it is like the unconscious, strives to fulfill repressed desire. One way of understanding language as a gap is to open a dictionary to find the meaning of a word. We are unable to find stable meaning in such a resource because language cannot satisfy desire; we continually search for what Lacan called the *objet petit a* (the specific hidden thing we're looking for—the object of desire we seek in the Other) that will fulfill us, but that *objet* is based on a lack, and this lack is a product of language. Language is made up of generalities while what we're looking for is the meaning of something specific and tangible.[54]

Despite these linguistic complexities, Lacan's version of psychoanalysis is still goal-directed. "For Lacan, the goal of psychoanalytic treatment is not the patient's well-being or successful social life or personal self-fulfillment, but to bring the patient to confront the elementary coordinates and deadlocks of his or her desire."[55] Desire is what is left over when needs are subtracted from demands. The child has basic needs (change diaper, provide food, etc.); society in turn has basic demands, which must be met before these needs are fulfilled (say please, don't hit your sister or you won't get your snack). Desire finally is what is programmed onto the unconscious as a result of how these needs and demands are negotiated. When the subject's desires are "barred," he or she is alienated from their natural needs and derailed onto the tracks of non-natural desires which are doomed never to be completely satisfied, like wanting and acquiring toys which are designed

to break almost immediately or are in some other way not what was promised. Lacanian psychoanalysis is not about showing the subject how to satisfy his or her desires, but to educate the subject about how society functions by creating artificial desires in the first place.[56] Analysis is ended when the signifier is bound to the signified and gives rise to the creation of new meaning; this is the capstone to the whole process.

Anti-Oedipus, or Deleuze/Guattari on Freud

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the anti-psychiatrist Felix Guattari wrote a number of books together, in which they attempted first to explain the relationship between philosophy and the concepts it creates, and then to initiate the dismantling of many of the assumptions of the standardized thinking that is the result of these concepts being enacted in late capitalist society. Accordingly, they identified their philosophy of *schizoanalysis* as a strategy of disruption, to be directed against the stability and productive forces of modern capitalism. Their view of schizophrenia as a potentially liberating force was directly at odds with the prevailing modernist belief that schizophrenia is a correctible form of mental illness. Deleuze and Guattari discovered in what they called their "nomad thought" a kind of work space within which the possibilities of living and thinking outside the common lines of power can be worked out once these lines of power are disrupted.

In the first volume of their work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, entitled *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), they attempted to explode the part of Freudian dogma that reduces to the unity of the "Oedipus Complex" the multiplicity of social relations that constitute an individual. What was left, they discovered, was a "body without organs," a term they appropriated from the surrealist writer Artaud in order to signify the residual effect of a schizoidal process, whereby the individual person gets replaced by a system that creates "desiring machines" who exist to consume its products. Difference without identity becomes the goal of nomad thought, then, since "molar" identities are controllable by the system, while "molecular" desiring machines are not. Desiring machines can't escape the double-bind experience, however, an idea that captures the self-defeating character of the politics of desire. For an example, imagine parents who say to their child, "always tell us the truth," and then the child tells them about something bad he or she did and gets punished for it. The child would perceive this as a no-win or double-bind situation, unless the meta-message of the parents was understood: "don't get into trouble in the first place." Similarly, even if the body without organs is able to disconnect from the system in order to record on the surface of its own hyped-up awareness the ordinarily hidden activities of capitalist production, this doesn't mean that it has

any answers to its dilemma. Even when the desiring machine knows its desires are artificial, it can't escape them.

Critically aware of their own revolutionary status and of the need for many of their readers to discover a new system of ready-mades for their entertainment, Deleuze and Guattari knew that the force of their thought could have little end in sight other than to promote an awareness of the kinds of power existing in our societies and in our minds. Their strategy was not to look for new answers—which would necessarily be employed to develop new systems of power—but to exemplify ways of thinking and living that are constantly vigilant against the abuses of power. This point of view is consistent with what we find in Guattari's anti-psychiatric work: not a desire to cure, but a desire to militate.[57]

Concluding Remarks

We can recognize how all these theorists who are commenting on Freud's work conceive of the real world as something of a single piece that is imposed on the individual by the social order, which, when it goes to work on the self, creates constraints, repressions, and renunciations—sources of neurosis, perhaps, but also the stuff from which a new personality might be made. But if there is a residual self left over from the conditioning imposed by the social forces that control our very thoughts and desires, how can we find the words to talk about it since the words we use belong to the same system that defines us?

Perhaps we need to look for a part of language that is non-rational and non-categorical, neither asocial nor a negation of order. Following the anti-psychiatry movement we might find this language in the speech of schizophrenics. Or, breaking with the scientific habit of using words as instruments, we might turn to Roland Barthes's declaration that words may be seen as dynamic literary texts, with the capacity to explode, vibrate, or transform intended meanings. Foucault once claimed his purpose was "to reveal a positivist unconsciousness of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature."[58] He came to believe that the western notion of "man" had become a conditioned product of the modern epistemic epoch. From this point of view, we are in danger of becoming little more than potential consumers of new and better versions of ourselves. We don't produce science so much as it produces us.

In consequence, could there be something about the "medical gaze"[59] that is inextricably tied up with a determinist framework? There is a current trend to identify varying yet still legitimate forms of behavior as being medically treatable. Recognizing whether a given situation is a medical problem in the first place has

become an important issue. The borderline behaviors that have come under the purview of psychiatry and pharmacology in recent years include grief, madness, depression, gambling, stuttering, and homosexuality.

Is this tendency to create problems merely an example of market forces at work? Or does this phenomenon reflect a natural tendency for various forces in society to assume their own avenues to the assumption of power? Not too long ago the media introduced the very complex issue regarding the involvement of psychologists as military advisors for the interrogation of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and at other unnamed locations. Which forces do these psychologists represent?

We are clearly living in a post-Freudian world. Freud's modernist dream, consistent with Enlightenment ideals, was to create a perfectible science of consciousness that would ultimately have the power to liberate people from their confused and conflicted selves. But we can't seem to get past the distortions that surround us. We are incessantly exposed to all sorts of images containing signifiers that we are unable to ignore. If in consequence we tend to internalize and become consumed by an increasingly large number of signified impressions that are uncontrollable and insatiable, then the limits of any science of consciousness become increasingly clear, and the insights made possible by hermeneutical interpretation must be included in our ongoing efforts to liberate ourselves from the power of these impressions.

If disillusionment and disenchantment permeate recent Continental philosophy, strategies for enabling the processes of liberation and freedom which are resistant to these strains are also present. They are directed at the various societal forces which if not checked will increase the sickness which already permeates our language, desires, values, politics, and economics. These philosophers are no longer content to describe the world; they are providing us with the tools to change it. If we are ever to resolve the dangerous and manipulative double-bind scenarios created by the social and cultural environments in which we live, we will need to learn to think about our world, with or without their help, in radically different ways.

Notes

1. See Ware, et al. *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development,* vol. 6, pp. 128–129.
2. See Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, pp. 19–20.
3. Husserl, *Ideas I*, pp. 261–262.
4. ibid., pp. 261–262.
5. ibid., pp. 262–263.
6. Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time,* p. 290.
7. ibid., p. 112.

8. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 279 ff.
9. See Dainton, Barry, "Temporal Consciousness," section 2.7.
10. See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 89–99.
11. Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1: 2; p. 5.
12. Levin, *Pathologies of the Modern Self*, p. 23.
13. See MacIntyre, Alisdair: "Freud'" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* pp. 249–251.
14. Freud, "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement" in Brill, ed., *Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* p. 939.
15. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,* p. 345.
16. ibid., p. 377.
17. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint,* p. 88.
18. Ricoeur, ibid., pp. 28–29.
19. ibid., p. 378.
20. ibid., p. 381.
21. ibid., p. 381.
22. cited in Loewenberg, "Psychoanalysis as a Hermeneutic Science," in Brooks, P. & Woloch, A., *Whose Freud? The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture,* p. 97.
23. cited in Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophical Phenomenology, Critical Theory, Structuralism*, p. 128.
24. ibid., p. 131.
25. see Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in *Writing and Difference*, pp. 200–201.
26. Freud, *The Ego and the Id and Other Works. The Standard Edition, vol. 19,* p. 230.
27. ibid., p. 230.
28. Derrida, 1978, p. 226.
29. Freud, 1961, p. 232.
30. Derrida, 1978, p. 224.
31. ibid., p. 227.
32. see Kearney p. 284.
33. See Kearney, p. 291.
34. quoted in Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* p. 210.
35. Foucault & Binswanger,. *Dream Existence.* pp. 38–39.
36. ibid., p. 41.
37. ibid., p. 42.
38. ibid., p. 43.
39. See Kurzweil, *The Age of Structuralism*, p. 136.
40. quoted in Kurzweil, ibid., 140.
41. See Fonagy, *Freud's "On Narcissism," an Introduction,* 133–134.
42. Brill, ed., *Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, p. 145.
43. Strachey, ed., *Collected Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XVIII*, 15.
44. ibid., p. 15.
45. See Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics,* pp. 166–172.
46. Lacan, *Seminar I*, p. 132.
47. ibid., p. 272.

48. Lacan, *Seminar II,* p. 97.
49. Lacan, *Ecrits*: *A Selection,* "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," also called "The Rome Discourse," p. 65.
50. Roudinesco, *Lacan*, p. 303.
51. ibid., p. 313.
52. Lacan, 2004, p. 214.
53. ibid., pp. 314–315.
54. Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, pp. 9–11.
55. ibid., p. 3.
56. ibid., p. 104.
57. See Bindeman, "Liberation and its Constraints: A Philosophical Analysis of Key Issues in Psychiatry." In *Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research, Volume I, 5*; pp. 501–510.
58. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, p. xi.
59. Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception,* p. 31.

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CHAPTER THREE

Silence at the Edge of Language: Wittgenstein and Heidegger

Introduction

Heidegger and Wittgenstein, who wrote their most significant works in the decades between the two world wars, were fundamentally concerned with the workings of language, especially at its limits. They largely tried to avoid metaphysical issues, and focused instead on describing different kinds of meaningful, communicative, and self-reflective experience. They both noted the significance of silence in these contexts although in very different ways. Silence by its very nature is antiphilosophical because it challenges the authority and autonomy of language itself.

Wittgenstein is an antiphilosopher because he characterized philosophical activity as either essentially negative—consisting in correcting people whenever they attempt to say anything metaphysical—or as a sickness from which one needs to be cured. He also asserted that, strictly speaking, philosophy is a form of nonsense because it attempts to bend its thoughts by force into the form of theoretical propositions, and because it never touches anything real. By insisting that anything "higher" is inaccessible to language, he relegated philosophy to irrelevance—and correspondingly raised the status of strategic silence. Yet, oddly enough, he kept on philosophizing to the very end.

Despite his deep and abiding appreciation of the history of philosophy, Heidegger is an antiphilosopher because of his insistence on the need to construct

a non-objectifying term for human existence, namely *Dasein*—meaning "being-there," or "situatedness." Heidegger's extended and rigorous exploration of the meaning of Dasein in his classic *Being and Time,* along with his conception in that work of being-in-the-world as the horizon for his analysis of everyday existence, together make a major contribution to our understanding of the lived experience. His belief in the central importance of poetry and painting, as providing Dasein with the possibility of escaping from the constant threat of nihilism through the magical power of art to transform language and to provide light during a time of darkness, is also essentially antiphilosophical because it privileges other forms of discourse over the philosophical.

How is it possible to mean more than we actually say? Why would we want to do so in the first place? Why would we ever wish to use language in such a way that we would want to transcend its logical form and its informative purpose? Finally, how could silence ever perform the function, through indirect discourse, of reaching beyond the limits of language? Such questions reflect the painful realization that there are times when we are unable to articulate (either to ourselves or to others) what we really want to say. Such moments place us in a situation of uncanniness, whereby we are forced to confront the essential disconnectedness between ourselves and the world around us. The common reaction to this moment of silence is to fill it up with words, since it's not the sort of experience one wants to endure for long. When we confront language with silence, however, the nature of language, and the constructed world it encompasses, both undergo significant changes.

The limits of language are explored in this chapter through an analysis of key passages in the works of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Heidegger's designation of nihilism as the inner logic of Western history is linked to Beckett's pure reflective consciousness, unmediated by thought, of a world bereft of comfort or meaning. Wittgenstein's subtractive view of language ("If only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then nothing gets lost")[1] is linked to Giacometti's rejection of the mundane physicalness of things in search of what is real in our experience (like his wish to preserve in his sculpture a person's gaze as the only feature of the face that would remain on the skull after death). Silence is understood to play contrasting roles here, of denial through disruption of the relation between self and world on the one hand, and preservation through the conjunction of the two on the other.

Part I: Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein and the Limits of Language

The relation between language and world was most extensively studied by Ludwig Wittgenstein, both in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and in his *Philosophical*

Investigations. In the earlier work Wittgenstein developed the idea, which later had an enormous influence on the logical positivists, that a formal "theory of language" could be developed, capable of showing how propositions succeed in representing real states of affairs and in serving the purposes of real life. Language is like a picture which is laid against reality like a measuring rod and reaches right out to it, he said. But Wittgenstein soon saw that the possibility of relating propositions in language to facts concerning the world could not in itself be proved. Without proof, his house of cards collapses. Once the validity of using language to describe the world is questioned, not much is left. Although propositions are indeed capable of modeling and describing the world with a rigor not unlike that of mathematical representations of physical phenomena, they cannot describe how they represent this world without becoming self-referential. Propositions are consequently recognized essentially as meaningless, since their meaning consists precisely in their ability to connect with the world outside of language.

Discussions about ethics, values, and the meaning of life were also consequently recognized by Wittgenstein to be meaningless, since they too had no clear referents outside language. This does not mean that these issues were of no interest to him, however. It merely indicates that a different way of using language, perhaps under the ordinance of silence, must be invented. Most importantly, the essential dignity of "the unsayable" must be respected. As he writes most significantly in his *Tractatus*, proposition 7: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."[2] The key problem for us now becomes the following: how can we move the boundaries of language outward to the point whereby our concern with ineffable experience can find a voice, without trivializing the experience? Wittgenstein's own thinking here can be indicated by his comments in a letter to his friend Paul Engelmann concerning a poem by the German poet Ludwig Uhland: "And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be—unutterably—contained in what has been uttered."[3] Wittgenstein's distinction between showing and saying, first developed in his *Tractatus*, comes into play here: if we are careful in limiting our statements to what can be said clearly, then those experiences about which we cannot speak clearly (the unsayable) get shown.

Wittgenstein returned to the problem of how to connect word and thing in his book *Philosophical Investigations*. When we ask what a word means, he noted, the implication is that there is a choice involved between the possible association that can be made between the word we are given and the thing or things it will signify. We do not ask for the meaning of a thing, we ask its name. Only words can give meaning. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had written that "only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning."[4] The nexus of a proposition is the point at which the proposition reaches out to the situation and touches it.

(This is his "picture theory" of language.) Wittgenstein both in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations* distinguished meaning from sense: propositions (sentences in the *Investigations*) are made up of words. Although the words may have different meanings, the sentence as a whole still makes sense. Children are taught the meaning of words before they are taught grammar. Both meaning and grammar affect their understanding of the world:

> Ostensive teaching of words can be said to establish an association between the word and the thing. But what does this mean? … One very likely thinks first of all that a picture of the object comes before the child's mind when it hears the word … (Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination) … If the ostensive teaching has this effect,—am I to say that it effects an understanding of the world? … Doubtless the ostensive teaching helped to bring this about, but only together with a particular training. With different training the same ostensive teaching of these words would have effected a quite different understanding.[5]

What is taught depends on the needs of the individual who is to be using the language. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is a study in how language works. The rules of language make up its grammar. Grammars undergo change (as Saussure has shown with his study of diachronic linguistics). The *Investigations* is a phenomenology of the behavior of language.

Language Games

Wittgenstein presents two "language games" at the beginning of the *Investigations*. The first consists merely of four words: block, pillar, slab, beam. The language serves as a means of communication between builder A and assistant B, and consists in orders by which B knows what to pass to A. Wittgenstein expands this into a second language by adding (1) the two words "this" and "there" to be used with gestures of pointing, (2) a series of the letters of the alphabet, and (3) a number of color samples. The words in such a language are very simple, and each word arbitrarily stands for an object. But: "Their *application* is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy!"[6]

Such primitive languages seem incomplete, since they consist merely of orders and commands. They cannot adequately circumscribe even a simple situation. Yet what about our own language? Even here this issue is not so clear:

> Ask yourself whether our language is complete;—whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language. (And how many houses or streets does it take before a town becomes a town?)[7]

Wittgenstein said language as a dynamic organism, using the primitive languages of children as a paradigm to help explain our own use of language: "Those games by means of which children learn their native language, I will call 'language games.' … I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language game.'"[8] These language games are grounded in the forms of life. This means that the ultimate basis for what a word means is simply how it is used in a given situation.

In order to understand Wittgenstein's conception of language games it is necessary to come first to an understanding of the milieu in which they are employed. Wittgenstein's concepts are often very fluid, and it is therefore necessary to narrow them down from their outside in. This very inexactness on the part of Wittgenstein is with a definite purpose: in the *Investigations*, he shows how certain problems can be explained only in an inexact way. But inexact "does not mean 'unusable.'"[9] In fact, the very word "exact" is vague: "No single ideal of exactness has been laid down; we do not know what we should be supposed to imagine under this head."[10]

Explanations can go only so far; there must be an agreement to stop explaining at that uncertain point when understanding occurs. Explanations serve a purpose. And this purpose is: to prevent misunderstandings. Wittgenstein's main concern in the *Investigations* is with language, and the misunderstandings that arise in its use. "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about."[11] "A philosophical problem has the form: I don't know my way about."[12]

Wittgenstein wishes to clear away the misunderstandings that occur concerning our use of words. These misunderstandings are caused partly by the existence of certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of our language. The usual forms of our language appear as if unanalyzed, implying that there is something hidden in them that has to be brought to light. We can eliminate these misunderstandings by making our expressions more exact. As Wittgenstein says: "What is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than that which is more exact. Thus the point here is what we call the 'goal.'"[13] The goal seems to be the essence of language, something that lies beneath its surface. Since we don't know our way about on the surface of language, how are we to get beneath its surface? Wittgenstein writes in his preface to the *Tractatus* (and it applies to the *Investigations* too) that "The reason why these problems are posed is the logic of our language is misunderstood."[14]

In order to explore the nature of things, we must proceed logically. Consequently, we imagine that logic has depth to it, and that it lies at the bottom of all the sciences. Yet logic itself is a language; moreover, it may not be the most exact

language we have in certain situations, in which inexactness would be more exact—that is, achieve the goal more perfectly. The whole account of logic and of the necessity for clarity of expression in the *Tractatus* is seen in the *Investigations* from a new perspective. Wittgenstein initially had assumed the *a priori* necessity of a pure intermediary between propositional signs and the facts of the world: the need for logical form. But a sentence can have an indefinite sense, and still be understandable. Wittgenstein had misunderstood the role of the ideal in our language:

> The ideal, as we think of it, is unshakable. You can never get outside it; you must always turn back. There is no outside, outside you cannot breathe,—Where does this idea come from? It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.[15]

When we take these glasses off, "We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider web with our fingers."[16] This web is the connection between language and reality. The tear means that "We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place."[17] We pass from logical explanation in the *Tractatus* to phenomenological description in the *Investigations.*

Philosophical Grammar

We ask again, looking for a more precise answer: what is Wittgenstein's aim in the *Investigations*? The aim is for complete clarity, for all philosophical problems to disappear. The end in view might be seen as an improvement in our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice. But this is not the aim here. The confusions we are involved with here "arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work."[18] This idling of language is *grammar*:

> Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfill its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs.[19]
>
> Essence is expressed by grammar.[20]
>
> Grammar tells what kind of object anything is.[21]

Here again the emphasis is on description and away from explanation. But, how can our descriptions achieve clarity? We must command a clear use of our words. This will produce the understanding which consists in making connections. In order to get a clear view of what is troubling us, we must lay down rules, and with their help develop a technique for communication. Yet when we become entangled

in our own rules a misunderstanding occurs, and things do not turn out as we had assumed. This entanglement is precisely what Wittgenstein wishes to get a clear view of. This is the place where the language games come in: "The language games are set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities."[22]

Wittgenstein admonishes us to "Don't think, but look!"[23] We should look for relationships, for things in common, between games in general, and between language games in particular. He continues: "And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities over-lapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail."[24] These similarities can be characterized as family resemblances, since similarities in a family criss-cross in the same way.

The problem Wittgenstein is introducing is the philosophical one of universals: how can the name "game," for example, encompass that group of things that together have not one single thing in common? In answer Wittgenstein shows how all the members of a family need not have a single feature in common for them all to still have the same "face." Games too form a family; yet how is the concept "game" bounded? Its use is unregulated; the use of words is not everywhere circumscribed by rules. If it were, the possibility of doubt would not be allowed, which is absurd. It is we ourselves who draw up boundaries. We do so for special purposes, like laying down a single ideal of exactness. The concept "game" has blurred edges. We play the language game with the word "game" by giving examples of the different situations in which it is used in approximately the same way. These examples are employed by the learners of that language game in a certain way. Each example alone is inexact, yet the network of which it is a part presents the learners with a more or less clear understanding of the use of that concept, in that language game.

We make a mistake if we look for an explanation; we ought to look at what happens. The question is not one of explaining a language game by means of our experiences, but of noting when a language game is played. To say that the emphasis is not on explaining a language game by means of our experience seems at first glance to be contradicted by Wittgenstein in a passage he writes in his book *On Certainty*: "If e.g. someone says 'I don't know if there's a hand here' he might be told 'Look closer,'—This possibility of satisfying oneself is part of the language game. Is one of its essential features."[25] But this passage is soon clarified: "We recognize normal circumstances but cannot precisely describe them. At most, we can describe a range of abnormal ones."[26] We describe a range of abnormal circumstances in order to infer from them a more precise description of normal circumstances; this is Wittgenstein's purpose in employing language games. But—

not all language games are "abnormal" or created with the purpose of clarification. Language games can exist in the natural order of things too, as Wittgenstein shows with his extensive list of language games in the I*nvestigations*.[27] The list referred to might be described as a list of "speech acts" (after Saussure) since it refers to acts of speech such as making statements, asking, referring, giving orders, obeying orders, play-acting, and so on, and does not refer to words which are simply "items" of a language. The thing to do with these language games is to note when they are being played. But the concern is still the same: namely, for what is going on. The problems that arise in given speech situations are about the use of language in those situations. The philosophical focus of this concern is still on description.

Different Kinds of Seeing

Wittgenstein's thinking toward a theory of description centers around his discussion concerning two uses of the verb "to see": "seeing," and "seeing as." We must discover first, however, what he means by a description, since there are many different kinds of things that are called descriptions. The following may be given as examples: the description of a body's position by means of its coordinates; the description of a facial expression; the description of a sensation of touch; the description of a mood; the description of a room. What we need to call to mind is the differences between the language games in which each of these expressions is used. Thus, descriptions are instruments for particular uses; they are not simply word pictures of facts.

Rules of grammar are needed to guide us in the usage of words. But these rules of grammar are not stationary. Language is a living thing, and its rules are fluid. They are fixed only temporarily and in an arbitrary way. They have a history. The problem is to notice when a language game is being played—we can then infer the rules of grammar that govern its use: "Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfill its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs."[28] The rules of grammar define a language game but in no way explain it. But as Wittgenstein writes elsewhere (in his *Philosophical Remarks*), "To explain is more than to describe; but every explanation contains a description."[29] For him, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on description: "Each time I say that, instead of such and such a representation, you could also use this other one, we take a further step towards the goal of grasping the essence of what is represented."[30]

To further his work towards a theory of descriptions Wittgenstein distinguishes between depth grammar and surface grammar. Surface grammar leads us to what is immediately presented about the use of a word by the way it is used in

the construction of a sentence. Depth grammar deals with the relations between the different uses of words: their meanings. The problem is the discontinuity between the two, since the use of a word does not lead us immediately to its meaning.

The problem is compounded by the observation that some meanings are nebulous, and we are uncertain how to describe them. For example, certain mental states are intangible, such as the feeling of being certain what time it is without having available a recognizable way of knowing it (like a clock or the Sun). But what is really intangible about this state? Don't we refuse to count what is tangible about it as part of the state we are discussing? We often attach the word "atmosphere" to anything that has an "indescribable character," but this is a construction on our part. We will feel frustrated, for example, if we try to describe the aroma of coffee because we lack the words for such a description. But where did the idea that such a description might be possible come from? From the fact that coffee does have an aroma. But we are able to see that a discussion of the meaning of description makes no sense at all without constant reference to experience.

Wittgenstein's discussion of the distinction between "seeing" and "seeing as" will help clarify the relationship between description and experience:

> Two uses of the word "see."
> The one: "What do you see there?"—"l see this" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other:—"l see a likeness between these two faces"—let the man l tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself.[31]

The second kind of seeing is an experience that Wittgenstein calls "noticing an aspect."[32] A man might make an accurate drawing of two faces. I might notice in the drawing a likeness between the two faces that he didn't see. I might then point out this likeness to him. Or perhaps he might notice it on his own. In either case, what he sees has not changed; yet he sees it differently. This experience Wittgenstein calls "noticing an aspect."

Wittgenstein then distinguishes between the continuous seeing of an aspect, and the dawning of an aspect. When an aspect changes, the new aspect is the expression of a new perception accompanied by the realization that the object of the perception has not changed. The expression "Now l see it" shows this; what I see hasn't changed, I have simply reorganized my visual impression, since a new unnoticed aspect of the object has "dawned" on me. This reorganized impression is not whatever I saw. It is not the drawing itself, but something I noticed in it. Simply by copying the drawing, I shall never present to someone what it was about the drawing that I noticed.

In order to clarify the distinction between the continuous seeing of an aspect and the dawning of an aspect, Wittgenstein provides the following examples: "I look at an animal and am asked: 'What do you see?' I answer: 'A rabbit.'—I see a landscape; suddenly a rabbit runs past. I exclaim 'A rabbit!'"[33] The first example is a report, the second is an exclamation. Both are expressions of perception and of visual experience, but only the latter is forced from us. Yet, since it is a description of a perception, it is also the expression of a thought. Looking at an object does not require thinking of it; having the visual experience expressed implies that you are also thinking about it. The dawning of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought, but the impression is never simultaneously two things at once.

The criterion of the visual experience is the representation of what is seen. This concept of a representation, however, is elastic. So too is the concept of what is seen, when it is intimately connected with the concept of a representation. Wittgenstein gives the example of the drawing of the Jostrow duck/rabbit to illustrate this elasticity. There are two possible ways of seeing this figure: (1) the possibility of seeing at one time a duck and at another time a rabbit, without necessarily realizing this to be the same figure; (2) the possibility of seeing the aspect change—of seeing the rabbit figure change into a duck figure. The change produces a surprise not produced by the recognition: a new experience.

When also we know that we are really seeing something, and when do we know that we are merely thinking it? When we read a blueprint, or when we experience a painting, how do we know whether either of there is a genuine visual experience? According to Wittgenstein, the question should be, rather, in what sense is it one? The question "In what sense is a given experience genuine?" parallels an aesthetic attitude that is not concerned so much with whether an object is a genuine work of art, but rather with the question "in what sense, of what quality, is the experience of this object an aesthetic experience?" It is of course possible to examine a painting as one would examine a blueprint: as an intellectual exercise, canceling the sensual experience of the painting altogether. It's not "wrong" to read a painting like a blueprint. But it is possible to *feel* the presence of a painting, too. Indeed, it is possible to do both, in coordination with each other: to see the picture visually, to feel it, to experience its presence, and also (but not simultaneously) to read it, to try to understand it, to work at knowing it. There seems to be a kind of balancing act discussed here underneath what is actually said: a philosophy of life about how we may live with the things around us, balanced between feeling on the one hand and intellect on the other, between "seeing" and "seeing as," or between relating to a thing's surface grammar and to its depth grammar.

Often we are "struck by a likeness." But the impression fades; we cannot maintain it. Therefore, the effect of being struck tells us something about the nature of being struck itself: it cannot be both a looking *and* a thinking. We don't see the likeness fade; therefore we don't see the likeness. The likeness is an interpretation on our part; sometimes we infer (mistakenly) that we actually see the likeness as part of the object:

> —but what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects.
>
> It is almost as if 'seeing the sign in this context' were an echo of a thought. "The echo of a thought in sight"—one would like to say.[34]
>
> One *kind* of aspect might be called 'aspects of organization.' When the aspect changes parts of the picture go together which before did not.[35]

We often have to organize what we hear, because of the background and foreground elements of sound. The play between harmony and melody in music provides an example: what sometimes happens is the melody will drift off into silence, and the harmony will remain, enter into the foreground as the basis for a new melody, and call up a new harmony out of itself. But to recognize this as happening, a technique of listening must be mastered, just as in the case with other aspects of organization: "It is only if someone can do, has learnt, is master of, such-and-such, that it makes sense to say he has *this* experience."[36]

Thinking and Meaning

We also organize in a similar way the concepts we use in speech. Concepts are made up of aspects, of ways of seeing; they denote the mastery of a certain way of seeing that includes other similar ways of seeing. Wittgenstein is saying that while we see, imagine, and feel with concepts, we don't think or interpret things with them. Thinking is active, seeing is passive: "A concept forces itself on one."[37] Thinking begins when we have conceptual difficulties. Our ordinary language, which of all languages is the one which pervades our life, holds our minds rigidly in one position, and this causes mental cramp. The task of philosophy is to remove this mental cramp. Philosophy will penetrate so far into the function of everyday language and thought, Wittgenstein hopes, that puzzlement and mental cramp will give way to the realization of how simple everyday language is. Philosophy as a discipline can help to organize our thinking only by helping us to organize the expression of our thoughts.

Because we often fail to come to a clear understanding of what the words we use mean, Wittgenstein attempts to come to a better understanding of our use of the word "meaning":

> When l pronounce this word while reading this expression it is completely filled with its meaning.—"How can this be, if meaning is the use of the word?" Well, what I said was intended figuratively. Not that l chose the figure: it forced itself on me.—But the figurative employment of the word can't get into conflict with the original one.[38]

There is no conflict between the original use of the word "meaning" (as use) and its figurative intention because one never needs to choose between them. Within the language game of experiencing a word we speak of the meaning of an expression: in this situation we use this expression, and in another situation, another expression, to mean the same thing. Therefore one might speak of primary and secondary senses of words; but only if the word has a primary sense to someone can it be used by him or her n a secondary sense.

But meaning is as little an experience as intending: meaning and intending have no experience-content outside the game of experiencing a word. Because I intend to do something does not mean that I actually shall do it; this is just like the fact that thought does not automatically accompany speech. Each pair is not made up of concepts of the same kind although they are in very close connection.

Thinking is an experience that is close in kind to meaning. But thinking is a process; meaning is not: "For no process could have the consequences of meaning."[39] When I use a word, what I mean by that word is not a process that accompanies it. When I talk without thinking, certain accompanying phenomena which are otherwise present are missing, but they are not what thinking is. Thinking is not meaning—although they are related: "When I think in language, there aren't 'meanings' going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language is itself the vehicle of thought."[40]

We think within language; we must guard against letting the concepts we form as a byproduct of our thinking become too rigid. Concepts have their place in individual language games, but there is no underlying structure for a language as a whole, except another language game. Language games are not important as structures, but rather as parts of the philosophical activity of discovering which one is being played. This activity is actually a kind of therapy, since it helps us become aware of the limitations of the concepts that we use in defining the world around us. Philosophical problems are solved in Wittgenstein's view not by our discovering new information, but simply by rearranging what we already know.

Different Kinds of Knowing

Wittgenstein also distinguishes between "knowing" and "not doubting": "I do not doubt" may imply that doubt is logically excluded, but "I know" can be used interchangeably with "I believe" or "I suspect." The fact that I say that I must know that I am in pain seems at first to contradict this, until one realizes the occasion and purpose of such a statement: "'War is war' is not an example of the law of identity, either."[41] This means that we use words in different ways in different contexts: "I know" may indeed mean "I do not doubt," but doubt must not be logically excluded from knowing, because we use the phrase "I know" in situations where doubt is allowable.

This means that knowledge is the outcome of a process, of making the connections in a series of inferences. I cannot know things directly; knowing is not commensurate with seeing or feeling (which are still not only important sources of knowledge but also highly structured). This insight helps to explain the following puzzler:

> I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say "I know what you are thinking," and wrong to say, "I know what I am thinking." (A whole cloud of philosophy condensed in a drop of grammar.)[42]

Knowledge requires the distance of perspective. I can recognize or feel that what a person says about me is correct or incorrect, but I cannot know it as the outcome of my own process of reasoning, because my ego will constantly get in the way. We are reminded here of Nietzsche's remarkable aphorism:

> "I have done that," says my memory. "I could not have done that," says my pride, and remains inexorable. Finally my memory yields.[43]

Because there are different degrees of knowledge, there are different degrees of truth, and therefore different kinds of certainty. As Wittgenstein says, "The kind of certainty is the kind of language game."[44] We constantly come across problems concerning how well we know certain things because we have learned a single mathematical ideal of truth. For example, we can have the highest kind of certainty concerning the results of mathematics, which makes it so tempting to use as a model for our reflection, but the certainty of mathematics is an apodictic, self-reflecting one. What grounds certainty in Wittgenstein's view is the lifeworld, the forms of life that must be assumed for any kind of goal-oriented reflection to take place. When we have an experience in the lifeworld, such as grief for example, we come to the realization that there cannot be the same degree of certainty concerning whether a

particular expression of this feeling is genuine or not as there is for mathematics. There are degrees of expertness for those who attempt to judge the genuineness of the expressions of feelings, but this knowledge is taught only through experience. One does not acquire a technique here; one learns correct judgements. The rules of operation concerning feelings do not form a system, but at best only the fragments of one.

Certain kinds of evidence are imponderable; they are incapable of being weighed. This kind of evidence still has to prove itself by evidence that can be weighed. Imponderable evidence such as subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone, can convince us of the genuineness of a picture, but it is still possible for this to be proved right by documentary evidence, too. A person's silence can convince us of his guilt, but we cannot convince him on this ground alone. Genuineness calls up its opposite, which is pretense. Pretense must be learned; thus only older (and not younger) children are capable of it, and animals not at all. Sometimes we can distinguish genuineness from pretense without being able to describe the difference. We feel as if we need new words, yet when we try to define a feeling, we find that it is something special and indefinable. We therefore notice the grammatical difference between being able to describe and define something as something, and being able only to feel or see it. For Wittgenstein the more important thing here is the feeling.

Concluding Remarks

Philosophy for Wittgenstein is not an end in itself, but rather something standing in the way of living: "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to."[45] He also refuses (although ironically) to give philosophy any deep meaning:

> Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.[46]

> The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth …—Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)[47]

> What is your purpose in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.[48]

It appears that Wittgenstein has not moved very far from his earlier position: the problems of philosophy are not all that important, and what *is* important is not to be elaborated on. And yet, curiously, we come away from reading Wittgenstein with the impression that everything *has* gotten said, with nothing lost.

The phenomenon of silence is relevant here because it reveals itself only at the limits of language. We cannot *know* silence because we cannot describe what it is. But we *can* describe the effects of silence. Silence has meaning because it affects our lives. Wittgenstein's theory of description leads us to the realization that as long as silence remains something mysterious and imponderable, we will gain nothing from our experience of it. We must learn to look at what silence *does*, and try to avoid thinking about what its essence might be. In this way, the essence of silence will become gradually more and more clear to us—as long as we continue to describe our use of silence from different perspectives and in greater detail.

Part II: Heidegger

Heidegger and the Transformation of Selfhood

For additional insight concerning how the limits of language are reached, we turn to the work of Martin Heidegger. A major theme of his *Being and Time* is that everyday Dasein (Heidegger's term for the situatedness of the individual within the world of his or her experience) suffers from loss of self through its evaporating into the world of trivial concerns. Becoming absorbed into the impersonal collectiveness and idle chatter of daily work activity, Dasein is closed off from its real self. Although idle chatter provides comfort and security by limiting all discussion to what is self-evident and un-mysterious, it is not all-encompassing. There are moments in everyone's life when the experience of a breakdown within the world of common-sense experience takes place. Sickness, old age, and death are commonly held to be such triggers, since they are negative experiences that often lead to a momentary loss of perspective or equanimity. These moments of uncanniness lead to a breakdown in the ordinary use of language, and the stillness of silence looms large.

What also breaks down as a result of this uncanniness, is Dasein's ordinary understanding of time. In the face of death especially, this breakdown occurs: "When Dasein talks of time's passing away, it understands, in the end, more of time than it wants to admit."[49] He adds: "The ordinary way of characterizing time as an endless, irreversible sequence of 'nows' which passes away, arises from the temporality of falling Dasein."[50] In the face of death, however, Dasein experiences time within the future-directed mode of *anticipatory resoluteness*. Heidegger, believing it was necessary to develop an alternative to the ordinary conception of time, called this alternative "ecstatico-horizonal temporality,"[51] in order to denote the ecstatic unity of temporality, according to which it is possible for us to experience other beings despite the fact that they are constantly changing. The Greek term *Ekstasis*

(literally, "being outside oneself") designates for Heidegger how the unity of future, having-been, and present allows the human being to be "cleared," or emerge into the light as part of the process of *unhiddenness* (also translated as unconcealment).

Contrasting Notions of Truth

Unhiddenness has to with Heidegger's noticing a significant difference in ancient Greek formulations concerning words denoting truth:

> *What* then do the Greeks call *aletheia* (unhiddenness)? Not assertions, not sentences and not knowledge, but the beings (das Seinde) themselves, the totality of nature: the human world and the work of God … Only if beings are previously experienced in their hiddenness and self-concealment … only then is it necessary and possible for man to settle about wrestling beings from hiddenness and bringing them into unhiddenness, thus also placing himself within the unhiddenness of beings.[52]

Heidegger is contrasting an early Greek philosophical notion of truth with a later Platonic one. The early Greek philosophical notion of truth presents truth as a metaphorical process (e.g. Heraclitus's truth is fire and Thales's truth is water) in which meaning is carried over from one term to a second one, that was however initially believed to be totally unlike the first. In this way, a new meaning appears in the second term as if it were coming out of hiding (thus explaining Heidegger's term "unhiddenness"). For example, Thales's belief that water is the underlying principle of all things only makes sense when we understand that Thales was recognizing the similarity between the three forms of water (namely gaseous steam, liquid water, and solid ice) and the same three forms for all things in nature. Plato's understanding of truth, on the other hand, has to do with his theory of ideas, the highest and most perfect of which was the Greek term "*to agathon*" (meaning "the highest Good"). Heidegger argues that this later Greek understanding of truth shows the highest good as the empowerment or ground for the relation between being and truth which emerges as unhiddenness, since it shows truth as something totally present despite its ideal character, and as something essentially human.

But he cautions us: "One acts as if the essence of man is the most self-evident thing in the world."[53] The problem with this self-evident notion of truth is that its self-evidence is itself a kind of hiding. This complacency about the self-evidence of truth and consequently of man's nature as well, was nihilistic in Heidegger's view. It indicated that a kind of herd mentality had entered human society, with the disappearance of the individual as the locus of moral responsibility. This was due, he believed, to the success of social engineering on a mass scale, and led to the perception that all actions could be understood in terms of cause and effect

relations, so that no one could be held responsible for anything. He called this mentality "one-track thinking" and blamed the dominance of technology for this point of view. Heidegger was convinced that he, like many of his predecessors, was fighting off the demon of nihilism, still present in Western Europe 100 years after the time of Nietzsche.

In his essay "Time and Being," however, he indicated that whatever a theory of time might try to accomplish, it would have to offer a structure for what he called *the event* (Ereignis) and also place a necessary emphasis on the future as the primary mode of time. The "event" for Heidegger was his term for Dasein's appropriation of Truth (as *aletheia*) within the *clearing* that is opened up during the experience of authentic works of art. It also designates a resistance to nihilism because it replaces a calculative and instrumental form of thinking with a meditative one.[54]

Heidegger's few comments at the end of Part One of *Being and Time* taken together with his reflections on time in the essay "Time and Being" seem to point to something analogous to Nietzsche's experience of eternal recurrence, during which Nietzsche felt all of time to be collapsed upon itself, with past, present, and future all telescoped onto the same moment of willful yea-saying. Here again, we find ourselves at a place where language is shorn of its ability to make sense of its subject.

Different Kinds of Thinking

Heidegger says in his "Dialogue on Language" that at one time he was looking for the nature of language within the *logos*.[55] He speaks of the *logos* as a gathering; by this gathering he may refer to "bearing or gesture,"[56] to the "Region," or to "performance and endurance."[57] He also speaks of "gathering" in relation to thinking, in his *What is Called Thinking?*[58] (We remember how Augustine notes [in his *Confessions*, chapter XI] that the Latin term "cogitere" means "to gather." Furthermore, the locus of this gathering for Augustine is the memory). For Heidegger this gathering is made both by the *logos* and by the *nous.* Since *logos* and *nous* are both ancient Greek words for thinking, the relation between them must be clarified by reference to their root forms. This passage to the root forms of words marks an awareness of the limits to ordinary ways of using language. The difference between *nous* and *logo*s cannot be expressed by their surface meanings. This need to clarify the meanings of words by going down beneath their surface, below their ordinary usage, marks a *phenomenological reduction* of the nature of language by Heidegger.

The relation between *nous* and *logos* is made clear by Heidegger through their root forms in Greek, *noein* and *legein*, which in his view modify one

another within the root form of the word "thinking" which is the ancient Germanic term "*thanc*." When Heidegger speaks of thinking as thanking, he is digging beneath the surface meanings of the word thinking, back to the root word "thanc"—which refers to the gathered, the all-gathering thinking that recalls."[59] Thinking as thanking is a thinking of the heart: "Original thanking is the thanks owed for being."[60] Memory too moves and has its being in the *thanc*. Initially it did not mean the power to recall, but rather the gathering of thinking back into "what must thought."[61] "The *thanc* unfolds in memory, which persists as devotion."[62] Memory discloses itself through this root word as a taking-to-heart; thinking discloses itself as a letting-lie-before-us. *Noein* discloses more than the gathering of memory as recall; it is also the gathering of memory as taking-to-heart. The memory not only collects and stores thoughts as representations but also collects and stores thoughts as feelings. *Legein* discloses more than the gathering of words as logical thinking; it is also the gathering of words as letting-lie-before-us. Language not only presents thinking with the clarity of logical structure but also presents thinking with the ambiguity of poetry. *Noein* unfolds out of *legein*: we take to heart what lies before us, the mystery of Being. This mystery unfolds out of the unfolding of language, which takes place when we get beneath the surface meanings of words, between the silent spaces of the logical grid which is their grammar. *Noein* is kept within *legein*: we keep in touch with our heart, our feelings, when we hold ourselves back from being seduced by the forceful rhythm of one-track thinking. We open ourselves to those qualities of life that are silent to this thinking—we go back to the originary presencing of words, looking for qualities that will restore to us their mythos, their story, their depth.

Noein and *legein* need one another; they collaborate in order to form a useful conjunction that is thinking. This usefulness is useless in the everyday world, however. Similarly, Socrates says that "justice is useless but in its uselessness useful."[63] His argument runs as follows: If I have a bow and arrow, a just man certainly will not help me learn how to use it, but rather someone who knows how to shoot arrows. But if the bow and arrow are to be kept safe when not in use, then justice is useful; we turn to the just man, the man who both understands what justice is and who also follows its orders, to protect us from injustice. Justice is useful then, both in public and in private. The same argument works with all the other virtues; virtue teaches us nothing other than itself—it has no practical use; it is not a bodily skill. Its importance and usefulness lie only in its power to affect the quality of our dealings with other men—and with ourselves. For Heidegger, thinking as thanking is useful not in practical terms but in terms of how it can alter the relationship of ourselves as beings to Being.

Silence and Language

The relationship of beings to Being can best be expressed within the approach to silence of language. Professor Tezuka, in his dialogue with Heidegger, demonstrates what may take place in a Noh play. The Japanese stage is empty; its emptiness demands uncommon concentration:

> Thanks to that concentration, only a slight additional gesture on the actor's part is required to cause mighty things to appear out of a strange stillness … For instance, if a mountain landscape is to appear, the actor slowly raises his open hand and holds it quietly above his eyes at eyebrow level. May I show you?[64]

When Heidegger asks, "Where would you look then for the essence of that gesture which you showed me?" Professor Tezuka responds: "In a beholding that is itself invisible, and that, so gathered, bears itself to encounter emptiness in such a way 'that in and through it the mountains appear.'"[65] Heidegger then makes the following inference: "That emptiness then is the same as nothingness, that essential being which we attempt to add to our thinking, as the other, to all that is present and absent."[66]

This nothingness does not refer to an empty void, but rather to the realm where no word can be. In his essay "The Nature of Language" Heidegger quotes a poem by Stefan George called "The Word," whose last two lines run as follows:

> So l renounced and sadly see:
> Where word breaks off no thing may be.[67]

It follows that word and thing stand in relation to one another in a certain way, if at first unclear. Heidegger explains that "If the word is to endow the thing with being, it too must be before anything is—thus it must inescapably be itself a thing."[68] Yet how can one thing convey being to another thing? The poem seems to say that where a word ends, at that point there can be no thing; we cannot however infer from this that words endow things with being. "Word and thing are different," says Heidegger, "even disparate."[69] If we focus on the "breaking up" of the word, we approach his thinking: "An 'is' arises where the word breaks up. To break up here means that the sounding word returns into soundlessness … This breaking up of the word is the true step back on the way of thinking."[70] To break up a word means for Heidegger to break away from the limits of the word's surface meanings and contextual situation, to surround it with silence, to get back to its originary presencing, and thus to approach authentic saying, where the word bespeaks man's essential nature as the preserver of language, which for Heidegger is the house of Being.

Self and Language

In Heidegger's later works he returned to the theme of the breakdown of language. His presentation of the idea that "language is the house of Being" adds to the realization that the articulation of who one is can take place only in language. This indicates a change in his thinking concerning how Dasein discovers authenticity. As Paul Ricoeur noted: "The basic difference, perhaps, between the later Heidegger and Heidegger 1 would be that the self no longer finds its authenticity in freedom unto death, but in Gelassenheit, which is the gift of the poetical life."[71] "Gelassenheit" refers to a process of "letting go." If a person were able to "let go" of their dependency on clarity, for example, then and only then would they be able to articulate the unique nature of their own experience—and this would mark a necessary stage in their process of self-transformation.

We need then to disconnect from our dependence on ordinary language as the appropriate vehicle for authentic discourse. Concerning this process Tetsuaki Kotoh, in his essay "Language and Silence," writes: "The true relationship between self and language is restored when the framework of everyday language breaks down to let silence emerge and give rise to creative language."[72] The experience of the breakdown of language into silence, which can be uncovered through a dialogue with the poetic language that is created by certain works of art, becomes for Heidegger the foundation for any authentic exploration into the true nature of one's selfhood. As he writes in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art," "Art, as the setting-into-work of truth, is poetry. Not only the creation of the work is poetic, but equally poetic, though in its own way, is the preserving of the work."[73] This "preservation" occurs through dialogue with the artwork. If and when this "authentic exploration" takes place, however, several transformations in the nature of self as a result of its prerequisite breakdown will follow: the experience of time passing, the experience of others speaking, and the experience of one's inner voice.

Keeping Silent

In *Being and Time* Heidegger speaks about the transformation of one's inner voice in terms of his discussion concerning the development of one's conscience. This in turn involves transformations in time-consciousness and hearing. His ideas about hearing and keeping silent occur in the context of his discussion of the possibility of his completing the analytic of Dasein. Both hearing and keeping silent require a full understanding of the nature of Dasein: "Dasein hears, because it understands."[74] Keeping silent has the same existential foundation: "In talking with

one another, the person who keeps silent can 'make one understand' (that is, he can develop an understanding) … To be able to keep silent, Dasein must have something to say—that is, it must have at its disposal an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself."[75] This authentic form of discourse requires a breaking down of ordinary time in order to take place: "(W)hen Dasein goes in for something in the reticence of carrying it through or even of genuinely breaking down on it, its time is a different time and, as seen by the public, an essentially slower time than that of idle talk, which 'lives at a faster rate.'"[76] Although it is certainly true that speaking and listening are part of every dialogue, in this new form of discourse, informed by silence, something more than everyday communication must then be taking place. Speaking in this context must somehow involve a deeper kind of listening, not merely to one's own voice or even to the person to whom one is speaking. We learn here how to let language itself speak through us. That this takes place within a dialogue between thinkers and poets is Heidegger's main thesis in his later works. In *Being and Time*, however, he believed that authentic discourse belonged to those who had confronted death.

The role of keeping silent in the overall analytic of Dasein becomes more concrete when it is seen in its connection to what Heidegger calls conscience. Dasein's understanding is related to its state-of-mind, or mood. In some moods, Dasein is very open to the opinions of others. In these situations it is threatened with the possibility of loss of self: "Losing itself in the publicness and the idle talk of the 'they,' it fails to hear its own Self in listening to the they-self."[77] Another kind of hearing is necessary to break away from this influence. The call which returns Dasein to itself is the conscience. This conscience has a voice that Dasein is capable of hearing, yet it is not the call that is put into words: "Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent. In this way it not only loses none of its perceptibility, but forces the Dasein which has been appealed to and summoned, into the reticence of itself."[78] The content of this call is indefinite, but its direction, toward a self-aware reticence, is certain:

> Only in keeping silent does the conscience call; that is to say, the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness, and the Dasein which it summons is called back into the stillness of itself, and called back as something that is to become still. Only in reticence, therefore, is this silent discourse understood appropriately in wanting to have a conscience. It takes the words away from the common-sense idle talk of the "they."[79]

In *Being and Time* Heidegger relates his concept of conscience to thinking about death: "Authentic thinking about death is a 'wanting-to-have-a-conscience.'"[80] This thinking about death places us in a state-of-mind of anxiety, which in turn

presents us authentically with ourselves. The idle talk of our they-self leads us to treat death as an event to be feared. But anxiety is not a fear of death, for this fear is an inauthentic mood. To dread death is to be uncannily aware of one's own eventual dying. "Anticipatory resoluteness" is Heidegger's term for Dasein's authentic way of treating death as a meaningful possibility, in which an awareness of one's own impending death leads one specifically to the question of what it means to be alive. Within the mood of anxiety, we do not take existence lightly, as something to be wasted; we treat life as a gift, as something precious to be savored at every moment, whether high or low. Anxiety, then, is the mood that is attuned to the possibility of death. Conscience calls Dasein back to this mood, and thus back to the stillness of itself. This stillness connotes Dasein's freedom, as a form of life which is in harmony with its own nature.

The Darkness of Nihilism in Heidegger and Beckett

Heidegger, speaking of nihilism as he does of death, sees it as part of an act of purgation, prefatory to a renewal of metaphysical faith. Nihilism itself, though, is for him simply another form of metaphysics. As he writes in "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'": "(M)etaphysics as the history of the truth of what is as such, is, in its essence, nihilism."[81] After quoting Nietzsche's definition of nihilism, "That the highest values are devaluing themselves,"[82] he then goes on to substantiate what in his mind these "highest values" actually are: "God, the suprasensory world as the world that truly is and determines all, ideals and Ideas, the purposes and grounds that determine and support everything that is and human life in particular—all this is here represented as meaning the highest values."[83] (This is an unusual passage in Heidegger's works because he is seldom clear about his spiritual concerns.) Heidegger recognizes (as does Nietzsche) that nihilism is the "inner logic" of Western history. This means that for Heidegger, the search for truth that takes place throughout the history of Western thought, beginning shortly after the earliest Greek thinkers and continuing through the time of Nietzsche, belongs to a tradition of thinking that is really an inverted form of metaphysics, since it is "a condition posited in the essence of the will to power, namely the condition of the preservation of power. Truth is, as this condition, a value."[84] This is an inversion of metaphysics for Heidegger because truth is properly a quality of something higher, rather than a value that we create for our own interests.

In order to discover a notion of presence that includes all things that are present *and* absent gathered together in *one* presencing,[85] we need to look, in Heidegger's view, either to the work of the early Greek philosophers (like Parmenides,

Heraclitus, and Anaximander, about whom he has written) or to the work of authentic artists. For Heidegger, the work of these artists and thinkers provides a "clearing" within which truth appears and is preserved through creative effort.[86] It is within this kind of clearing that the truth of nihilism, that the highest values are devaluing themselves, appears. These highest values now appear as an absence which is felt all too clearly as a presence. Other absences which appear in a gathering presence include the experience of grieving, and the experience of looking for a lost object. Perhaps the most authentic artist of modern nihilism is Samuel Beckett, and it is to his work that we will now turn.

Writing about the emergence of "aliterature," Claude Mauriac has this to say about Beckett's language: "(T)he writer who pits himself against the unsayable must use all his cunning so as not to say what the words make him say against his will, but to express instead what by their very nature they are designed to cover up: the uncertain, the contradictory, the unthinkable."[87] Beckett's world is a game that the mind plays with itself, and language is the original flaw. As his character Malloy (from his novel of the same name) says:

> There could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names … the world dies too, foully named. All I know is what the words know, and the dead things, and that makes a handsome little sum, with a beginning, a middle, and an end as in the well built phrase and the long sonata of the dead.[88]

This is a world where nothing makes sense, where the senses refuse to distinguish between illusion and reality. Consciousness controls nothing, doing little more than displaying an infinite number of mutations of its subject, moving between unknowables, particulars, and universals. The only action that seems to make any sense at all, is to keep silent, and that takes courage. As Beckett's Malloy character says in *The Unnamable*: "It's to go silent that you need courage, for you'll be punished, for having gone silent, and yet you can't do otherwise than go silent, than be punished for having gone silent."[89]

In his great trilogy of novels (*Malloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable*), Beckett discarded the entire notion of narration, and in its place left a series of bare reflections on the lived here and now that provide no comfort through reflection on anything "higher." The assumptions of narrative fiction, including character, place, story, and meaning, appear only on the just visible horizon as something recognizable but somehow lost. Earlier, in his novel *Murphy* (1957), Beckett had provided a definition of silence that effectively situated the state of mind of his trilogy's protagonist: silence is "that frail partition between the ill-concealed and the ill-revealed, the clumsily false and the unavoidable so."[90] In *Texts for Nothing*

(1950–1952) he explored this "frail partition" even further, when he began the fourth text of the series with the following passage:

> Where would I go, if I could go, who would I be, if I could be, what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it's me? Answer simply, someone answer simply.[91]

The answer he gets provides no comfort at all:

> "It's the same old stranger as ever, for whom alone accusative I exist, in the pit of my inexistence, of his, or ours, there's a simple answer. It's not with thinking he'll find me …[92]

What's so astonishing and even liberating in reading Beckett's prose is that there is no thinking in it, no orderly gathering together of concepts or development of focus concerning a theme of interest. What remains is pure reflective consciousness unmediated by thought. That these monologues are often hysterically funny may be due to their movement into the neighborhood of true hysteria. But unlike most schizophrenics, Beckett was in full control of his language.

Beckett began the eighth text of *Texts for Nothing* with a profound meditation on the impact of words on silence, and of silence on words:

> Only the words break the silence, all other sounds have ceased. If I were silent I'd hear nothing. But if I were silent the other sounds would start again, those to which the words have made me deaf, or which have really ceased. But I am silent, it sometimes happens, no, never, not one second. I weep too without interruption. It's an unbroken How of words and tears. With no pause for reflection. But I speak softer, every year a little softer. Perhaps. Slower too, every year a little slower. Perhaps. It is hard for me to judge. If so the pauses would be longer, between the words, the sentences, the syllables, the tears, I confuse them, words and tears, my words are my tears, my eyes my mouth.[93]

What is especially striking about the jumble of words presented here is the kinds of dualities that it encourages. First of all there are dualities with silence. Tears represent emotions. Sometimes happiness, but usually suffering. Unfeelingness would be the other side of this duality, and this would be a silencing of emotion, one form of silence. Tears are also made up of water, a symbol of life. The absence of water is therefore death, which is the ultimate form of silence. Another duality would be that of sounds and silence. When the pauses between the words get longer, we lose their meaning, their reference to the world. When the pauses between the sentences get longer, we lose their connectedness, their logic and focus. When the pauses between syllables get longer, we lose their sense, their coherence. "Tears" could refer to crying, but it could also refer to the tearing apart of the fabric that

connects self and world. Silence seems to represent the tearing apart of this fabric for Beckett.

One of the fascinating aspects of Beckett's literary world is that it seems entirely hermetic; there simply is no getting outside of his protagonist's self-consciousness. The current "medical model" of modern psychology would try to find a "cure" for such an individual. Beckett, however, is an artist, and his created consciousness is not a real one. Perhaps it is intended, then, as a "representative" consciousness of something authentic in ourselves that we have lost, due to our attachment to the "theyself." Our artificially created forms of "normalcy," then, are merely our own respective responses to a world going increasingly insane. Beckett's chosen style may then turn out to be a strategy of disruption, to help us on the way to becoming authentically "sane." If this is so, this would place Beckett's work within the postmodern context of Deleuze and Guattari's strategy of creating "plateaus," places where things pick up speed, connecting and developing but never finalizing or conceptualizing. It would also connect to Heidegger's characterization of nihilism as purgative, prefatory to and necessary for a renewal of faith. We have learned that the experience of silence can signify a breakdown in our connectedness to the world as we understand it. The loss of this fabric, the one that connects self and world, is due to a growing lack for words. As the silence of absence, it is often recognized as the experience of uncanniness. Instead of veering away from the awe-inspiring disorientation of this experience, however, we need to learn to dwell within it. Only then will we discover paths beyond its grasp. Confrontation with authentic works of art like with Beckett's novels and plays may provide us with an understanding of how we might accomplish this task, since they show us detailed aspects of at least some of the states of mind through which we will have to pass.

Wittgenstein's Ladder and Giacometti's Rejection of the Mundane

Near the end of his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein spoke of his text as consisting of a series of propositions which need to be transcended. He compared them to steps on a ladder, which must be thrown away upon its ascendance in order to see the world correctly. They must be discarded, since they will ultimately be recognized as nonsensical. This is so because for Wittgenstein, any statement that asserts the truth about something is either tautological (and therefore says absolutely nothing of any sense or significance about the world but only clarifies its own meaning) or it is nonsensical, since it passes beyond the limits of what can justifiably be said with any recognizable degree of certainty. Since his own statements in his text do claim to be truthful, though, then strictly speaking they are nonsensical, and must be passed over in silence. This ironic, self-defeating

aspect of Wittgenstein's writing is the subject of Marjorie Perloff's recent book, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*. For Wittgenstein, the purpose of doing philosophy is to learn how to stop doing philosophy, which he characterized as a kind of disease. Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks appear on the surface at least to be perfectly clear and lucid. But even when his wonderfully strange puzzles and riddles are resolved, they leave other puzzles and riddles in their wake. Perloff refers to Wittgenstein's remark that "Philosophy ought really be written only as a form of poetry"[94] in order to make the related point that an artistic construct of this kind has the ability "to slow down perception and make the audience see the object in question as if for the first time."[95] In order to slow down perception we need to learn to extract what is extraordinary from within what is ordinary. This extraction, however, requires very close attention to the different ways in which the same words can be both intended and understood. "Wittgenstein shows us, too, that we cannot climb the same ladder twice; the use of language, the context in which words and sentences appear, defines their meaning, which changes with every repetition."[96]

The act of repetition was also a significant aspect of the artwork of the painter and sculptor Alberto Giacometti. James Lord (1965) and David Sylvester (1994) have both spoken about their experiences sitting for portraits by him. At the end of each and every day of painting from a live model, Giacometti would simply paint out, slowly and gradually obliterating by careful over-painting, his work to that point. With his sculptures, too, a similar act of subtraction within the wider act of repetition would take place: "When he modeled from life, the coming and going of the form was gradual and continuous: he obliterated a part, rebuilt it, sharpened it, softened it, constantly modified here and there, sometimes slowed down and concentrated for hours on a detail, sometimes demolished sweepingly, but always retained the broad outlines of the mass."[97] Giacometti seemed never to see the same face twice, since each time he would perceive different things in it differently.

Giacometti clearly worked through subtractive acts. His thoughts on the subject present an uncommon intensity of focus, similar to Wittgenstein's:

> I just wanted to make ordinary heads. That never worked out. But since I always failed, I always wanted to make a new attempt. I wanted once and for all to make a head as I saw it. Since I never succeeded, I persevered in the effort. The more I looked at the model, the more the screen between his reality and mine grew thicker. One starts by seeing the person who poses, but little by little all the possible sculptures of him intervene … And when there were no more sculptures, there was such a complete stranger that I no longer knew whom I saw or what I was looking at (p. 165)… The motive that makes one work is surely to give a certain permanence to what is fleeting (p. 307) … If I could actually make a head as it is, that would mean one can dominate reality. It would mean total knowledge, Life would stop. It's curious that I can't manage to make what I see. To do that, one would have to die of it (p. 417).[98]

Giacometti spoke of an internal tension between the unattainable perfection of what he sees with his mind's eye, and the mundane reality of what he sees with his physical ones. The constant rejection of this mundanity might even be seen as a kind of philosophical quest, for the purely eidetic essential thing. This would also explain why Giacometti found it far easier to sculpt by memory than with live subjects, since with the imperfect evidence of his memory there would be no need to reject anything.

Giacometti's sculptures seem to present figures as they were captured during the perception of actual time passing; they carry a charged atmosphere around them and appear to expand and contract in their atmosphere like a lung. His art conveys precisely why our sensations of reality cannot be conveyed precisely. In looking at his sculptural portraits we experience the artist's experience of his distance from his subjects. What seems to have been especially frustrating to Giacometti is the realization that his sculptures as human figures are separate from his sculptures as objects, their imagery detachable from their inherent physical nature. He realized that

> The model can go on standing still forever, but the work will nonetheless be the product of an accumulation of memories none of which is quite the same as any other, because each of them is affected by what has gone before, by the continually changing relation between all that has already been put down and the next glance at the model.[99]

There is also a self-defeating, ironic quality to Giacometti's work which calls up Wittgenstein's similar quality referred to above. Giacometti once noted that "If I managed to do what I was aiming at, it would be something almost intolerable to look at because it would seem real, or give too much the illusion of being real."[100] Giacometti wanted what he couldn't have, even as he knew he couldn't have it. If the sculpture appears as too real yet cannot move, he said, then it's little more than a dead object. And if you give it eyes, and paint them on, and they don't move, then it becomes an unpleasant object. What gives a sculpture reality is that the viewer sees it as real because of its pent-up energy, or its tension. "So tension takes the place of movement; it's as if it were movement. And then the thing becomes tolerable."[101] Giacometti's works recede from view even as we look at them, for what is left of them has been so pared away that they appear to us as if seen from a distance, even up close. He thus in a way captured, through the style of his art, the very frustration that every artist faces, of being unable to capture what is fleeting. In this way Giacometti's works expose the limits of artistic creation, just as Wittgenstein's work exposes the limits of language. Knowing when to stop is therefore the key, for this enables what is transcendent, that which cannot be said, to be shown. As a consequence of this action, something beautiful shines forth, through the language of silence.

Silence as a Form of Indirect Discourse

Even if silence is another language, it cannot speak to us directly, for it contains nothing in itself, but only reflects what surrounds it. Silence, therefore, is an example of indirect discourse, analogous to Wittgenstein's "showing" or Heidegger's "poetic dwelling." Silence as indirect discourse can be experienced first of all as the process of breakdown, as a disruption in the connection of self and world within a given linguistic framing of reality. It can also be heard in a more static mode, as the part of mystical experience that refers to the personal realization of the conjoining of self and world. Both experiences exist beyond words. The temporal framing of both experiences is different as well. Disruptive silence takes place within linear external time, the one that is measured by a clock. The agenda of this kind of silence is practical, for when the limits of a particular discursive frame are bumped against repeatedly, then the defining characteristics of that frame are clarified and an avenue leading to other forms of discourse is introduced. Conjoining silence on the other hand takes place within vertical internal time-consciousness, and is experienced in terms of heightened levels of emotional and spiritual intensity. The pure simplicity of such notions as "suchness" and "emptiness" refers to this state of mind, one that is essentially here and now, and not elsewhere. Such a person dwells in the timeless now of the instant, vertically rather than horizontally defined along the axis of temporality. This is a breaking through beyond language, that is in contrast to, and even dependent on, the breaking down of language by disruptive silence.

Eugene Gendlin's introduction of a silent space into his client-based therapy, whereby the client, after feeling heard, feels that there is nothing more to say, is especially relevant in the present context. Comparing this silence to a space, and enabling the process by slowing down the cormnunicative frame, Gendlin says that "the client feels (knows, has, is) the inner silent edge of more."[102] Inserting a space or gap into the assumed unity between words and feelings leads to the moment between concealments where the void looms forth. This insertion of a space or gap between the concealments of everyday language use is analogous to what I have above called "disruptive silence." The experience of the void itself, on the other hand, an experience upon which no order can be imposed, is analogous to what I have called "conjoining silence." This latter form of silence can be compared to the pregnant silence that exists between images and sounds both in music and in poetry, and to the instant before music begins. It is also a major source of the creative impulse.

These two forms of silence work together as complementary stages within a creative process. Disruptive silence first exposes the limitations of whatever linguistic framing of experience is taking place. By tearing apart the linguistic fabric that frames and unites self and world, and by slowing down the typically rushed

temporal frame of practical-mindedness, disruptive silence opens up consciousness to the possibility of moving into other frames of experience. Conjoining silence in turn contains a reflexive nature which brings us together with ourselves. We experience a restoration of unity between self and world, and learn to dwell ecstatically and vertically within the simplicity of the purely felt moment.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have delineated some of the ways whereby silence can be seen as a creative strategy which performs the related functions of disruption and conjoining, located at the limits of language. We began with a discussion of Wittgenstein's positivist theory of language, as he presented it in his *Tractatus*. It was Wittgenstein's view in that work that since the connection between language and the world cannot be proven, language can be only formally descriptive and therefore cannot be a viable medium for either explaining the meaning of the world or the sense of our experience of it. He also believed at this point in his development as a thinker that discourse concerning ineffable experience is essentially meaningless since it has no clear referent. He did indicate, however, that meaningful aspects of this experience can still show forth if only the limits of language are carefully maintained.

Turning to Heidegger for insight concerning what happens when the limits of language are reached, we learned that there are moments of what he calls uncanniness that occur in everyone's life, which take place around such experiences as sickness, old age, and death, and are based on the emerging awareness of one's own impending death. These are negative experiences that may involve a momentary loss of perspective and equanimity when the stillness of silence looms. These moments have the capacity to lead to a breakdown in ordinary conceptions of time passing and people speaking. In his later works. Heidegger explored the idea that this breakdown in ordinary consciousness also takes place when we engage in dialogue with great works of art. We also investigated Heidegger's thoughts on nihilism, and learned that for him metaphysics is the same thing as nihilism, and that both are indicative of a historical process of decline, during which the highest values gradually lose their value. Truth has become whatever preserves power, and is thus a part of a metaphysics of absence rather than of presence.

Reference was then made to the work of Beckett, whose work is understood to present an authentic voice to nihilism. What he voices is the language of silence. Silence emerges as a frail partition between the ill-concealed and the ill-revealed, and as a tear in the fabric that connects self and world. We noted that Beckett's style of writing has a good deal in common with the aphasic language of schizophrenics, presenting as it does a consciousness totally self-absorbed in a world

without external reference or connection. If this language is authentic, however, it would indicate a strategy of relating to an external world whose everyday demands have themselves become unreasonable, even unthinkable.

The subtractive, reductive quality of art was then introduced, through reference to the work of Giacometti. We noticed how the space around his sculptures seems altered, changing from contraction to expansion as our attention wavers, the figures receding even as we approach them. We learned how the very frustration of art itself, of being unable to capture what is fleeting, is the subject of Giacometti's art. Although the ultimate goal of any artist is to create something real and make it appear as if newly discovered, the reality is that the best an artist can do is to capture the creative tension, the pent-up energy that remains in the artwork as the residual effect of the artist's frustration at not being god-like—a form of energy that is the source of what is unique to any artist's vision.

We ultimately recognized a functional distinction between two types of silence. The first type of silence exists in linear time and is experienced during the process of the breakdown of meaningful discourse. We called this mode of silence "disruptive silence." We then discovered a more static mode of silence, which takes place within vertical time as the part of mystical experience that brings together self and world. Referring to the mode of silence that is both the result as well as the purpose of the breakdown of language, we called it "conjoining silence." The works of Heidegger and Beckett, Wittgenstein and Giacometti, each in their own unique way, provide us with the opportunity of discovering both of these modes of silence.

Notes

1. See below.
2. Wittgenstein, 1961 [1921], p. 151.
3. Engelmann, 1967, p. 7.
4. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3.3.
5. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #6.
6. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #11.
7. ibid., #318.
8. ibid., #7.
9. ibid., #88.
10. ibid., #88.
11. ibid., #203.
12. ibid., #123.
13. ibid., #88.
14. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, p. 3.
15. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #103.

16. ibid., #106.
17. ibid., #109.
18. ibid., #132.
19. ibid., #496.
20. ibid., #371.
21. ibid., #373.
22. ibid., #130.
23. ibid., #66.
24. ibid., #66.
25. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 2, #3.
26. ibid., p. 6, #3.
27. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #23.
28. ibid., #96.
29. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, p. 51, I, #1.
30. ibid., p. 51, I, #1.
31. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 193.
32. ibid., p. 193.
33. ibid., p. 197.
34. ibid., p. 212.
35. ibid., p. 208.
36. ibid., p. 209.
37. ibid., p. 204.
38. ibid., p. 215.
39. ibid., p. 218.
40. ibid., #329.
41. ibid., pp. 221 ff.
42. ibid., p. 221.
43. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche,* p. 270.
44. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 224.
45. ibid., #133.
46. ibid., #109.
47. ibid., #111.
48. ibid., #309.
49. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 478.
50. ibid., p. 478.
51. ibid., p. 479.
52. Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and the Theaetetus*, p. 9.
53. ibid., p. 54.
54. See Heidegger, "Time and Being" in *On Time and Being,* p. 19.
55. Heidegger, "Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language,* p. 8.
56. ibid., p. 19.
57. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 106–10.
58. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* p. 139.
59. ibid., p. 139.

60. ibid., p. 141.
61. ibid., p. 143.
62. ibid., p. 149.
63. Plato, *Republic* 333d.
64. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 18.
65. ibid., p. 19.
66. ibid., p. 19.
67. Quoted by Heidegger, *On the Way to Language,* p. 86.
68. ibid., p. 86.
69. ibid., p. 86.
70. ibid., p. 108.
71. cited in Frings, *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth*, p. 74.
72. in Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 204.
73. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* p. 74.
74. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 206.
75. ibid., p. 208.
76. ibid., p. 218.
77. ibid., p. 315.
78. ibid., p. 318.
79. ibid., p. 296.
80. ibid., p. 304.
81. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, p. 109.
82. ibid., p. 66.
83. ibid., p. 66.
84. ibid., p. 84.
85. Heidegger, 1984 [1946], p. 36; cited in Rosen, *Dimensions of Apeiron*, p. 151.
86. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 71.
87. Mauriac, *The New Literature*, p. 81.
88. Beckett, *Malloy*, p. 41.
89. Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 151.
90. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 257.
91. Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*, p. 114.
92. ibid., p. 114.
93. ibid., p. 131.
94. quoted by Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder,* p. 51.
95. ibid., p. 53.
96. ibid., dust jacket.
97. Sylvester, *Looking at Giacometti* p. 83.
98. Lord, *A Giacometti Portrait,* passim.
99. Sylvester, *Looking at Giacometti*, p. 36.
100. ibid., p. 128.
101. ibid., pp. 127–128.
102. Gendlin, "Celebrations and Problems of Humanistic Psychology," *The Humanist Psychologis*t, 20, p. 451.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Reason Under Siege: Benjamin and Horkheimer/Adorno

Introduction

Immersed in the demoralizing cultural landscape of the time before and during the second world war, Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno tried to articulate, mostly within the confines of Critical Theory, how the world could have reached such a state. They believed that the source of its disintegration could be found in the emphasis on instrumental reasoning that was characteristic of the philosophical thinking of the Enlightenment. The fascism then dominant in Western Europe was nothing if not "reasonable." The problem was that the *foundations* for this perspective were anything but reasonable. Somehow, reason had become corrupted and taken on irrational elements, and they tried to understand how this had happened.

Benjamin, like Nietzsche before him, recognized how nihilism had come to dominate the modern age, and also like Nietzsche he emphasized how an effective response to nihilism could be found in aesthetic experience. Benjamin is an antiphilosopher because he rejects the empirical positivism rooted in the Enlightenment view of the world, in favor of a mystical view of language in which the integrity of ephemeral experience and not just conceptual knowledge is recognized. Like many of the other antiphilosophers, Benjamin believed that

it was essential not to lose sight of the importance of the "lived experience." He asserted that even the most destitute and outmoded of material objects could be transformed, through the cognitive construction of new political constellations, into an intoxicating and revolutionary experience. The beautiful and sundry objects he discovered in the arcades of Paris provided him with a materialist historiography from which he would derive the political intents of modernism.

Horkheimer and Adorno believed that entirely new forces of social domination had appeared in the late stages of modernism, and that traditional Critical Theory could not explain them adequately. They had mistakenly assumed that state intervention in the economy would effectively abolish the tension in capitalism between workers and owners and lead to an era of social revolution. They asked themselves how the apparent persistence of social domination could take place in the absence of the very contradiction (between the forces of production and the relations of production) which was supposed to have been the source of the domination itself. With the rise of fascism in Europe, they recognized how the history of human societies had led to a collapse of reason, and into something resembling the superstitions and myths of ancient Greece, out of which the belief in the central importance of reason had originally emerged. Horkheimer and Adorno are antiphilosophers because they discover the source for the social and political problems of the modern world in the sterile and hubristic values of Enlightenment reasoning. The passage from reason to myth was slippery, they believed, because the culture industry, along with the technology which had facilitated its development, had created a mass society which was all too easily manipulated into docility and passivity, and, in consequence, susceptible to authoritarian forces.

Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno were united in their opposition to the Enlightenment belief that the use of instrumental reason could be applied successfully to any and all of humanity's problems. This belief was perhaps most succinctly put by Descartes, who, in his earliest philosophical work, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (1628), said in Rule 5 that if we proceed by breaking down any problem confronting us into its simplest component parts, and then place them in their proper order from the absolutely simple to the more complex so that we fully understand not only the meaning of each step but also how it follows from the previous one, we will, by following this method be able to solve virtually anything. "In this alone," he explained, "lies the sum of all human endeavor."[1] In the view of Benjamin, Horkheimer, and Adorno, this instance of Cartesian *hubris* would not only prove to be the essence of modernism, but would come to haunt it in many ways as well.

A common theme would arise for these "fellow travelers" of the political left: the belief that reason itself had become "unreasonable." Their thinking was based on the historical situation they found themselves in: living in Europe between the two world wars. For Benjamin, it was all too "reasonable" to understand how the invention of modern democracy had facilitated the development of capitalism, which in turn had created the demand for commodities. The result of this process, he felt, was the phenomenon of commodity fetishism, the belief in the myth of enhanced personal identity through the ownership of material objects. From his wanderings in the great shopping arcades of modern Europe, Benjamin would discover the origins of this mythic aspect of fetishism in the archaic objects of previous generations, whose desirability, based not only on their inherent beauty but also on their unattainability due to their high prices, foreshadowed the commodity fetishism of his own time. Horkheimer and Adorno, in turn, would focus on the modern phenomenon of social and political domination, which they believed was also a logical consequence of Enlightenment thinking. In the modern world, they asserted, it seemed not unreasonable to think of "final solutions" to human problems. The domination of nature by humans and the domination of humans by humans were the inevitable consequences of this kind of instrumental thinking. This in turn led to the creation of totalitarian regimes and the senseless slaughter of millions of human beings.

Benjamin asserted that modern technology had created an age of mechanical reproduction which had destroyed the "aura" that belongs to original works of art. The emerging dominance of photography and film as modern art forms was a byproduct for him of this loss, and represented the replacement of the unique art object with the possibility, through its endless reproduction, of mass communication and mass consumerism. This shift, in his view, represented a change in the way we come to understand the world around us. We no longer perceive the world through innocent eyes, but organize our experience from the influence of its artificial reproduction.

Horkheimer and especially Adorno disagreed with Benjamin's belief that modern communications technology would provide the revolutionary means for progressive social change by disrupting our uncritical view of the world around us. In their view, the demands for profits within the culture industry would instead lead to increasingly lower standards, while technological and stylistic innovation would be subverted by the need for popular appeal. The gift of Enlightenment-style reason, they believed, would always prove to be a tool of the powerful for taking advantage of the masses in the name of "progress."

Part I: Benjamin

A Couple of Flâneurs Turn Their Backs on History

When Walter Benjamin submitted his study *The Origin of Germany Tragedy* as the first step towards the university career for which he was then preparing himself, it should not have come as much of a surprise to him that it was not accepted, for not only was his work extremely obscure and difficult to understand, it consisted mostly of quotes—"the craziest mosaic technique imaginable" as Benjamin put it in one of his letters.[2] His obsessive appreciation of quotes had its origin in his fascination with the Marxist conception of the *superstructure,* which includes the idea that every cultural creation located in the superstructure has its origin in specific conditions within the economic *substructure* or base. Benjamin interpreted this to mean that "the spirit and its materialist manifestation were intimately related."[3] He believed that here was a way of thinking about things which was not unlike Baudelaire's *correspondances,* which clarified and illuminated one another in similar fashion. Benjamin's unfinished masterwork, the *Arcades Project,* which he spent his last decade writing and which amounts to over a thousand pages of detailed observations and historical facts about 19th century life, was also based on this principle. As Hannah Arendt, a close friend of his in Paris during the time of his working on this project,[4] explains it: "He was concerned with the correlation between a street scene, a speculation on the stock market, a poem, a thought, with the hidden line which holds them together."[5] Having always had a fascination with small, even minute things, he believed that "the size of an object was in an inverse ratio to its significance."[6] He also thought of himself as a flâneur, one who, through his aimless strolls around the big cities of Europe (which took place in studied contrast to the hurried and purposeful activity of the crowds surrounding him), was uniquely able to notice the "secret meaning" of things.

The 19th century poet Baudelaire was especially significant for Benjamin and his search for hidden meanings behind common objects. He clearly found in him a kindred soul, a flâneur like himself, and used his dissections of the crowd, the city, and of modernity as a starting point for his own Arcades Project. Benjamin was able through Baudelaire's eyes to look deeper into the future by examining consumer objects and their meaning from an earlier historical perspective than his own. Baudelaire's book of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), for example, combined the then radically new aesthetic sensibility of decadence with a concern for the premodern religious allegories of the Catholic belief system. The poems thus introduced disruptive modernist shocks within the continuity of a given literary tradition. For example, in his poem "The Confession," Baudelaire revealed

"… That it's a hard calling to be a lovely woman,

And that it is the banal task
Of the cold and silly danseuse who faints away

With a mechanical smile,
That to build on hearts is a foolish thing,
That all things break, love, and beauty,
Till Oblivion tosses them into his dosser
To give them back to Eternity!"
I've often evoked that enchanted moon,
The silence and the languidness,
And that horrible confidence whispered
In the heart's confessional.
That it is a sad trade to be a lovely woman,
That it is the banal labor
Of a dancer who entertains, manic, cold and fainting
With her mechanical smile.[7]

The poem contrasts the eternal value of beauty with its crass commercial potential, insisting that even beauty and love can be transformed by modern capitalism into something as ephemeral and banal as a commodity on display. In Benjamin's view, the intention of Baudelaire's poetic allegories of death and decay was to help work himself up into a violent rage, and then to "rip away the harmonious facade of the world that surrounded him, "in order to avoid falling 'into the abyss of myth that constantly accompanied his path.'"[8]

Baudelaire didn't spare himself from his raging at inauthenticity either, recognizing a kind of prostitution in his own quest for literary publication. It was in this spirit that he wrote the following selection from his poem, "The Venal Muse" from his cycle *Spleen and Ideal*:

To earn your daily bread you are obliged
To swing the censer like an altar boy,
And to sing *Te Deums* in which you don't believe,

Or, hungry mountebank, to put up for sale your charm,
Your laughter wet with tears which people do not see,
To make the vulgar herd shake with laughter.[9]

Benjamin clearly admired this sort of brute honesty: "Baudelaire," he wrote, "knew how things really stood for the literary man: As flâneur, he goes to the marketplace, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer."[10] But Baudelaire wasn't selling poems or even books; he was selling himself. Because he was a flâneur,

though, Baudelaire was able, in Benjamin's view at least, to "empathize himself into the soul of the commodity."[11] Baudelaire was also "his own impresario, displaying himself in different identities—now flâneur, now whore; now ragpicker," now dandy. He even, in Benjamin's words, "played the role of a poet […] before a society that already no longer needed real ones."[12]

In a previously neglected fragment that Benjamin believed had a significance that "cannot be overestimated,"[13] Baudelaire related a story of losing his halo on a muddy street pavement. In order to avoid breaking his neck in the moving chaos of the traffic, he leaves it there, amused that some bad poet might pick it up and adorn himself with it. Benjamin wrote that with this loss of halo, the poet "is forced to exhibit his own person in the marketplace"—whereas "the exhibition of aura" becomes from now on "an affair of fifth-rank poets."[14] The lack of aura in Baudelaire's poetry found its source, according to Benjamin, in "the mass article [which] stood before Baudelaire's eyes as model."[15] The article of mass production became for him an obsession, a speciality, even a trademark for his work, and appeared there in the form of his constant appreciation for the sensation of the new. The making of novelty into the highest of aesthetic values, as something which cannot be interpreted or compared, ultimately led Baudelaire into the aesthetic position for which he is best remembered, "L'art pour l'art," or "art for art's sake." Ironically, this last line of resistance against the commodification of art became itself commodified. Benjamin in turn viewed the slogan as part of a "theology of art" because of its turn away from any concern with art's social aspects. He also suggested that the consummation of this perspective could be found in fascism, since one of its Futurist slogans was "*Fiat ars—pereat mundis*"—meaning "Let art be created. Let the world perish."[16]

The Arcades Project

In the ninth of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* Benjamin conceived of the "angel of history" who, instead of looking dialectically forward into the future, has his face turned to the past:

> Where a chain of events appears to *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and join together what has been smashed to pieces. But a storm is blowing from Paradise [and] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of ruins before him grows skyward. What we call progress is *this* storm.[17]

Benjamin believed he saw the angel of history in Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* (and he actually owned the original). He realized that alongside the angel, he, in

his guise as flâneur, would experience his final transfiguration: by turning his back against the crowd he too would be blown backward into the future by the storm of progress. As Pierre Missac put it in his noteworthy book on Benjamin's life and work, "Benjamin turns his back to the future toward which he is being drawn, but he sees some of its characteristics ahead of time with a precision like that of a mirror that painters sometimes use to see behind them."[18]

When Benjamin finally turned away from academia, he directed his attention instead to the "metaphysics of transiency"[19] where, in his words "the eternal is in every case far more the ruffle on a dress than an idea."[20] He followed up this perception with a somewhat surprisingly intimate reflection on how in fetishism, sex does away with the boundaries between living flesh and lifeless matter by employing clothing and jewelry as its allies, and by playing them off against one another within the imagination. In a later section in which he related the theory of knowledge to the theory of progress, he was not afraid to use the same phrase again, but this time within a theoretical context: "Resolute refusal of the concept of 'timeless truth' is in order. Nevertheless, truth is not—as Marxism would have it—a merely contingent function of knowing, but is bound to a nucleus of time lying hidden within the knower and the known alike. This is so true that the eternal, in any case, is far more the truffle on a dress than some idea."[21] Directly after this second passage he made a comment about his Arcades Project as a whole, which also explained his reference to fetishist practice earlier:

> Outline the story of The Arcades Project in terms of its development. Its properly problematic component: the refusal to renounce anything that would demonstrate the materialist presentation of history as imagistic in a higher sense than in the traditional presentation … The history that showed things 'as they really were' was the strongest narcotic of the century.[22]

A few pages earlier, he had reflected even more deeply on his methodology:

> Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.[23]

We see him here again looking for the secret meaning of things, constantly noting correspondences between small objects and large ideas.

Benjamin's seemingly aimless wanderings around the arcades of early 20th century Paris enabled him to discover the remnants of 19th century culture. In the "afterlife" of these objects he uncovered evidence of what it was like to live and to experience everyday life under its unique set of economic conditions. He

believed that through his ongoing and passionate attention to minute details he was discovering the material conditions of history. The Arcades Project was to be a "prehistory" of the 19th century, if not of all human history. His was a construction of history that looked backwards rather than forward. His fascination with the arcades was due to their being in his view "the original temple of commodity capitalism."[24] The arcades, he believed, transformed mere objects into commodity fetishes, whose desirability was due not only to their intrinsic beauty but also because of their unattainably high prices. In fact, anything from sex to social status could be so transformed. Here is how Buck-Morss, in her book on Benjamin's Arcade Project, describes the arcades as he would have seen them:

> Constructed like a church in the shape of a cross (in order, pragmatically, to connect with all four surrounding streets), these privately owned, publicly traversed passages displayed commodities in window showcases like icons in niches. The very profane pleasure houses found there tempted passersby with gastronomical perfections, intoxicating drinks, wealth without labor at the roulette wheel, gaiety in the vaudeville theaters, and, in the first-floor galleries, transports of sexual pleasure sold by a heavenly host of fashionably dressed ladies of the night.[25]

While the arcades can be seen (more or less) as precursors of modern department stores, the displays in the world expositions of the time (the first of which was held in London in 1851—Benjamin visited the one in Paris in 1937) were even grander and more pretentious. Although these grand affairs were intended to teach a lesson, the problem was that this lesson took on a different shape depending on the differing agendas of its interpreters. On the one hand, industry and technology were presented as mythic powers, capable of producing a future world of peace, harmony, and abundance—without the need for revolution. On the other hand, workers were encouraged to view products that their own class had produced but could not afford to own, and to marvel at machines that would soon displace them in the workplace. This contrast, between the myth of historical progress and the belief in the economic reality that social conditions will always remain the same, ultimately became a central theme for Benjamin in his Arcades Project.

Benjamin asserted that one of the primary aspects of myth was its repetitive uncreative sameness, and this, he believed, was one of the more salient characteristics of the mythic sensibility produced by alienated capitalist society. He was, accordingly, especially interested in the modern forms of boredom. In the case of boredom, he theorized, class differences are crucial. When history is stuck like a broken record in the present structure of social relations, it is because workers cannot afford to stop working, and not just because the privileged class that lives off this labor cannot afford to let history go any further. "Factory work," Benjamin

explained, is "the economic substructure of the ideological boredom of the upper classes."[26] But boredom could also lead to the false expectation that great deeds are just ahead, and to "the truly infernal horror of modern time [which] is that revolution itself can become its victim, condemned to repeat itself, and condemned to fail: 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871."[27] While each of these revolutions was fought in the name of universal democracy and justice, each left the social relations of class privilege and status fundamentally unchanged.

Benjamin believed that the essence of modernity was split into two mythical halves. One half assumed that historical progress consists in rapid change; the other half concluded that modernism essentially means no progress is possible or even necessary. This paradox was exemplified by the existence in the arcades of material objects that were a fusion of the old and the new: "Early photographs mimicked painting. The first railroad cars were designed like stage coaches, and the first electric light bulbs were shaped like gas flames."[28] In Benjamin's view, "Every epoch dreams the one that follows it."[29] Even as they mask the new by making it seem familiar and comfortable, archaic images from the past symbolize the social and human significance of technological change. Inevitably, however, the symbol of progress itself turns into a fetish, and technology is mistaken for its actualization. Commodity fetishes and dream fetishes become indistinguishable.

Benjamin's friend and colleague Adorno, however, objected to the static component in Benjamin's thinking. He was very critical of what he felt was Benjamin's un-dialectical use of such categories as the fetishism of commodities. He believed that some degree of concreteness was necessary in all such objectifications, and he argued against Benjamin's equation of the commodity with its archaic aspects, since in his view not all objects were of esoteric interest or archaic significance. He was also dissatisfied with Benjamin's use of dialectical images as objective crystallizations of the historical process. Benjamin's thinking here reflected social reality too directly for Adorno; instead, he believed that objects should be seen as "constellations in which the social condition represents itself."[30] Adorno also believed that the individual should similarly be seen as "a dialectical instrument of passage which should not be mythicized away, but can only be sublated."[31] But Benjamin in his Arcades Project was more interested in things and ideas than he was in the potential change in consciousness of individual people.

Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Despite this subsequent disinterest, in his earlier 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Benjamin examined the impact of the culture industry on how people in modern times perceive the world around

them—and as children of the Enlightenment this includes ourselves. He also looked at how the technological inventions of photography and film have affected our perception of the world around us, and insisted that our entire mode of existence needs to be re-examined as a result. Because we live in a world of mechanical production and reproduction, he argued, we can no longer look at works of art in the same way as before, and we need to study the consequences of these changes. We also need to examine how our sense perception has changed, too, and to understand how all these changes affect our relationship to and perspective on history.

According to Benjamin, when a work of art is reproduced through mechanical means, it loses its "aura." This means that the originality and authenticity of a work of art, which are so essential to its uniqueness and power, cannot themselves be reproduced. It also means that while a painting has an aura, a photograph does not. This is due to the fact that while the painting remains utterly original, the photograph is an image of an image and therefore lacks originality. This essential difference between an original painting and a photograph is even more pronounced in the case of photography and film, since we can at least view a photograph over an extended period of time, while if we "freeze" a frame from a film we suppress its filmic character and reduce it to its mere photographic aspect. In fact, for Benjamin the decline of the aura is seen most strongly in the case of film, which he argues is the ultimate realization of the surrealist technique of montage. The fact that photography and film both lack an aura while emerging as significant modernist art forms, demonstrates in his view that a historical shift has taken place and needs to be accounted for.

Benjamin argued that although it is true that with the loss of aura the original work of art loses its singular authority, the mechanical reproduction of it manages to make up for this void by producing the possibility of its mass consumption. Through the seeming "magic" of reproduction, "the cathedral," said Benjamin, "leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or the open air, resounds in the drawing room."[32] These advances encourage the masses to want to get closer and closer to the aesthetic object both spatially and humanly, and Benjamin remarks with regards to this that "To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction."[33] Statements like this demonstrate how Benjamin vacillated between his Marxist sympathy for the fate and welfare of the masses and his collector's snobbish attachment to unique and beautiful objects.

While the removal of aura with regards to an original work of art once it has been reproduced infers its loss of authority, the issue with regards to the mechanical

reproduction of what was originally photographic material is more complicated. In the case of a movie, for example, the cameraman controls what the viewers of the movie will eventually see far more than a painter could ever do with the viewers of his painting, because the cameraman directs the viewer's eye to a specific place and its specific story. He thus guides his viewers to one side of the story and leaves the other sides outside the perceived frame. This interference dulls the viewer's perception by introducing distraction as a mode of reception. Thus, individuals of the modern age never merely contemplate the screen or the film portrayed on it *per se*; on the contrary, in a certain sense the film actually contemplates *them*. Because of the reproducibility of its images, the film demands that its viewers submit themselves increasingly to the way it portrays the world. When we, as filmgoers, reflect back on ourselves after being absorbed by its inauthentic and politicized images, we discover that our perceptual abilities and sense of identity have become transformed through this submission. We may, for example, then discover that our own lives pale in comparison to the artificially enhanced lives we see on screen, or we may begin to see our lives unfold as if we ourselves were living inside a movie, unable to affect its outcome. Either way, we've been ineradicably affected by the filmic experience.

Benjamin believed that reproductive techniques were destructive of the aura of ritual and cult which once surrounded art works. He compared the montage technique used in film to the principle of interruption in his friend Brecht's epic theater. In both cases the interruption in the action results in an alienation effect, because the illusion of reality is disrupted, displaying the social conditions which underlie all human action and making them seem strange and unfamiliar. Benjamin, however, was looking at the revolutionary silent films of Eisenstein and Vertov from the 1920's; in consequence he even lamented the decline of film with the coming of sound. From his point of view, then, technical innovations like montage seemed capable of having direct political effects. He underestimated the possibility, at least in the view of Adorno and others, that the public's demand for popular art might undermine the potential of films to be emancipatory and challenging. He couldn't see how the leveling forces of capitalism would get in the way, undermining the revolutionary aspects of the technology. Nor could he anticipate how the psychological and sociological aspects of the mass media conglomerate would come to overwhelm its aesthetic side.[34]

Now that anyone can go to a gallery, museum, theater, or cinema, the mystical cult of the original artwork and its aura has died out, while a new appreciation for art has been introduced in its wake, bringing with it a whole new mode of deception and distraction. By losing its aura the original work of art has become "de-aestheticized," and previously recognized universal values in art such as genius,

beauty, and creativity have almost completely disappeared. This is due to the fact that technological advances have interfered with traditional aesthetic categories to the point that art has become little more than a vehicle for political communication. The culture industry makes our myths now, and through our aesthetic interpretation of its reproducible images we uncover a world that mirrors our own in numerous ways even though we can't participate in it. The massively reproduced art object helps to create a field of mass consumption which consumes us at the same time we consume it. And as it acquires its greatly augmented capacity to become political, it becomes all the more powerful and dangerous.

While Benjamin largely regarded the film industry in a positive way because he believed that its revolutionary technology would enable its audience to reflect more deeply on the world around them, Horkheimer and Adorno (discussed below) were more pessimistic and skeptical about the culture industry in general and the film industry in particular, fearing that its rapacious demand for profits would interfere with any higher aesthetic calling it might have. Enlightenment has always been a tool of the powerful for fooling the masses in order to make them more malleable in the name of "progress."

Concluding Remarks

Benjamin's conception of history and his understanding of the place of "the modern" within it were central themes for him. Modernity for him represented something ephemeral and contingent, and he became interested in how the novelty of "the new" functioned as a mode of experience which could enable the eternalization of modernity's transitory nature. But "the new" itself becomes transformed by its commodification into the "ever selfsame." The interpretive key, he felt, was the experience of shock, or the feeling of dislocation which exposes the discontinuity of history. This dislocation in the fabric of time was in his view a result of the disintegration of "aura," which occurred in modern times due to the expansion within society of the mechanical reproduction of works of original art. While the original "aura" had placed a distance between the original work of art and its spectator, regardless of how close they were in actuality, the reproducibility of photos, prints, and films destabilized the uniqueness, authenticity, and unapproachability of the original work which were its essential attributes. The loss of aura reflected the alienation of humanly constructed objects from their creators. When such objects lose their human trace, they become reified and lose their historical context. A major consequence of the loss of aura is that the work of art leaves the realm of religious ritual and, once it is disseminated throughout the world in reproduced form, enters the world of politics.

The modern, in Benjamin's view, completely transformed the experience of history because it de-historicized history, removing it from the continuity of tradition. He insisted that one of the main methodological objectives of his Arcades Project was "to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress," taking as its "founding concept … not progress but actualization."[35] The idea of progress, in his view, was too dependent on causal connection; he formulated in its stead a conception of historical time which took the time of human life into consideration, one which included the existential modes of memory, expectation, and action. He believed that only through the experience of images of the past—in film, photography, and material objects—could historical intelligibility emerge, as a result of a confrontation with the dialectical relationship between "then" and "now." As he put it, "the dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash."[36] Historical experience thus emerges from the discharge of the explosive force of "now-time" blasting open the continuum of history.

Part II: Horkheimer and Adorno

Irrational Reason

Horkheimer and Adorno began *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with a bleak assessment of where the progressive thought of the Enlightenment had led us. World War II had just ended, and the burden of fascism was still all too present—and not just in memory. Although the progress of modern science, medicine and industry was all very obvious, it hadn't brought unambiguously positive consequences. While its advances were clearly intended to liberate people from ignorance, disease, and brutal, mind-numbing work, they had instead helped to create a world where people willingly accepted fascist ideology, practiced deliberate genocide, and knowingly developed lethal weapons of mass destruction. How could this have happened? Their answer was that reason had become irrational.

In Horkheimer and Adorno's view, the "eclipse of reason" occurred with the appearance in modern societies of a pattern of "blind domination," which they characterized in three ways: the domination of nature by human beings, the domination of nature within human beings, and the domination of some human beings by others.[37] When such blind, fear-driven domination is allowed to continue, it leads to an unfree society whose culture pursues "progress" at any cost. In such a society, whatever is "other" is shoved aside, to be exploited or even destroyed. The engine that drives this society is the ever-expanding capitalist economy, fed by scientific research and the latest technology. Eisenhower famously referred to

this engine in his farewell speech to the nation in 1961 as the "military-industrial complex."

A key aspect of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that it is an open-ended text. This is so not only because its view of history is indeterminate, but also because of its authors' aversion to closed philosophical systems. Adorno and Horkheimer believed that the critical use of reason needs to be applied to the ideologies that surround and threaten us, and in such a way that their power over us can be canceled. Their understanding of what this "critical" approach might entail derives from their study of the use of the term by Kant and Marx. They view Kant's critique as establishing the limits of validity with regards to how the various faculties of knowledge function within the larger knowledge system. They characterize his work as part of the Enlightenment critique of superstition and irrational authority, directed at the disestablishment of false, unprovable, and dogmatic beliefs. "The program of the Enlightenment," they maintain, "was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy"[38] and they view Kant's critical philosophy as contributing to this process of disenchantment. They view Marx, on the other hand, as directing his critique against ideologies in general, due in part to his notably having said in the 11th of his *Theses on Feuerbach* that "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in certain ways; the point is to change it." While Marx believed that the primary contradiction within capitalism, namely the tension between the relations of production and the productive forces of society, would lead to an era of social revolution, his theory could not account for the rise of the new forms of social domination which were taken up only a couple of generations later by modern societies around the world, including National Socialism in Germany, state capitalism in Soviet Russia, and (at least for Horkheimer and Adorno) the culture of mass media in modern Europe and the United States. The idea that the third of these modern societies was in many significant ways equivalent to the other two became a major theme of the Critical Theorists, beginning with *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, the necessary counterforce to the presence of totally administered societies is Critical Theory, whose method consists in the "determining negation"[39] of whatever is at hand. They derive this term from Hegel, and with it they refer to the negating force that goes beyond the superficial properties of a thing, penetrates into its inner workings, and understands that it is not a static object but something in the process of becoming something else. In this way the new object is negatively determined, because it is derived from the very thing it has negated. By focusing their attention on whatever is at hand, Horkheimer and Adorno turn to whatever is immediately given and is self-evident to them, and this includes all social phenomena such as social practices, institutions, beliefs,

customs and the like. Their method of "determining negation" entails showing that the apparent self-evidence of these social phenomena actually hides a complex set of preconditions as part of their history.

Although established in the name of reason, this critical engagement with social phenomena through determining negation must itself be negated in order to neutralize what Horkheimer and Adorno consider to be its oppressive, totalizing character. This second negation is necessary, in their view, because modern societies are driven by the need to rationalize all aspects of human existence in order to make them more efficient:

> What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men. That is the only aim. Ruthlessly, in despite of itself, the Enlightenment has extinguished any trace of its own self-consciousness. The only kind of thinking that is sufficiently hard to shatter myths is ultimately self-destructive.[40]

For Horkheimer and Adorno, the dominating vision of the Enlightenment, which views the world in terms of the categories of rationality and efficiency, amounts to a modern mythology—despite the fact that one of its goals is to overthrow the myths of past generations. It is itself driven by an "irrational reason" which is the product of its own dialectical process. It therefore becomes the responsibility of Critical Theory to turn on reason itself in order to expose how it has become entangled in the history of domination. In order to combat totalizing reason effectively, Critical Theory has to be anti-dogmatic as well as anti-systematic. It has to learn how to use its capacity for negation in order to find the elusive truths it seeks.

Horkheimer and Adorno's search for a dialectical social science is grounded in their desire to avoid both the absolutism of identity theory and the empirical bias of positivism. While absolutism leads to dogmatism and systematization, positivism leads to a form of skepticism since all it can do is measure things, not judge between their truth or falsity. For example, on the one hand absolutist Enlightenment thinking about identity can't recognize the potentiality for change in selfhood over time. On the other hand, the instrumental manipulation of nature *by* humans leads to the parallel manipulation *of* humans, due to the fact that the objectivization of the world produces a similar effect on human relations. When myth turns into enlightenment, "Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power."[41] Or, to put it metaphorically, on the one side we have the crises of identity in Homer's *Odyssey*, while on the other side we find the cold instrumentalism of de Sade's *Juliette.* Consequently, in the two succeeding chapters of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which follow their analysis of the concept of enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno repeat

their dialectical construction, this time between the crises of identity caused by the culture industry and the use of instrumental reason in the case of anti-Semitism.

Homer's Odyssey

For Horkheimer and Adorno, the Enlightenment's systematic elimination of negation from language leads to speech becoming nothing more than the tool of the dominant forces in society.[42] They note further that an early anticipation of this decline took place within the language of Homer's *Odyssey,* which they view as anticipating the first stage in the dialectic of enlightenment. Horkheimer and Adorno thus assert that the epic narrative of the *Odyssey,* especially in the oldest of its many layers, had its origin in popular tradition, and clearly exhibited a close relation to myth. But because Homer organized the ancient myths into a coherent epical pattern, he contradicted their originally dark and chaotic chthonic character. The Homeric narrative also in their view effected a new universalist language by using an exoteric form of representation informed by reason and practicality. By doing this, Homer dissolved the hierarchical order of men and gods in the very process of glorifying it. "The venerable cosmos of the meaningful Homeric world," Horkheimer and Adorno conclude, "is shown to be the achievement of regulative reason, which destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order in which it reflects it."[43] By organizing the ancient Greek myths into a coherent pattern, Homer made them manageable and understandable—and thus neutralized their potency, and this ultimately destroyed them.

Horkheimer and Adorno insist that the Enlightenment has always been a tool of the powerful for fooling the masses, in order to make them more malleable in the name of "progress." They point out that epic and myth, while very distinct forms of expression, still have in common the desire for domination and exploitation. For this reason, Homer represents for them "the basic text of European civilization".[44] They approvingly quote Nietzsche in this regard: "Apollonian Homer merely continues that general human artistic practice to which we owe individuation,"[45] and they note further that Homer's narrative form "is also a description of the retreat of the individual from the mythic powers."[46] Here we find in their view the birth of what would later become the modern concept of the independent, isolated, individual agent, the ego:

> The opposition of enlightenment to myth is expressed in the opposition of the surviving individual ego to multifarious fate. The eventful voyage from Troy to Ithaca is the way taken through the myths by the self—ever physically weak as against the power of nature, and attaining self-realization only in self-consciousness. The prehistoric world is secularized as the space whose measure the self must take …[47]

Horkheimer and Adorno detail a number of additional ways in which Homer's epic anticipates various Enlightenment themes. One important theme is the belief in the need for renunciation and self-denial in the face of the demands of instrumental reason. For example, man's oneness with nature is sacrificed in the name of civilization. There are numerous examples in the *Odyssey* of this tension between self-denial and self-preservation: "Odysseus's refusal to eat Lotus or the cattle of Hyperion, his sleeping with Circe only after extracting an oath from her not to transform him into a pig, his tying himself to the mast of his ship to avoid seduction by the song of the Sirens."[48]

The story in the *Odyssey* of the Song of the Sirens is especially significant for Horkheimer and Adorno on a symbolic level, because they view it as combining myth and rational labor.[49] When Odysseus's sailors put wax in their ears to prevent them from hearing the Sirens, this represents for Horkheimer and Adorno the repressed gratification of modern workers, the prerequisite for them to continue working. This is in contrast to the condition of Odysseus, who, not being a worker, is allowed to hear the song while still being protected from it—and while this represents the access to culture of the privileged it also points to their inability to fully appreciate what they have.

In the *Odyssey*, this inability of Odysseus to appreciate his privileged status is due to the fact that, in struggling against the mythic domination of fate, he is forced to deny his oneness with the totality of his surroundings. He realizes that if he lives by its rules he'll die by its rules, so he "loses himself in order to find himself."[50] He is consequently obliged to develop a particular form of instrumental rationality, one based on trickery, in order to survive. He cheats the gods by offering them false gifts in exchange for their cooperation. This deception, however, also marks the birth of the individual as self-conscious agent—a "trickery, which elevates the frail individual to the status of a vehicle of divine substance."[51] While this form of barter may represent a secular form of sacrifice, it is also a device whereby rational exchange overcomes magic, thus enabling the gods to be overthrown by their own system. Odysseus's treacherous journey thus anticipates the Enlightenment value of profit as the moral justification for risk.

de Sade's *Juliette*

Because the process of enlightenment "disenchants" the world, this leads to the realization that an otherwise innocent return to nature (Odysseus's return home) is distorted by instrumental reason (the presence of suitors trying to take over his wife and property), and Horkheimer and Adorno detail the revenge of brutalized nature (Odysseus's slaying of his enemies) in their analysis of

de Sade's novel *Juliette,* which appears immediately after their chapter on the *Odyssey.*

Before turning to de Sade's work, however, they examine Kant's philosophy again but in a new light, as an attempt to develop for science a sense of itself that transcends its mere operational nature. But in this case, they point out how Kant was unable "to derive the duty of mutual respect from a law of reason."[52] Any citizen who would forgo profit based on the Kantian motive of respect for the mere form of law, they note, would be a fool. Duty is not rational. When fascism treats men as things,[53] then, it does so in contradistinction from Kant's categorical imperative, which states that men should always be treated as ends in themselves and never as the mere means to an end; this is what he called "the Kingdom of Ends."[54] Despite this form of Kantian resistance, for Horkheimer and Adorno it is the philosophy of the Enlightenment which is responsible for the totalitarian order of fascism:

> Previously, only the poor and savages were exposed to the fury of capitalist elements. But the totalitarian order gives full rein to calculation and abides by science as such. Its canon is its own brutal efficiency. It was the hand of philosophy that wrote it on the wall—from Kant's *Critique* to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* … Even the ego, the synthetic unit of apperception, the instance which Kant calls the highest point, on which the possibility of the logical form of all knowledge necessarily depends, is in fact the product of, as well as the condition for, material existence.[55]

Although the prospects of economic self-sufficiency and productive ownership change variously from one generation to the next, the general directional shift of society, as Horkheimer and Adorno see it, is from a dispossessed bourgeoisie to totalitarian war-lords. This is so because in totalitarian societies all thinking is reduced to pure efficacy, and men are viewed as mere material things.

Horkheimer and Adorno turn to the works of the Marquis de Sade to illustrate how the affinity between knowledge and planning leads inexorably to a form of expediency which overwhelms all aspects of human experience. De Sade wrote two novels in this regard whose contrasting points of view were intended to inform each other. With his first novel, *Justine,* he tells the story of a woman who holds her virginity as something sacred, so close to herself that it is for her the mark not only of her purity and innocence but of her virtue as well. In the course of the novel, de Sade subjects her to the most horrifying indecencies imaginable, in order to demonstrate how little value her virtue actually has. Because she insists on maintaining her virtue at all costs, she loses everything else, and ultimately lives a life of poverty and degradation. In his next novel, *Juliette*, de Sade tells the story of Justine's sister Juliette who, precisely because she holds her bodily virtue to no

account, easily sacrifices it (along with any other moral concerns she might have) in return for such worldly goods as wealth, status, and influence, and she becomes a world famous, successful courtesan. De Sade's point is clear: in the face of the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment, morality holds no significant value.

There is also little concern for love in de Sade's universe. With his libertine arrangements, in which no human orifice is left unexplored, human feelings fall at the wayside in favor of gymnastic orgies whose arrangements amount less to pleasure than to the regimented pursuit of mere content.[56] Juliette is a daughter of the Enlightenment and believes in science, not God. She despises any and all forms of worship. She looks for the courage to do what is forbidden, and, like Nietzsche, she learns to "live dangerously" and to celebrate "the cruelty of the powerful."[57] She is a person capable of, in Nietzsche's words, "say, a frightful sequence of murder, arson, rape, and torture, as if it were all no more than some student's prank … [who finds] ghastly serenity and profound pleasure in all destruction and in all the debauchery of conquest and cruelty …"[58]

Unlike Nietzsche, however, Juliette deifies sin—and, as Horkheimer and Adorno note, "her libertinage is as marked by Catholicism as the nun's ecstasy is by paganism."[59] While Juliette forgoes the possibility of love in favor of her enjoyment of pleasure, in doing so she separates her mind from her body.[60] Hers is a view of human relations in which mere sexual coupling replaces tenderness, and where domination and control appear as reasonable choices. In this context Nietzsche once asked himself, "Where do your greatest dangers lie?" and he answered, "In compassion."[61] What he meant by this is the realization that without compassion the world is all too easy to figure out. When humans are treated as objects, their actions and reactions are very predictable. It's also no accident that the Enlightenment dream of utopia has no place for compassion.

The Culture Industry and Mass Deception

Horkheimer and Adorno have argued thus far that the legacy of the progressive thinking of the Enlightenment has been largely a negative one. The thinking that was supposed to set us free has instead been used to control us, and we find ourselves in a world of social domination rather than social revolution. On the one hand, the Enlightenment provided us with a myth, namely the idea that rational thinking can be used to solve all our problems while still avoiding being strangled by dogma. On the other hand, the Enlightenment introduced the theme of instrumental reason, the belief that as long as we separate thinking from feeling, we can maximize efficiency and minimize risk, and thus become masters of our environment without destroying it. It is relatively easy and even convenient to recognize

how these forms of thinking can lead to the conditions for "unfreedom" that are central to the totalizing societies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. It is less comforting to note how Horkheimer and Adorno point to these same forces being present in the democracies of Western Europe and the US. They do this through their analysis of the culture industry.

Horkheimer and Adorno recognize that culture itself, despite their pessimistic view of its status within modern society, is an important source for social knowledge as well as a potential form for social criticism and opposition. The task of the culture critic, they argue, should not be merely to identify which interest groups are being targeted by which form of cultural production, but to decipher the general societal tendencies expressed in these phenomena, especially in capitalist societies. This takes the form of systematic inquiries into the effects of the relation between culture and ideology and into the dialectics of culture, whereby culture can be both a force for social conformity and for opposing it as well.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, because they were living in the era of World War II, the existence of death camps and the threat of the triumph of fascism were all too real. In their view the ideals of Enlightenment thinking had turned into their opposites: "democracy had produced fascism, reason had generated unreason as instrumental rationality created military machines and death camps, and the culture industries were transforming culture from an instrument of *Bildung* [self-cultivation] and enlightenment into an instrument of manipulation and domination."[62] Culture, once the refuge for beauty and truth, had been reduced by instrumental reason to a rationalized, standardized demand for conformity. Culture had become the product of a totally administered society which was inevitably producing the end of the individual.

Horkheimer and Adorno assert that "Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part."[63] As proof of this systemic uniformity they point to the modern style in government buildings and exhibition centers throughout the world, in both authoritarian and democratic societies. "Under monopoly," they contend, "all mass culture is identical."[64] The creators of movies and radio consequently don't need to pretend that they create art, since their business is also clearly an industry. Together they create a "circle of manipulation and retroactive need" whereby "technology acquires power over society" and "automobiles, bombs, and movies keep the whole thing together."[65] Horkheimer and Adorno point out that "the step from the telephone to the radio"[66] crosses over from a liberalizing technology which "allowed the subscriber to play the role of the subject" to a democratic format which "turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same."[67] Because the intended markets for these programs is diverse, consumers

are classified, organized and labeled in order to facilitate the process of mass quantification and identification, so that nobody is excluded. "Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda."[68] Once mass culture is created and its various parts identified, the road to fascism has been paved.

The power of the culture industry is so pervasive, Horkheimer and Adorno contend, that it controls all aspects of artistic production as well. "Not only are the hit songs, stars, and soap operas cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types," they argue, "but the specific content of the entertainment itself is derived from them and only appears to change."[69] Ready-made clichés are slotted everywhere; technical details as well as ideas are sacrificed in favor of the desired effect, which is the preparation of a ready-made audience. Since nothing is left to chance, everything is predictable from the first note, the first sentence, the first frame. In the culture industry, the superficiality of mere amusement takes over from the deeper challenges posed by the great art of the past.

Pointing to the dialectical nature of mass art, Horkheimer and Adorno qualify their analysis by suggesting that "negative elements" are still present, at least in film, in "the tendency to fall back on pure nonsense, which was a legitimate part of popular art, farce and clowning, right up to Chaplin and the Marx Brothers."[70] They point out that negation is present in corporeal rather than intellectual art, such as in the actions of circus and vaudeville performers, acrobats and clowns, all of whose actions hint at oppositional tendencies. At the same time, though, tragic figures like Garbo and even Betty Boop were being displaced in the industry by the programmed cheerfulness of Mickey Rooney and the fatalistic masochism of Donald Duck.[71] But the real object of the culture industry is of course the creation of the eternal consumer. "The liberation which amusement promises is freedom from thought and from negation."[72] The culture industry produces artificial needs in the hearts of its consumers, and then controls them, disciplines them, and even withdraws amusement from them when necessary. Resistance is futile.

A Marxist Reading of Donald Duck

What Horkheimer and Adorno characterize as "fatalistic masochism" in the character of the cartoon figure Donald Duck is seen by Dorfman and Mattelart in their book *How to Read Donald Duck* as a pernicious form of colonialist discourse. Their work is an attempt to show how the seemingly innocuous characters of Donald Duck and his pals perpetuate an infantile view of the third world and its working classes. They argue that the animated world of Disney, despite its supposed

innocence, actually consists of representations of everyday forms of social oppression. While Disney's cartoon characters live in a simplistic world governed by formulaic ethics, their tales are shown to constantly promote and defend both capitalist and imperialist views at the expense of third world cultures.

In their preface to the English edition of their book, Dorfman and Mattelart discuss the revolutionary political circumstances in Chile that were then (1971) taking place as the central backdrop to their writing. The Chilean people were in the process of taking over industries that had been in the control of the likes of Rockefeller, Grace, Guggenheim, and Morgan, and this was a turn of events that the US government and its multinational corporations found intolerable. "They organized a plan," the authors inform us, "which at the time was suspected, and since has been confirmed by Mr. Kissinger, Ford and Colby to have been directed and financed by the United States intelligence services. Their objective: to overthrow the constitutional government of Chile. To realize their objective, an "invisible blockade" was imposed …"[73] The blockade included the freezing of Chilean State bank accounts in the US, the setting up of embargoes preventing the sale of Chilean copper around the world, and the organized refusal to send the spare parts needed to keep Chilean industrial machinery operational. Significantly, among the items that were *not* blocked were materiel for the Chilean armed forces, along with magazines, TV serials, advertising, and the ongoing data from public opinion polls. "In the words of General Pinochet," Dorfman and Mattelart report, "the point was to 'conquer the minds,' while in the words of Donald Duck (in the magazine Disneylandia published in December 1971, coinciding with the first mass rallies of native fascism, the so-called 'march of the empty pots and pans') the point was to 'restore the king.'"[74]

Here are some examples from the Disney comics that bear out Dorfman and Mattelart's message about the ultraconservative values of the Disney world view:

> In one episode, the nephews, exhausted after six months scouring the Gobi desert on Scrooge's behalf, are upbraided for having taken so long, and are paid one dollar for their pains. They flee thankfully, in fear of yet more forced labor. It never occurs to them to object, to stay put and to demand better treatment.[75]

> There is no room for love in this world. The youngsters admire a distant uncle (Unca Zak McWak), who invented a "spray to kill apple worms." (D 455, DD 5/68). "The whole world is thankful to him for that … He's famous … and rich," the nephews exclaim. Donald sensibly replies "Bah! *Brains, fame* and *fortune* aren't *everything.*" *"Oh, no*? What's left?" ask Huey, Dewey, and Louie in unison. And Donald is at a loss for words: "er … um … let's see now."[76]

> Moby Duck and Donald (D 453), captured by the Aridians (Arabs), start to blow soap bubbles, with which the natives are enchanted. "Ha, ha. They break when you catch

> them. Hee, hee." Ali-Ben-Goli, the chief says, "It's real magic. My people are laughing like children. They cannot imagine how it works." "It's only a secret passed from generation to generation," says Moby. "I will reveal it to you if you give us our freedom." (Civilization is presented as something incomprehensible, to be administered by foreigners.) The chief, in amazement, exclaims "Freedom? That's not all I'll give you. Gold, Jewels. My treasure is yours, if you reveal the secret." The Arabs consent to their own despoliation. "We have jewels, but they are of no use to us. They don't make you laugh like magic bubbles." While Donald sneers "poor simpleton," Moby hands over the Flip Flop detergent. "You are right, my friend. Whenever you want a little pleasure, just poor out some magic powder and recite the magic words." The story ends on the note that it is not necessary for Donald to excavate the Pyramids (or earth) personally, because, as Donald says, "What do we need a pyramid for, when we have Ali-Ben-Goli?"[77]

Dorfman and Mattelart build their thesis that all forms of modern hierarchical social structures depend on media culture to create the ideological support they require, on comic book stories and cartoons like these. In the Disney universe, for example, children don't seem to grow up with parents, so the only social authority present is external to the family. The characters are therefore depicted as being without any internal moral compass. This is also a world without pleasure, in part because where there is no labor there is no leisure. Instead, Donald is constantly bored and wishing he were off having an adventure somewhere else. His adventures however invariably include having fun at someone else's expense. By presenting Donald's antics as innocent fun, Disney manages to gloss over the real conflicts behind social struggle. For instance, when Donald and his cousins travel to other lands, like Inca-Blinca or Aztecland or Unsteadystan, they easily dupe the locals into trading their precious resources for items of no value. The reason certain nations are wealthy and others are poor, or so it seems in Donald's world, is the barbaric ignorance of those who live in places like these. The implicit assumption behind these tales is that people from underdeveloped countries are all uneducated and uncivilized, and therefore must be colonized. The culture of Donald and his friends is seen only in terms of the incessant search for money, fame and fortune, which are the only things that matter in their world. The characters seem locked in a permanent stasis, repeating the same messages over and over. The only possible savior present is Uncle Scrooge, who, representing the rags-to-riches hard worker, is the only person around able to save Donald from his own laziness, which is understood to be the real reason for his problems rather than the economic conditions within which he finds himself.

In Disney's world, every character stands either above or below the demarcation line of power. Those below are bound to obedience, submission, discipline, and humility. Those above are free to employ constant coercion, including threats,

physical and moral repression, and economic domination. While sometimes the oppression is paternalistic and less aggressive, like through gift-giving, this is still a world of permanent profit and bonus. There can be no rebellion against the established order. An *inversion* of this structure is allowed, however. This occurs when the balance of power has been disturbed. When Donald, as often happens, oversteps his boundaries and by his actions threatens to upset the established order, inevitably his nephews step in and restore the moral order. This means that when Donald acts like a child, for example, the children in his life turn around and play the necessary restorative role of adults. The established order of law is what is sacrosanct. While horizontal movement is allowed where different players take on the roles of worker and owner or master and slave, the vertical nature of the hierarchy of power must be maintained at all times, not to be overturned.

The Elements of Anti-Semitism

Echoing the dialectical contrast between the crises of identity in Homer's *Odyssey* and the application of instrumental reason in de Sade's *Juliette,* Horkheimer and Adorno introduce a second dialectical relation, between the crises of identity caused by the culture industry (which they call "Enlightenment as deception")[78] and the application of instrumental reason to the proliferation of anti-Semitism (which they call "the limits of Enlightenment")[79] within the totalitarian societies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, especially during the 1930's and 1940's.

However, the chapter on anti-Semitism in *Dialectics of Enlightenment* to doesn't fit quite so neatly into this dialectical schematic, for several reasons. First of all, the seven separate sections which make up this chapter were not initially intended for the book but for a wholly different "antisemitism project" of the Frankfurt School critical theorists. The "Elements" section was composed only after all the other sections were completed, and its themes were not originally intended to relate integrally with the rest of the book. The authors also found the issue of anti-Semitism to be far more complicated than they had at first believed. As Horkheimer later recalled, "On the one hand we have to differentiate radically between the economic-political factors which cause and use it, and [those anthropological elements which respond to it]; on the other hand we must show these factors in their constant interconnection and describe how they permeate each other."[80] Still, from Adorno's point of view as he later recalled, the chapter was intended to "situate racial prejudice in the context of an objectively oriented critical theory of society," including while de-emphasizing the psychological element.[81]

The "Elements" chapter juxtaposes anthropological, sociological, psychological and economic perspectives. From an economic and psychological perspective

the authors focused on how the mental imagery of the Nazis "metaphorically substitutes the Jews as the 'hated mirror image of capitalism.'"[82] They ultimately came to recognize anti-Semitism as "a deeply imprinted schema, a ritual of civilization."[83] In the following years their view changed somewhat, especially as reports of extermination camps first began to circulate in the US in 1944. As Horkheimer acknowledged at the time to the editor of the magazine *The Jewish Forum*: "… wittingly or unwittingly, the Jews have become the martyrs of civilization … Their survival is inseparable from the survival of culture itself."[84] As early as 1941, Horkheimer had speculated in a letter to Adorno that the chapter on ant-Semitism might actually become the focal center of their book: "That would mean the concretizing and limiting which we have been searching for."[85] The tragic death of their friend and associate Walter Benjamin during this time also provided a "guiding star"[86] around which the whole constellation of themes in their book might be organized: "the fate of the exile, the fate of the Jews, and catastrophe of civilization."[87] In a letter to Horkheimer, Adorno pointed out the need for them to make a shift in perspective in their book from the proletariat to the Jews, as the "counterpoint to power."[88]

The authors then began to recognize and develop connections between their first chapter on the fate of Odysseus and their chapter on anti-Semitism. As Rabinbach points out in his essay on why were the Jews sacrificed, "As Odysseus resists regression into the boundaryless world of magic and matriarchy, the modern epic of the homelessness, exile, and diaspora of reason is self-consciously counterpointed to the fascist glorification of rootedness and the mythology of *Heimat* (homeland)."[89] Because of his use of reason and cunning, Odysseus is able to escape from his mythical prehistory, but by *imitating* the power of the gods over nature he initiates a ritual of sacrifice that subordinates his instincts to the power of reason. This theme, of imitation (mimesis), is key to understanding the genealogy of sacrifice undergone by Odysseus, from animism to magic to myth to reason. "Mimesis," Rabinbach explains, is "… an act of substitution that intervenes between the helpless subject and the overpowering object: it appears in the frozen terror with which all human beings react to fear, in the magician's impersonation of demons, in his gestures of appeasement to the gods, or in the wearing of masks which guarantee that the identity of self 'cannot disappear through identification with another.'"[90]

Horkheimer and Adorno (like Freud before them) identified the taboo on pictoriality in Jewish monotheism as the event that inaugurated modernism, because it converted ritual substitution and sacrifice into the order of law. The Jews thus "transformed taboos into civilizing maxims, while others still clung to magic."[91] But even in the "disenchanted world of Judaism" the power of mimesis is expressed

in the "bond between name and being" that is recognized within Judaism as "the ban on pronouncing the name of God."[92] Furthermore, as Rabinbach explains it, "Fascism is the mirror opposite of the prohibition on mimesis, an archaic world of inauthenticity and terror masquerading as authenticity, heroism, and 'being-in-the-world.'"[93]

As the "secret gypsies of history"[94] the Jews were perceived through anti-Semitic eyes as lacking ties to the earth, threatening the ideals of civilized life which were home, family, and labor. They represented from this distorted viewpoint a stage of humanity which did not yet know work. Their collective remembrance of a utopian "land of milk and honey" seemed also to reinforce the perception that Jews refuse to be civilized by submitting to the primacy of labor, because of their belief that as the chosen people their god would take care of them. Ultimately, Horkheimer and Adorno came to believe that totalitarian regimes were hostile to the Jews because they represented "happiness without power, wages without work, a home without frontiers, religion without myth."[95] They conclude that only with the end of the dialectic of enlightenment will anti-Semitism disappear.[96]

Concluding Remarks

Working together on their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Horkheimer and Adorno attempted to address the rise of fascism, the historical fact most central to their lives at the time of their writing. They traced the rise of fascism to the demise of both the liberal state and of market capitalism, as well as to the failure of the socialist revolution to materialize in their wake. They noted two main theses for their work, that "Myth is already Enlightenment, and Enlightenment reverts to mythology."[97] They meant that they had recognized from their own historical situation that reason had regressed into something resembling the very forms of superstition and myth from which it had emerged. They also noticed how, in their own time, the culture industry had emerged in capitalist society (and ultimately in communist society as well) as a means to manipulate mass society into docility and passivity. Unlike the telephone, the mass media of radio and television did not provide the opportunity for listeners to reply to what they were being told—and in their view this provided the seeds for authoritarian rule. This one-sidedness or one-dimensionality of the media for mass communications would therefore account for the persistence of various forms of political and social domination, not only during their own time but for the foreseeable future as well, because of the absence of significant forces of negation within these societies.

Notes

1. Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind,* in Haldane, E., and Ross, G.R.T., eds., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol. I*, p. 14.
2. cited in Arendt, H., *Men in Dark Times*, p. 160.
3. ibid., p. 163.
4. See for example his letter to Arendt in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 637.
5. see for example his letter to Arendt in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 637.
6. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times,* p. 164.
7. Baudelaire, tr. Aggeler, n. pag.
8. Benjamin, quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 182.
9. Baudelaire, tr. Aggeler, n. pag.
10. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 185.
11. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 186.
12. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 187.
13. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 193.
14. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 193.
15. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 193.
16. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 23.
17. Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, cited in Arendt, ibid., p. 165.
18. Missac, P., *Walter Benjamin's Passages,* p. 9.
19. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 23.
20. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 69.
21. Benjamin, ibid., p. 463.
22. Benjamin, ibid., p. 463.
23. Benjamin. ibid., p. 460.
24. quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 83.
25. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 83.
26. Benjamin, quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 105.
27. Buck-Morse, ibid., p. 105.
28. Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 111.
29. Benjamin, quoted in Buck-Morss, ibid., p. 116.
30. From Adorno's *Letters*, cited in Jay, M., *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 207.
31. Also from Adorno's *Letters*, cited in Jay, p. 207.
32. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, pp. 220–221.
33. ibid., p. 223.
34. See Andrae, T., "Adorno on Film and Mass Culture: The Culture Industry Reconsidered" from *Jump Cut* no. 20, 1979, pp. 34–37.
35. Benjamin, *Arcades Project,* p. 460.
36. ibid., p. 473.
37. See Zuidervaart and Lambert, "Theodor W. Adorno," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Winter 2011 Edition, Edward N. Zalta, ed.

38. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment,* p. 3.
39. ibid., p. 24.
40. ibid., p. 4.
41. ibid., p. 9.
42. ibid., p. 43.
43. ibid.,. p. 44.
44. ibid., p. 46.
45. quoted in ibid., p. 46.
46. ibid., p. 46.
47. ibid., p. 46.
48. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 264.
49. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 43.
50. ibid., p. 48.
51. ibid., p. 51.
52. ibid., p. 85.
53. ibid., p. 86.
54. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 433.
55. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 86.
56. ibid., p. 88.
57. ibid., p. 97.
58. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, quoted in DE, pp. 97–98.
59. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* p. 106.
60. ibid., p. 107.
61. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, quoted in DE, p. 119.
62. Kellner, D, "Theodor W. Adorno and the Dialectics of Mass Culture" in *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gibson, N. and Rubin, A. p. 87.
63. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 120.
64. ibid., p. 121.
65. ibid., p. 121.
66. ibid., p. 121.
67. ibid., pp. 121–12.
68. ibid., p. 123.
69. ibid., p. 125.
70. ibid., p. 137.
71. See Andrae, T., "Adorno on Film and Mass Culture: the Culture Industry Reconsidered," from JumpCut: A Review of Contemporary Media no. 20, 1979, p. 34–3.
72. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 144.
73. Dorfman and Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck,* p. 9.
74. ibid., p. 9.
75. ibid., p. 35.
76. ibid., p. 35.
77. ibid., p. 51.
78. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* p. 120.
79. ibid., p. 168.

80. See Rabinbach, A., "Why Were the Jews Sacrificed? The Place of Antisemitism in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*" in *Adorno: A Critical Reader,* Gibson, N. and Rubin, R., eds., p. 135.
81. ibid., p. 134.
82. ibid., p. 135.
83. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* p. 171.
84. Rabinbach, ibid., p. 136.
85. Rabinbach, ibid., p. 137.
86. ibid., p. 137.
87. ibid., p. 137.
88. quoted in Rabinach, ibid., p. 139.
89. ibid., p. 139.
90. Rabinach, ibid., p. 140.
91. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 186.
92. ibid., p. 23.
93. Rabinach, ibid., p. 141.
94. ibid., p. 143.
95. Horkheimer and Adorno, ibid., p. 199.
96. Rabinach, ibid., p. 147.
97. Horkheimer and Adorno, ibid., xviii.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Lived Experience: Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty

Introduction

The search for the lived experience found additional voices in Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty, who did their most important work in the 1940's. When Bachelard first directed his focus on the phenomenon of time, he experienced a personal transformation which turned his philosophical attention away from the data of science and towards the imagery of dreams. He challenged Bergson's traditionalist conception of time as continuous duration, contrasting it with his own experience of the vertical time of the poetic dreamer's instant. He saw this as a complex experience which gathers together several simultaneities all at once, so that time no longer merely flows—it gushes, it shoots up—and the ties of causation are then loosened. For Merleau-Ponty, the human being is a body-subject, whose being and consciousness are intertwined due to the primacy of perception. Language cannot be separated from meaning, yet meaning appears in the social world at the intersection of signs and signifiers. Since all language is essentially indirect and allusive, its hidden workings are most powerfully felt in the primary and universal voices of intersubjective expression found in the visual arts, music, and in literature—what he called "the voices of silence."

Bachelard is an antiphilosopher because of his untraditional approach to both science and art, which started with his recognizing how both stem from the

same creative force. In his view science can never develop into a complete system, because scientific truths tend to turn against their supporters and compel them to take into consideration new facts and new discoveries. He recognizes that scientific investigation leads to certain kinds of truths, but he questions whether the information they provide is sufficient for all our needs. In order to discover new perspectives, it's necessary to move past the truths offered by objective science and turn to the subjective experience of things. In order to discover this subjective realm, we turn to the phenomenology of the poetic imagination, which allows us to explore the being of man in an entirely new way.

Merleau-Ponty is an antiphilosopher because of his commitment to the primacy of perception over understanding and reason. He thus develops his concept of the body-subject as an alternative to the Cartesian *cogito*. Instead of locating consciousness as the source of knowledge, he emphasizes the body instead. The unchanging object of the natural sciences is no longer the phenomenal thing, as it was in Cartesian rationalism, but a correlate of our body and its sensory-motor functions. Avoiding mind-body dualism, he recognizes how humans are embedded in the "flesh of the world" in a totally codependent way. Our involvement with language is similarly intertwined with our connection to the world, since while language precedes human existence and therefore all other engagements with intersubjectivity, it is at the same time affected by this interaction itself.

Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty shared a number of concerns, as well as at least some strategies for resolving them. Both recognized that a crisis in the modern sciences had occurred, and believed that a new philosophy of science was needed in order to respond to this crisis. They both recognized in Husserl's phenomenology the most radical attempt thus far to resolve it. They both also believed that Husserlian phenomenology as science failed because its commitment to the "primacy of the perceived" failed to reach the "ipseity" (or "thisness") of the thing itself. As Derrida put it: "Contrary to what phenomenology—which is always phenomenology of perception—has tried to make us believe, contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing, the thing itself always escapes."[1] They both found the need to stretch the limits of language in order to discover the proper way to embrace the complexity of the world—and they both attempted to formulate a "post-Cartesian" non-dualist structure for this articulation. Bachelard's reflections on air, water, and dreams offer an opportunity for initiating a post-Cartesian encounter with the phenomenology of the body and with what Merleau-Ponty called "the flesh of the world."

Bachelard's poetics proceed from the variation of pure images. Unlike conceptual variation, however, the encounter of the "poetic dreamer" with words does not constitute reality so much as connect with the reverberation of elementary being

in its pre-conceptual form.[2] Here, "phenomenology liquidates the past and confronts what is new."[3] Moreover, it escapes the semantics of its context: "The poetic image is always a little above the language of signification … and stands out from the ordinary rank of pragmatic language."[4] The poetic dreamer's encounter with the hidden world of pure images may not be a pragmatic one, but it is authentic: "In what, precisely, does belief in reality consist? … The belief in reality is essentially the conviction that an entity transcends immediate sense data; or to put the same point more plainly, it is the conviction that what is real but hidden has more content than what is given and obvious.[5] The poetic dreamer's encounter with the world of pure images yields a kind of knowledge of the world that is completely inaccessible and hidden to the scientific mind.

Merleau-Ponty defined "flesh" as *chiasm*, as the interlacing of a being with, at least potentially, all other beings. Flesh, however, cannot be encountered as a mere "thing," since as a living entity, it is continually involved in the process of living and dying. Flesh is made up of flows and vapors, and presents itself to everyday perception as both an illusion of substance and as a deception of material stability. The body for Merleau-Ponty is not the medium for communication but is communication itself. "The flesh," he wrote, "is neither a fact nor a sum of material or spiritual facts."[6] Nor is it even a representation for a mind, since such a representation cannot be captured by its own representation, whereas the flesh of the world involves a horizon that not only captivates us, but withdraws from us as well. Merleau-Ponty articulated this horizon as one in which the flesh of my body and the flesh of the world share something in common, even if the flesh of the world is not "self-sensing" like my body is. While the embodied self is embedded *in* the world, at the same time the world displays its meaning *to* the embodied self.

Part I: Bachelard

Bringing Science and Art Together

Gaston Bachelard's work centered around the two basic themes of science and art and is thus relevant to issues belonging to the philosophy of science and to the philosophy of art. In his view they both stemmed from the same creative imaginative force, which involved the interaction between suppression and renewal of energy. For Bachelard, this was a dialectics built not on the principle of contradiction like in the case of Hegel, but on the principle of complementarity. He discovered an example of the latter principle in the non-Aristotelian logic of Korzybski, whose

unorthodox perspective involves neither negating nor destroying Aristotelian logic but instead goes beyond it and places it into a larger scheme of things, so that Aristotelian logic becomes a special case of non-Aristotelian logic.[7]

Committing himself to the absolute newness of the modern scientific spirit of Einstein and Heisenberg among others, Bachelard believed that it was necessary to exorcise the prehistory of science, recognizing that the human mind had been weighed down by structural layers analogous to the geological strata of the earth. He therefore concluded that the influences of Aristotle, Euclid, Newton, and Kant had to be recognized, understood, and then jettisoned. One of the first ideas to be abandoned was the need for a single, fixed viewpoint, an idea which had been fundamental to classical philosophy. What emerged in its place was Bachelard's concept of the psychoanalysis of objects, which he used as a method to refocus his attention on earth, air, fire and water as the four elements of the imaginative experience. If the world could no longer successfully be examined logically and objectively, he asserted, then we would have to learn how to examine it psychologically. This is how he reached the non-traditional epistemological approach to things which he called "poetics." It was in his view an approach uniquely suitable to respond to the open-ended, constantly shifting character of the new science.

Bachelard's archetype for the need to extend our concept of rationality beyond its Cartesian limits was the emergence of non-Euclidean geometry and the ensuing transformation in physics from the Newtonian to the Einsteinian model. As a result, reason could no longer be understood as absolute, unchanging and timeless. Nor could it be reduced to the founding intuitions of an "I think" or consciousness.[8] Reality would need to be defined as much by inference as through discovery.[9] Bachelard's requisite non-Cartesian epistemology for this task emerged as a response to this correction of prior knowledge. It arose less by simplification than by complication,[10] reflecting the fact that the Einsteinian model is more complex than the Newtonian one which it supplanted. Rather than involving a reduction or repetition of fixed axioms, this new account of the rationality of scientific construction involved its extension into the "surrationality" of a more open-ended rationalism.[11] If reason no longer worked, its range would have to be extended until it did, necessitating a creative act.

Although the two approaches to knowledge of science and art might differ in content and in method, Bachelard believed that they find their origins in a common root. While the substructure of science is work and the substructure of poetry is dream, both involve the imagination—and in this way they relate to the same creative source. Ultimately, then, at the very core of Bachelard's philosophy is his desire to elucidate man's creativity both in science and in art.

Bachelard's New Approach to Science

Bachelard believed accordingly that it was essential to recognize the importance of psychological factors in the development of the sciences. For example, he noticed how the progress of science could be blocked by certain types of mental patterns which he called "epistemological obstacles." In his view, scientific discoveries such as the theory of relativity demonstrate the discontinuous nature of the history of science, and thus point to the importance of psychological factors in creative scientific thinking. He was consequently critical of positivist views of science that viewed the historical development of science as one of inevitable continuous improvement. To reinforce his theme of discontinuity, he introduced his related idea of the "epistemological break," and provided the examples of non-Euclidean geometry integrating Euclidean geometry within its larger framework without contradicting it, and of Einstein's concept of mass doing the same thing with Newton's original concept. In both cases the earlier basic idea was expanded on so greatly that it no longer meant the same thing, and therefore its later development needed to be understood as revolutionary and not merely evolutionary.[12]

Bachelard also believed that scientific thought produces its own basic categories, by means of its theoretical concern with what is empirically given. Although he asserted that scientists are oriented toward and guided by what is true, he viewed scientific truth as always partial and provisional, never complete and exhaustive. He consequently did not view the scientific enterprise as it was understood conventionally, as being based on the relation between scientific claims for truth on the one side and "states of affairs" in the real world on the other. Instead, he recognized the reality of what real scientists experience: how scientific truths tend to turn against their supporters and compel them to take into consideration new facts and new discoveries. Thus, in his view science could never develop into a complete system.

Correcting "errors" and discovering new "truths" might well describe the process of science theoretically, but ultimately the philosopher of science will have to recognize how our understanding of tomorrow will negate what we understand today. Instinct also plays a larger role in the scientific world than many care to admit. Like a musician might use his knowledge of chord progressions and harmonies to improvise his way through a song, so might a scientist interpolate as a way of improvising his way through data by drawing lines between its known depths, hypothesizing where no data could be found. The importance of creativity in scientific thinking is often underestimated as well as misunderstood.

The modern sciences in Bachelard's view have replaced the classical ontology of the reality of "substance" with an ontology of relations. He thus characterized

the modern scientific enterprise, consisting of the continuous interchange between rational and experimental elements, as an attempt to understand the empiricism of facts by applying the rationalism of principles. He recognized that the tension between the two could not hold. For instance, the physical concepts of matter and rays correspond to the metaphysical concepts of the thing and of movement; but whereas classical philosophy considered the two as distinct from each other and only the thing as ontologically real, modern science cannot distinguish matter from rays since it finds it impossible to examine an immobile thing. Although nothing in the universe ever stands completely still, theoretical immobility had been the condition for knowledge for centuries, in accordance with classical theory.

In order to correct the theoretical impasse of classical philosophical physics, Bachelard turned his critical attention to its crystallized expression in the philosophy of Descartes, for whom truth was found in the simple objects known by the mind and not through the senses. In the non-Cartesian epistemology favored by Bachelard, however, there is no "simple substance" but only complex objects built by the interaction between theories and experiments, a relationship subject to continuous improvement. Since intuition, which for Descartes was directly accessed through the mind, was in non-Cartesian thought not directly accessed but constructed, this led Bachelard to support a kind of constructivist epistemology.[13]

The Philosophy of No

In his book *The Philosophy of No*, Bachelard presented his view concerning the need for an open-ended philosophy whose grounding principles would be subject to constant revision. The philosophy of science, in Bachelard's view, has been split between philosophers studying principles which are too general and scientists guided by results which are too particular. What we need, he asserted, is "a philosophy of science which would show us under what conditions—at once subjective and objective—general principles lead to particular results."[14] He explained that what animates actual scientific thought is the alternation between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. Rationalism and empiricism are bound together, need each other, and validate each other: "The value of an empirical law is proved by making it the basis for a chain of reasoning. A chain of reasoning becomes legitimate by becoming the basis of an experiment."[15] Science thus requires a sort of dialectical development in which every notion is illuminated from two different, yet complementary, philosophical points of view. The new physics is an example of this, because its principles are applicable even when it decides to overstep them. The philosophy of science can no longer afford to be a closed system.

A particular problem arises from the evolution of science, and this has to do with how scientific knowledge effects the structure of the human mind. From Kant, we learned that the mind is equipped with various categories, which are recognized as being indispensable for our understanding of reality. The scientist cannot afford to have preconceived categories, though, since they won't allow him or her to accommodate new information that is incommensurate with the old. For the scientist, knowledge emerges from ignorance, since errors need to be coordinated with each other in order to be effectively overcome—or recognized as new truths. In fact, all progress in science requires some kind of total subjective reform. For example, advances in the study of the brain have brought about transformations in how we understand the workings of the mind—and these changes have also effected the principles of knowledge as understood by philosophers. Another example of subjective reform stems from Descartes, from whom we learned to identify the mind with thinking. As Bachelard put it, "Identification of the mind with *I think*, is so clear that the science of this clear consciousness immediately becomes the consciousness of a science, a certainty of founding a philosophy of knowledge."[16] We see here yet another example of antiphilosophical critical thinking, the recognition that philosophical certainty can never successfully be the end or goal of thinking, because it indicates instead its closing off from reality.

The belief in the identity of the mind has repercussions throughout all forms of knowledge. Perhaps the most important of these is that it provides for the grounding of a definitive method, one which informs the whole of knowledge and necessitates that all objects should be treated in the same manner. Overcoming this faith in a single model for thinking is a necessary step towards the acceptance of an open-ended philosophical approach to science. "Above all" said Bachelard, "we must recognize the fact that new experience says *no* to old experience, otherwise we are quite evidently not up against a new experience at all."[17] We have, for example, allowed mathematical functions to explain the reality of experimental results, allowing an "objective" framing of the object to define it. Bachelard insisted that this mathematically "objective" framework needs to be recognized as outmoded, and in order for this to happen, the psychology of the scientific mind needs to be rebuilt on new foundations.

According to Bachelard, the epistemological profile of any concept (such as mass, for example) has five levels:

1. **Subjective Concretism:** at this most primitive *animist* level of existence concentration is directed more on objects than on phenomena. The properties of an object are learned just by looking at it. Regarding mass, it is believed that the bigger the object, the heavier it is. Mass is understood to be proportional to volume, irrespective of density.

2. **Positivist Empiricism:** at this level concepts become clearer and more precise. Quantitative measurement is made with appropriate instruments, like a scale for mass, but instrumental development and use are not guided by theory.
3. **Classical Rationalism:** this level consists of the conceptual systems created by Newton and Lagrange among others, which are built on the basis of inner theoretical and mathematical coherence. Empirical experimental corroboration comes later. This model is in accordance with Kant's notion of *a priori* knowledge. The merits of a concept are recognized based on its predictive power, not on its correspondence to physical objects. Mass is now conceived of in terms of its relation to force and acceleration, according to the rational laws of arithmetic.
4. **Relativistic Rationalism:** the closed rationalisms of the classical perspective are replaced by an open-ended orientation. Mass, space, and time are no longer recognized as absolute. They are understood to be no longer as simple as they were before; for example, mass is still a basic concept, but it is now a complex function of speed. This level is dominated by Kantian *noumena* in search of their *phenomena.*
5. **Dialectical Idealism:** this is a level of open and discursive super-rationalism. Concepts like Dirac's "negative mass" are only imaginable at this level, even if empirical corroboration is absent or seems far-fetched. Here, scientists do not know reality until they realize it themselves. This is where *anagogic dreams* take place.[18]

Anagogic dreaming, Bachelard explained, is "dreaming which ventures into thought, dreaming which thinks while it ventures, dreaming which seeks an illumination of thought by thought, which finds a sudden intuition beyond the veils of informed thought."[19]

Because any concept in science can be delineated through such a profile, Bachelard insisted on the relativity of all such concepts, and was consequently convinced of the need for a fluid, open-ended epistemology to account for this variability. No single-ended or objective approach to scientific knowledge would ever suffice. He was in need of an epistemology that could say "no" to old knowledge, and shed its skin like a snake.

Bachelard's Turn from Science to Poetic Dreaming

Bachelard first announced his shift from science to art with his publication of *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* in 1938: "*Fire*," he wrote in italics, *is no longer a reality*

for science."[20] He further noted that the space allocated for the subject of fire in chemistry textbooks had shrunk to practically nothing. It no longer offered a perspective for scientific investigation. Even educated people, he discovered, could not give a satisfactory answer to the question, "What is fire?" "The reason for this," he explained, "is that the question has fallen into a zone that is only partially objective, a zone in which personal intuitions and scientific experiments are intermingled."[21] He then outlined his goal regarding his forthcoming "psychological" investigations into natural phenomena:

> The pedagogy of scientific instruction would be improved if we could demonstrate clearly how the fascination exerted by the object *distorts inductions.* It would not be difficult to write about water, air, salt, wine, and blood in the same way that we have dealt with fire in this brief outline … If we succeeded in inspiring any imitators, we should urge them to study, from the same point of view as a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge, the notions of totality, of system, of element, evolution and development … One would have no trouble in discovering that underlying such notions is a system of heterogeneous values, indirect but of an undeniably affective nature. In all these examples one would find beneath the theories, more or less readily accepted by scientists and philosophers, convictions that are often quite ingenuous.[22]

This passage clearly echoes Nietzsche's sentiment that behind every truth there is a lie. The real question to be asked, Nietzsche insisted, is not whether a judgment is true or false, but rather, who benefits? For Bachelard, scientific investigation leads to certain kinds of truths, but he questioned whether the information they provide is sufficient for all our needs. At times, he believed, it may be necessary to move past the truths offered by objective science and turn to the subjective experience of things, in order to discover new perspectives.

To discover this "subjective experience of things" we turn to the world of art. This world, however, appears in contrast to science as a magical realm, whose rites of initiation include teaching us that truth in art arrives in a different way than it does through the more ordinary paths of communication. If we are to be open to an artistic experience, we must be prepared for it, by having learned how to open our senses to new experiences. For example, since a work of art creates its own space and its own time, we must be prepared to relinquish our normal preconceptions of these experiences if we wish to enter its world.

Bachelard turns to the world of poetry as his entrance into the world of poetic dreaming. The word "poetry," we remember, comes from the Greek *poesis*, meaning "to make." The making of poetry refers to the dualistic situation of the poet and his/her audience. The reader of a poem re-creates its original creation; this reading is also an act of recreation or play, since without this element of

playfulness there is no room for ambiguity in poetry. The effort to understand the metaphorical language of a poem leads the reader to the construction of a temporal field within their internal consciousness in which the meaning or meanings of a poem can unfold. This unfolding of a poem is a game played with its words, whose metaphorical ambiguity and historical density lend themselves to the poetic experience.

We discover meaning in the temporal field of a poem as the end of the continuous creative and recreative play with symbols and metaphors that makes up the poetic experience. In poetry, everything is symbolic, transitory, unstable; nothing is firmly established. The meaning of a poem is not in its words, nor in their referents, but in the interplay between them. In *The Poetics of Space,* Bachelard provides us with a phenomenological description of the temporal field of poetic experience:

> Since a phenomenological inquiry on poetry aspires to go so far and so deep, because of methodological obligation, it must go beyond the sentimental resonances with which we receive (more or less richly—whether this richness be within ourselves or within the poem) a work of art. This is where the phenomenological doublet of resonances and repercussions must be sensitized. The resonances are dispersed on the different planes of our life in the world, while the repercussions invite us to give greater depth to our own existence. In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is own own. The reverberations bring about a change in being. It is as though the poet's being were our being. The multiplicity of resonances then issues from the reverberations' unity of being. Or, to put it more simply, this is an impression that all impassioned poetry-lovers know well: the poem possesses us entirely.[23]

When we actively attend to the "reverberations" of poetic images or symbols, we lose ourselves in poetic reverie. And in doing so we restore to language its free field of expression, rescuing language from the dominance of dead metaphors. However, we are still obliged to supervise their use. Bachelard explains:

> The phenomenology of the poetic imagination allows us to explore the being of man considered as the being of a surface, of the surface that separates the region of the same from the region of the other. It should not be forgotten that in this zone of sensitized surface, before being, one must speak, if not to others, at least to oneself. And advance always. In this orientation, the universe of speech governs all the phenomena of being, that is, the new phenomena. By means of poetic language, waves of newness flow over the surface of being. And language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up … Then, on the surface of being, in that region where being wants to be both visible and hidden, the movements of opening and closing are so numerous, so frequently

> inversed, and so charged with hesitation, that we could conclude on the following formula: man is half-open being.[24]

Metaphors denote intellectual meanings; symbols connote emotive experiences. When we sensitize our imaginations to the reverberations of the symbolic poetic image, we liberate ourselves from what Bachelard calls "the intellectualism of metaphor."[25] We become free, able to discover and create new meanings.

Bachelard explains how a poem can be a distillation of vast complexities into a single moment:

> Poetry is a metaphysics of the moment. It has to convey within the space of a short poem a vision of the universe and the secrets of a heart, a person, things—and do so all at once. If it merely obeys the time scale of life, it is something less than life; it can only be greater than life by immobilizing life and experiencing on the spot, as it were, the dialectic of joy and pain … Whereas all other metaphysical experiences are prefaced by interminable preliminaries, poetry rejects preamble, principle, method or proof. It rejects doubt. It does, however, demand a prelude of silence. First of all, by laying stress on words that are hollow, it silences all prose or song that would leave a continuity of thought or sound in the reader's mind. Then, after the empty sonorities, it produces its moment.[26]

The poetic moment is still temporal, however. But its temporality is vertical, in contrast to the horizontal time that rushes by us without stopping. Vertical time is stopped time; it is the plurality of contradictory events within a single moment. The process of discovering meaning in a poem is the process of arranging these accumulated simultaneities into different orders of possible meanings: each order is an interpretation of the event of the poem. These "arrangings" occur when the internal time of the poem is stopped. Yet the internal time of the poem as an experience begins only when external time has been stopped.

Bachelard lists three successive experiences that if followed are capable of liberating a person from the imprisonment of horizontal time:

1. getting used to not referring one's own time to other people's time—breaking the social frame-work of time;
2. getting used to not referring one's own time to the time of things—breaking the phenomenal framework of time;
3. getting used—this is the hardest—to not referring one's own time to the time of life—to no longer knowing whether one's heart is beating or whether one's happiness is burgeoning—i.e., breaking the vital framework of time.

   Then and only then does a person reach the auto-synchronous reference point at the center of himself, stripped of all peripheral life. Suddenly all commonplace horizontality disappears. Time no longer flows. It gushes.[27]

Bachelard also calls the primal condition of the poetic dreamer "non-knowing."[28] This "non-knowing" is the foundation for the disclosure of things that have value. It is the "ignorance" of Socrates, and the basis for self-knowledge. It is also akin to Nietzsche's non-willing, to Heidegger's thinking as thanking, and to Wittgenstein's keeping silent.

The Poetics of Space

In order to examine Bachelard's application of poetic dreaming to the world of physical things, we turn to his book *The Poetics of Space,* which represents his renouncement of two of his previous working methods. Not only did he turn away from his earlier analyses of scientific reasoning, he also stopped using his other "objective" method, which had involved interpretation by means of depth and which he had used in his studies of the four elements. He was no longer interested in explaining the image through past experience or Jungian archetypes. He now recognized the irreducible originality of the poetic image, and viewed its benefit to the poetic imagination as the result of a cooperation between "these two functions of the human psyche—the function of the real and the function of the unreal."[29] Emphasizing the importance of the unreal over the real to the point that he felt that "actual conditions are no longer important,"[30] he concluded that the poetic imagination was independent of both the past and of all psychological determination.

The Poetics of Space also presents an example of Bachelard's ontology of the poetic word. Accordingly, he devoted the largest part of the book to his analysis of "felicitous space."[31] Limiting himself to inside spaces, he devoted himself to the following topics: the house as universe; chests, cupboards and drawers, which he identified as the homes of things; corners, in which intimacy takes refuge; and nests and shells, which as primal images bring out the primitiveness in us. He called the sum of this approach "topo-analysis," and explained how the image of the house becomes "the topography of our intimate being."[32] Additional chapters cover such topics as the dialectics of the imagination; of things large and small; of inside and outside; and of closed, complete space, which he called "the phenomenology of roundness."

From the titles of the chapters alone, we can see where Bachelard's poetic dreaming led him. We can also easily imagine what a more "scientific" or engineering approach to the house would look like in contrast. We've all seen architectural renderings of two-dimensional plans (sometimes even three-dimensional ones) for new houses or add-ons. These plans are based on the mathematics of Cartesian space, and provide necessary details for the physical construction of the

house. What they omit, of course, is any reference to the "lived experience," of what it would actually be like living in this particular articulated space. Bachelard's phenomenological poetics of space does not replace the notions of space based on classical physics but augments them in a necessary way. It provides us with access to otherwise hidden things. His vision of a house is that it is primarily a psychological space, "a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability."[33] He reminds us (as did Husserl) that the real world is not just an objective world but in a complementary way a subjective one as well. The fact that the new physics reinforces this two-fold orientation through its own theory of complementarity just serves to justify Bachelard's point of view.

Among Bachelard's favorite images are houses, cellars, huts, drawers, nests, corners, and human bodies. He liked them because they were both objective things and inhabitable spaces. Because he was trying to avoid Cartesian mind-body dualistic thinking, he wished to avoid any mechanistic understanding on the one hand and any resort to the priority of consciousness on the other. In his chapter on drawers, chests and wardrobes, for example, he directed his attention to the many different sorts of objects found in the house. But instead of focusing on these objects in some abstract way, he turned first to a character in a novel by Henri Bosco, using a piece of furniture as a metaphor.

Bosco's character, a certain Mr. Carre-Benoit, has a real affection for his solid oak filing cabinet, finding it reliable, in perfect proportion, and a marvelous tool for replacing everything, from memory to intelligence: "Forty-eight drawers! Enough to hold an entire well-classified world of positive knowledge."[34] Bachelard remarks tellingly about Bosco's metaphor, that "it is not the intelligence that is a filing cabinet; the filing cabinet is an intelligence."[35] With this filing cabinet Bosco has succeeded in embodying a dull administrative spirit, someone whose stupidity deserves ridicule. So, when Mr. Carre-Benoit opens one of the drawers, he discovers that the maid has used it as a place to put mustard, salt, rice, coffee, peas and lentils. His reasoning cabinet has become a larder. Such an image, stated Bachelard, could be used to illustrate a "philosophy of having": "There are many erudite minds that lay in provisions. We shall see later, they say to themselves, whether or not we'll use them."[36] He moved on to make a larger point: "Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life."[37] Without them, our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy. "If we give objects the friendship they should have, we do not open a wardrobe without a slight start."[38]

Bachelard concluded his chapter on drawers, chests and wardrobes with a reiteration of his new method: "The hidden in men and the hidden in things belong in the same topo-analysis, as soon as we enter into this strange world of the

superlative, which is a region that has hardly been touched by psychology … To enter into the domain of the superlative, we must leave the positive for the imaginary. We must listen to poets."[39]

At the end of *The Poetics of Space* there is a short chapter entitled "The Phenomenology of Roundness." With this title Bachelard demonstrated how he had moved from his analysis of concrete particular things to a subject that was more metaphysical. "When metaphysicians speak briefly," Bachelard began, "they can reach immediate truth … [and thus] may be compared and associated with poets who, in a single verse, can lay bare a truth concerning inner man."[40] As an example he quoted Karl Jaspers, who, he noted, summarized his thick volume *On Truth* with a single pithy sentence: "Every being seems in itself round."[41] He went on immediately to present similar quotes from a variety of artists: from Van Gogh: "Life is probably round"; from the French poet Bousquet: "He had been told that life was beautiful. No! Life is round"; and from the French fabulist La Fontaine: "A walnut makes me quite round."[42] He explained that "with these four texts … we have the phenomenological problem clearly posed."[43] It could even be solved, he asserted, by enriching it with further examples—and all of them would be totally disconnected from any knowledge of the outside world! These examples could come only from "the purest sort of phenomenological meditation."[44] "In order to judge them, and to like them and make them our own, they oblige us to take a phenomenological attitude."[45]

These reflections, said Bachelard, "have helped me to 'dephilosophize,' to shun the allures of culture and to place myself on the margin of convictions acquired through long philosophical inquiry on the subject of scientific thinking."[46] Bachelard's dephilosophizing recalls Husserl's phenomenological reduction, in which we learn to disengage from the habits of everyday knowing, in order to reach the experience of astonishment necessary for moving beyond mere opinion and toward knowledge.

Bachelard on Nietzsche

Bachelard didn't limit himself to the analysis of physical and metaphysical objects. When he directed his poetic imagination in the direction of Nietzsche and his key concept of the transmutation of ethical values, the results were particularly enlightening. He admitted that using the imagination to study such a subject might seem initially to indicate a lack of understanding of it. He admitted that his approach might be "to mistake the echo for the voice"[47] because he chose to focus on Nietzsche's poetic imagination rather than on his ideas, but he said that he had come to realize that Nietzsche's images lend a distinctive energy to his work. He

also claimed that "Nietzsche is the prototype of the *vertical poet*."[48] He found that some of Nietzsche's images actually evolve, untouched, at an amazing speed—and that it is this rapidity of the image that induces thought.

Bachelard then turns to the issue of how aerial images are especially powerful in Nietzsche's poetic world, and begins by first rejecting the roles of the other three elements in his work. First, he argues, Nietzsche is not a poet of the earth. Humus, loam, fields for clearing and plowing, none of these seems to hold any interest to him; nor do metals or minerals, stone or rock. Soft earth disgusts him. He is not a poet of matter, but a poet of action. Even in his subterranean work he knows where he is going. He is not a mole-like creature; he moves in straight lines, towards a goal. Second, Nietzsche is not a water poet. Bachelard quotes one of Nietzsche's poems in which he "smites" a wave's folly with his rudder; this shows how he is sure of his destiny and is always quick to keep moving forward like an arrow. To be cradled in soft waters holds no interest to him. His cosmos is a cosmos of the heights. Third, although harder to prove, Nietzsche is not a fire poet. Even though all impassioned eloquence is inflamed, and fire lights up the other elements providing clarity and color, "it is not the substance that impregnates and tonalizes Nietzsche's material imagination."[49] Fire is less a substance than it is a force, and it thus plays a role in the very specialized dynamic imagination.

Bachelard invokes two kinds of imagination here: material imagination, which suggests the intimacy of human beings with the universe through the material image; and dynamic imagination, which refers to the transformative function of the imagination through human action. The distinction is an echo of Husserl's noesis/noema correlation: the material imagination is like the receptive consciousness of noema, while the dynamic imagination is the active consciousness of noesis. The poetic imagination requires the interaction of both.

Nietzsche, Bachelard informs us, sees himself as an aerial being:

> Storm clouds—why should you be a concern
> for us, the free, the aerial, the joyous spirits?[50]

For Nietzsche, air is freedom, the substance of superhuman joy. In contrast, says Bachelard, "*Terrestrial* joy is richness and weight—*aquatic* joy is softness and repose—*igneous* joy is love and desire—*aerial* joy is freedom."[51] Nietzschean air is a strange substance because it has no substantial qualities and is thus equal to absolute becoming. In the realm of the imagination, it frees us from our attachment to matter; it brings nothing and gives nothing—and is thus the greatest of gifts. "Is it not up the giver," says Nietzsche, "to thank the one who is willing to take?"[52] This, for Bachelard, is an example of how the material imagination of air gives

way to the dynamic imagination of air. We breathe in air and it gives us energy. From this insight, we begin to notice how Nietzsche's air is the homeland of the predator, providing a sense of offensive and triumphant freedom—akin to "a bolt of lightning, an eagle, an arrow, or an imperious, sovereign glance."[53] This air is odorless and pure, fresh and brisk. It is the place of cold, silence, and height—what Bachelard calls "three roots for a single substance. To cut one of the roots would be to destroy Nietzschean life."[54]

This imaginative orientation to Nietzsche's work is intended to support Bachelard's thesis concerning Nietzsche's ethics, that it derives from a poetic sensibility "initially formed by the material and dynamic imagination and that creates new ethical values by virtue of enthusiasm for a new poetry … an aestheticization of ethics (that) is not something superficial."[55] He concludes his essay with the following reflection: "Nietzsche's imagination is more instructive than any experience. It radiates a climate of imaginary altitude. It leads us into a special, lyrical universe. The first transmutation of Nietzschean values is a transmutation of images. It transforms the riches of the depths into the glory of the heights … He has made the abyss speak the language of mountains."[56]

Bachelard's interpretation of Nietzsche's imagery is enlightening at least in part because Nietzsche was such a lyrical and poetic philosopher in the first place. The non-traditional nature of Nietzsche's writing is especially open to the kind of interpretation Bachelard provided. The energy of Nietzsche's thinking cannot be separated from his style, nor his style from his ideas. Nietzsche is a dangerous thinker because his energy leads him to the abyss, which he has encountered in the pure air of the highest mountains, and this energy intoxicates him almost to the point of recklessness. The risks he takes with his ideas cannot and should not be taken lightly. His reflections for example on the relations between will and power, between truth and lies, on an ethics beyond good and evil, and on the Dionysian frenzy of the creative spirit, are not only deeply insightful but also bordering on the edge of sanity. Bachelard's approach captured the feeling of this energy as well as its imaginative origins.

Concluding Remarks

Bachelard's thinking underwent three stages in its evolution. At first, he considered the imagination only as an obstacle to scientific progress because it created mental blocks which impeded it. He limited his attention at this time to medical texts and experimental records. He eventually began to recognize the importance errors play in the scientific imagination, and began to pay more serious attention to the work of poets, applying the methods of psychology and psychoanalysis to the

language of poetry in his ongoing search for understanding how our knowledge of the world is constructed. With his third and final stage he turned to the primacy of images, which he uncovered through the application of his phenomenology of the imagination. He identified a material imagination, through which we relate to the otherness of the world, discovering beauty from the details of this encounter; and a corresponding dynamic imagination, through which we discover the need to constantly re-invent ourselves in response to the ongoing and unceasing diversity of this same otherness.

With his concentrated and relentless work at each of these stages, Bachelard turned the complacent worldview of empirically informed philosophy on its head. His ongoing explorations into language and the imagination demonstrated that scientists don't apply their own principles consistently enough to advance past their theories, that psychoanalysts don't follow the language of dreams deeply enough to reach coherence, and that phenomenologists don't reach back far enough to establish their proper foundations. Along the way he continued to reiterate the importance of maintaining a reciprocating relationship between objective and subjective experience. His domain may have been limited to words but his range was without limit.

Part II: Merleau-Ponty

The Primacy of Perception

Merleau-Ponty's main thesis is that the world given to perception is the same concrete, intersubjectively constituted life-world of immediate experience that everyone knows. This is the familiar world of natural and cultural objects, and of other people. It is the world within which all of us live and act. But we do not live only in this world; we also live in the different realms of imagination, of ideas, language, culture and history. Each of these additional realms is another level of experience, and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is open to all of them. What is unique about his approach is that he recognizes how the same fundamental structures of perceptual consciousness emerge at each of these different levels. As he writes in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, although there are "many ways for consciousness to be conscious,"[57] we still never escape from the realm of perceptual reality. We are not only immersed in the world, we are also perceptually present in it. Although it was his intention to use this insight as a program for further phenomenological research into the realms of imagination, language, culture and reason, and on aesthetic, ethical, political, and religious experience, he died too early (at the age of 53) to accomplish more than just a small part of this project.

Especially characteristic of Merleau-Ponty's account of perception is his emphasis on the centrality of the body. In his view, we perceive the world through our bodies; we are embodied subjects, involved in existence from our bodies outward. Instead of following Descartes and reaching past his process of radical doubt to the fundamental idea that I am a thinking thing, Merleau-Ponty came to realize that consciousness, the world, and the human body as a perceiving thing, are all intricately intertwined with one another. He thus replaced mind-body dualism with an intersubjective, dialectical conception of consciousness. In other words, Merleau-Ponty solves the mind-body problem (which has to do with the fact that once you choose one or the other as real, you have no way to account for the reality of the other) by saying that neither one nor the other is real by itself. It is the relation between them that is real, and this relation is exemplified by the example of perception. Merleau-Ponty thus developed his concept of the body-subject as an alternative to the Cartesian *cogito* and as a resolution to to the problems it poses.

Merleau-Ponty called his alternative to Cartesian thought the philosophy of the "incarnate *cogito*"[58] because, instead of locating consciousness as the source of knowledge, he emphasized the body instead. The phenomenal thing, then, becomes not the unchanging object of the natural sciences as it is in Cartesian rationalism, but a correlate of our body and its sensory-motor functions. Because the world and our sense of self continue endlessly to change and to affect one another, the elaboration of this ongoing correlative activity is not only inexhaustible, it is also, as perception, the basis for all knowledge.

Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the primacy of embodiment led him away from pure phenomenology in favor of an indirect ontology, an ontology of what he called the "flesh of the world," in which our flesh is incorporated within worldly flesh. This means that our connection to the world is a reflexive one: we touch things while at the same time they touch us. This is essentially an ecological way of thinking about our embedded relation to the world, since it recognizes that human reflexivity is merely a phase of worldly reflexivity.[59] The primacy of embodiment is not the same as the primacy of body, however. Embodiment has to with having a body and being already situated in the world. Embodiment is the reality of the primacy of perception.

Merleau-Ponty did not achieve his thesis concerning the primacy of perception in a vacuum, however, but refined it in relation to his major predecessors in phenomenology, notably Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. He shared with them a belief in the fundamental rightness of the phenomenological method. Like them, he too believed that science wasn't rigorous enough, in part because its accounts of space, time, and the world completely omit direct description of these phenomena as lived experiences. He also recognized the central importance of the *phenomenological*

reduction in helping us to discover (in the words of Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant) "'wonder' in the face of the world."[60] Only by practicing the *phenomenological epoché* can we learn how to refuse to put into play any of the preconceived ideas about the world that we possess, and start our investigation into the nature of the world, as it is given to us through our experience.

There are differences between the various approaches, however. The main difference between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, for example, is that whereas Husserl emphasized his elaboration of reason and categorical thought *before* turning to perception as the foundational mode of experience, Merleau-Ponty began with perception and essentially ignored the other issues. Unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty did not postulate that "all consciousness is consciousness *of* something", which supposes at the outset a noetic-noematic foundational ground. Instead, he developed the thesis that "all consciousness is perceptual consciousness" instead. In the case of Heidegger, while Merleau-Ponty and he clearly agreed that human reality is constituted by the active intentionality of consciousness in the form of the life-world, they parted ways concerning the primacy of perception and its connection to the perceived world. For Heidegger, the Being of beings is primary reality, a notion of reality not even accessible to perception. Finally, regarding Sartre, Merleau-Ponty was against his view of a "pure" consciousness, independent of being and without content or structure. He believed that Sartre's dichotomization of reality between being-in-itself and being-for-itself introduced ambiguous interrelations between modes of being that in his view properly belonged between consciousness and the world.

The Lived Space of Embodiment

For Merleau-Ponty, we are connected to the world through our bodies in terms of how we relate to physical space. He identifies the two distinct types of space we are concerned with as "lived space" and "objective space." Lived space is the first-person account of the space around each of us; it is the space in which someone's own body is the main point of orientation. Objective space, on the other hand, refers to a more mathematical interpretation of space, one that is defined by the three dimensions of length, breadth and depth. We relate to space through both of these types of comprehension. When Merleau-Ponty concludes that our body is not "in" time and space so much as it "inhabits" these dimensions instead,[61] he is suggesting not only that we are aware of our own subjectivity, but also that we know the details of our own "lived space" precisely through our embodiment, which is our primary connection to space. Our body is the context in which we experience space, and even more fundamentally, the world. Our individual body

thus derives meaning from the concept of its own lived space, even while it has no control over objective space.

Merleau-Ponty describes an aspect of our bodily engagement with the world through yet another reference to Descartes's *cogito*. He explains that "Consciousness in the first place is not a matter of 'I think that,' but of 'I can,'"[62] suggesting that bodily knowledge and experience of the world come *before* intellectual and conscious knowledge of the world. This does not mean that the mind is somehow not factored into our understanding of the world, but rather that it is tied into our *bodily* understanding of the world. We engage with the world first through our bodies and then through our understanding of bodily limits; we experience the world directly, and only then do we experience the world in relation to ourselves. In this way, consciousness is produced from our bodily engagement with the world around us.

Intersubjectivity

Because humans are innately embodied, we therefore have an embodied consciousness as well. Because consciousness and embodiment are inseparable for Merleau-Ponty, our intersubjectvity is made known by the fact that our consciousness is made visible both on and through our bodies. This means that to know a body is to know a mind. It also means that for Merleau-Ponty, bodies can be seen as both subject and object. He therefore asks, "If my consciousness has a body, why should other bodies which I perceive not 'have' consciousness?"[63] For Merleau-Ponty, this understanding of the correlation between body and consciousness defines intersubjectivity.

The true field of intersubjective experience for Merleau-Ponty, however, is not the body but language. Language precedes human existence and therefore all other engagements with intersubjectivity. When Merleau-Ponty stresses "we must re-discover 'the social world,'"[64] he is arguing that we are engaged with the social world through the "mere fact of existing."[65] This means inevitably that we are engaged with language as well, because it is our primary means of relating to the social world.

Furthermore, if the use of language is a "shared activity," then this fact allows us to reconcile what would otherwise be a conflictual engagement with the other in any account of intersubjectivity. Because language precedes a single human being's existence, the subject already has a starting point for relating to the other. In this way, language can serve as the vehicle within which we can put a stop to all engagements with the other otherwise defined by conflict.

The body is the vessel from which we communicate, since it physically amplifies our words. Consequently, phenomenology must focus on the body, if for no other

reason than to stop the focus of phenomenology remaining solely on the mind. In Sartre's existentialist account of phenomenology, for example, the mind plays a central role in defining our relation to the world and to others. This for Merleau-Ponty is naive, because it leads to the mind and the body being seen as two separate entities. His own thesis, that embodiment defines our primary relationships to ourselves, to the world and to each other, avoids such metaphysical dualism altogether.

Space and Place

But, how can the lived body assume the responsibility of being the general medium for our having a world in the first place? The answer is that it can do so because it has its own corporeal intentionality, which replaces the rigid dichotomy between mind and body of traditional philosophy with the concept of the "intentional arc"[66] which binds us to the life-world we inhabit and anchors us within it.[67] Bodily intentionality is so massive and sensitive that its agency provides "a certain gearing of my body to the world,"[68] a gearing that is the "origin of space."[69] More precisely, this origin is found in the body's "pre-objective" experience[70] of its own movement. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of the geometer who does not merely project abstract figures into an abstract space, but knows their relationships because of his ability to describe them with his own body.[71]

The lived body is also the origin of both "spatializing" and "spatialized" space, between space understood as something actively expanding and as something fixed and closed-in. The lived body thus has an empowering force, which lends to space the power to connect things that would otherwise be isolated from each other in the vastness of undifferentiated space. Merleau-Ponty claims that we should therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space or *in* time; rather, we should say it *inhabits* them instead. "I am not in space and time," he writes, "nor do I conceive of space and time. I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them."[72]

Understanding the lived body as the source of expressive and oriented *space* has implications for our understanding of *place* as well. Place can no longer be reduced to a position in objective space; it is now seen as something ambiguously experienced by the lived body, which is itself oriented in a constantly changing and shifting way. Place is now understood to have a *virtual* dimension, previously overlooked by classical accounts. As Edward Casey explains in his book *The Fate of Place*:

> A place I inhabit by my body is not merely some spot of space to which I bring myself as to a fixed locus—a locus that merely awaits my arrival … A place is somewhere I *might* come to; and when I do come to it, it is not just a matter of fitting into it. I come into a place as providing an indefinite horizon of my *possible* action.[73]

Closely linked with the concept of a virtual dimension is the concept of a phenomenal dimension. Just as the theme of the phenomenal field was introduced by Husserl as an alternative to the empiricist idea of the perceptual world, so does Merleau-Ponty's theme of the phenomenal body introduce the idea of virtual movement into and out of places of possible action as an alternative to the empiricist idea of objective space. Merleau-Ponty's notion of place is that it is a *felt* experience; in fact, the lived body not only feels but *knows* the places to which it is especially attached. This kind of knowledge, moreover, has to do with *familiarity,* and this makes the body "the matrix of habitual action."[74]

Being-in-the-world is therefore for Merleau-Ponty not a matter of strictly measurable relationships. The human body is not merely a body among many others, it is also our only means for gaining access to the world and facing our tasks. The body's spatiality is not merely geometrical either, but is a spatiality of situatedness, of being oriented towards the myriad of possible worlds which confront it. This is a world of constant uncertainty which has no absolute basis outside ourselves. If we find ourselves confronted by the collision between shifting external perceptions and often misguided personal feelings, then all we can do is acknowledge how this is the fate of the human condition.

Sound and Body

The relation between the body and sound is also more complex than is commonly realized. Human ears are actually not natural reflectors of sound in the world. They are instead transducers, and they play a key role in the making of sound. Because the perception of sound is not a mirror of nature, it's more accurate to say that perception *makes* sounds, even if it makes sounds differently than a microphone does. Because of the role of perception in sound production, we should say that we hear music with our minds.

In his book *Listening and Voice*, Don Ihde explains that "in the auditory dimension the imaginative mode is a matter of 'voice' in some sense."[75] He goes on to point out that in his discussion of the expressive body "Merleau-Ponty notes that what is taken as an inner silence is in fact 'filled with words' in the form of what will here be characterized as 'inner speech.' *Focally, a central form of auditory imagination is thinking as and in a language*" (his italics).[76] This ultimately means that language itself is embodied, and that "meaning *in* sound embodies language."[77]

How is it then, that when we hear a stream of sounds, what we hear is words? How does the mind know when they start and stop—how does it organize this stream of pressure on the eardrum into language and background noise? The answer is that the ear is a piece of the mind. The ear creates aural figures and aural

backgrounds the way the eye makes figure and ground. Merleau-Ponty's conception of the phenomenal body contains the realization that the body is embedded in the world. We hear words, not mere sounds, because our minds have been trained to recognize certain repeated sound-patterns in meaningful ways.

Although it would seem that the relation between the sound of a word and its actual meaning is completely arbitrary, Merleau-Ponty didn't see it that way. He distinguished between the conceptual meaning of a word and its gestural meaning. He claimed that specific sounds have an emotional impact on us and are thus able to convey an indeterminate meaning, a meaning that sets boundaries to and provides a grounding for the conceptual meaning that follows it. He even gave pathological evidence to support his theory, observing that "certain patients can read a text 'putting expression into it' without, however, understanding it. This is because the spoken or written words carry a top coating of meaning which sticks to them and which presents the thought as a style, an affective value, a piece of existential mimicry, rather than as a conceptual statement."[78] Similarly, many of the "nonsense" words in Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky poem from *Alice in Wonderland,* (e.g. "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:/ All mimsy were the borogoves;/And the mome raths outgrabe") as well as many of the passages from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake,* (e.g. "Oftwhile balbulous, mithre ahead, with goodly trowel in grasp and ivoroiled overalls which he habitacularly fondseed") lend support to the idea of gestural meaning. Although there is a definite grammatical structure to these selections, many of the words contained therein don't make any sense at all—even though, somehow, they resonate in the mind all the same.

Phenomenology and Painting

Cézanne

In the preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty linked the task of the phenomenological description of human experience to the work of modern writers and painters, such as Balzac, Proust, Valéry, and Cézanne. Regarding phenomenology's kinship with painting, he wrote how the two exhibit "the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness."[79] He especially appreciated Cézanne's attempts to paint from nature without using the Renaissance techniques of perspective and outline. He recognized how Cézanne allowed no other guide than his instincts, remaining true to his desire to find a new artistic expression. In Merleau-Ponty's view, Cézanne "remain[ed] faithful to the phenomena," and painted "the lived experience, that which we actually perceive."[80] He believed that he had found in Cézanne's paintings a paradigm of the

phenomenological epoché, due to Cézanne's achievement in presenting a prescientific perception of the visible.

Cézanne's paintings consist almost exclusively of images of landscapes, still life, and human figures. He allowed his images to spread out in all directions rather than restricting them to just one part of the canvas. He applied his paint with short, hatched brushstrokes, which helped him to ensure surface unity, while his repetition of certain colors allowed him to generate a kind of color web in the background. But color and brushstroke serve other ends as well. Cézanne used his brush strokes to model individual masses and spaces in such a way that it's as if these masses and spaces are carved out of paint itself. His use of color, while unifying and establishing surface, also generated space and volume, because, as various colors were juxtaposed, some tended to recede into space while others appeared to project toward the viewer. In this way, Cézanne achieved flatness and spatiality at the same time. In other words, his space and volume belong exclusively to the painting medium. It is because of these painterly qualities that Cézanne's paintings show us how to look at the world as if for the first time, without blinders on. His works also serve as a bridge between the empiricism of Impressionism and the rationalism of Cubism.

Merleau-Ponty was also attracted to Cézanne's paintings because he thought they supported his own gestural theory of language, which has its origin in his notion of the primacy of bodily experience. He developed this theory in detail in a chapter from his *Phenomenology of Perception* entitled "The Body as Expression, and Speech." In this chapter, he traced a genealogy of linguistic meaning from its beginnings in the facial and bodily gestures of infants and their sung tonalities, to its later appearance in speech and the written word as abstractions from these gestures. He argued that there is no essential difference between gesturing with the face or hand and gesturing with the tongue and teeth.[81]

For Merleau-Ponty, the dimension of depth was of special importance. It was the first and primary spatial dimension, out of which the other dimensions derive. "Depth," he wrote, "forces us to reject the preconceived notion of the world and rediscover the primordial experience from which it springs."[82] Depth, he explained, belongs to perspective and not to things. "We must describe apparent size and convergence,'" he added, "not as scientific knowledge sees them, but as we grasp them from within."[83]

In order to illustrate the self-containing quality of depth, Merleau-Ponty noted how Cézanne's works present an unbroken flow from container to content. Cézanne had realized that the envelope or shell which is space is not the cause of a thing's form, and this enabled him to discover the need to break the shell. His new conception of space, as part of the content of the world and not its container, enabled him to discover that the "pure" forms of cubes, spheres, and cones to which he now

turned his painterly focus, begin to move in and out, color against color, according to their relative intensity. Thus, he found, do space and its content merge into one another—a perspective which goes beyond the classical sense of space understood as inert container, in favor of a conception of space as an indivisible cycle of action in which contained and uncontained, object and subject, are integrally and organically incorporated.

Merleau-Ponty believed that his phenomenological theory of the lived perspective and the primacy of perception provided a philosophy of painting that could explain both Cézanne's paintings and his artistic credo. Merleau-Ponty stressed that the artist should not merely imitate nature as in a realist philosophy of art, nor project an inner world outward in the style of the Impressionists. Rather, the artist should attempt faithfully to construct the fusion of self and nature, by restricting himself to rendering the visible world as it is re-constructed in its process of appearing to visual sensation as colored, solid, weighty and monumental. Cézanne himself put it even more simply: "The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness."[84] Cézanne, in Merleau-Ponty's view, remained faithful to the phenomenon, and with his works he demonstrated that the lived perspective is neither geometric nor photographic but natural. Cézanne challenged himself to work his way past what he had been taught to see, in order to discover what was actually there in front of him. If critics found his work unnatural and distorted, perhaps this was not due to his lack of talent after all, but to limitations on their part. They too needed to learn how to look at the world differently—and thus at art differently too—and unlearn what they'd been taught.

The very features that caused viewers of Cézanne's paintings to see them as too abstract, too bulky, or too ugly—namely, their prefigurative content—were present because of his having been able to capture, through his brush strokes and colors, the ever-changing play of appearances as they are mirrored on the retina of the eye—something completely inaccessible to realist painting because of its adherence to preconceived notions of stasis, perspective and outline. "It is Cézanne's genius," explained Merleau-Ponty, "that when the over-all composition of the picture is seen globally, perspectival distortions are no longer visible in their own right but rather contribute, as they do in natural vision, to the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes."[85] Cézanne's paintings captured the dynamics of the living eye.

Klee

If Cézanne's works were sometimes perceived as "ugly," this was due not only to his unusually disciplined style but also to the complex aesthetics of modern art

in general. Modern aesthetics has a close kinship with the sublime, which often evokes energizing and terrifying emotions. The idea of the sublime as beautiful is often held in contrast to the more traditional view of beauty which evokes impressions of serenity, rationality and divinity. Since Merleau-Ponty was emphasizing the importance of artistic expression for grasping prereflective experience, he increasingly found the traditional view of beauty to be sterile. In his view the modern artist needs to look elsewhere for transcendence, and the works and ideas of Klee provide for him a prime example of this.

In his essay "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty described painting as "a figured philosophy" which expresses the continuous birth of a "primordial historicity" found at the heart of the visible[86] Questioning Sartre's more classical phenomenological account of the artist's creative process as the opposition of percept and image, Merleau-Ponty envisioned a figurative or productive event prior to both, based on the reversibility of the exchange between the visible (perception) and the invisible (language). In his book on the many recent philosophical interpretations of Klee's work entitled *Crescent Moon Over the Rational*, Stephen Watson calls special attention to Klee's "script pictures," in order to emphasize the importance for Klee of the reversibility between the visible and invisible realms:

> What Klee's other work implies, the script pictures explicitly state. They take as their very subject matter the equivalence of writing and drawing, of poem and picture. The fusion between the architectonic and the poetic becomes writ large. In these works, lines and letters interact without fixed *mimesis* or reference, precisely bearing witness to the bond between the painter's hand and the philosopher's text.[87]

The relation of the artist's hand to the text of the world is not just philosophical, however. Merleau-Ponty quotes with approval the surrealist painter Max Ernst saying that "the painter's role is to circumscribe and project what is making itself seen within himself."[88] Reversibility implies that the artist's gestures and tracings "seem to emanate from the things themselves."[89] Merleau-Ponty references Klee saying how, "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me."[90] This felt connectedness between the artist and the world would seem more spiritual than philosophical, however. Like his friend Kandinsky, Klee recognized a strong link between modern art and the spiritual realm.

Klee understood that the main task of modern art required a change in our relation to optics, meaning the physics of light and its interaction with matter. He was concerned not so much with the optics of outer appearance, however, but with the need for a change in the optics of "inner being."[91] Like Cézanne, he insisted on the artist's connection to Nature: "The artist is man, nature himself,

and a piece of nature."[92] Although Klee stressed the importance of the formal elements in painting of dot, line, plane, and space, he claimed that these elements are all charged with energy. For him, the "picture" within a painting is all energy and movement, and this movement is what makes it figurative. For him, the change in the "optics of inner being" meant recognizing the reality of energy. When he famously "took a line for a walk," he believed that it was this energizing movement that gave his graphic lines "the schematic fairy-tale quality of the imaginary."[93] As Merleau-Ponty put it, "Perhaps no one before Klee had let a line muse."[94]

Wild Space

In his book *Dimensions of Apeiron,* Steven Rosen expands on Merleau-Ponty's concepts of depth and reversibility by exploring their mathematical ramifications. Associating Euclidean space with classical ontology, Rosen points out that Merleau-Ponty was in essence proclaiming this classical notion of space to be ontical in nature, in contrast to the embodied, *apeironic* dimension (*apeiron* is the ancient Greek term for "the unbounded") of topological space which Merleau-Ponty called "wild being." A key property of this wild or chaotic space is the reversibility of subject and object. To illustrate this property, Merleau-Ponty made reference to the situation of touching, wherein at one moment my left hand touches an external object and thus plays the role of subject, while in the next moment my left hand is touched by my right hand which now plays the role of subject while my left hand now plays the role of object.

The same phenomenon occurs with the other senses. Merleau-Ponty thus turns to the faculty of vision and provides the example of the Necker cube, which consists of a drawing of two overlapping squares at an angle to one another connected corner to corner by short lines. While the "cube" is in reality just a two-dimensional drawing of twelve lines, what we perceive is a three-dimensional cube. Since the cube seems to flip back and forth between two equally valid interpretations, however, this not only makes the picture ambiguous, but suggests that what we are seeing isn't actually there. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "I organize the cube."[95] This means that by focusing on different parts of the cube, I change the structure of my perception. What I take as figure (as distinct from ground) determines whether I see the cube as from below or from above.

Don Ihde, in his book *Postphenomenology,* takes the "bistability" of the Necker cube a few steps further. "There is a third stability," he notes, "a two-dimensional one, which may be gestalted … the central parallelogram is the body of an insect; the hexagonal outline is a hoe; and the lines from the parallelogram to the hexagon are the legs of an insect … [what emerges from this is] the hermeneutic tale as the

vehicle of letting the 'insect' be seen … Were I to use the Merleau-Pontian phrase, I am demonstrating that 'culture is perceived.'"[96]

Merleau-Ponty took the issue in a different direction, and asserted that reversibility equally applies to speech and what it signifies. Thus the speaking and thinking subject is not just a detached cogito but also an embodied participant in the phenomenological lifeworld. While reversibility merely changes what is being objectified, it does nothing to directly challenge the act of objectification whereby we pass irreversibly from subject to object. A gap still remains between the right hand touched and the right hand touching. The presencing of Being, the ability to glimpse what lies between the opposing perspectives, remains out of reach.

The topological example of the Moebius strip shows a way out of the dilemma. Although mathematicians refer to it as a one-sided figure, we can still experience both its inside and outside simultaneously. Yet even though the two perspectives are different, they become in this instance paradoxically one and the same. Thus, if we continue to trace a line on one side of such a figure, upon returning to the starting point we find that both sides have been traced. What we have, though, is merely a two-dimensional model of one-sidedness within which inside and outside get folded into one another.

For such a phenomenon to occur in three-dimensional space, we would have to produce something on the line of a Klein bottle, a bottle whose tube-like top folds into and opens up inside itself without however allowing a hole in its body, clearly an "impossible" object—at least, without access to a fourth dimension. This "higher dimension," which is needed to complete the formation of the Klein bottle, is also the dimension of prereflective Being. Take the example of the worm Uroburos that swallows its own tail. For this to happen, its mouth becomes the hole that swallows itself. Similarly, the Klein bottle can be understood within its own integrity to possess such an enclosure, so that its hole is canceled out by becoming part of its whole. It thereby becomes a self-containing object that contains its prereflective origin without a break.

Eugene Gendlin's therapeutic practice of initiating "felt meaning" in his clients can be seen as another example of identifying a self-containing object, whereby the mind-body duality is bridged. We are thus led, with the reversibility operating in wild space, to a realization of the intimate harmony of outside and inside, object and subject, bounded and boundless.

Art as Indirect Language

In his essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Merleau-Ponty discussed how the art of painting is a form of indirect language. (His use of the phrase

"The Voices of Silence" refers to his dependency on Malraux's text on the history of painting of that title.) Following Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified, which suggests that since the relation between the linguistic sign and the thing it represents is essentially random then all meaning is constructed and all objects are texts to be interpreted, Merleau-Ponty makes this point:

> If we rid our minds of the idea that our language is the translation or cipher of an original text, we shall see that all language is indirect or allusive—that is, if you wish, silence. The reaction of meaning to the spoken word can no longer be a point for point correspondence that we always have clearly in mind."[97]

If all language is allusive, then the writer's act of expression is not very different from the painter's:

> We usually say that the painter reaches us across the silent world of lines and colors, and that he addresses himself to an unformulated power of deciphering within us that we control only after we have blindly used it—only after we have enjoyed the work.[98]

If the discovery of meaning takes place between the words, then the structure of this meaning-apprehension in the aesthetic situation would be the same no matter what the artistic medium. Thus no painting, poem or musical event, classical or modern, should be seen as a mere representation of its subject. We must learn to separate language and meaning in order to realize that *how* something is communicated is as important (if not more so) than *what* is represented by the communication. In summing up his essay, Merleau-Ponty elaborates on this point:

> Language is not meaning's servant, and yet it does not govern meaning. There is no subordination between them. Here no one commands and no one obeys. What we mean is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification. It is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said. With our apparatus of expression we set ourselves up in a situation the apparatus is sensitive to, we confront it with the situation, and our statements are only the final balance of these exchanges.[99]

Even though he believed that all art is equally allusive, Merleau-Ponty still recognized that modern art is essentially different from all the forms of art which preceded it. "Modern painting," he noted, "like modern thought generally, obliges us to admit a truth which does not resemble things, which is without any external model and without any predestined instruments of expression, and which is nevertheless true."[100] This may also explain why he found the artworks and ideas of Cézanne and Klee of interest: they were trying—like phenomenologically-minded philosophers—to work their way back to "the innocent eye," to the zero point from which they could begin to see and then paint the world, without the preconceptions of other artists and philosophers getting in the way.

Concluding Remarks

Merleau-Ponty believed that ordinary language, understood as literal descriptive speech, cannot help us at the frontiers of language. Philosophy, he asserted (or at least the way he practiced it), isn't interested in the meanings of words in the first place. It doesn't look for a verbal substitute for the world that we see, or try to transform the world into something that can be said, or install itself into the order of what is said. Instead, it seeks to express the things themselves, from out of the depth of their silence. This moment of coming to expression, which Merleau-Ponty called "the originary," occurs as an explosion, breakthrough, or dislocation. When our experience of the originary breaks things up, we learn philosophically how to let things speak out of their silence, and in consequence the things themselves are revealed to us at the level of pre-predicative experience, in all their uncanniness. To express this "wild being," we are limited to the indirect speech of metaphor and art. The encounter is experienced as a surprise that amounts to an opening, or a questioning that is also an admitting that we are out of our depth. We are caught up in the vertical moment, outside of time.[101]

Notes

1. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 104.
2. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, pp. xii–xv.
3. ibid., p. xxviii.
4. ibid., p. xxiii.
5. Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit,* pp. 31–32.
6. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139.
7. See G.C. Waterston's preface to Bachelard's *Philosophy of No,* p. ix.
8. Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit,* p. 167.
9. ibid., p. 160.
10. Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No*, p. 23.
11. ibid., p. 12.
12. See Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*, concluding section, and *The Philosophy of No*, pp. 18–33.
13. See Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*, concluding section.
14. Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No*, p. 5.
15. ibid., p. 6.
16. Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No*, p. 8.
17. ibid., p. 9.
18. See Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No*, pp. 18–43; also see Halloun, Ibrahim, *Modeling Theory in Science Education*, p. 93.

19. ibid., p. 32.
20. Bachelard, *Psychoanalysis of Fire*, p. 2.
21. ibid., p. 3.
22. ibid., pp. 5–6.
23. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xviii.
24. ibid., p. 222.
25. ibid., p. xxxv.
26. Bachelard, "The Poetic Moment and the Metaphysical Moment," in *The Right to Dream*, p. 19.
27. Bachelard, *The Right to Dream*, pp. 197–198.
28. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* p. xxix.
29. ibid., p. xxx.
30. ibid., p. xxxi.
31. ibid., p. xxxi.
32. ibid., p. xxxii.
33. ibid., p. 17.
34. ibid., p. 77.
35. ibid., p. 77.
36. ibid., p. 78.
37. ibid., p. 78.
38. ibid., p. 81.
39. ibid., p. 89.
40. ibid., p. 232.
41. quoted in Bachelard, ibid., 232.
42. all quoted by Bachelard in ibid., p. 232.
43. ibid., p. 232.
44. ibid., p. 233.
45. ibid., p. 233.
46. ibid., p. 236.
47. Bachelard, "Nietzsche and the Ascensional Psyche" in *Air and Dreams*, p. 127.
48. ibid., p. 127.
49. ibid., p. 133.
50. quoted in Bachelard, *Air and Dreams,* p. 135.
51. ibid., p. 136.
52. quoted by Bachelard, ibid., p. 136.
53. ibid., p. 136.
54. ibid., p. 140.
55. ibid., p. 144.
56. ibid., p. 160.
57. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 124.
58. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. xviii.
59. See Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology,* pp. xii–xiii.
60. See Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xiii.

61. Merleau-Ponty "The Body, Motility and Spatiality," in *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, p. 380.
62. ibid., p. 348.
63. Merleau-Ponty, "Other People and the Human World," in *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, p. 450.
64. ibid., p. 454.
65. ibid., p. 454.
66. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 136.
67. ibid., p. 144.
68. ibid., p. 250.
69. ibid., p. 251.
70. ibid., p. 267.
71. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception,* p. 67.
72. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology and Perception*, p. 140.
73. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, p. 232.
74. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 82.
75. Ihde, *Listening and Voice,* p. 12.
76. ibid., p. 120.
77. ibid., p. 152.
78. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 182.
79. ibid., p. xxi.
80. Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt" in *Sense and Nonsense*, p. 14.
81. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 185–186.
82. ibid., p. 256.
83. ibid., p. 257.
84. quoted by Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Nonsense*, p. 17.
85. ibid., p. 14.
86. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 168, 161.
87. Watson, *Crescent Moon Over the Rational,* p. 23.
88. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader,* p. 129.
89. ibid., p. 12.
90. ibid., p. 129.
91. Klee, *The Thinking Eye: The Notebooks of Paul Klee. Volume I*, p. 66.
92. ibid., p. 66.
93. ibid., p. 76.
94. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, p. 143.
95. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 275.
96. Ihde, *Postphenomenology,* pp. 78–81.
97. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 43.
98. ibid., p. 45.
99. ibid., p. 83.
100. ibid., p. 57.
101. See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 165 ff.

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CHAPTER SIX

Strategies of Disruption: Levinas and Derrida

Introduction

Levinas and Derrida emerged in the 1960's (although Levinas had begun publishing much earlier) to explore additional ways of applying Husserl's phenomenological method. Levinas attempted to solve the philosophical problems of identity/difference and self/other by prioritizing the difference of the other over and beyond the identity of the self. In doing so, he also created an entirely new way of looking at ethics—and at language. Derrida invented the term "deconstruction" to describe his way of working past the limits of language. By identifying the revealing assumptions behind a writer's fundamental statements in order to explore what was left unsaid, Derrida attempted to undermine the logic, clarity and purpose of the writer's thesis in order to preserve the ambiguity of the play between opposites that he believed was inherent in all texts. This play could also lead to the creation of new values.

Levinas is an antiphilosopher because of his recognition of the totalizing effects of systematic philosophy. In its place he proposes an anarchistic philosophy that remains unassimilable. Since the discourse for such a philosophy must find a way to transcend itself in order to find its moorings, it discovers this in the "felt meaning" of the ethical language of responsibility to the Other. Only through such a creative approach to language can one maintain the ethically necessary respect

for the unique ipseity (or specificity) of another person. In place of traditional philosophies of objectivity and control, Levinas introduces a decentered philosophy committed to ethical responsibility. By emphasizing touch over sight and interiority over exteriority, Levinas is able to break with a tradition dominated by the confines of objective reason.

Derrida is an antiphilosopher because of the extent of his stance against the western philosophical tradition of logocentrism and its faith in the centrality of logic and reason. Since in his view language constitutes our world, meaning can be attributed to the object only by the human mind. It is thus *we* who construct meaning and express it through language. Since meaning is not already contained within the thing itself, as it was assumed to be by logocentric empirical philosophy, there is no absolute truth outside of its construction in language. Derrida's thinking represents a commitment to work against the specific kind of empirically-based, objectivist approach to the human situation which was dominant during the modernist age of philosophy—a form of thinking still pervasive today. This traditional form of philosophy asserts that certain aspects of human behavior can be objectively delineated in a verifiable, scientifically valid way. Its one-dimensional purpose is control over its immediate environment. To "understand" in this context means to control, since this form of thinking operates within its own system of power. In place of this philosophy of certainty, Derrida posits a philosophy of infinite regress, in which there is no end in sight, and where all philosophical positions are merely traces in the sand.

Levinas and Derrida are worth reading together because of their common philosophical grounding and because they have similar concerns about ethical theory and socio-political issues, as well as with language and interpretation. Philosophically, they share a common grounding in the phenomenology of Husserl along with its radical transformation by Heidegger. Concerning their ideas about ethical and socio-political theory, while Levinas focuses on the demands of the Other as being prior to the demands of the self and regards justice as being found in the expression of duty and obligation discovered in the play of emotions on the face of the Other, Derrida focuses on the parameters of friendship and on the state's configuration of friend or enemy qua citizen. Both recognize that language is the main arena within which their concerns about justice and the call of the Other are played out. While for Levinas language *is* justice, since only by transcending its limitations in objective literalness can the epiphany of the face of the Other open up the self to the human dimensions of care and obligation, for Derrida justice is impossible because its demand for immediate action can take place only in the darkness of non-knowledge and non-rule, due to the inability of language to ever reach beyond itself and grasp the thing itself.

Both Levinas and Derrida found it necessary to develop strategies of disruption in their philosophies. They believed that the traditional goals of clarity and lack of ambiguity in philosophical language cannot reflect the complexity of the world in a satisfactory way. Moreover, they both believed that when the language of objectivity becomes a totality it achieves a system of power and control over individuals and society which reduces each to bearers of someone else's will.

Part I: Levinas

A Disruptive Ethical Stance

In his play "Marat/Sade," Peter Weiss has one of his characters say: "You must pull yourself up by your own hair, and turn yourself inside out, so that you may see the world with new eyes." For Emmanuel Levinas, confrontation with the face of the Other has the capacity to turn us inside out in just the same way.

Levinas challenges us with the question, what does the face of the Other ask of us? When we are within the affect of its gaze we recognize the infinite play of complexities on its surface. The transcendence of this experience drives us to act in an ethically responsible way. We learn to substitute ourselves for the Other, and his or her needs become of paramount importance to us - even replacing our own in terms of priority. What we give value too changes as well. The things we measure, like beauty, wealth, intelligence, and status, either recede into the background or disappear completely. What takes their place are the things that can't be measured, including friendship, care, devotion, spirituality, justice, and love. Here we will address some of the disruptive aspects of the ethical demands Levinas places on his readers.

According to Levinas, in a fundamental distinction he develops near the beginning of his first great work *Totality and Infinity*, those who follow the agenda of measurement are the totalizers. They follow the metaphysics of ontology and develop egocentric systems of sameness around themselves. They violate their surroundings by their acts of measurement, which, he claims, are also acts of violence. This is so because conceptuality as a kind of measurement violates the alterity, the unknowable difference, of the Other. By reducing difference to sameness, conceptuality leads to understanding, then control, and finally violence. The horrors of war, especially those of the 20th century, can be seen as a consequence of this process. Those who follow the other path, the infinitizers, are the proponents of subjectivity. They pass through the experiences of infinity and transcendence. Their universe is decentered, rooted in a heightened awareness of the radical difference

of Otherness. The Other is not there for me, but rather the other way around. For Levinas, I am here for the Other. My personal belief is that this stance is one of the most shocking, disorienting, and far-reaching ethical commitments in the entire history of philosophy. Its implications can be felt in the way we relate to community, language, politics, justice, and divinity.

The Face-to-Face Relation

This disorientation is grounded in the experience of the face-to-face relation. When the self meets the Other, face-to-face, what is the nature of this confrontation? Does it entail a special kind of listening, of hearing what the Other has to say, perhaps through a privileged kind of dialogue? Or does it require instead a heightened kind of seeing, of looking at the Other in a certain way, differently from how one might view for example an inanimate object? The answer of course is both. Levinas asserts that seeing the face of the Other is not a matter of simple perception. To understand his point, we should recognize that perception belongs to the philosophical tradition of representation, part of what he calls the Said, with its tendency to possess, appropriate, reify, and totalize, which he is trying to avoid. Instead, he is pointing to a deeper kind of experience of the face of the Other, part of what he calls the Saying. (We will return to Levinas's distinction between the Said and the Saying later on in this chapter.) The face, then, should not be reduced to its physical aspects alone. However, it is not merely a metaphor for something else, either. The face of the Other is real. In fact, the face-to-face relation starts with an awareness of the physical incarnation of the face. What Levinas is asking of us is a profound reconsideration of our perception of this face. When we recognize someone, when we go even further and say we know him or her, we have fallen into the habit of seeing as a kind of understanding. We need to learn how to see otherwise, in order to respect, morally speaking, the singularity and otherness of the Other. We need to let the absolute foreign nature of the Other astonish us.

This confrontation with the Other becomes therefore both an occasion and an opportunity. It is an occasion to the degree we are passively affected by the encounter. In this context the face operates symbolically, uniting a feeling with an image. The feeling it evokes is responsibility, and the image it presents is of infinite variability. The experience of the face of the Other therefore is an epiphany, a revelatory appearance of God through this contact with infinity. "I approach the infinite," Levinas says, "insofar as I forget myself for my neighbor who looks at me. A you is inserted between the I and the absolute He."[1] The consequences of this experience are far-reaching, affecting both the proper subject matter of philosophy and the language it uses. The face however is also an opportunity, for

intentionally discovering the nonrepresentational consciousness of affectivity. The face in this context "means" responsibility. "Meaning" here though is a kind of "felt meaning." For Levinas, to intend affectively is to mean through feeling. We "feel" responsible for the Other when we find ourselves face-to-face with him or her. Because of this feeling of responsibility, confrontation with the face of the Other discourages intellectual categorization. The specific uniqueness of the face calls instead for an ethical commitment to preserving the very qualities such categorization eliminates.

The Call of the Other

Levinas's ethics, grounded in the originary experience of the face as a living presence, is therefore an embodied ethics. The call of the Other—to feel responsibility for him or her—takes hold of our flesh. It not only affects our gestures, the ways by which we comport ourselves in our social relations to others, but our listening, looking and seeing as well. This call is not to be understood through an intellectual or cognitive act; rather it is something to be *felt*. We *feel* the presence of the Other through the experience of the face-to-face, and this felt experience has real meaning for us. The ethical subject is not determined by its freedom and autonomy (as it is in liberal humanism for example) but by being subjected to and attentive to this call. Freedom is consequently to be understood not for oneself, but for the Other. As Levinas writes: "The Good is not presented to freedom; it has chosen me before I have chosen it. No one is good voluntarily."[2] His ethics is not therefore based on the rights and responsibilities of a person with free will using rational principles, but on an embodied dimension that is prior to this. It is a response to a call that it is not yet heard by the ego. Although incomprehensible, befalling us from "beyond essence," this call is still real. Levinas is referring, in fact, to "a reason before the beginning, before any present, because my responsibility for the Other commands me before any decision, before any deliberation."[3]

The ego is not yet able to hear the call of the Other because the ego is attached to a mask. "Prior to the play of being," says Levinas, "before the present, older than the time of consciousness that is accessible in memory … the oneself is exposed as hypostasis, of which the being it is as an entity is but a mask."[4] The "I," he continues, is at first a "no one, clothed with purely borrowed being, which masks its nameless singularity by conferring on it a role."[5] We discover our true moral self only by tearing off this mask and exposing our face to the face of the Other. The mask we tear off is our socialized, artificially constructed identity, which gave us our name and protected us from disorientation and loss of self.

However, it is only in this state of embodied vulnerability, beyond ego, that we are attentive to the Other's call.

The call of the Other is disruptive. It disintegrates egological identity and leaves it with nothing more than a nameless ipseity. It calls into question the intentionality and primacy of consciousness. It uproots the self from history and undermines its sense of freedom. It leaves the self within an ethically grounded universe of obligation that is unending in its demands and asymmetrical in character. This means that the ethical demand to be good and just is not contingent on the Other's reciprocity. Yet for Levinas, only this disinterested selflessness is "what is better than being, that is, the Good."[6]

Levinas's work is disruptive in another sense, too: it disrupts the movement towards certainty of the modem European philosophical tradition. This movement gives precedence to the atemporal mode of presence, since presence is what enables knowledge to take shape through the process of philosophical analysis. This quest for knowledge assumes that everything that is other (object, thing, or being) is in principle accessible or reducible to theoretical contemplation. Heidegger, in making a similar point, uses the term "presencing" to call attention to the need to emphasize the key role temporality plays in consciousness. With this term he refers to the event of appropriation whereby truth as unconcealment comes into the clearing opened up by the experience of authenticity. Authenticity in turn is discovered either through the exploration of certain artworks or from the increased awareness of one's own mortality. Within authenticity, one's personal time slows down. Presencing is being as time, or temporal coming-about—like in the unfolding of a cubist portrait where the identity of the subject is refracted and hidden—but presencing almost unnoticeably becomes "something present" when it is named or represented. The modernist reification and totalization of presencing—which transforms it into something present, is found most noticeably in modern technology, and is violent, anxiety-driven, and defensive.[7] (Levinas, through his reading of Heidegger, has learned from him that the modernist search for scientific clarity has transformed language into a mere tool for the accumulation of knowledge.) As Levinas puts it, knowledge is what reduces the Other to the same.[8] That which is both agent and container for this transmutation (or what could also be called the shift from difference to identity) is variously called by the tradition ego, self, consciousness, mind, or Dasein. Its end result is nothing more than the reiteration of what one already knows, where nothing new, nor other, nor strange, nor transcendent, can appear or affect someone. Levinas attempts in its stead to develop a kind of alternative phenomenology based on the experience of transcendence, which, as a trace of the infinite, is discovered through the infinite variability on the face of the Other within the face-to-face relation.

Saying vs. the Said

In order to articulate the experience of transcendence, Levinas makes a key distinction between two modes of confronting the face of the Other. They echo the two rhetorical modes whereby Levinas addresses his readers. He makes what is for him a fundamental distinction in his later work *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* between categorical thinking, which he calls the Said, and the authentic awareness that is a consequence of affective confrontation with the face of the Other, which he calls Saying. As his language oscillates between phenomenological description and moral exhortation, he seems to want us to respond at a deep, bodily felt level, to what is morally good in what he has to say.

In search of a truly ethical language, Levinas turns his critical attention to the normative and egological aspects of our linguistic framings of the world. These framings are shown to do untoward violence to the Other, necessitating numerous attempts by Levinas to say things about the experience of Otherness in a different way. The problem is essentially this: although we live and experience the world within time from moment to moment, the language we use persists in a timeless present and consists of words that identify, in Levinas's words, "this as that."[9] In this way the Said coagulates the lived experience in the flow of time into a defined something, ascribes it a specific meaning, and fixes it in the present moment. The challenge is to rescue Saying from the Said, to see what Saying signifies otherwise. And further, if Saying signifies responsibility for another, how is it to be found, beyond the influence of the Said?

By the time he wrote *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas had begun to recognize the ethical importance of the need to overcome the ontological assumptions inherent in the terminology of his earlier work (due chiefly to Derrida's penetrating criticism of it—see below). His central occupation subsequently concerned the possibility of constructing an ethical Saying, one that would rupture the ontological language of the Said. The "Said" for him designates the structured totality of language that is both a system of nouns designating entities, and an order founded on the law of identity. Identity, in turn, works through a system of cross-references with other identities, coexisting with them in the universe of discourse. In the linguistic universe of the Said, identities are all different from each other in significant Ways, each completely distinct from the others. Language in this limited context represents reality, in such a way that thought and being are understood to be one and the same, coexisting simultaneously. This synchronic organization of that which is spatially and temporally dispersed, Levinas calls "thematization." He then characterizes it in a negative way as a system of power and control, which reaches its apotheosis in the

authoritarian state and in war, both of which reduce individuals to bearers of someone else's will.

Against this ontological "Said" Levinas posits a "Saying" that is primary to it, a pre-original anarchy that remains unnamable but not unsayable. Saying dethematizes or desynchronizes the rational integrity of the system by recalling an anarchy that remains unassimilable. Since this dethematization requires the very language that it attempts to call into question, the unsaying of the Said can take place only through the Said itself, and Saying thus betrays itself. Philosophical discourse as a consequence of this remains mired in the ontological identity-oriented synchronic order of the Said. Such discourse must find a way to transcend itself in order find its moorings, which it discovers in the felt meaning of the ethical language of responsibility that is grounded in the nonrepresentational alterity of Othemess.

Affectivity as the Pathway to Otherness

For Levinas, the essential pathway to Otherness is through the intentionality of the nonrepresentational consciousness of affectivity. To intend affectively is to mean through feeling. To say that the face "means" responsibility means that in the face-to-face relation, one feels responsible for the Other. One also is affected by the Other's face-to-face proximity. Affectivity thus presents itself in two ways. First is its intentional aspect, which as an activity of the ego presupposes one's ability or intention to respond to its demand. It is a kind of ethical choice. Second is its non-intentional aspect, which one neither chooses for oneself nor reaches as a kind of conclusion from a series of judgments. It is a kind of passivity; whereby one simply is affected. Affectively, this occurs most powerfully in the face-to-face encounter.

When the face of the Other awakens us to the alterity of the Other, we are obligated somehow to avoid the reifying and totalizing habits of ordinary discourse. We accomplish this through a re-orientation, a re-prioritizing of the center—away from the ego and towards the Other. Although Levinas speaks of an egological "I" looking and seeing the face of the Other, he insists that this is not merely a matter of perception.[10] The face, then, is not merely a "phenomenon," a thing that discloses itself through its gradual and unfolding appearance over time. Nor is it something that can be reduced to the physical. We already know how to see; the problem is to learn how to see "otherwise." Indeed, we already know how to see the face; the problem is to learn how to see it otherwise. "The absolute experience," says Levinas, "is not disclosure but revelation … the manifestation of a face over and beyond form."[11] The face cannot actually itself be seen; nor can it be known. It is beyond essence; it is invisible. As the manifestation of a living

presence, though, it is the play of infinity. It undoes every form I may attempt to impose on it. It is also beyond the authority of the gaze, the "panoramic look"[12] that is inherently blind to the play of infinity. Allied with the forces of totality, the gaze "totalizes the multiple"[13] and imposes the categories of objectivity on its field of vision.

In fact, *seeing* for Levinas is highly problematic. For example, the authority of the gaze is the violent application of theoretical consciousness onto the plane of the Other. As David Michael Levin writes in his recent book *The Philosopher's Gaze,* "Seeing the other person as something, inevitably subjects the Other to the violence of classification."[14] For Levinas, we do not "see" the face since the face cannot be an object of knowledge. The face, rather, is a commandment to feel responsibility. The experience of the face of the Other is also an opportunity for transcendence into infinity. Infinity, though, is forever outside the grasp of seeing. How to liberate philosophy from the domination of vision and reason may be Levinas's central dilemma. In his words, "what is needed is a thought for which the very metaphor of vision and aim is no longer legitimate."[15] Since reason demands lucidity, transparency, and visibility, it is a natural ally of light. Truth for Levinas must be located elsewhere.

Language, Truth, and Justice

For Levinas, however, language, truth, and justice are intertwined. "Truth," he writes in his early major work *Totality and Infinity* in a section entitled "Rhetoric and Injustice," "is produced only in veritable conversation or in justice."[16] He emphasizes in the same passage that "*We call justice this face to face approach, in conversation*" (his italics). Injustice in turn starts with rhetoric, the kind of discourse that violates the freedom of the Other. Rhetoric itself cannot be the problem, however, since Levinas uses it himself, as a way of breaking through the boundaries of reason. The problem rather is in the way that rhetoric is used. The wrong way is found especially, he says, in "pedagogy, demagogy, and psychagogy,"[17] which are all systems of measurement and control. When ethics thus moves into the domain of politics and becomes morality, the possibility of violence appears because of the threat of the application of such absolutist forms of thought. Although the moral agent must remain free in order to avoid the totalizing domination of the state, morality must still be grounded in the ethical relation of the face-to-face. For Levinas justice is not an abstract notion but is found in the expression of duty and obligation discovered in the face of the Other. When ethical discourse is grounded in the face-to-face relation so that the freedom of the Other is respected and preserved, absolutist systems are thereby renounced.

Justice for Levinas is still more complicated, though. Although every face is invisible to me even when facing me, it bespeaks its kinship with all other human beings however distant from me. With this insight Levinas passes from his development of an ethics between singular persons to a theory of justice related to the idea of kinship. Present to all face-to-face relations is the addition of what he points to as a kind of "third party," a condition that he calls "illeity."[18] This third party acts as a witness to the proceedings. This addition brings up the issue of social standards, and along with it another serious problem for Levinas. He somehow has to pass over from the ethically grounded specificity of the face-to-face relation to the universality of the institution of justice. Can justice be fair and impartial on the one hand, yet on the other hand still be connected to the transcendence discovered on the face of the Other?

The challenge that Levinas provides his readers regarding justice is this: how can one maintain an ethically necessary respect for the unique specificity (or ipseity) of another person, while simultaneously working within the confines of a language that employs universal concepts? For example, I identify the person with whom I am engaged in a specific social activity as belonging to the category of human beings. But no person is merely a being, a thing, or an entity. As an open-ended set of possibilities, s/he presents rather more than that. As an Other, this person like me is a subject, someone who projects their own sense of the world onto their experience of it. Furthermore, within their frame of reference, I am the Other. But the words by which I choose to refer to this other person will still tend to represent them as a thing, since in language, only the word "I" can be the subject.

The problem is not merely one of becoming sensitive to how language objectifies experience, however. The poststructuralist call to subvert and demystify the covert effects of objectifying language, which made us more aware of the relations between knowledge and power, is not enough. The egoism and narcissism of consciousness must be overcome as well. Furthermore, this calling into question of the ontological assumptions of language when referring to Otherness should not be seen as part of a search for moral self-justification. It is intended rather as a calling to account of one's own responsibility for the Other. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* Levinas identified this call as substitution, or as "me for the other,"[19] saying further that "Toward another culminates in a for another, a suffering for his suffering."[20] It is by this move that Levinas attempts to evade the Husserlian claim that subjectivity is transcendental. Since first philosophy is no longer ontology for Levinas but ethics, subjectivity is then a kind of radical passivity—a being subject to the Other that is prior to freedom, consciousness, and identity.

There is consequently a sense of distance and even of absence in the questioning glance of the Other, which comes at me from inside his/her own interior world. However, the only medium within which I can coexist with this Other and still leave their Otherness intact is language. When an "I" learns to pay serious attention to an "Other" and to the strange world s/he inhabits, this kind of communication is an example for Levinas of Speaking. Through my response to the Other in this way, I am able to transcend the limitations of myself. I can even discover that the transcendent face of the Other can reflect a "trace" (meaning that which has passed by but is no longer there and therefore cannot be captured) of God. Furthermore, for my communication to be ethically responsible and for it to go beyond the egotism of casual discourse, an act of generosity is necessary, one that offers a giving of my world to the Other. On the other hand, when I choose to pay attention to the Other, taking account of the strange world s/he inhabits, I become aware of the arbitrariness of my own views and of the attitudes to which my uncritical egocentric freedom has led me. I become aware of the need to justify or overcome my egocentric attitudes, and of the possibility of doing justice to the Other in my thoughts and actions. Through this enlightened response to the Other I am able to transcend the limitations of myself.

The lived experience of such an ethically charged situation demonstrates that reason has many voices and many centers. This Other-oriented mode of speaking and of thinking pays less attention to things as they appear to the separated self, and more to their radical otherness, to their "alterity." From this guise, the aim of philosophy is not to acquire knowledge with the aim of knowing and then acting, but to demonstrate a readiness to listen and a capacity to learn from experience. This readiness leads to the kind of action that constructs systems of justice and peace that are recognized by Levinas as prior to speaking and thinking. Furthermore, it is the Other who gives the self the opportunity for transcendence, for going beyond the thoughts and feelings that trap it in the subjectivism of its own system. If for example I am able to learn to fight against the need to fit all my experiences into a system, and instead discover the desire to know the other person as she is for herself or he is for himself, I become free. I then discover the possibility of becoming infinitely responsible for the Other. This desire to know and to be responsible for the Other (and not just for some selected Others but for all sorts of extreme types) enables me to transcend my self-centered categories. It also enables the alterity of that which is radically other than myself to appear to me in an ethically grounded way.

This taking account of the Other can take place most notably in the face-to-face encounter. The face, as the realm of the pre-conceptual and non-intentional, opens up into a play of different forces, such as between concealment and un-concealment

or between closure and dis-closure. Although these forces are beyond the control of the individual will, what is revealed is the experience of infinity, of never being able to reach the depths of oneself or of an Other. The face is where the bottom drops off, where the surface opens up, where the abyss appears. Ethically, the face of the Other has the power to command me not to kill him/her (if and when I might otherwise wish to do so), due to the difficulty of carrying out this action face-to-face. Moreover, what gains my respect here is the mystery of the Other, the realization of unfathomable depths. What goes on then in a face-to-face encounter is an intimation of the beyond.

The Trace

The face also operates as a symbol, though, one that unites a feeling with an image. The feeling it evokes is responsibility, and the image it presents is of infinite variability. A trace of God may be found in this infinite variability on the face of the Other. But a trace of God is not itself God. This is similar to the idea of the infinite itself not being infinite. Levinas attempts to escape such ontological assumptions, by developing a unique sense of the term "trace." Ordinarily, a trace is a kind of residual phenomenon. The examples Levinas gives of this way of understanding the term are the fingerprints left by a criminal, the footsteps of an animal, or the vestiges of ancient civilizations.[21] In all these cases, though, the trace is the mark of something absent that was previously present. Levinas's conception of the trace is more radical than this, however. For him, the trace of the Other is itself otherwise. It has no connection to a being that is or was present in this world. The Other leaves a trace only by effacing its traces. Furthermore, my responsible relation to the Other avoids the presence/absence dyad. In this way the Other can be neither denied nor enclosed. If the trace of God were to be found in the trace of the Other, as Levinas repeatedly says, it would be a God not contaminated by being, a God whose very name is unpronounceable.

Conclusion

By stretching language beyond its categorical limits, Levinas lays the foundation for a philosophy of alterity, one that preserves and respects the Other and everything that makes him/her unique. This preservation in turn is part of an ethical concern that for Levinas is prior to all other themes. By focusing his attention on the repercussions that take place because of the felt experience of face-to-face proximity to an Other, Levinas is able to establish ethics as first philosophy. This prioritizing of the ethical over all other ways of thinking and being serves to

provide his philosophy with a transformative character that is far-reaching in its effects. Since for Levinas justice is not reciprocal, the Other is not responsible to me like I am to him/her. If there is in consequence a surplus of duties over rights, then it needs to be allowed that this is not fair and balanced. It does however seem that the alternatives lead to ever-expanding systems of control and dominance.

Part II: Derrida

Introduction: A Brief History of Deconstruction

Derrida based his career on his ability to read texts in a very precise and rigorous way. His strategy was to locate in his subject's writings or life "an originary complication of the origin, […] an initial contamination of the simple."[22] This means that when he chose to "deconstruct" an author's work, he went in search of anything, however casual or biographical, that he believed would destabilize its foundations. His use of the term "deconstruction," however, has its own history.

Derrida's deconstruction initially focused exclusively on Platonism and its belief in a hierarchical structure that valued theoretical form over material substance. His strategy at the time (1972) was to reverse this hierarchy and demonstrate how appearance is more valuable than essence. He soon went further and "re-inscribed" appearance as the origin of both the opposition of the two terms and of the hierarchy itself. In order for this shift to work, he had to emphasize the fact that the phenomenon of appearance referred to an experience of the present moment, and that this experience was grounded in the temporality of consciousness.

Derrida then noted an "undecidable" difference between a person's experience in the present moment of the now, and of their experience of the past and of the future. To signify this metaphysical shift in relating to the uncertainty of temporal orientation at any given moment, Derrida invented the term "*différance*."[23] In his book *Positions*, Derrida called names like *différance* "old names" or "paleonyms," and then provided a list of them, including the following: *pharmakon*; *supplement*; *hymen; gram*; *spacing*; and *incision*.[24] These names are "old" because, he explained, like the word *appearance* or the word *difference*, they have been used for centuries in the history of Western philosophy to refer to the inferior position in a dualist hierarchy. But now, Derrida was using them to refer to a resource older than the history of metaphysics. Nietzsche and Heidegger both spoke of the need for a similar return: to the positions of the early Greek philosophers before Plato, with their emphasis on originary experience over abstract truth.

Derrida's second conception of deconstruction was more political. In his essay "The Force of Law" (1989–1990) he mentioned two "styles" of deconstruction, the

first genealogical, examining the history of a concept such as writing or justice; and the second, which examines *aporias* (or ahistorical paradoxes). In "The Force of Law" Derrida focused on the unstable relation between law and justice. He pointed out three "aporias," which lead to three differing states of perplexity.

The first he called "the *epoché* of the rule."[25] Here he examined the idea that in order to exercise justice, we must be free; otherwise, how else could one be held responsible? But such freedom is problematic. Does justice merely involve freely choosing which law, which regulation, to follow? We might choose the right rule, but this would not be justice. Each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, and this involves more than choosing which law to follow. In order for the law to be conserved, then, it must also be destroyed—and *suspended* as well. This suggests the need for the application of the phenomenological *epoché* (meaning the suspension of judgment), which would be necessary if we are to be able to make a judgment without prejudice. However, now the choice appears to be between programmatically following a code or allowing for complete arbitrariness, and both acts would be unjust. Derrida concluded that the re-institution of the law in any unique decision must be a kind of violence, since it cannot conform perfectly to the instituted codes—and therefore justice is impossible.

Derrida called his second aporia "the ghost of the undecidable."[26] Although a decision begins with the initiative to read, to interpret, and to calculate, actually making a decision requires that one experience "undecidability." This is the realization that since any unique and singular case cannot fit the established codes, *any* decision about it would seem to be impossible. Yet we are still obligated to provide a decision all the same. In fact, any decision that did not go through such an ordeal would not be free, since it would be automatic and therefore not just either. We find ourselves surrounded by unjust options on both sides. Consequently there can be no certainty with decisions regarding justice.

This leads us to Derrida's third aporia, which he called "the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge."[27] Stressing the Greek etymology of the term "horizon," Derrida shows that "a horizon is both the opening and limit that defines an infinite progress or a period of waiting."[28] Justice, however, cannot wait. Since it cannot find unlimited knowledge either because it is grounded in finitude, the moment of decision that justice demands constitutes a moment of madness. Acting in the darkness of non-knowledge and non-rule, the demand for justice yields yet again to a moment of irruptive violence.

In his later essay "Et Cetera" (from 2000) Derrida introduced a principle that defines deconstruction in a finalized way. He noted that every time he has ever said "deconstruction and x" it leads to a singular division that turns whatever x is into an i*mpossibility* that becomes its proper and sole possibility. Referring to

demonstrations he had attempted over the years regarding such experiences as gift giving and receiving, hospitality, and death, he concludes that they are possible only *as impossible*. Deconstruction is therefore a kind of thinking that never finds itself at an end.

This recognition of bankruptcy is consistent with Derrida's proclamation (at the beginning of his book *Of Grammatology*) that logocentrism (his characterization of the entire metaphysical tradition) is "nothing but the most original and powerful ethnocentrism." Derrida thus attempted with his method of deconstruction to drill down through the layers of Western metaphysics in order to discover its mythical, distinctly unscientific (or more accurately, prescientific) origins.

Deconstructing the phenomenon of sound, for example, he asserted that to hear oneself speak is to immediately posit a distinction between the one in here who speaks (the signifier) and the world out there (the signified). The primacy of the spoken word gives rise to a philosophy of presence that defines the essence of metaphysical thinking. But Derrida insisted that this realization actually hides something further. He insisted that Aristotle's belief, that spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and that written words are the symbols of spoken words, is wrong. Derrida posited over and against this system a deeper language of primary writing, a language of absence, a trace language that displays the game of the world as the play of differences. This play is in fact the infinite regress of postmodernism prefigured by modernism itself, whereby the point of origin, the individual thing, becomes increasingly recognized as essentially ungraspable.

Derrida's Deconstruction of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*

Derrida began his most extended essay on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, which he called "Violence and Metaphysics," with a reflection on the death of philosophy. The question arises because of Levinas's assertion that philosophy needs to be replaced by ethics. Levinas, we remember, believed that since all conceptions of Otherness are metaphysical and reifying, they consequently inflict violence on the Other through this conceptualization. The problem, he felt, could only be resolved by learning how to think "otherwise than being, or beyond essence." This kind of thinking, of course, would mark the end of philosophy—or at least, philosophy as we know it. But Derrida began his essay by noting this was not the first time that the death of philosophy had been announced. Hegel and Marx, for example, shared a belief that history moved in a pre-determined direction, whose end would be the perfect realization of freedom (Hegel) or a classless society where forces and interests are in perfect balance (Marx). Neither vision of the end of history would allow a place for philosophy. Nietzsche and Heidegger, in contrast, believed that

true philosophy ended with the early Greek philosophers before Plato, who they saw as archetypal philosophers engaged in the creation of truth. They viewed this active engagement with truth as fundamentally different from Plato's conception of truth as an idea more perfect and more real than anything in this world. Plato's inversion of truth, they both believed, marked the death of true philosophy, leaving a comparatively pallid form of metaphysics in its place.

In fact, before turning to the content of Levinas's work, Derrida questioned whether *all* efforts at modern philosophical inquiry take place in the wake of philosophy's death. He even suggested that the awareness of this death "is perhaps the most deeply inscribed characteristic of our age."[29] Echoing many of the sentiments of the antiphilosophers already expressed in these pages, Derrida was essentially asserting that philosophy—understood as the search for certainty—is no longer relevant. He was also saying that if philosophers are to find the power to make a difference in today's world, they will have return to the origins of their tradition in a more rigorous way than ever before—and learn somehow to *think differently.* Philosophy, in Derrida's view, needed to be replaced by a form of thinking able to reflect the relation between disclosure and concealment, a new kind of thinking which he called "deconstruction." He pointed out that Husserl and Heidegger were his forerunners in this regard because of their rigorous return to philosophy's tradition. It is in this context that Derrida presented three motifs which he believed need to be followed for philosophy to reassert its relevance: (1) recognize that all philosophy is essentially Greek in nature; (2) recognize that metaphysics can no longer claim to be "first philosophy"; (3) recognize that ethics must be disassociated from metaphysics and coordinated with a function even more radical.[30]

Derrida followed Heidegger in characterizing modern thinking in general as a form of one-track thinking, which at its heart is both pragmatic and ruthless in its ability to organize and control all forms of physical, social, and psychological reality. He also followed Heidegger in recognizing the essential Greek nature of this form of thinking, understood as the aim of philosophy to become science. He summarized this realization by saying that

> The knowledge and security of which we are speaking are therefore not in the world; rather, they are the possibility of our language and the nexus of our world. It is at this level that the thought of Emmanuel Levinas can make us tremble.[31]

Derrida in this passage demonstrated that he clearly recognized the radical and destabilizing character of Levinas's thinking, which "summons us to a dislocation of the Greek *logos,* to a dislocation of our identity, and perhaps of identity in general …"[32] This new kind of thinking also seeks to liberate itself from the totalizing form of philosophy that is fascinated by war and violence. Derrida, however, still

characterized Levinas's non-totalizing form of philosophy as yet another type of metaphysics, although one which is opposed to the entire tradition derived from Aristotle. What makes this metaphysics different however is that it is grounded in an ethical relationship with the infinite Other, a non-violent relationship which has the power to open the space of transcendence and to liberate metaphysics from its tendency toward violence.

Derrida was very interested in how Levinas's work represents a break from the tradition. He pointed out that this thinking "no longer seeks to be a thought of Being and phenomenality [but] makes us dream of an inconceivable process of dismantling and dispossession."[33] He declared that Levinas's thought was inspired by a "messianic eschatology"[34] whose main concern is saving us from the end of the world. It is a form of discourse which reaches a height and a level of penetration that is unprecedented—perhaps because it cannot be assimilated into philosophical truisms. Its form, said Derrida, belongs neither to theology, Jewish mysticism, dogmatics, religion, nor even morality. Despite displaying an affinity with Jewish themes, it never bases its authority on Hebraic texts. "It seeks to be understood not merely philosophically but from within a *recourse to experience itself*"[35]—in fact, to the most irreducible experience possible, one that consists of the passage and departure toward the Other. His work creates an opening that cannot be enclosed within a philosophical category or totality, but instead resists the reifying impulse completely—more like art than philosophy:

It proceeds with the infinite insistence of waves on a beach: return and repetition, always, of the same wave against the same shore, in which, however, as each turn recapitulates itself, it also infinitely renews and enriches itself. Because of all these challenges to the commentator and the critic, *Totality and Infinity* in Derrida's view is a work of art and not a treatise.[36]

Overcoming the Violence of Light

All of this is prologue, however. What Derrida was really interested in was applying his own philosophy of deconstruction to his reading of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* in order to explore its foundation, assumptions, and other "unthought" aspects. Derrida's deconstruction of Levinas unfolds in two stages: the first concerns Levinas's dependence on Husserl, while the second focuses on his dependence on Heidegger. Derrida consequently began his deconstruction by turning to Levinas's early book on Husserl, entitled *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. (This was the work that in 1930 first introduced Husserl to France.) In a section of his essay entitled "The Violence of Light," Derrida focused on his belief that Levinas needed to overcome "the imperialism of *theoria*"[37] in Husserl's

phenomenology, in the wake of Plato's theory of ideas: "Unable to reduce the last naivete, the naivete of the glance, it [Levinas's philosophy] predetermined Being as object."[38] This means that in Derrida's view, Levinas was only able to liberate himself from the dominance of objectifying reason by arguing against the privilege of sight and of the light that makes sight possible.

This privileging of light (and of reason) is Greek in origin, and represents the ability to grasp things from the outside. Derrida described this Greek ideal as "a world of light and of unity, a 'philosophy of a world of light, a world without time.'"[39] Levinas was able to break with this tradition by emphasizing touch over sight and interiority over exteriority. When he speaks of the face as the rupture of phenomenology, he implies a breaking away from the metaphor of light, and from the phenomena which appear within it. Derrida asked in this regard, "What language will ever escape it? How, for example, will the metaphysics of the face as epiphany of the other free itself from light? Light perhaps has no opposite."[40] Can Levinas even speak intelligibly without presupposing the presence of light, the Greek opposite of his thought? Derrida explained this problem further:

> This unthinkable truth of living experience, [the relation to the other] to which Levinas returns ceaselessly, cannot possibly be encompassed by philosophical speech without immediately revealing, by philosophy's own light, that philosophy's surface is severely cracked, and that what was taken for its solidity is its rigidity. It could doubtless be shown that it is in the nature of Levinas's writing, at its decisive moments, to move along these cracks, masterfully progressing by negations, and by negation against negation. Its proper route is not that of an "either this … or that," but of a "neither this … nor that." The poetic force of metaphor is often the trace of this rejected alternative, this wounding of language. Through it, in its opening, experience itself is silently revealed.[41]

Now, Heidegger had already developed a concept to define Dasein's relationship to others; he called this relation *Mitsein* (being with) and he introduced the related concept *Miteinandersein* (being with another) to signify its collective form. Levinas felt the need to move beyond these relations in order to describe a more original relation to the other. As Derrida points out, "Beneath solidarity, beneath companionship, before Mitsein."[42] Levinas directed his attention to the encounter with the face of the other—an encounter "without intermediary and without communion, absolute proximity and absolute distance."[43] But what would be the specific nature of such an encounter?

Such is the experience of eros—"eros in which, within the proximity of the other, distance is integrally maintained; eros whose pathos is made simultaneously of this proximity and this duality."[44] Only through this experience, where the presence

of someone is simultaneously a certain absence, can the logic of noncontradiction representing the whole of formal logic be contested at its root. Within the erotic experience, neither partner "thinks the other" because, in Derrida's words, "they do not have time. Without time, they do not have history. The absolute alterity of each instant, without which there would be no time, cannot be reproduced—constituted—within the identity of the subject or the existent."[45] There is, however, another aspect to this relationship:

> More seriously, to renounce the other (not by being weaned from it, but by detaching oneself from it, which is actually to be in relation to it, to respect it while nevertheless overlooking it, that is, while knowing it, identifying it, assimilating it, to renounce the other is to enclose oneself within solitude (the bad solitude of solidity and self-identity) and to repress ethical transcendence.[46]

Levinas calls the positive movement which takes itself beyond the disdain or disregard of the other, that is, beyond the appreciation or possession, understanding of the other, *metaphysics* or *ethics*. Metaphysical transcendence is *desire*.[47]

Levinas's concept of desire is thus based on the respect and knowledge of the other as other, a moment whose transgression, says Derrida, consciousness cannot allow:

> Here there is no return. For desire is not unhappy. It is opening and freedom. Further, a desired infinite may govern desire itself, but it can never appease desire by its presence. "And if desire were to cease with God/Ah, I would envy you Hell" (Claudel).[48]

> The infinitely other is the invisible … Inaccessible, the invisible is the most high … [it] is higher than height … No addition of more height will ever measure it. It does not belong to space, is not of this world. But what necessity compels this inscription of language in space at the very moment when it exceeds space? … The theme of the face perhaps will help us understand it.[49]

Eros and desire are thus two experiences, intimately connected to Levinas's theme of the face, which have the power to overcome the dominance of reason and the faculty of sight which accompanies it. Flourishing in the dark, they allow the other to remain unknowable and to preserve its mystery.

Moving Beyond the Ego as the Same

Derrida then turned to Levinas's conception of the ego as the same. In his view, for Levinas to be able to say this, he would have to insist that "the alterity or negativity interior to the ego, the interior difference, is but an appearance: an *illusion*, 'a play

of the Same,' the 'mode of identification' of an ego whose essential moments are called body, possession, home, economy, etc."[50] Common sense would suggest that I am the same over time, established by the act of self-identification. But, Derrida responded, the play of the same is not monotonous; the concrete production of maintaining an ego entails a certain negativity—"it alters itself toward itself within itself."[51] This production, of the ego attempting to maintain its identity, requires work, which the ego resists, provoking a finite moment of the same "that forms a system and a totality with the agent."[52] Since Levinas is clearly and emphatically anti-systematic and against totalization, this aspect of the ego is problematic for him.

Levinas would say in response to this criticism that the distance, the self-separation necessary for the ego to affect itself, is provided by the other, specifically the other's standpoint that I internalize—and thus does not originate from a totalizing impulse of selfhood. He would also say that Derrida was wrong when he attributed to him the idea that the alterity or negativity interior to the ego is but an illusion. For Levinas, the alterity within the ego is real; it is the result of the social relation. The egotism of the ego is also real, since it is that in which the other is introduced.

Another problem for Derrida concerns Levinas's view of the relation with the other as being beyond history. But isn't the relation to the other, asked Derrida, (in work, in authority, etc.) *necessary* for history? How can Levinas be justified in calling history the "laborious procession of the Same"?[53] Similarly, how can the ego "engender alterity within itself without encountering the Other"?[54] In response, Levinas would say that ethics has a reality beyond history. Since history is written from a third person perspective, it ignores the I-you perspective and therefore does not allow for the beyond essence and otherwise than being that genuine exteriority involves.

"What exactly is this encounter with the absolutely-other?" asked Derrida. "Neither representation, nor limitation, nor conceptual relation to the same. The ego and the other do not permit themselves to be dominated or made into totalities by a concept of relationship."[55] The problem as Derrida saw it was that since there is no way to conceptualize the encounter with the Other, how is it even speakable in the first place? How can Levinas admit the possibility of discourse without admitting the priority of the third-person perspective, the perspective of the common world which is there for all of us? Can he admit this and still maintain the preeminence of the I-you relation—a relation which is not totalizable, not capable of being viewed from an external, universal perspective?

Levinas would say that Derrida misunderstands the notion of infinity, by equating the infinitely other with the totally other. Infinity for Levinas is just the

notion of the addition, the not being able to complete the series, the "plus one." Thus, his favorite example of infinity is discourse, which signifies the intervention by the other as the addition of the saying to the said, a relation within which the other comes from a perspective that is completely different from mine. Derrida might argue in response that if this perspective were truly different then I couldn't understand it—but this presupposes a common world about which we *could* find complete agreement—which is itself a metaphysical problem lacking a satisfactory solution.

Derrida was basically arguing that for Levinas to make himself intelligible, he must use classical philosophical language. One of the necessary premises of this language is that identity is prior to difference. This means that terms must have definite, self-identical meanings which correspond to definite, self-identical senses of objects. The opposite view would be that difference is prior to identity, which would imply that being is essentially ambiguous and not capable of being described in a definitive manner. The latter of course is Derrida's view.

From a classical point of view, to be is to be present, or to be capable of presence. Such presence allows the being to be definitely described, and even to have certain truths asserted with regards to it. But if difference is considered to be prior to the identity of being, this would affect its presence by splintering it into two halves, into its presence and its absence. The classical conception would call this, in Derrida's words, an "impossible presence,"[56] something which becomes present through what differs from it. For Derrida, this meant that *différance* (a key term for him) understood as the operation of differing, both fissures and retards presence, both dividing it and delaying it.

In his lecture "La Différance" Derrida gave Freud's theory of the unconscious as an example of this "impossible presence." He claimed that it cannot appear without the collapse of conscious life since it can only manifest itself through symbolic substitutes. These manifestations are "traces" which are not modifications of presence but rather stand in for what can never be present—and, in doing so, protect our conscious life by delaying its arrival.[57]

When we apply this point of view to language, we get the idea that in language there are only differences—without positive terms to anchor them. Consequently, every concept is essentially inscribed in a chain within which it refers to another concept and through it to yet another, in a system-wide play of differences. This means that intuition never establishes a concept's meaning and that the significance of any sign is purely arbitrary, depending on the system of differences in which it is located. We are stuck with a philosophical language that presupposes presence, but is itself undermined by *différance*. This was Derrida's problem, and he thought it was Levinas's too. He therefore attempted to show how Levinas

cannot really assert his doctrine using the language of philosophy. Even his turn to Husserlian phenomenology, said Derrida, was undermined by his attempt to work beyond the idea of an unambiguous presence because of its own dependence on this idea.

Since Levinas conceives of the face of the Other as that which does not reveal itself, as that which cannot be made thematic and is not of this world, it follows that I cannot possibly speak of the Other or conceive of him or her as an object. The Other presents itself to me as an absence, "interrupting all historical totalities through its freedom of speech."[58] But how can I know whether he/she is an ego like I am? Further, how can the other present him/herself as an absence? Derrida insisted that "one could neither speak nor have any sense of the totally other, if there was not a phenomenon of the totally other, or evidence of the totally other as such."[59] Unless Levinas accepts from the beginning that the other is an ego like he is (with the exception of their different bodily positions), then he has no phenomenological basis for his descriptions. This basis can only be the first person immediate experience we have of ourselves, which we transfer to the other.

Levinas maintained, however, that "the other, as other, is not only an alter ego. It is what I myself am not."[60] Derrida's response was that this could lead to a serious problem. The alter ego, he insisted, is not a mere thing (which is what it would have to be in order to be other than oneself), since if it were, it would be a mere object in the world among others. It is a *transcendental* ego, "necessary for the possibility of experience" as Kant would say, and the grounding of the real world for Husserl. The other is a transcendental ego in the same sense I am. To refuse to see this is itself an act of violence—because to refuse to see the other in this way is to refuse to recognize ethically that we should treat the other only as an end in itself, and never as a means to an end. The refusal to act towards the other in this ethically responsible way, would entail breaking Kant's categorical imperative. Since the self can only recognize the other in the present moment of time, the self essentially pins the other to the wall as a specimen, freezing it within that very moment, even as the ego's experience of the other passes from one moment to the next in the flow of time. Since the ego centers all its experience around itself, it does so within a here and now that serves as a zero point—and since all other egos do the same thing, they perform the same act of violence by distancing all others away from the essential and central self. In other words, Derrida was accusing Levinas of a theoretical ethical transgression by saying that the other is what I myself am not.

Levinas would reply that the other shows itself through language. But if this is the case, how do I ground the alterity of the infinitely other in a common language that is itself based on the identity and lack of ambiguity of the Same? Since these

are the characteristics of exterior space, Levinas must account for the experience of the other as a non-spatial relationship. He must be able to "state infinity's excess over totality in the language of totality … [and] to think true exteriority by means of the Inside-Outside structure and by spatial metaphor."[61] The problem is, you can't separate language from space, nor can you empty language of space. This is because all our knowledge (and thus our language too) comes from our experience of the world as made up of spatial objects. These objects are there for everyone, and we rely on this fact whenever we try to teach language or verify others' assertions. Thus, when Levinas stated that the infinite exteriority of the other is not spatial and therefore can only be designated negatively, he was also arguing that the infinite cannot be stated—and this marks a limit, a finitude, to speech. This in turn means that no speaker can get outside the space of their language, and it follows that "if discourse is always spatial, it is thus always violent."[62] To put it even more cogently, "the philosophical *logos* … is inhabited by war."[63] Levinas, with his prioritizing of the other over the self and of ambiguity over dogma, was attempting to articulate a position of peace—but he can only do so by using the language of war.

Beyond Ontology

After attempting to show how Levinas's philosophy presupposes key elements in Husserl's work, Derrida turned to Heidegger with the same intention in mind. While Levinas clearly believed that he had put forth a metaphysics of the infinitely other that was the very opposite of what he perceived as the ethical violence implicit in Heidegger's thinking about the question of Being, Derrida attempted to prove instead that Levinas's ethics actually presupposed Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Derrida insisted that "Levinas must ceaselessly presuppose and practice the thought of precomprehension of Being in his discourse."[64] While for Heidegger each of us as Dasein must learn to "let things be," we can't do this unless we think of the other as being like ourselves, and this presupposes thinking of the other as yet another disclosing being. "Would the experience of the face be possible," asked Derrida, "could it be stated, if the thought of being were not already implied in it? In effect, the face is the inaugural unity of a naked glance and of a right to speech. But eyes and mouth make a face only if, beyond need, they can 'let be,' if they see and they say what is such as it is, if they reach the Being of what is."[65]

The problem here with the *thought* of Being is that while it "lets individuals be" on the one hand, it also hides what Being is on the other; thus it both reveals and conceals. It is the first thing we know, but also the first thing that is concealed from us. This is the meaning behind Heidegger's discussion of "the ontological

difference" regarding the relation between Being and beings: Being is "an impossible presence," an example of difference prior to identity. It is nothing that can be determined—despite leaving traces that are real. Derrida suggested that in the same way the face of the other for Levinas is also an impossible presence, since the other is nothing in itself but appears only through its traces.

While Levinas accepted Heidegger's core belief that human beings discover themselves as having been thrown into the world without control over their beginning or end, he objected to Heidegger's placing Being in a cultural and historical context, since this implied that Being was somehow finite and therefore flawed. Levinas postulated instead that to be embodied is to struggle with the limits of one's facticity and one's situation. It was here, he insisted, that the question of Being first arises. The gap between Being and beings emerges through such attempts of transcendence as need, pleasure, shame, and nausea—and it is through these possibilities that the corporeal self first encounters the fact of its own existence. This way of framing the experience of the question of Being led Levinas to distance himself further from Heidegger's ontology, by insisting that Being is continuous presence rather than an event of disclosure and withdrawal. Furthermore, Levinas noted, since *need* is the ground of our existence, transcendence is continually directed at "something other than ourselves."[66] The deepest motivation of need, he felt, is to get out of the being that we ourselves are—to transcend our situation and our embodiment.

Levinas as Empiricist

Derrida concluded his essay on Levinas by exclaiming that Levinas has been an empiricist all along. He explained how Levinas's renunciation of the concept, his radicalizing of the theme of the infinite exteriority of the other, his inability to come to his own aid in speech, and his contesting of the resolution and coherence of philosophy itself, are all earmarks of empiricism—a form of thinking, said Derrida, that has "always been determined by philosophy, from Plato to Husserl, as *nonphilosophy*."[67] The step from nonphilosophy to antiphilosophy is not a long one.

If Derrida is right and Levinas *is* an empiricist, we need to consider how Levinas's ethical framework fits into the empirical paradigm, using Hume, the prototypical representation of modern empiricism in ethics, as its representative. Essentially, Hume asserted that all knowledge must be acquired *through* experience (or *a posteriori*), and cannot be acquired by reason *independent of* experience (or *a priori*). Hume's moral philosophy strongly appeals to *a posteriori* methods. He thus believed that while our reason can consider both deductive and inductive validity, all other notions of truth must originate from experience, since reason alone

"never influences any of our actions."[68] He concluded that "Since morals … have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason."[69]

Since reason cannot move us to act, our motivation for action must come from our sentiments or feelings, which therefore become the source of morality.[70] We distinguish right from wrong through "the impression arising from virtue, to be agreeable, and that proceeding from vice to be uneasy."[71] For Hume, then, morality is not the result of abstract reasoning, but arises from sentiment based on experience. Therefore our ability to distinguish between right and wrong is directly in accordance with our perception of which of our actions lead to feelings of pleasure and which lead to displeasure.

Levinas's postmodern moral philosophy is in severe contrast to Hume's empirical perspective. For Levinas, ethics is "first philosophy" and is *a priori*, logically prior to and independent of any other sort of experience. Ethical issues arise because of our relation to the other and not merely through reference to the universality of a law. In contrast to Hume, Levinas is thus asserting an approach founded in *a priori* reasoning, since it is based on the notion of the face, an experience that is "independent of my initiative and my power."[72]

Levinas's understanding of the face of the other eclipses any social label we could ascribe to the other.[73] While the other as person can be labelled as father, son, mother, daughter, carpenter, and so on, Levinas affirms that even the culmination of all such labels could not define what is the Other. Accordingly, he postulates, "For the presence before a face, my orientation toward the Other, can lose avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands."[74] His revelation here is that in order to surpass the limitations of such labels and impositions on our experience we must embrace generosity. The transcendence and infinity in the face of the other require us to be for-the-Other, and compel us to act morally.

This demand for morality from the face of the other does not entirely conflict with Hume's views on sympathy since both views lead to moral action, but their foundations are incompatible. Hume's concept of sympathy arises from the subject's experience of the other as resembling himself,[75] but the sentiment of sympathy reduces the other to an object since it asks us to embrace the other as a means to an end, as something that can either be pleasurable or anti-pleasurable. For Hume, only experience can cause sentiments to arise, but trusting sentiments to determine morality also necessitates acceptance of the possibility of immorality. For Levinas, the responsibility for the other results *a priori* from my encounter with the face, and thus morality is always incumbent on *me*. This experience of the other as a unique being is also the first recognition for the self of the significance

of something meaningful. The ethical relationship for Levinas is more than the social interaction of individuals; it is the foundation for all further philosophical reflection.

Hume, in his *Treatise*, once made an observation regarding other moral philosophies that he had encountered; it has since become known as the naturalistic fallacy. Essentially, it means that descriptive statements about existence cannot lead to a prescriptive conclusion:

> I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.[76]

When Levinas's ethical position regarding the encounter of the face of the other is framed within this empiricist point of view, certain questions arise: How can the face of the other actually contain something infinite or transcendent? How can the encounter with the face actually be *a priori*? Is it even possible for an individual to encounter anything truly infinite? The lack of clear answers to such questions suggests that Levinas commits the naturalistic fallacy at the foundation of his philosophy and that this fault trickles down to taint the rest of it as well. (This procedure, of locating a particular fault in the foundation of a given thinker's work and using it to undermine the credibility of the rest of it, is of course the pathway for Derrida's deconstructions.)

Hume would suggest that what Levinas has done as the basis for his idea of responsibility-for-the-other is place a value judgement upon his *a priori* reasoning. Values, Hume would argue, are not formed from reason alone, but are dependent upon our sentiments derived from our experience, *a posteriori*. While Levinas's sentiment of kindness obligates him to feel generous when encountering the face of the other, from an empirical point of view there is no *necessary* reason for it. If his initial sentiment were fearful instead of kind, then his reaction to such an encounter would be with aversion or hostility rather than with generosity. Even if the infinite face of the other could be encountered by us *a priori*, the experience would be devoid of sentiment and we would have to consider the other with indifference rather than generosity—and this would present the other in an ethically compromising way as a means to an end and not as an end in him/herself, since our *a priori* impression of the other could never provide intrinsic value to the other based on reason alone.

Of course, Hume's empiricism can only be deaf and blind to the methods and goals of Levinas's ethics. After the appearance of Derrida's essay on his work, however, Levinas came to recognize the need to provide a follow-up to his *Totality and Infinity*, which he did with his *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. In this sequel he clarified how subjectivity is opened up by contact with the alterity of the Other. He showed that even the most fundamental mode of affectivity, consisting of the enjoyment and anxiety of sensuous experience (so basic to Hume's view), is preceded by the subject's being thrown back on itself, reeling under the impact of alterity. He also called into question the materiality and centrality of the subject. In its stead he posited a passive and vulnerable susceptibility to the demands of the Other, through which the subject discovers itself. Maternity is an especially powerful example of this.

Levinas would argue that Hume's empiricism belongs to the objectifying domain of the Said, a pattern of thinking so enmeshed in its enclosing structure that it cannot allow for anything meaningful to exist or be talked about outside itself. Empirically sanctioned speech can only express the inward experience of the subject, and anything outside this experience must be considered to lack meaning. Because Levinas's ethics exists "beyond essence," it's not surprising that it proves to be impervious to the demands of empiricism.

Concluding Remarks

Levinas's goals for articulating and defending his ethical stance can only be achieved if he is able to move beyond the limits of what can be said in language. This is a central concern for antiphilosophers. It is not, however, a problem for the philosophers of the canon because of their attachment to system and certainty. The irony of Derrida's "deconstruction" of Levinas is that while on the one hand he was demonstrating the internal contradictions of Levinas's thinking as *philosophy*, he was still very sympathetic to Levinas's project as *antiphilosophy*. Levinas's problem of transcending the limits of language while still using language was also Derrida's problem as he moved forward with his own work.

Notes

1. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp. 72–73.
2. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,* p. 15.
3. ibid., p. 166.
4. ibid., p. 106.
5. ibid., p. 106.

6. ibid., p. 19.
7. See Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, pp. 16–17.
8. See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* p. 151.
9. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p. 35
10. Levinas, *Ethics and infinity*, pp. 85–87.
11. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 65–66.
12. ibid., p. 289.
13. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 292
14. Levin, T*he Philosopher's Gaze*, 247.
15. Levinas, *Totality and infinity*, p. 155.
16. ibid., p. 71.
17. ibid., p. 7.
18. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,* 12–13.
19. ibid., p. 11.
20. ibid., p. 18.
21. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 61.
22. Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy,* p. xv.
23. See Derrida, preface to *Dissemination,* pp. 4–6.
24. Derrida, *Positions*, p. 43.
25. Derrida, *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice,* pp. 22–23.
26. ibid., pp. 24–26.
27. ibid., pp. 26–28.
28. ibid., p. 26.
29. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 81.
30. See Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 81.
31. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 82.
32. ibid., p. 82.
33. ibid., p. 82.
34. ibid., p. 83.
35. ibid., p. 83.
36. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 312, footnote.
37. ibid., p. 85.
38. ibid., p. 85.
39. ibid., p. 90.
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41. ibid., p. 90.
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44. Levinas, quoted in Derrida, ibid., pp. 90–91.
45. ibid., p. 91.
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61. ibid., p. 112.
62. Mensch, "Lectures on Derrida's Violence and Metaphysics," p. 10.
63. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 116.
64. ibid., p. 141.
65. ibid., p. 143.
66. Levinas, *On Escape*, 58.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

Exploring the Edge of the Real: Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari

Introduction

Beginning in the 1960's, philosophers like Foucault and Deleuze, and psychiatrists like Guattari began investigating the strategies they believed were needed to identify and undermine the forces of power and domination which they found inherent in modern society. They also believed that modern society was governed by the laws embedded in the discourse of modern empirical and behavioral psychology (Foucault) and by the dysfunctional and manipulative actions of the media (Deleuze and Guattari). Foucault defined three modes of objectification that transform humans into subjects to be manipulated by society, the first two being passive (forms of classification, techniques of domination) and the third being active (self-formation). Deleuze and Guattari attempted to develop functional concepts with the potential to change our relationship to the world by showing us how to think differently about it. Because we have become "desiring machines" programmed to consume, our only strategy for survival would be to become "bodies without organs," living off the grid as nomads.

Foucault is an antiphilosopher because of his recognition of the limitations of human finitude, and his realization that all forms of discourse are disguised systems of power and control. For Foucault, the physical nature of the panoptically

designed prison (one in which the prisoners can all be seen at a glance by a single person at any time), mimics the operational design of other similar institutions of guidance and control such as schools, hospitals, and factories, and needs to be understood in terms of the social dynamics of the power-relations in the society that produces it. Prisoners and citizens alike are thus parts of a technological vision that can see individuals only as the means to an end and never as ends in themselves. Philosophy for Foucault is not a way of reflecting on what is true and what is false, but on our relationship to truth. For him the central question is, if this is the relationship we have with truth, how must we behave?

Deleuze and Guattari are antiphilosophers because the concepts they develop in their collaboration make up a manifesto for a non-violent response to what is in their view a totally dysfunctional society. They suggest that the only way to protect ourselves from going crazy in a world of hyper-reality, in which our very desires are totally constructed according to the designs of others, and where all information has hidden agendas behind it, is to become schizoidal ourselves. The goal of their pragmatic philosophy is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions, but instead introduce the potential for increased energy. They are no longer philosophically interested in whether something is true, but whether it works. What new thoughts does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?

Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari all recognized that modernity provides the historical stage for domination, due to the fact that its normalizing discourses and institutions pervade all aspects of contemporary social existence including everyday life. Their perspectives on modernity were somewhat different, however: where Foucault tended toward a totalizing critique of modernity, Deleuze and Guattari sought to theorize and appropriate its positive and liberating aspects while still recognizing its dangers. Although their work was less a critique of knowledge and rationality than of the dysfunctional aspects of capitalist society, they followed Foucault in rejecting a dialectical methodology in favor of a postmodern logic of difference, multiple perspectives, and fragmentization. While all three concentrated their attention on the microstructures of domination, Deleuze and Guattari addressed the importance of macrostructures as well, and accordingly developed a detailed critique of the state.

Where Foucault's emphasis was on the disciplinary technologies of modernity and the targeting of the body by various regimes of power/knowledge, Deleuze and Guattari focused on the colonization of desire by various modern discourses and institutions. They also concentrated on what they perceived as the fascist aspects of psychoanalysis, like its concept of psychic repression and its analysis of family dynamics.

In contrast to Foucault who emphasized the productive nature of power while rejecting the "repressive hypothesis" (which suggested that historically Europeans had become progressively more repressed about their bodies and their speech than in earlier times), Deleuze and Guattari readily spoke of the repression of desire in the process of constructing their essentialist concept of desire. Their willingness to champion the liberation of bodies and desire stood in sharp contrast to Foucault's sympathies regarding the Greco-Roman project of mastering the self. All three theorists, however, attempted to decenter and liquidate the bourgeois, humanist subject. Foucault pursued this decentering through his critical archaeology and genealogy of knowledge, which ultimately reduced the subject to an object, namely the effect of both discourse and various disciplinary practices. Deleuze and Guattari similarly pursued their schizoidal destruction of the ego and superego in search of a more dynamic model for the unconscious. All three postmodernists rejected the modernist notion of a unified, rational, and expressive subject, and attempted to pave the way for the emergence of new types of decentered subjects, liberated from their fixed and unified identities, free to become dispersed and multiple, free to be reconstituted as new types of subjectivities and bodies.

Part I: Foucault

Foucault's Kantian Framework

Foucault was always concerned with the sort of system that forms links between discourse, concepts, institutions and practices. He learned to think in this way from his early university studies of Kant, which taught him how to think about human knowledge from a reversed angle. Since in Kant's view we never deal with the real world directly but only through phenomena, science can never be about reality but only about our construction of it, through the concepts we develop for this purpose. This Kantian revolution in thinking provided Foucault with a philosophical framework within which he could locate his own studies. He thus directed his critical focus on the modern human sciences and on their claim to offer scientific truths about human nature. He came to recognize that these beliefs were mere expressions of a particular society, rather than the universal truths they were claimed to be. He discovered an example of this from his historical studies of the 18th century, when human beings first came to be interpreted both as knowing subjects and as objects of their own knowledge. "The problem," he wrote (shortly before his death in 1984), "is to determine what the subject must be, to what condition he is subject, what status he must have, what position he must occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become a legitimate subject of this or that

type of knowledge."[1] In the same essay, he explained that to the extent his work could be said to fit into the philosophical tradition at all it would be in the critical tradition of Kant, and because of this his project could be called "a *Critical History of Thought.*"[2] Throughout his career he would closely follow the path of this problematic in a variety of different contexts, later calling his analysis of them "the analytic of finitude."[3]

Foucault's understanding of finitude would lead him to recognize the limitations of philosophical discourse as well. In response to Derrida's criticism that he had made some unwarranted assumptions about the relation between reason and madness expressed by Descartes in his *Meditations,*[4] he replied that he had tried to show in his book on madness "that philosophy is neither historically nor logically a foundation of knowledge; but that there are conditions and rules for the foundation of knowledge to which philosophical discourse is subject, in any given time period, in the same manner as any other form of discourse with rational pretensions."[5] In other words, it was the certitude claimed by various philosophers and other purveyors of knowledge over the years that gave Foucault pause. He gradually came to believe that this certitude was a source for the pervasive and dangerous abuse of insufficiently legitimized power throughout a number of different societies.

For example, Foucault attempted with his *History of Madness* to demonstrate that madness was a social construct distinct from mental illness, by tracing the evolution of the concept's employment in Western Europe over three distinct historical stages, namely the Renaissance, the 17th and 18th centuries, and the modern era. In order to complete this task, he found it necessary to make "a structural study of the historical ensemble—notions, institutions, judicial and police measures, scientific concepts—which hold captive a madness whose wild state can never be reconstituted."[6] Foucault wasn't romanticizing this "wild state" of madness so much as recognizing how the various notions of it that held sway over different historical stages all lost sight of its nuances. Foucault's history of madness is actually less about madness itself and more about the history of societal *exclusions,* including (among others) lepers, the syphilitic, the poor, vagrants, prisoners, and the insane.[7]

Foucault's Kantian studies thus enabled him to examine the history of ideas in a new way. Instead of merely accepting the handed-down "scientific" truths about specific social situations, he turned the tables and examined the unexplored assumptions and value-systems behind these truths. The problem, as Foucault framed it, is that there is not just one truth. Recalling Nietzsche's remarks about truths and lies, good and evil, he wrote:

> And now, in this philosophical-philological space opened up for us by Nietzsche, language wells up in an enigmatic multiplicity that must be mastered … For Nietzsche, it

> was not a matter of knowing what good and evil were in themselves, but of who was being designated, or rather *who was speaking* when one said *Agathos* [good man] to designate oneself and *Deilos* [coward] to designate others.[8]

Similarly, it's not a matter of who is mad and who isn't, but who holds the keys to the locked door. What's really at issue is who is empowered and who is not, and what system of power and responsibility is maintained by such an arrangement in the first place.

Power and Society

In the first of the public lectures Foucault presented at the College de France (in 1976, entitled "Society Must be Defended") he questioned the way power relations have been traditionally addressed: "Rather than asking ideal subjects what part of themselves or their powers they have surrendered in order to let themselves become subjects, we have to look at how relations of subjugation can manufacture subjects."[9] In order to do this we need first to uncover, and then focus on what he called "subjugated knowledge." This consists not only of historical content that has been buried by functional coherence or masked by formal systematization, but also of the whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual or not scientific enough.[10] This second kind of subjugated knowledge he called "knowledge from below," referring to "the knowledge of the psychiatrized, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, that is parallel to, marginal to, medical knowledge,"[11] and he explained that it is the reappearance of *this* knowledge that makes his own critique possible. He characterized his project as a whole as a "multiple of genealogical investigations,"[12] which are themselves a combination of erudite knowledge and what people commonly know. These genealogies are also a way of playing off against one another two sorts of knowledge: the local, discontinuous, disqualified, or non-legitimized knowledges and the unitary theoretical impulse that filters and organizes these forms of knowledge into a hierarchy in the name of science. "Genealogies," he noted, "are, quite specifically, antisciences."[13] With this remark he clearly placed his genealogical work within the scope of antiphilosophy, as a series of activities that mark an attempt first to analyze and then to undermine the systematic, totalizing, and hierarchical aspects of modernism.

Foucault's genealogies of knowledge use the method of archaeology, by digging below the surface of history in order to reactivate or "desubjugate" local knowledges. This is the sort of knowledge that has disappeared from history. His genealogies are not against knowledge or science *per se*; they are instead against "the centralizing power-effects that are bound up with the institutionalization and workings of any scientific discourse."[14] In fact, they have to fight against the

power-effects characteristic of such discourse. To the degree that Marxism or psychoanalysis for example claims to be a science, argued Foucault, we should be asking ourselves about the aspiration to power that is inherent in such a claim. When you try to prove that a particular form of knowledge is a science, he added, you are partly also disqualifying other forms. You are, in essence, connecting to a type of discourse that has been used by the West since the Middle Ages to subjugate others, through the power of the authoritative reputation of science.[15]

But, let's say we are able to save particular pieces of historical knowledge from the dustbins of history and accumulate enough pieces to enable us to form a coherent alternative narrative to whatever is current. What's to prevent this new narrative from merely replacing the old, and becoming the dominant narrative of its time—and consequently performing the same subjugating function of all other dominating discourses? This type of discourse needs to be scrupulously avoided.

Two recent examples of such discourse are Nazism and Stalinism. The collapse of the former and the retreat of the latter left two very distinct power vacuums in their place, due to their differing economies. Under the liberal or capitalist conception of political power, power is regarded as a right which can be possessed in the same way one possesses a commodity. It can be transferred or alienated either in whole or in part, through juridical action. Any individual can hold it or surrender it, just like with the exchange of contracts. There is consequently a relation between power and wealth since both can be held with potential loss or gain, or traded like commodities. Under Marxism, however, the conception of power is different. Here the focus is on the functionality of power rather than on its private accumulation. The role of power is to perpetuate certain relations of production that make the appropriation of productive forces possible. While capitalist economic philosophy emphasizes the circulation of goods within the process of free exchange, Marxist socialism emphasizes the stability of the economic structure of the state as a whole. Despite these significant economic differences, Nazism and Stalinism were similar in their totalitarian aspects. In both cases, said Foucault, the expression of power serves to repress, whether it be "nature, instincts, a class, or individuals."[16] The mechanisms at work, he added, are more complex than mere repression—and they are present not only in totalitarian societies but everywhere else as well.

The Repressive Hypothesis and Bio-Power

Repression requires power. In modern society, a good deal of this power takes place under—and is enabled by—the authoritative discourse of science, and in the case of society, specifically the human sciences. Foucault identified two sources

for this power: law and discipline. Law, he explained, is "the discourse that makes rules a product of the will of the sovereign" while discipline is "a discourse about a natural rule, or in other words, a norm."[17] Norms are established within the theoretical horizon of the human sciences acting under the jurisprudence of clinical knowledge. These norms produce mechanisms of coercion which in Foucault's view, "are increasingly in conflict with the juridical system of sovereignty."[18] He noted that the increasing incompatibility between the two reaches a point where an arbitrating discourse is needed to work between the mechanics of discipline and the principles of right. Since the idea of repression represents a unification of these two forces as they operate within society, a closer examination of repression (and of why it is "tainted, spoiled, and rotten from the outset")[19] is in order.

In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* Foucault developed (with the purpose of refuting it) what came to be known as the "repressive hypothesis," which states that "through European history we have moved from a period of relative openness about our bodies and our speech to an ever-increasing repression and hypocrisy."[20] Because of the influence of psychoanalytic thought and radical politics, the hypothesis continues, we have come to believe that our freedoms are currently curtailed or repressed. This point of view understands power as a repressive instrument whose agenda includes the suppression of desire, the fostering of false consciousness, and the promotion of ignorance. Fearing truth, power needs to suppress it. It follows that when power is understood in this way, it is best opposed by the discourse of truth. Foucault argued against this view, saying that the hypothesis is wrong because it considers power only in the negative terms of prohibition, ignoring the fact that modern disciplinary power is not just a negative, repressive force but a positive, productive, liberating force as well. Furthermore, if the hypothesis is wrong it also follows that truth and power are not quite as opposed to each other as they might once have seemed. For example, Foucault noted how the alliance between the sciences of man and the structures of power helped to form (and continues to inform) the modern social sciences.[21]

In rejecting the "repressive hypothesis," Foucault's intention is not to deny the presence of misery and repression in capitalist societies, but to question the totally negative conception of power as a limiting, repressive force. He wanted to emphasize that power should be seen as a productive force as well But the mere fact that power is a potentially liberating force does not make it a tool for emancipation. Too much freedom can be repressive too. For example, the web of determinations and limitations in capitalist societies is actually sustained through freedom. Freedom is not the way out of domination and repression. The general form of control in modern societies is management, not curtailment. Modern power does not work by starving desire; instead, it prospers through creating, inducing and

multiplying desire. Desire is the type of discourse that exploits the temptation of the general population to believe that happiness can be found merely by removing a few prohibitions. The mechanisms of desire end up dispersing movements of revolt and liberation that might otherwise proliferate.

The other concept around which Foucault organized his writings of the 1970's is bio-technico-power or bio-power. (The two concepts, the need to reject the repressive hypothesis and the growth of bio-power, are for him interconnected.) He theorized that bio-power coalesces around two poles: a concern with the human species as a whole, and a concern with the human body as an object to be manipulated. The first has to do with the history of sexuality and its relation to regulatory social controls, and we'll turn to this issue later. The second has to do with what Foucault calls "disciplinary power," whose basic goal is to produce "docile bodies"; this phenomenon is the subject of his book *Discipline and Punish.*

Disciplinary Power

Arguments about the failures of penal institutions have been going on since the advent of the modern prison itself. Foucault's main purpose in *Discipline and Punish* is to show how these alleged failures are actually an inherent part of these institutions in the first place. Prisons have traditionally been known to serve three purposes: to separate dangerous people from the rest of society; to punish them for the crimes they have committed; and to rehabilitate them so they can become productive citizens upon release. Foucault's intention is to demonstrate that prisons were never actually intended to eliminate criminals, but only to define, refine and perpetuate crime. He traced the emergence of Western penal methods to the seventeenth century, when torture of the body gave way to punishment and rehabilitation. These methods of correction, which on the surface appear to be more humane and progressive than the torture they replaced, in his view have actually perpetuated a far-ranging and sophisticated system of repression and behavioral change even more troublesome than what they were trying to cure. The discipline these prisons provide mirrors the society they serve: their regulated routines have continued to spread throughout schools, armies, factories and hospitals, ever since the seventeenth century. The "experts" on normality whose job it is to test, classify, and assess prisoners, epitomize the ways people are controlled and repressed to this day.

Foucault's study of prisons and prison reform follows four rules: (1) punishment needs to be regarded as a complex social function, since it is not merely repressive but has a whole series of positive effects as well; (2) punitive methods need to be studied not simply as consequences of legislation or as indicators of social structures, but as a way of exercising power, for example as a political tactic; (3) the history of penal law and the history of the human sciences need to be recognized as working

together in forming a technology of power; and (4) it is necessary to show how the history of prison reform helped give birth to the idea of man as an object of knowledge for scientific discourse and to the possibility of a political technology of the body.[22] The body thus becomes a political field, invested with relations of power and domination on both sides of the class divide.

Foucault came to believe that the relation between disciplinary control and the creation of docile bodies is key to the rise of capitalism and that the development of these two political technologies preceded economic change. Dreyfus and Rabinow in their book on Foucault note that "without the insertion of disciplined, orderly individuals into the machinery of production, the new demands of capitalism would have been stymied. In a parallel manner, capitalism would have been impossible without the fixation, control, and rational distribution of populations on a large scale."[23] Although these two technologies together certainly did not cause capitalism, they served as preconditions for its success. An important part of Foucault's thesis is his belief that these technological disciplines remained hidden while they spread. This hiddenness is what enabled different theories of discipline to coexist in different settings, such as in factories, schools, universities, and the like. For example, during the eighteenth century, humanist discourse on equality was accompanied by tighter discipline in workshops and by increased police surveillance throughout society.

Foucault explained this seeming inconsistency as marking a change in political philosophy. While traditional political theory (stemming from Aristotle) had focused on how to apply practical reason to the need to change individual character in order to provide the good and just life for everyone, with the advent of modern political thought (beginning with the work of Machiavelli), all metaphysical speculation about the good life was cast aside in favor of the purely practical problem of preserving the leader's power. The freedom and virtue of the citizens were no longer at issue. Foucault noted a third development in political thought, based on the theory of *raison d'etat*. Despite being historically associated with Machiavelli, the authors of this theory were different from him because they were not really concerned with aiding the prince, but with the preservation of the state. They viewed the state as an end in itself. Examining the police and technical manuals of this time, Foucault noticed that they focused on the minutiae of everyday governance. In order to enable the state to rule effectively, the authors of these manuals found it necessary to gather information about the general population which was concrete, specific, and measurable. As Dreyfus and Rabinow note, "The new political rationality of bio-power was therefore connected with the nascent human sciences. What was first a study of population, for instance, soon became political arithmetic."[24] Once again we recognize how the confluence of knowledge and power can have an impact on society and on the different social relations contained within it.

The Panopticon and the Technology of Power

As a concrete physical example of how knowledge and power can be conjoined, Foucault introduced the concept of the Panopticon, first proposed as a design for a model prison by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The Panopticon is an architectural design intended to increase security by facilitating effective surveillance. Imagine a circular building with an observation tower placed in the centre of an open space and surrounded by an outer wall. This wall would contain cells for occupants. Each of these cells are flooded with light, so that their occupants are readily distinguishable and visible to an official, who is invisibly positioned in the central tower. The occupants, on the other hand, would be invisible to each other because of concrete walls dividing their cells. By individualizing and separating the subjects and placing them in a state of constant visibility, the efficiency of the institution is maximized. Even when there is no one actually asserting it, the power of the institution is apparent. "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without being seen."[25] Here is a machine that allows power to express itself automatically, one that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, and difference. It can also be used conveniently for experiments—and any individual can operate it, no matter their purpose or place in life.

The panoptic design can be used for any population that needs to be kept under observation or control, such as prisoners, schoolchildren, medical patients, or workers. Foucault explains its practicality:

> If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time; if they are workers, there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those distractions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents.[26]

Foucault's panopticism thus concerns the systematic ordering and controlling of human populations through subtle and often unseen forces. The disciplinary measures which are its elements make up a tactical strategy of power that operates at the lowest possible economic and political cost, with such intensity and extension that it leads ultimately to these effects becoming evident throughout society.

For Foucault, the nature of the prison (as well as the other institutions that mimic its operational design) should therefore be seen in terms of the social dynamics of the power-relations in the society that produces it. Prisoners and citizens alike need to be recognized as parts of a technological vision that can see

individuals only as means to an end and never as ends in themselves. His remark on the prevalence of prison revolts at the time of his writing (1975) points again to this technology of power:

> In fact, they were revolts, at the level of the body, against the very body of the prison. What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power; it is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the "soul"—that of the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists—fails either to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools.[27]

Foucault again cautioned us that power should not be understood merely as an oppressive system bearing down on individuals from above. Power can also be found in the set of free relations between people. For example, when someone exercises power or influences the other through guidance or leadership, even though the situation requires an unbalanced relationship of power between the participants, it still takes place between two free subjects. From this type of case alone it can be seen that power is not always repressive, and that it is possible to have relations of power that are open as well.

But even if relations of power are not necessarily forms of repression, organizations in most societies are created in order to freeze the relations of power and hold them in a state of asymmetry so that a certain number of persons are able to get an advantage over the others—socially, economically, politically, institutionally, etc. This is a specific type of power relation that has been institutionalized and immobilized to the profit of some and to the detriment of others. All organizations, in Foucault's view, have a marked tendency toward this kind of freezing since it is to the benefit of their leaders to do so. He does suggest certain kinds of actions that can counteract this tendency: refusal, curiosity and innovation.[28] The prison revolts Foucault refers to would of course be an example of refusal; curiosity and innovation would seem to represent the need for thinking differently, which could ultimately lead to the recognition of the need for organized action in an effort to try to change the status quo. In addition, these actions could be initiated either from below or from above.

Foucault also suggested that it is necessary for us to abandon the idea that knowledge is possible only in the absence of power relations, as well as the idea that it can be developed only outside the demands and interests of their reach. On the contrary, he insisted that "we should admit that power produces knowledge."[29] It is not therefore a matter of there being a particular individual who, as a subject of knowledge, is or is not free in relation to the power system. Instead, we should learn to think in terms of how the situation operates as a whole, and learn to see how "the subject who knows, the objects to be known, and the modalities of

knowledge"[30] must all be regarded as mere effects of the historical transformations of power-knowledge. It is not we who produce knowledge but knowledge which produces us—because it determines the forms and possibilities that make up our existence.

Power Relations and the History of Sex

Recalling that for Foucault, bio-power consists of two poles, we now turn to the second of them, concerning the human species as a whole as it appears in the history of sexuality and its relation to regulatory social controls. Foucault's concern is not with sex *per se* but with how sex relates to the analytics of power. He thus examined in his *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* how power operates not through the repression of sex but by the "discursive practice" of creating rules for the control of sexuality and subjects, through power mechanisms which are socially constructed, unstable, and historically situated.

In the essay on himself he wrote for *Dictionnaire des Philosophes,* Foucault explained his project for a history of sexuality in the following way:

> The question of sex and sexuality appeared, in Foucault's view, to constitute not the only possible example, certainly, [of the history of subjectivity] but at least a rather privileged case. Indeed, it was in this connection that through the whole of Christianity, and perhaps beyond, individuals were called on to recognize themselves as subjects of pleasure, of desire, of lust, of temptation, and were urged to deploy, by various means (self-examination, spiritual exercises, admission, confession) the game of true and false in regard to themselves, and what constitutes the most secret, the most individual part of their subjectivity.[31]

Foucault asserted that everything in our knowledge, especially those things which are suggested to us as being universally valid, must be tested and analyzed. He was careful to add that the refusal to abide by universals such as madness, delinquency and sexuality does not imply that what they refer to doesn't actually exist. Instead, he wanted to show us how their content varies with time and circumstance. "It means that one must investigate the conditions that enable people, according to the rules of true and false statements, to recognize a patient as mentally ill or to arrange that a subject recognize the most essential part of himself in the modality of his sexual desire."[32] One must learn to recognize these "truths" as mere historical constructs. (For example, the use of a binary diagnostic system for medical use might be due merely to the need for maximal efficiency via computer applicability.) Here we see Foucault operating in his Kantian critical mode: "One must also reverse the philosophical way of proceeding upward to a constituent subject which is asked to account for every possible object of knowledge in general. On the

contrary, it is a matter of proceeding back down to the study of concrete practices by which the subject is constituted in the immanence of a domain of knowledge."[33] What happens is that the "game of truth" is not just imposed on the subject from the outside but from the inside as well, since both subject and object are both products of the same historical context and constantly modify one another. Foucault suggested that we should also study the power relations that determine the manner in which these individuals are governed by each other in this game. Again, this does not mean that the abuse of this or that power has created madmen, sick people, or criminals out of nothing, but that various particular forms of governing determine the ways subjects are objectified.

Foucault believed that the modern history of sex provides an example of this phenomenon. Increasingly during this time, sex was referred to in mechanistic terms as an activity devoid of reason. Through a series of binary oppositions, body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, and drives/consciousness, the West managed—although not entirely, Foucault points out—"to annex sex to a field of rationality"[34] but also and more importantly "to bring us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire."[35] But, if sex is the explanation for everything, why is it so secret? What is its hidden meaning? Where there is desire, he suggested in response to these questions, the power relation is always present. The technologies of power combine to create conditions that sometimes create repression, and sometimes create positive outcomes. The essential issue however is the fact that there is no escape from these power relations in the first place.

Foucault stated that at the start of the 18th century, a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex emerged, with self-appointed experts speaking moralistically and rationally on the subject and even trying to categorize its various forms. During this era, governments discovered the need to manage their "populations" by compiling data on birth and death rates, on marriage and on contraception, thereby changing the discourse on sexuality. Prior to the 18th century, this discourse had centered on the productive role of the married couple; during the 18th and 19th centuries societies became increasingly interested in sexualities that did not fit into this model, with what they called "perversions" that included the sexuality of children, the mentally ill, the criminal and the homosexual. Foucault remarked that the labeling of perverts conveyed a sense of pleasure and power onto both those studying sexuality and the perverts themselves.

Foucault discovered sexuality to be "a dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young and old, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, and an administration and population."[36] He noted four strategic unities beginning in the 18th century which he said formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex: a hysterization of women's

bodies; a pedagogization of children's sex; a socialization of procreative behavior; and a psychiatrization of perverse behavior. He discovered that four figures emerged from these mechanisms: the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian procreating couple, and the perverse adult. Foucault used this train of evidence to argue that this is how sex became a political issue, revolving around the four figures mentioned above. For Foucault, they lay at the juncture of the "body" and the "population," where "sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death."[37] Foucault reiterated that his purpose with his history of sex is to "show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body,"[38] and to argue that sex is not an autonomous agency that produces sexuality, but an element organized by power in its grip on bodies.

When we learn how the "procreating couple" became labeled as "normal" while the other three became labeled as "abnormal," we begin to recognize how and why defining these terms were prerogatives of power in the 19th century. By linking deformity, delinquency, and sexual deviancy with the three related figures of the human monster, the individual to be corrected, and the onanist, Foucault was able to point to the formation of a technology of abnormal individuals, which was established more than 200 years ago in accordance with the development of a regular and regulating network of power and knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

Foucault's importance as an anti-philosopher revolves around his ethical and socio-political commitment to question "the order of things." His studies gravitate around the many times over history when knowledge was transformed into power and power into knowledge. Throughout his career he maintained his critical focus on the ways institutions produce their own versions of truth—in prisons, hospitals, schools, administrative offices, military bases, asylums, and clinics. He questioned—and ultimately helped to undermine—the authority of medical doctors and psychologists by characterizing it as less a question of knowledge and more a matter of moral authority. Foucault forced us to recognize that any and all serious thinking about social and political issues must take into consideration the complex relationship between knowledge, power and the self.

Reflecting on the reach of the human sciences at the conclusion of his book *The Order of Things,* Foucault asked us to consider the problem, what is the nature of man? He informs us that this issue never existed before the 19th century, because the historical conditions were never appropriate for the formulation of the problem. The scientific study of psychology only emerged, for example, when the needs of industrial society to impose new norms on workers' behavior were

present, while reflections on sociological types only appeared after the French Revolution introduced a desperate need for social equilibrium. The study of man was a similar event in the order of knowledge, said Foucault. It occurred around the same time as the development of the sciences of biology, economics and philology. But the subject of the study of man is different from the subjects of the other sciences, since this subject is both the knower and the known. Since the focus of such study is on man only insofar as he lives, speaks, and produces, then it is on that unique object which is also a subject. Man is also both the subject of history and the product of it. As the sciences of man become more precise, as the languages used to circumscribe his nature become more comprehensive, the invention which is man may be nearing its end, Foucault informed us. If the specific arrangements that were once necessary for the problem to be necessary ever disappeared, "then," in his words, "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."[39]

Foucault once asked, "What is philosophy if not a way of reflecting, not so much on what is true and what is false, as on our relationship to truth? … It should be added" he continued, "that [philosophy] is a way of interrogating ourselves: if this is the relationship we have with truth, how must we behave?"[40] If the question of the nature of human being were ever to disappear, this would not necessarily mean the extinction of mankind, but merely the end of a way of formulating a certain kind of problem. In the absence of the problem, only then would we have the opportunity to learn how to behave differently.

Part II: Deleuze and Guattari

Introduction

What are the pros and cons of classifying and marginalizing certain kinds of experience? What does it mean to measure the behavior of someone? How are we affected when we learn to pay attention to and learn to empathize with how schizophrenics experience the world? How is it possible and why is it necessary to explore empathically their visions and obsessions? Can we extend our understanding past the edges of normalized experience without losing control ourselves? With their efforts to respond to these questions, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari pursue the contemporary problem of how to live otherwise, best approached not by traditional philosophy but by antiphilosophy.

In their book *Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Deleuze and Guattari provide a kind of postmodern work space to consider these questions. The force of their work is directed against what they call "state philosophy," the kind of thinking

which has dominated modern western philosophy by asserting that certain aspects of human experience and behavior can objectively be delineated in a verifiable and reproducible, scientifically valid way. "Understanding" for them is an issue that takes place in the context of the construction of a system of power. For example, when a psychologist operating under the authority of a state institution defines a person's behavior with terms such as "paranoid schizophrenic" or "obsessive compulsive," then the behavior of that person, and sometimes even the whole person, gets placed within a large and complicated system of control. For Deleuze and Guattari such a system needs to be dismantled and not merely "understood."

When we "measure" the behavior of another person, we have already in no uncertain terms gone a long way toward interpreting and understanding that behavior, and that person, in a very narrow way. The scientific poses of objectivity and interactive indifference do additional harm to the subject's self-esteem, by turning him into an object of study whose "illness" can be cured only if he follows his doctor's directions—and stops thinking for himself. When we silence such a person's voice and thoughts, we place institutionally supplied and approved limits of control upon that person's own sense of the world, of his place in it, and of his own sense of selfhood as well. When we place this person within a clinically controlled environment, we make him into a thing—in fact, a thing that we own, control, and are now responsible for.

In contrast to the "measuring" that is an essential part of mainstream psychological practice (with respect especially to its dependency on the DSM guide put out by the APA) are the phenomenological descriptions of the first generation of humanist psychologists, such as Binswanger (about whom Foucault wrote sympathetically in his essay "Dream, Imagination, and Existence") and May. By avoiding judgments that make clear-cut distinctions between normal and abnormal conditions, they lay a foundation for the postmodernists that followed them. In another early work (*Mental Illness and Psychology*) Foucault summarized their task: "The understanding of the sick consciousness and the reconstitution of its pathological world, these are the tasks of a phenomenology of mental illness."[41]

According to Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenics confront aspects of the world that most of us choose not to notice. The overpowering force of these perceptions, however, may also be the source for their lack of control over their obsessive disorders. Paying heed to these perceptions while still acknowledging their obsessive character, Deleuze and Guattari recognize in schizophrenia important insights into the human experience concerning which more effectively normalized people are usually blind. We can further understand their task as being informed by a phenomenologically-based method for approaching mental illness, which they employ in order to explore correlations between noematic conceptualizations

of mental states and the noetic descriptions of the lived experiences of these same states. Turning to the lived experiences of the mentally ill led Foucault to recognize the implications of this turn:

> But here we may have touched on one of the paradoxes of mental illness that demand new forms of analysis: if this subjectivity of the insane is both a call to and an abandonment of the world, is it not of the world itself that we should ask the secret of its enigmatic status? Is there not in mental illness a whole nucleus of significations that belongs to the domain in which it appeared—and, to begin with, the simple fact that it is circumscribed as an illness?[42]

Foucault's concern, shared by Deleuze and Guattari, is that modern medicine is too quick to label various behaviors as abnormal or as mentally ill without sufficient description of their nuances, or as lived experiences. One especially noteworthy aspect of this experience that is overlooked is the recognition that such behaviors are often merely coping strategies in response to a world filled with contradictions and manipulations.

Nomad Thought

But what are the implications of this alternative? How would a practitioner of "nomad thought," for example, approach the classification of human beings? "Nomad thought" is Deleuze and Guattari's term for their style of philosophical thinking, referring to their refusal to settle down in one place to one set of consistent ideas—a style which instead looks to create fields of force wherein old habits of thinking and living break down in favor of new combinations and connections. In avoiding the temptation of reaching final definitions, the practitioner of nomad thought would be careful to recognize the possibility of, and attempt to continue the discovery of, new and different ways of perceiving a specific individual. The subjective experience and goal orientation of a person would always be taken as an essential part of that person's ever-emerging picture. Clarity of insight would be constantly subject to critical doubt. It is in this regard that Foucault, in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, calls nomad thought an "Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life," a work whose enemy is "the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us."[43] Critically aware of their revolutionary status, and of the need for many of their readers to discover a new system of ready-mades for their entertainment, the force of Deleuze and Guattari's work together has little end in sight other than to promote an awareness about the kinds of power existing in our societies and in our minds that threaten to control us. Their strategy,

then, is not to find new "answers"—which would necessarily involve developing new systems of power—but to exemplify strategies of thinking and of living that are constantly vigilant against the abuses of power. In this regard, they outline five strategies that they believe can help bring forth the possibility of "becoming other," their term for the mode of desire that is free from societal constraints. They include: (1) Stop the world; (2) Cherish derelict spaces; (3) Study camouflage; (4) Sidle and straddle; (5) Come out.[44] Such strategies would seem necessary to any attempt to "live off the grid" and disconnect from the capitalist system that creates "desiring machines."

The Breakdown of Selfhood into the Pieces of the Desiring Machine

In the first chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the theoretical framework that explains the need for "becoming other." They suggest that Freud's idea of "the" id was a mistake. By saying that there should be no "the" in front of the concept "id," and consequently that there is no singular, unifiable thing that we refer to as an identity, they imply that we are merely made up of different kinds of wants and needs, and that we are nothing more than the buttons that society creates, selects, and pushes. Or, as they put it in a later chapter: "to code desire … is the business of the socius."[45] From the subjective side, they view desire as a free-flowing physical energy that establishes random, fragmented, and multiple connections. They consequently conceive of modern human beings, both subjectively and socially, as "desiring machines," which function only through the establishment of these connections. There is, moreover, no objective side to the equation. When Deleuze and Guattari characterize desire as a kind of energy flux, they place the whole of human experience within a monist orientation, and thus avoid such modernist dualisms as subjective/objective and reality/fantasy. Because desire both creates all social and historical reality and is at the same time part of the social infrastructure, dualistic habits of thinking and perceiving fail to reflect its containing force.

The Schizophrenic Model

When Deleuze and Guattari come up with the idea that "a schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch,"[46] the immediate question arises: what kind of model is this? Neurosis theory is based on the idea that our ideal self (who we'd like to be) dominates our realized self (what we actually act like) to the extent that we continuously experience this difference between the two as an essential part of our personhood. If we fail to confront this difference, the theory goes, our resulting anxiety can even lead to various forms of repression. Deleuze and Guattari ask the question, for what reason and for what

benefit do we experience this difference? The concept of difference carries with it the connotation of frustration, because, when it is seen in relation to its counterpart of identity, it indicates a failure to complete the process of assimilation or individuation. For Deleuze and Guattari, however, identity is never fully realizable. In fact, difference without identity is a major goal of "nomad thought." "Molar" identities, because they are indivisible, are controllable—while the infinitely divisible "molecular" desiring machines are not.

In this regard, when Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we will benefit from the replacement of the normative idea of "neurosis" (the belief that we're all basically neurotic) with the paradigmatic model of "the schizophrenic process," they are noting their preference for the decentering of schizophrenics that proceeds to the point of breakthrough, but not to the point of breakdown.[47] Their schizophrenic model, furthermore, should not be perceived as a goal or even as a positive model for identity but rather as a recognition that as a model for identity, it is better able to guard against the residual effects of modernization and capitalism.

Schizophrenics seem to experience an alteration at the level of human consciousness which forms the bedrock for any sense of stability, so that commonly held cognitive forms of space, time, causality, and human identity collapse before their eyes. (Compare the discussion concerning "oscillations," below.) They may feel that they do not inhabit or control their own consciousness. Nevertheless, in the view of Deleuze and Guattari, we cannot afford to disconnect ourselves completely from their experience. Nor can we help but be reminded of the paintings of such modem masters as Van Gogh, Munch, and Goya. Are their visions simply the representation of private madness? What has happened to our world that we are able to experience a fascination with and even perceive a kinship to such horrifying states of mind? With our postmodern sensibility we seem to have experienced a further breakdown, because our trust in naive experience has been replaced by the schizoidal paralysis of hyperconsciousness. The idea that too much consciousness might itself be a thoroughgoing illness, although common enough, has had little impact on the understanding of psychoses for the past two centuries, however. If madness is seen as a heightening, rather than a dimming, of conscious awareness, and further, if it is seen as a disconnection from emotions, instincts, and the body rather than from reason, then it will be necessary to develop new metaphors for this kind of mental illness, other than the traditional ones of dementia and the sleep of reason.

Metaphor and Metonymy

The attachment of postmodern theorists to schizophrenia as a significant subject for philosophical investigation can be traced to the influence of Roman Jakobson's article "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia". This article

was especially important to Jacques Lacan, for his reading of it enabled him to develop further his hypothesis of an unconscious structured by language, and of an ego subordinate to it. This subordination, in turn, helped him to define the ego as resembling Jakobson's "shifter," the latter's term for a grammatical unit whose meaning is referentially dependent on the message. The shifter thus designates the subject without signifying it. The breakdown, decentering, or even disappearance of identity is a key postmodern theme from Foucault onward.

In this work, Jakobson distinguished between two basic semantic lines of communicative language, namely metaphor and metonymy, and between their corresponding types of aphasic disorders, namely contiguity disorder and similarity disorder, respectively. Because metaphors illuminate one part of experience by another and connect dissimilars through analogy, they also provide intellectual meaning to our experience and can be seen to dominate modernist modes of thought. A person with a contiguity disorder based on metaphor confusion would have trouble with grammatical rules and with syntax, and would express himself through a jumble of words resulting in a chaotic word heap. An example can be found within Freud's theory of dreams, which he called "the royal road to the unconscious." He believed that elements from this unconscious realm could be discovered through the dream work interpretation process. Once these repressed memories and feelings hidden in the unconscious are exposed, they are presented by the subject in a grammatically unclear, "chaotic" way, as the latent content of the dream. Once they are decoded, however, and the dream's manifest content unveiled, they can be rendered powerless. The resultant neuroses can then be cured—at least in theory. Metonymy, on the other hand, evokes the whole by way of a connection, such as perceiving the cause from its effect, or thinking that one knows a person from seeing the house in which he lives. A person with a similarity disorder based on metonymy confusion would have trouble with the context of a message. He would be able to grasp literal but not figurative meanings, would not be able to give an account of whatever he was doing at a given moment, and would not know how to make a normal distinction between what is essential and unessential in a given situation. He would also show an inability to transfer his thinking from one level of abstraction to another.[48]

Double Bind Theory

Gregory Bateson's "double bind" theory is intended to explain this inability, while also providing an explanation for the genesis of schizophrenia. Double bind situations occur when a person encounters difficulty resolving self-contradictory directions, such as "do not follow this order," or "do not read this sentence." We might,

as an additional example, hypothesize parents who say to their child, "always tell us the truth," and then whenever the child after doing something wrong does this, the child gets severely punished anyway. The child would perceive this as a no-win, or double bind situation, unless the meta-message of the parents was also clearly understood: "Don't get into trouble in the first place." The potential recognition of a meta-message is, for Bateson, a way out of the difficulty. "The organism," he explains, "will 'climb' to a higher logical type of adaptation which will provide an economy—a saving—of flexibility."[49] He goes on to say that the problem is one of transcendence. If the organism can go through the pain over and over again, then that's a kind of solution in itself. Or it can transcend (like through humor or art) the double bind situation—for another solution. Bateson further asserts that two kinds of logic can be applied to a double bind situation. He first gives his own example for such a situation: "If this message is true, then it's untrue. If it's untrue, then it's true." He then provides the following explanation: "There's no contradiction if the word 'then' contains time. The contradiction exists only in a timeless logic. If you're in a causal system where the then is causal, then you oscillate"[50]

To illustrate the concept of oscillation (which he found in Norbert Wiener's work) he tells the story of being in New Guinea and trying to stand in a wobbly canoe (since, as a male, it was his assigned role to stand and paddle and not to sit). This made him experience the feeling of being "prone to oscillation which may be excessive and disrupt the system called 'man's-standing-in-canoe.'"[51] Whenever the canoe wobbled he would fall into the water. He had to learn that falling in the water didn't matter. But more importantly he had to learn not to be afraid of the oscillation. "And the way to convince myself that I could control the oscillation was to cause it. If I made the canoe wobble with my feet, the wobbling caused by me was controllable and not frightening. There's a mine of psychotherapy in that parable."[52] With this discussion Bateson exemplifies the modernist belief that control over key aspects of our social environment is possible (and that it is even of fundamental importance for therapy). What is central to schizophrenia theory, however, is his application of Wiener's idea of a cybernetic feed-back system of uncontrollable oscillating perceptions of difference, to the pathological condition of obsessive disorder. (Wiener gives the example of a patient trying to pick up a pencil, constantly overshooting the mark, and going into uncontrollable oscillation; he coined his term "cybernetics" to refer to the need for a governor, or steersrnan of such a feedback system.)[53] In other words, schizophrenics suffer from an inability to gain control over their oscillating perceptions concerning their environment. Their fearfulness of being out of control in the first place will often be the first obstacle to regaining other kinds of control.

Jean Baudrillard, in his essay "The Masses," also addresses the issue of the double bind experience when he refers to the masses' relation to the media by this same term. He refers first to the double bind relation of children to the demands of the adult world: "They are at the same time told to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects, responsible, free and conscious, and to constitute themselves as submissive objects, inert, obedient, and conformist."[54] Whenever they are expected to be and to act one way, their reaction will be to act just the opposite. He compares this reaction to their resistance to what goes on in the relation between the masses and the media that represents them, wherein "only the practices of liberation, of emancipation, of expression, of self-constitution as a political subject are considered worthwhile and subversive. This is to take no account of the equal and probably superior impact of all the practices of the object, the renunciation of the position of subject and of meaning—exactly the practices of the mass—which we bury with the disdainful terms alienation and passivity."[55] His point is that discourse concerning the liberation of the subject is no longer effective within postmodern society. Such a strategy merely enters into a game whose rules are set up by the pervasiveness and needs of commodity culture. It also gives the subject more information about itself and what it needs than it could ever want or fulfill.

For Baudrillard, no rational response is possible, since we have already been seduced by the capitalist system into mistakenly believing that the possibility of limitless information consumption can provide us with some gain in control over our environment. Since we no longer have even the possibility of creating our own reality, now completely media-based, this privileged position has given way to the "hyperreality" of the world of objects. Systems of power and control all around, the masses' schizophrenic reaction of alienation and paralysis, Baudrillard ironically theorizes, may be its only way out of this double bind. He ultimately concludes that no real way out of the double bind situation is available, and the hyperreality of everyday life becomes simply another source for schizoidal frustration and alienation.

Another example of how a metonymical restructuring of language can lead to a similarity disorder resulting in a kind of double bind experience may be enlightening. The concern will be with how women's "needs" in our society are manufactured in part by the producers of certain magazine advertisements. Take the example, from several years ago when smoking was more common in our society, of the plethora of ads for Virginia Slims cigarettes. Physically, the cigarettes were longer and slimmer than other brands, subtly suggesting that the women who smoked them would also look taller and slimmer through their use, and even further hinting that smoking could help a woman to lose weight, and to look more elegant. (That it would also be detrimental to her health in many ways was

completely ignored by the spirit of the ads. Although by law, information about the health risks of smoking had to be included, this information was framed—and thus rendered extraneous and impotent. It was then placed outside the center of the ad so as not to interfere with its overall message.) Moreover, the common theme of these ads over the years had been that in earlier times (usually back to the early parts of the twentieth century) women had fewer rights than they have now, and less social prestige as individuals. They had to ask their husbands or male bosses for permission to smoke cigarettes that were never intended for them in the first place, and if this permission was not forthcoming, they had to sneak away to smoke in peace. Now, with their newfound "freedom," they have gained the right to smoke what they want, along with the right to do so whenever and wherever they pleased (which of course with recent laws about smoking in public places is no longer possible either). Smoking (which in reality is clearly an example of physical dependency even to the point of slavery) was equated by these ads to freedom. Linguistically, the signifier/signified relation of meaning construction was elided metonymically, since in place of the causal relation of smoking = slavery, we found smoking = freedom. (The resultant double bind here was this: smoke and become a slave to its demands, or don't smoke and remain a slave to conformity.) It is also important to note that advertisements seldom present opportunities for rational dialogue but instead are attempts to frame information in such a way as to control how the information is taken in by the potential consumer.

When Deleuze and Guattari go so far as to call their work "schizo-analysis," they seem to believe that it is more enlightening in our postmodern condition to recognize ourselves to be schizoidal—doubled over in contradictory behavior—than it is to look for, and attempt to resolve, our neurotic symptoms. We will avoid the wastage of guilt feelings because of some perceived lack in ourselves, and will no longer discover the need to adhere to some sense of a "better" self that will always be just out of reach, never actually attainable. In their view, the "Oedipus" concept of Freud presupposes repression, including the repression of the desiring machine. For Freud, the child becomes a man when he resolves his Oedipal complex and enters the world of society—only to rediscover the same problem again under the name of Authority. "In short," Deleuze and Guattari argue, "the 'double bind' is none other than the whole of Oedipus."[56] "In any case, the double bind is not the schizophrenic process; on the contrary, the double bind is Oedipus insofar as it arrests the motion of the process or forces it to spin around in the void."[57]

A Libidinal Economy of Desire

The schizophrenic model of Deleuze and Guattari replaces repression with a "libidinal" economy (referring to the Balinese social relations that Bateson contrasts

with western "orgasmic" ones) which is concerned with relations of exchange (of thoughts, feelings, sex) more than with the finalized ownership of things. Produced by the desiring machine when it is relieved of its repressions, this libidinal economy of desire would, contrary to neurosis theory, never seek completion nor expect complete understanding, but would rather be on the edge and within the present. A libidinal economy does not expend itself completely, but continues to gather force.

Moreover, a libidinal economy would consist in the tribal exchange of gifts and not in the exchange of mere commodities as it does in capitalist economies, The difference between the two kinds of exchanges consists in the fact that in the tribal sense a gift should be kept in motion, while a commodity is something to be owned and controlled. Lewis Hyde refers to this theme in his work *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, when he writes that "Unlike the sale of a commodity, the giving of a gift tends to establish a relationship between the parties involved."[58] He goes on to distinguish gift exchange as an "erotic" commerce, from commodity exchange which is part of the profit orientation of a market economy. He characterizes this distinction through the opposition of "eros" (the principle of attraction, union, involvement which binds together) from "logos" (the principle of differentiation, of reason, and of logic in general).

Hyde's description of the ethics of tribal gift-giving (in addition to its connection with schizo-analysis) might do well as an alternate model to the sort of cultural interaction that proceeds on the "reasonable" premise that western economic investment in the third world modernization process gives itself the right, and even the responsibility, to include and insist on certain moral conditions as part of the investment package. When, for example, the World Bank or the I.M.F. lends money to a third world country, conditions attached to the loan inevitably dictate how the money should be spent. To protect their investments, these lending institutions define the terms of the risks they are willing to take. Moreover, the proponents of alternative, open-ended economic policies will forever have trouble identifying how a wide distribution of wealth, including goods and services, can take place, if representatives of these societies come only from their wealthiest classes. Even an extensive educational program will solve nothing if it merely perpetuates the values of dominant cultures. A value-free education that taught skills which could be passed on to others to their further advantage, such as reading and writing and repairing, would be the only kind of education that could offer a truly "erotic" gift, and thus escape the dangers of seduction and exploitation.

Rhizomes and Plateaus

A libidinal economy might choose to set down new roots as part of its relationship with others—roots that are sustainable only through care and trust. This

reference to "roots" also calls forth Deleuze and Guattari's introductory chapter to *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) [1980], the second volume of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The chapter is entitled "rhizomes" and this word is intended to refer to the way a tree's roots and branches will set off in unpredictable directions, establishing connections to different sources of nourishment, or "plateaus," in the process. "Plateaus" revert back to a word first used in this sense by Bateson in his article on the Balinese ethos: "It is possible that some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for climax as the child becomes more fully adjusted to Balinese life … (T)here are [also] indications that a plateau type of sequence is characteristic for trance and for quarrels."[59] Bateson was fascinated by the idea that the Balinese are not "schismogenic": that is, they don't set up vicious circles for themselves in their social relations with one another (double binds) but develop instead a "steady state" mechanism "maintained by continual nonprogressive change"[60] which works in part because Balinese children at an impressionable age are taught that the balance of the social system holds more importance than the interests of the individual—and they learn to avoid competitive behavior as a result. Quarrels are dealt with not by final resolution but by formal recognition of the quarrel. Since no attempt is made to influence the antagonists away from hostility and toward friendship, we seem to find the substitution of a plateau for a climax.[61]

Deemed important enough by them to be used in the title of the second volume of their work, plateaus for Deleuze and Guattari are made up of the realizations of rhizomes. Plateaus are forever in progress, connecting and developing but never finalizing nor conceptualizing. They establish a logic of the And, of conjunction, rather than of conceptual specification. They locate a middle that is not an average, but a place where things pick up speed. Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to create and to discover these plateaus (and the rhizomes which are their source) with their work. They also think of them as outgrowths of their different lines of investigation, that have no beginning nor end in themselves but have and maintain connections (transformational multiplicities) with each other and with other things as well, though not necessarily to things of the same nature. *A Thousand Plateaus* is a crazy quilt of a book that speaks of many things, of sorcerers and black holes, of fuzzy sets and noology—and "of cabbages and kings." The reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is not accidental; Deleuze devoted an entire book, his *Logic of Sense*, to the kinds of logic that appear in Lewis Carroll's work, in search of the place where sense and nonsense collide. This is not only the world of the schizophrenic, whose connecting threads to the world outside have broken, but may also be the radically different world of the primitive, whose magical conception of religious force operates counter to the one-track thinking and doing of the modem world.

Deleuze calls his view of philosophy "pragmatics" because, in Massumi's words, "its goal is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that you either enter or you don't, but instead pack a potential in the way that a crowbar in a willing hand develops an energy of prying … The question is not, Is it true? But, Does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perception does it open in the body?"[62]

Decentering Strategies

Within this logic there is no center. This means there is no God, no Truth, no final sense of clarity and understanding. Instead of searchers after truth, antiphilosophers are exploders of ideas. They "deconstruct" texts in order to discover what is unthought about them. They explore beyond the discourse of common sense and of accepted truth in order to open up bridges across perspectives and insights. They refuse to accede to the status quo of shutting things down through conceptual specification. For example, in a section on Freud's Wolf-man text in their chapter on rhizomes, Deleuze and Guattari show how Freud's tendency to reduce multiplicities to a conceptual clarity flattens everything. The multiplicity of selves whom we recognize under a single name is in Freud's work reduced to a single self, and thus virtually silenced. Wolves live in packs, but Freud, in isolating the Wolf-man, misses both his message and his voice.

The "self," contrary to Freud's view, is not simply a given thing, but something that we construct for ourselves, with the reinforcement of the culture within which we are born and raised. It is not a constant, stable entity. It is simply something one becomes, during the act of construction. "Becoming," in fact, for Deleuze and Guattari is a way of life that is very desirable, for it is neither here nor there, and contains within it the force ofinfinite possibilities. The origins for this idea may lie in Nietzsche's writing: "Becoming," Nietzsche writes in his notes which were later published under the title *The Will to Power*, "must be explained without recourse to final intentions … Becoming does not aim at a final state, does not flow into 'being.'"[63] Alexander Nehemas, in his work *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, suggests that for Nietzsche, the whole question of subjectivity, of having a self in the first place, became problematic. Nietzsche, he believes, had intentionally made an artwork of himself, "a literary character who is also a philosopher."[64]

The self may be nothing more than the sum of its effects on others. These effects might have no single or simple cause (or self), but are simply distinct examples of consciousness grouped together in various ways. Selfhood is, then, a kind of fiction which we create in order to make sense of our consciousness, which in

turn is nothing in itself other than its relatedness to what is external to it—echoing Husserl, who maintained that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. These connections, moreover, are grouped according to numerous kinds of order, or sense (such as internal/external, or real/nonreal), that get constructed under the influence of moods, defined as specific degrees of being in or out of tune with one's environment at any given time. Only by being "out of tune," though, will we ever be able to get a handle on the cultural mechanisms that surround us. If we continue to act in ways that seem "reasonable" to us, however, we will remain blind to other ways of thinking and of living. We will also remain vulnerable as prey to the many exploitative interests that surround us.

Reaching Schizoidal Otherness

This "reasonableness" will also forever prevent us from seeing the reality of another person's different cultural (or psychological) experience. To resolve the problem is especially difficult, however, since all we have to work with are the tools from our own language, which lock us into a zone of interiority, with walls of power and control all around.

For Richard Schweder, author of *Thinking Through Culture*, it is only through our ability to be "astonished" by certain experiences that we will be able to avoid the "us versus them" dualisms commonly associated with cultural studies. "Whatever the perils of experience, to recognize a true object of astonishment you must look at it, and be curious about its peculiarities, so as to see."[65] Schweder gives the example of the world of the obsessive compulsive (as encountered by Von Gebsattel, whose work appears in May's *Existence* anthology) as one that can be understood effectively only within the framework of the affect of astonishment. Here we see what it is like to live with ontological terror. This is a world, says Schweder,

> … symbolized by dirt, symbolized by every conceivable danger, symbolized by a myriad of radical philosophical doubts: doubts about the trustworthiness of subjective experience, doubts about the precise and unambiguous meaning of words, doubts about one's control over the rarifying consequences of one's actions, doubts about the possibility of enchantment in the material world … The counterworld of obsessive-compulsive patients is an anxious world … (within) which we may encounter fellow human beings so captivated by the ideal of logical analysis that they cannot read, because every word must be divided up into its component letters, or so uncomfortable with embodiment that they are perpetually disgusted and immobilized by their own body odor and can never cleanse themselves quite enough; or so doubtful of their own senses and experiences that they keep checking incessantly to make sure they have locked the door, ever tormented by the method of erasure and the Cartesian insight that their memory of having locked the door could, in principle, be an illusion.[66]

Although we must be careful to recognize that schizophrenia is not a desirable state of mind or body for anyone to inhabit, Deleuze and Guattari seem to respect the schizophrenic for his honesty, and for his endless desire to push through the boundaries that determine and define him—like for example, the concept of ego:

> The ego, however, is like daddy-mommy: the schizo has long since ceased to believe in it. He is somewhere else, beyond or below these problems, rather than immersed in them … There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word "I," and we must restore his ability to pronounce this hallowed word. All of which the schizo sums up by saying: they're fucking me over again. "I won't say 'I' anymore, I'll never utter the word again; it's just too damn stupid. Every time I hear it, I'll use the third person instead, if I happen to remember to. If it amuses them. And it won't make a bit of difference."[67]

We recall that Freud's therapeutic focus was primarily on the ego, on the part of the self that constructs whatever order it can find onto the id, which constantly threatens with its chaotic demands and drives to blow the whole thing apart. He believed that the ego is the central part of the individual, and that it develops from the existing social order. Constraint, repression, and renunciation (which are the work of the social order on the self) are consequently the stuff from which Freud's idea of a "free personality" was made. He believed that this deep programming defines us, even to the extent that our designs for a new society are determined by these limits. Since a key strategy in their work is distancing themselves from Freud's influence, it should not be surprising to discover Deleuze and Guattari noting that "Freud doesn't like schizophrenics. He doesn't like their resistance to being oedipalized, and tends to treat them more or less as animals. They mistake words for things, he says. They are apathetic, narcissistic, cut off from reality, incapable of achieving transference, they resemble philosophers—an undesirable resemblance."[68]

Deleuze and Guattari's replacement of Freud's commitment to the repression of desires with the schizoidal philosopher's embracing of them enables them to explain what the social world is up to when it codes desires according to its own interests. They argue that in order to overcome this kind of social control, a person will have to become a "body without organs," since it is through these organs that the individual is externally programmed. When the schizophrenic deliberately scrambles all the codes, he becomes a body without organs, whose goal is to become "difference without identity":

> Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and larynx, head and legs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly? … Where psychoanalysis

says, "Stop, find your self again,'" we should say instead, "Let's go further still, we haven't found our BwO yet, we haven't sufficiently dismantled our self."[69]

Concluding Remarks

The space opened up to schizoidal thought is created by something akin to the schizophrenic process. We are obliged to break down what is commonly accepted as normal and unremarkable, in order to look beyond the curtain and see which strings are being pulled. When things make sense, that's when we are really most in the dark. It's only at the place where sense and nonsense collide that we find ourselves able to discover those unnamable experiences that provide us with clues about the mechanisms of our culture. The postmodern plea for a schizophrenic dissolution of the self should be understood as an attempt to escape from the domination of what Foucault called the controlling "modes of discourse" that largely define modem society.

There are so many things here that we are blind to or take for granted. It is only when the "desiring machine" stops working effectively that we find ourselves able to observe human behavior "with astonishment"—without blinders on. As long as we censure, or objectify, or split off from ourselves the various kinds of othemess we encounter along the way, we will remain mired in our own biases, unable to recognize or change those aspects of our society—including what we find in ourselves—that threaten to overwhelm us.

The best a philosopher (or antiphilosopher) can do is to create new concepts for people to work with, in order to gain more control over their lives. Deleuze and Guattari's main concepts, which include such new or borrowed ideas as desiring machines, body without organs, plateaus, schizoanalysis, libidinal economy, rhizomes, becomings, and territories, are all intended to provide people with a toolbox from which they can choose what they need. With these tools they can construct work spaces for themselves, where new possibilities for living are there to be discovered.

Notes

1. Foucault, writing under the pseudonym Maurice Florence for an entry on himself in the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*; in *French Philosophy Since 1945: Problems, Concepts, Inventions*, p. 241.
2. ibid., p. 241.
3. Foucault, *The Order of Things,* p. 312.
4. Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* "Cogito and the History of Madness," pp. 31–63.

5. Foucault, *History of Madness,* appendix iii "Reply to Derrida" pp. 577–578.
6. ibid., p. xxxiii.
7. ibid., pp. 6–7.
8. Foucault, *The Order of Things,* p. 305.
9. Foucault, "Society Must be Defended," p. 265.
10. ibid., p. 7.
11. ibid., p. 7.
12. ibid., p. 8.
13. ibid., p. 9.
14. ibid., p. 9.
15. ibid., pp. 10–11.
16. ibid., p. 15.
17. ibid., p. 38.
18. ibid., p. 39.
19. ibid., p. 40.
20. Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* p. 128.
21. Foucault, ibid., p. 41.
22. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 23–24.
23. Dreyfus and Rabinow, ibid., p. 135.
24. ibid., p 137.
25. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* pp. 201–202.
26. ibid., pp. 200–201.
27. ibid., p. 30.
28. See Bess, "An Interview with Michel Foucault".
29. Foucault, ibid., p. 27.
30. ibid., pp. 27–28.
31. Florence, M., "Foucault," ibid., p. 243.
32. ibid., p. 243.
33. ibid., pp. 243–244.
34. Foucault, *History of Sexuality vol. I,* p. 78.
35. ibid., p. 78.
36. ibid., p. 103.
37. ibid., p. 147.
38. ibid., p. 151.
39. Foucault. *The Order of Things*, p. 387.
40. Foucaut, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, p. 330.
41. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* p. 46.
42. Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, p. 56.
43. in Deleuze and Guattari, ibid., p. xiii.
44. Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* pp. 103–106.
45. Deleuze and Guattari, ibid., p. 139.
46. ibid., p. 2.
47. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 278.
48. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" in Jakobson, *Language in Literature,* pp. 109–111.

49. Bateson, "Addendum I: Bateson Workshop." In M.M. Berger, ed., Beyond the Double Bind: Communication and Family Systems, Theories and Techniques with Schizophrenics, p. 61.
50. Bateson, "The Birth of a Matrix or Double Bind and Epistemology." In M.M. Berger, ed., Beyond the Double Bind: Communication and Family Systems, Theories, and Techniques with Schizophrenics, p. 226.
51. ibid., p. 228.
52. ibid., pp. 228–229.
53. Wiener, C*ybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine (2nd ed.),* pp. 7–8 and 11–12.
54. Baudrillard, "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media." In Poster, M., ed. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* p. 218.
55. ibid., p. 218.
56. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* p. 80.
57. ibid., p. 110.
58. Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, p. xiv.
59. Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* p. 113.
60. ibid., p. 125.
61. See Bateson, 1972, p. 113.
62. Massumi, ibid., p. 8.
63. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 377.
64. Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 8.
65. Schweder, *Thinking Through Culture*, p. 13.
66. ibid., p. 17.
67. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 23. Their quotation is from Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable.*
68. ibid., p. 23.
69. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 1987, pp. 150–151.

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Conclusion: Philosophy at the Boundaries of Thought

Certain philosophical issues persist at the boundaries of thought. They have to do with the limits of language. Since not everything we experience can be placed neatly into the ordered categories of rationality, we need to find ways to transcend this order. Examples of these boundaries include the following relations: self and other; language and silence; sanity and insanity; sickness and health; right and wrong; male and female. With our focus on postmodern antiphilosophy in the present work we have uncovered a variety of responses to modernism, the dominant philosophical orientation of the past 400 years. Modernism is understood to embrace the twin ideals of mathematical precision and systematic inclusiveness. From both rationalist and empiricist perspectives, modern philosophers have believed that the universe is essentially rational and this means in their view that a science of society is not only possible but realizable and desirable. The postmodern antiphilosophers react strongly against this belief, however. They insist that systematic thinking and social engineering can never be adequate guides for a meaningful life, which they believe is not merely a mystery to be solved but something to be embraced and experienced as richly and as freely as possible.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

In this regard, Kierkegaard turned to the idea of the Single One, the person who stands out from the masses, who has the courage and feels the desperation to dare to "leap" out of his or her humdrum and stereotypical life and into the rarified air of a higher dimension of experience. Whether this leap of faith is taken from a state of aesthetic boredom or from a state of ethical emptiness, in either case Kierkegaard applauded the individual drive to overcome social conformity. In his view, one could never be personally fulfilled merely by following rules. Similarly, Nietzsche believed that modernism had brought with it the "death of God," and in the wake of this loss people needed to find a way to respond to the resultant threat of nihilism. Although Nietzsche's philosophy was atheistic while Kierkegaard's was Christian, they both emphasized the importance of self-transcendence: Kierkegaard's Single One could only be a true Christian through an irrational leap of faith, while Nietzsche's Overman needed to learn to act like an artist and create new rules on how to act in a world whose moral center would keep shifting "beyond good and evil." Moreover, these rules would have to be liberating rather than controlling, encouraging of self-overcoming rather than demanding of conformity—at least for those who have the will and the fortitude to be the leaders of this new society and not its followers, to be its masters rather than its slaves. Kierkegaard's Single One would similarly avoid the leveling process demanded by modern society. While Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were certainly elitists, together they provided a wake-up call for philosophical inquiry by announcing the end of the era of grand narratives.

Husserl and Freud

Following Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Husserl and Freud felt the need to rescue science from its dehumanizing tendencies. Husserl accomplished this by emphasizing the human element in all scientific inquiry. He not only insisted that science could never entirely remove the human perspective, he went so far as maintaining that all rigorous scientific work was grounded in the inner time-consciousness of the individual. Science in his view could never reach its ideal of abstract truth nor should it ever wish to do so in the first place; instead it should embrace its true nature by locating its foundation in the practice of the human-centered reasoning process. Phenomenological inquiry, he insisted, should alway be qualitative and never merely quantitative; furthermore, it should be focused on the exploration of meaning and not on mere facts, and committed to furthering description over mere explanation. In a similar spirit, Freud turned away from the dehumanizing tendency of the common psychiatric practice of his day to label mentally ill

patients as incurables who were somehow less than human. He preferred instead to see the variety of human behavior as a continuum, viewing all individuals in terms of their variable abilities to control their irrational impulses. He learned to characterize their behavior as goal-directed, and developed his theory that the human personality was based on the way it responded to the various psychosexual stages that he believed were common to everybody. Freud's dynamic perspective on human personality development was both transformative and liberating. Furthermore, after the importance of Husserl's legacy became established, the phenomenological orientation of Freud's work emerged as one of its most salient features.

Wittgenstein and Heidegger

Wittgenstein and Heidegger turned their attention to the way humans use language. They each discovered that if language usage was restricted to merely picturing or mirroring the world in a idealist and static form of correspondence, this would lead to serious problems at the boundaries of language, where it touched up against silence and against the tension between showing and saying. They were also concerned with the possibility that significant aspects or dimensions of human experience could very well disappear if language were allowed to function in this restrictive way. While Wittgenstein during the early part of his career developed his theory of a perfect language, even then he was aware of the fact that at the boundaries of language, the integrity of such a system would collapse since nothing of true significance could be expressed within it. In the later stage of his career, he came up with the idea of the "language game" to indicate the complex fluidity of everyday language usage in a more realistic way. When he ultimately realized that there are different levels of knowing and different levels of certainty, he challenged even further the complacent idealism of traditional philosophical views about truth and knowledge. Similarly, Heidegger believed that we had become complacent about the "essence of man," and that in doing so we had lost sight of the human being as moral agent, and with our "one-track thinking" we had turned one another into objects for our convenience and profit. His concern with the dehumanizing tendency of modern technology led him to introduce a new non-objective way of referring to human experience, namely his term "Dasein" or "being there," with which he emphasized the subjective and situated sense of human existence instead.

Benjamin and Horkheimer/Adorno

With Benjamin and Horkheimer/Adorno, postmodern antiphilosophers widened their scope and moved into the realms of history and political theory. Benjamin

turned his attention to the smallest and most transitory of items, looking for the secret meaning of things in the correspondence between small objects and large ideas. Accordingly, he found the grand Arcades of Europe to provide a prehistory of commodity fetishism, with their great displays of objects from pervious centuries for sale. Relations between industry and technology and between workers and owners became visible to him as lying beneath the surface of this material world. With his examination of it, he showed how the traditional belief in the myth of progress could be contrasted with the modernist view that once perfection was reached, the belief in progress wasn't needed anymore. Horkheimer and Adorno also focused on the mythologies of modernism, focusing on the issue of how progress in modern science, medicine, and technology had not brought the universal benefits it was supposed to. In order to combat what they viewed as the totalizing aspect of modernist reasoning, they made sure that their own critical approach to the history of social domination was anti-dogmatic and anti-systematic. They noted how twentieth century modernism had introduced its rationale for the existence of both fascism and concentration camps, thus demonstrating how the use of reason had itself become unreasonable. Like Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno chose to focus on the culture industry as a major source for such dangerous visions, with its production of carefully constructed social values that maintained the status quo of traditional class and other social divisions behind the veneer of sheer entertainment.

Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty

Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty continued the antiphilosophical critique of the modernist belief in the authority of one-dimensional reason. Bachelard, recognizing the epistemological implications of the new physics, turned away from traditional Cartesian notions of a static universe in favor of the more complex and open-ended character of the non-Euclidean and post-Newtonian "surrational" view. Merleau-Ponty turned against Cartesian thought as well with his notion of the *incarnate cogito,* which located the body as the primary source of knowledge rather than the mind. This led to his model of the "reflexive connection" between the human body and the world, where we touch the world while at the same time it touches us, thus resolving the problem of how to connect mind and body within the Cartesian modernist view. The ecological implications of Merleau-Ponty's conception here are also important, because once objective space is re-conceived as lived space, our connected relationship to the world that sustains us moves from the periphery of our awareness to the center, from where it subsequently appears as essential.

Levinas and Derrida

Levinas and Derrida completely disrupted the modernist philosophical scene. Levinas pointed out the totalizing effects of systematic thinking, and proposed in its stead an anarchistic form of thinking that would remain unassimilable. In place of the traditional ethical universe which centered on selfhood along with its ideals of objectivity and control, he proposed a decentered ethics which emphasized touch over sight and interiority over exteriority, one which was committed to the "felt meaning" of one's primary responsibility for the other. Derrida in turn challenged the western philosophical tradition of logocentrism including its faith in the centrality of logic and reason. In place of a philosophy of certainty, Derrida put forth his view that since all philosophical positions are really nothing more than traces in sand, final justice is totally impossible. Both Levinas and Derrida recognized that language is the main arena for decisions about justice and the call of the Other; they also believed that the traditional goals of clarity and lack of ambiguity will never reflect the complexity of the world in a satisfactory way and are in fact a threat to human freedom because the language of objectivity inevitably leads to a system of power and control.

Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari

Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari took Derrida's notion of impossible justice and Levinas's insistence that objectivist language leads to totalizing theories even further. They began by assuming that modern society consists of forces of power and domination that are pervasive. Foucault focused on how the discourses of modern empirical and behavioral psychology inform the whole system of justice and punishment, while Deleuze and Guattari emphasized the dysfunctional actions of the media. They all agreed that the main function of modern society is to transform humans into subjects for the purpose of manipulation. Deleuze and Guattari felt that the best they could do would be to teach people how to think differently about this situation—since changing it will always be totally out of the question. Since in their view we've all become programmed to be consumers, or what they called "desiring machines," our only possible survival strategy is to learn how to live off of the grid, in what they called "nomad life." They were no longer interested in whether something is true, but in whether it works.

Appendix: Badiou and Žižek Debate Antiphilosophy

Badiou and Žižek Debate the Definition of Antiphilosophy

In 2010 Badiou and Žižek participated in a debate together, under the title "Is Lacan an Antiphilosopher?"[1] The nature of what antiphilosophy actually is played an important part in their discussion. In the debate, Badiou defined antiphilosophy as any system of thought or thinking which opposes the singularity of its experience to the properly philosophical category of truth.[2] The common strategy of an antiphilosopher, then, is to draw from personal experience in order to launch an attack on the universal abstractions of philosophical discourse. In Badiou's view, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and to some extent Lacan, are the great antiphilosophers of modern times. For example, he noted how in Nietzsche's philosophy the abolition of truth is the negative condition for Dionysian affirmation, and the justification for this affirmation was Nietzsche's own existence—since it was he who placed the decisive rupture between truth and affirmation within the philosophical tradition. This form of violent subjectivity is for Badiou a pure form of antiphilosophy.[3] For Nietzsche (and for Wittgenstein as well) the victory of the real is possible only with the complete destruction or abandonment of the category of truth. Antiphilosophy can be understood then,

as Wittgenstein would say, as a form of therapy whose goal is to cure us of our philosophical illnesses by helping us learn how to eliminate metaphysical nonsense from our thinking.

The specific question addressed by Badiou and Žižek in their debate was whether Lacan was an antiphilosopher. According to Badiou, Lacan was unlike the other antiphilosophers in that he did not want to destroy the category of truth.[4] Instead, he wanted to preserve and reformulate it by rethinking it. Lacan continued to voice ambivalence about this issue, however. On the one hand he believed that truth is secret and unknowable, while on the other he believed that only through psychoanalysis can the analysand produce his or her truth, what he called the "proper real." This means that for Lacan, there is no abstract knowledge of the real but rather a revelation, an experience which occurs in the form of an act, which is itself something like a cut in the ordinary representation of the real. This act isolates the real from its normal connection to the imaginary and symbolic orders. Because of this disconnection, the question for Lacan ultimately becomes, is there some sort of mysticism of the real? If so, this would be an experience that produces no knowledge, since the realm of the mystical is unknowable. Thus, Lacan's antiphilosophical movement (at least, during the 1970's when he produced these ideas) was directed away from the possibility of possessing actual truth and towards mere knowledge concerning the real,[5] since in his view we can no longer know whether truth can actually touch the real. His point, however, was not that antiphilosophers need to make a choice between faith and rational knowledge. He believed that doing philosophy requires that there is a *law of truth,* which states not only that there is such a thing as truth concerning the real, but also that we, as philosophers, ought to love experiencing it. But what if the truth is, that there is no truth of the real? How are we supposed to love *this?* Lacan's answer was that ultimately, philosophy is a love of weakness and impotency. We remember that for him, truth is castration, loss, and imperfection, so that philosophy becomes the love of that which does not say everything. Philosophy is for him, then, at its core, the love of ignorance. The problem is that philosophy *pretends* to love truth as power—and this is its great illusion. And what this illusion exposes is our passion for ignorance.

Badiou's description of the degradation of the value of truth in Lacan's writings moves from an insistence that the category of truth is not dead, to a desire to rethink it, to the notion that there is no abstract knowledge of the real, to the idea that truth can appear only as a realization of an event and as a cut in the ordinary representation of the real. Once Lacan conceives of the real as being disconnected from the straightforward thinking and representing of traditional philosophy, this makes him in Badiou's eyes an antiphilosopher.

Žižek on the Historical Breakthroughs of Antiphilosophy

Žižek, in contrast to Badiou, does not view antiphilosophy as a stance against traditional philosophy's inability to respond effectively to the disparity between representation and reality. Instead, he notes that the first breakthrough of antiphilosophy was Kant's ethical system, which in his view marks a clear position concerning the domain of truth and how the real might be accessed—via the ethical act. From this point on, Kant's interest was no longer in metaphysics *per se* but in the transcendental critique of its conditions. Žižek provides numerous examples of how Kant's critique of metaphysics affected his fellow philosophers: after Kant, Fichte became more interested in teaching political science, Schelling privileged art, and Hegel turned away from the love of wisdom in favor of wisdom itself. Žižek in his book on Hegel[6] refers to this group of four great German Idealists as "the mother of all Gangs of Four"[7] and notes further that they represent the four "conditions" for philosophy (of science, politics, art, and love) elaborated by Badiou. Accordingly, Kant relates to Newtonian science since he asks what kind of philosophy is adequate for the Newtonian breakthrough; Fichte relates to politics, since he focuses his attention on the event of the French Revolution; Schelling relates to Romantic art as the highest approach to the Absolute; and Hegel relates to love of wisdom.[8] Because of the Kantian revolution, Žižek concludes, "nobody wants to be a philosopher anymore." But then, at this point in the debate, Badiou interjects and claims, "Except for me!" And Žižek responds, "Precisely!" Žižek seems to be suggesting that Badiou is actually not a true philosopher but an antiphilosopher in disguise because he doesn't react against Kant's critical philosophy like other modern philosophers do. It should be noted however that Badiou, in his rejoinder to Žižek, cautions Žižek on conflating anti-philosophy with critical philosophy. Badiou believes that they are not the same position. In his view the antiphilosophical position does not question the limits of rational thinking as Kant does but is much more radical in that it places experience above rational thinking.[9] But since Badiou's own claim is more in the sense of his being "anti-antiphilosophy" rather than pro-philosophy, his status in this regard seems to be unclear.

Žižek claims that the greatest breakthrough of antiphilosophy (in contrast to its first breakthrough which was with Kant's ethics) came as a result of the turn against Hegel. "The basic motif of antiphilosophy," he writes in *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, "is the assertion of a pure presence (the Real Life of society for Marx, Existence for Kierkegaard, Will for Nietzsche, etc.) irreducible to and excessive with regard to the network of philosophical concepts or representations."[10] Žižek thus sees philosophy as being caught up in its own circle of representation through its propensity for abstract reasoning, and sees antiphilosophy

as arising in response, demanding a return to the singular life. Kierkegaard in this regard spoke of the unique individual escaping philosophy, while Nietzsche referred to the need to find the lie behind the truth (which is also presence lying behind representation). Similarly, Wittgenstein and Heidegger made a fundamental distinction between showing and saying, Levinas favored infinity over totality, and Foucault asserted the virtues of madness against the Cartesian *cogito*.

Žižek also claims that antiphilosophers are not interested in the Real to the degree that Lacan was. Although Lacan did find philosophy too tied to the correlation of thinking and being, he believed that there is no need to go outside human consciousness to reach reality since the true force of the *objet petit a*—the hidden thing we're looking for—lies within us. Žižek thus finds an ambiguity in Lacan's work with regards to its antiphilosophical nature.[11]

In his book *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Žižek argues further that Lacan's antiphilosophy was not antagonistic towards all of philosophy, but was specifically directed against the postmodern stance of Deleuze and Guattari's anti-Oedipal philosophy of nomadic desiring machines, and against what he believed to be postmodernism's "sophistry"—namely its anti-essentialist refusal to accept a universal foundation and its insistence on the dissolving of "truth" into the mere effect of language games and intersubjective communities. He explains how Lacan's position on truth was actually closer to Plato's or Kant's than to the postmodernists. In his view,

> Plato accepts from the sophists their logic of discursive argumentation, but uses it to affirm his commitment to Truth; Kant accepts the breakdown of the traditional metaphysics, but uses it to perform his transcendental turn; along the same lines, Lacan accepts the "deconstructionist" motif of radical contingency, but turns this motif against itself, using it to assert his commitment to Truth as *contingent*.[12]

In addition, Žižek suggests that Lacan could be conceived of "as a 'vanishing mediator' between philosophy and antiphilosophy, with his determinate negations of given philosophies rendering possible the birth of novel philosophical trajectories."[13]

So, what about Žižek himself, is he an antiphilosopher? Since his political agenda is "to formulate a leftist anti-capitalist political project in our era of global capitalism and its ideological supplement, liberal-democratic multiculturalism,"[14] this places him in the company of such postmodern antiphilosophers as Horkheimer and Adorno, Benjamin, Delueze and Guattari, and Foucault. Once we understand that the enemy lies not in society, however, but in what Badiou calls the persistent and "Great Temptation of philosophical ontologies,"[15] we get a clearer idea of the connection between Žižek's politics and the broader themes of antiphilosophy in general. When old forms of resistance to capitalism (like

multiculturalism) seem instead to energize capitalism, there is the temptation, at least on the left, to abandon particular concepts, like the very concept of 'truth" itself—and this is a position consistent with antiphilosophy.

Badiou and Žižek on Antiphilosophical Ethics

Badiou identifies this abandonment of truth specifically within the work of Levinas in terms of Levinas's emphasis on "respect for the other" which accompanied his turn to ethics and away from ontology. He notes that Levinas's ethics and its emphasis on the primacy of the other is consistent with social and political stands against racism, sexism, and the exclusion of immigrants. It is also a philosophy that embraces multiculturalism and tolerance.[16] Badiou, however, identifies these principles as a form of "ethical ideology," which he characterizes as being the "principal, albeit transitory, adversary of all those striving to hold fast to some true thought, whatever it be."[17] In other words, if the desired end of all political activity is merely respect for the other, then we are not, in Badiou's view, in a position to discover truth. And truth for Badiou is the goal of all philosophical thinking.

Žižek responds to Badiou's point by arguing that our attention to ethics tends to "depoliticize" those towards whom we are ethical, leaving them at the depoliticized mercy of the vagaries of human rights.[18] For example, he continues, any withdrawal from global capitalism will necessarily involve withdrawing from its positive supplements as well, including the numerous benefits gained from the resistance movements worldwide which have grown up against it.[19] For Žižek, then, the goal for ethics should not be absolute truth but the recognition that someone benefits and someone suffers.

Badiou counters by insisting that "the whole ethical predication based upon recognition of the other should be purely and simply abandoned."[20] Jackson in his essay on the two thinkers clarifies this point: "(I)t is important to point out that the problem here is not that we are not trying hard enough to respect the other. Trying harder only plunges us deeper into ideological mist … Levinas's suggestion that the 'other' is there from the very beginning—in some sense originary or foundational in a way that necessitates a rupture in western ontology—ultimately tends only to reconstitute the 'other' as another name for being, something we count as 'one'—and again [as Lacan insists], the one is not."[21] As Badiou puts it, "Materialism means that the reality I see is never 'whole'—not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it."[22]

In this regard Badiou follows Derrida, who pointed out in his own critical essay on Levinas, "Violence and Metaphysics" (1967), that knowing or responding

to the "other" is impossible, since the very notion of radical otherness is an impasse or aporia that we can approach and respect but never solve. While Derrida might be fascinated by this attempt to "think the other," Badiou insists that the only realm in which such discourse might be even remotely intelligible is the religious, because in his view "every effort to turn ethics into a principle of thought and action is essentially religious."[23]

For an example that locates the foundation of ethics in religious thinking, Badiou refers to Derrida's treatment of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. In that work, Kierkegaard had examined Abraham's action in response to God's demand to sacrifice his son Isaac. For Kierkegaard, Abraham's response to God's command acknowledged an incommensurable difference between himself and the divinity of God. It did not acknowledge such a difference between himself and his son, however. By moving away from the normal circular economic relationship between equal individuals of sacrifice or exchange, in Derrida's view Kierkegaard introduced here the idea of an "impossible gift"—the death of his son as an offering to God—since he expected nothing from God in return. This is a notion of gift-giving that is neither an exchange nor a sacrifice; and further, since it operates outside the proper domain of justice, it belongs only to that which is absolutely other. It is, finally, a sacrificing of the possibility for any general ethics—which, because it is founded on the idea of justice, requires either exchange or sacrifice to restore balance between otherwise equal individuals.[24] Like Kierkegaard, Derrida wanted to keep the possibility of the impossible open. He also wanted to weaken the distinction between the other as individual and the absolutely other. Levinas, in contrast, insisted on the primacy of ethics, as the primordial call of the other as manifested in other individuals.

Kierkegaard, Levinas, Derrida, and Badiou each confronted the problem of divine alterity in different ways. While Derrida may have hoped that by juxtaposing Levinas and Kierkegaard the transcendent and materialist rather than the more specifically religious aspects of Levinas's position might become more evident, Badiou wishes to emphasize its religious aspects instead: "When Levinas calls his principle [of alterity] the 'Altogether-Other,' it is quite obviously the ethical name for God."[25] Since Badiou views every effort to turn ethics into a set of principles for thought and action as essentially religious, he feels obligated to place Levinas's ethics under this purview as well.

Žižek's Critique of Badiou's Anti-antiphilosophy

In his classic science fiction novel *Dune,* Frank Herbert made some observations about human nature that resonate especially well in the present context. He wrote

that "Deep in the human unconscious is a pervasive need for a logical universe that makes sense. But the real universe is always one step beyond logic."[26] He also wrote that "When law and duty are one, united by religion, you never become fully conscious, fully aware of yourself. You are always a little less than an individual."[27] With these two pronouncements he introduced antiphilosophical themes that are of common concern to Lacan, Badiou and Žižek. With the second pronouncement he indicated what's wrong when the roots of ethics are located within religion: the free and self-responsible ethical agent gets replaced by a cipher who must act according to a rigid set of rules and obligations that will necessarily alter and thereby diminish whatever personal individuality he or she might have had originally (as was the case with Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son Isaac in accordance with God's will).

Herbert's first pronouncement, that the real universes is always one step beyond logic, relates to the concerns of antiphilosophy as well. In *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism,* for example, in a section with the title "Badiou and Antiphilosophy," Žižek announced that "The great theme of post-Hegelian antiphilosophy is the excess of the pre-conceptual productivity of Presence over its representation: representation is reduced to the 'mirror of representation,' which reflects in a distorted way its productive ground."[28] To clarify: "Presence" refers to the conceptually inaccessible, actively creative, conscious mind. While the mind has both a pervasive need for a logical universe (which it represents to itself through the language of mathematics, among other means) it also possesses the awareness that such a creation is not itself real—because it knows (or rather, antiphilosophers *believe* that it knows) that the *real* universe transcends logic. This awareness is pre-conceptual because the mind was aware of the limitations of logical representation even before it conceived of its vision of a logical universe in the first place. This is due to the fact that once the mind recognizes that the logical universe is its own creation, it understands that its representation of the universe can act as a mirror, and through this reflection it sees itself as the productive ground or origin of the very possibility of logical sense in the first place. Logic is *not* natural—at least not according to the post-Hegelian, antiphilosophical view of things.

In keeping with this point of view, Žižek discovers what he believes to be a flaw in Badiou's philosophy when he notes how Badiou reacted to the fall of socialist regimes and to the exhaustion of twentieth century revolutionary thinking in general, "by taking a step from history to ontology."[29] What is at issue here is the political question of who properly represents the people, as well as the related issue of what it means when the very idea of state representation becomes itself the source of societal problems. Žižek notes how Badiou plays on the double meaning of the term "state"—between "'the state of things' and State as the apparatus of

social power"[30]—since he thus establishes a connection "between a particular historical form of social organization and a basic ontological feature of the universe."[31] In pointing this out, Žižek is accusing Badiou of drawing a direct link from seeing the State as a mere political apparatus to seeing the State as part of the necessary "state of things" in general. Žižek is also pointing out the similar linkages between presence/representation and history/ontology as well as the one between state as power/state as state of things, where each dyad establishes a connection between an active, creatively experiential producer with its passive, seemingly necessary logical derivative. He is thus arguing that Badiou's anti-antiphilosophical position is too focused on logical necessity and not enough on real-world contingencies.

Žižek notes that this same tendency, of letting abstract theory blind oneself to real world conditions, exists even in Marx's work. He explains that while Marx

> … rightly perceived how capitalism unleashed the breathtaking dynamo of self-enhancing productivity … on the other hand, he also clearly perceived how this capitalist dynamic is propelled by its own inner obstacle or antagonism—the ultimate limit of capitalism is Capital itself … On the basis of these insights, Marx's fundamental mistake was to conclude that a new social order (communism) was possible … In short, what Marx overlooked was that … if we abolish the obstacle, we do not get the fully unleashed drive to productivity, but lose precisely this productivity itself.[32]

Marx had failed to recognize the reach of Adam Smith's basic principle that people are driven by self-interest: he couldn't see that they would never be persuaded to work with the same degree of enthusiasm for some abstract ideal like for the benefit of society. Žižek then points out that this insight was Lacan's fundamental reproach to Marx.[33]

It doesn't matter to Žižek whether Badiou is interpreting the fall of the Cultural Revolution in terms of its demise as a paradigm appropriate to its own period and not to ours, or if he is arguing that our own historical moment has given us the privilege of seeing the same revolutionary paradigm of failure as a universal feature of emancipatory politics. In both cases he is accusing Badiou of assuming that the state is both a necessary form of political organization and simultaneously something we should resist.[34]

Žižek asserts that the problem with Badiou's representing the state apparatus as a necessary evil is not that this apparatus contaminates the apolitical spheres of the economy (which is what makes it evil in the first place), but that it depoliticizes them, thus constituting the illusion of its pervasive presence through coercion and regulation. For proper Marxism, though, the "withering away of the State"—meaning the *absence* of the state apparatus—does not in Žižek's view aim at depoliticizing society, but at radically politicizing it instead, so that literally

everything becomes political. "One does not 'abolish the state' by getting rid of its excess in a transparent-harmonious self-organization of society," he explains, "but by 'abolishing' the specter of apolitical spheres"[35] in the first place.

Because Badiou exempts the economy from the domain of truth (the economy being for him the "sphere of 'servicing the goods,' of production-exchange-distribution"),[36] "does this exemption not imply," asks Žižek, "that the economy is a sphere of productive presence prior to its (political) representation? Badiou thereby effectively accepts the depoliticization of the economy as a fact, not as an effect of ideological censorship; that is, he ignores the fundamental Marxist insight that the economy is always a *political* economy."[37] Žižek again shows how Badiou, at least in his view, seems blind to real-world contingencies in favor of abstract theory, because he constantly fails to take sufficiently into account the disruptive capacity of the human subject.

What emerges from their debate, at least initially, is the perception that Badiou remains a philosopher, one who is committed and devoted to the discovery of Truth, while Žižek, as antiphilosopher, is more concerned with the contingencies of the individual lived experience within the historical moment, and thus with issues regarding praxis over mere ideology. However, with his emphasis on the destabilizing aspects of the truth event as a rupture in the ordinary nature of things, Badiou too is clearly aware of the importance of the central role of human disruptive contingency in the material world. In fact, in his book *Being and Event* he maintains that while there *are* eternal truths, they are not unifiable in a metaphysical system because philosophy itself does not have the capacity to produce them. The truths that philosophy *can* produce are not eternal, but are the result of real world events grounded in their fundamental contingencies, to be taken alongside the work of those human subjects who attempt to investigate their world in light of them.[38] Zizek concludes his debate with Badiou by suggesting that either Lacan and Badiou are both antiphilosophers *and* philosophers, or they are both neither of the two.[39] His point underlines the interdependence of the two positions.

Notes

1. Rousselle, "Žižek versus Badiou: Is Lacan an Antiphilosopher?" A video presentation and hyper-transcription of the debate, which originally took place on the UCLA campus, on May 28, 2010, posted in *Dingpolitik* on June 14, 2013 by duanerousselle 2013.
2. ibid., no pagination.
3. ibid., no pagination.
4. ibid., no pagination.
5. ibid., no pagination.

6. Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism,* 2012.
7. ibid., p. 8.
8. ibid., p. 9.
9. Rousselle, ibid., no pagination.
10. ibid., p. 841.
11. Rousselle, ibid., no pagination.
12. quoted in Johnston, "This Philosophy Which is not One: Jean-Claude Milner, Alain Badiou, and Lacanian Antiphilosophy," in *Journal of the Jan van Eyck Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 3: pp. 154–155.
13. ibid., p. 157.
14. Žižek, 1999, p. 4.
15. Badiou, 2005, p. 26.
16. Badiou, 2001, p. 20.
17. ibid., p. 90.
18. see Žižek, 2006, p. 341.
19. see Žižek, 2006, p. 383.
20. Badiou, 2001, p. 25.
21. Jackson, 2007, pp. 217–218.
22. Badiou, 2006, p. 17.
23. Badiou, 2001, p. 22.
24. see Jackson, 2007, pp. 14–16.
25. Badiou, 2001, p. 22.
26. Herbert, F. *Dune,* p. 367.
27. ibid., p. 403.
28. Žižek, 2012, p. 841.
29. ibid., p. 842.
30. ibid., p. 842.
31. ibid., p. 842.
32. ibid., p. 850.
33. ibid., p. 850.
34. ibid., p. 843.
35. ibid., p. 843.
36. ibid., p. 843.
37. ibid., p. 844.
38. Meillassoux, 2011, p. 1.
39. Rousselle, ibid., no pagination.

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In this volume, author Steven L. Bindeman presents a survey of the key figures in postmodern antiphilosophy. Noting that the main thrust of their work can be found in their need to respond to the threat of nihilism, he is guided by the question, if the path to abstract truth is no longer viable, what then? He shows how the antiphilosophers turn their focus on the complexity of lived experience in place of the search for certainty, which was in their view what previously had guided the dominating discourse of the modernist philosophical tradition. Through close examination of a broad variety of texts, Bindeman illuminates how the antiphilosophers initiate a new way of doing philosophy, one which prefers to examine the question, Does it work? instead of, Is it true? Moreover, Bindeman demonstrates how the antiphilosophers are united in questioning the centrality of the great cornerstones of western metaphysics—time, self, universe, and God—because of their insistence that there is no way to reach beyond any of these words to the actual things to which they refer.

Utilizing the exposed, significant fault in the foundation of all philosophical systems, *The Antiphilosophers* delivers new insight concerning the issue of how we should relate to the resultant chaos. Written with a rare combination of philosophical rigor and clarity of expression, Bindeman's work will be of interest to students and scholars of postmodern philosophy.



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