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NEW CLASS, NEW CULTURE

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Notes and Commentary

Reviews

Introduction

The paradigm of a "new class" originated in socialist Eastern Europe among dissidents and other regime critics as a way to describe the ensconced stratum of managers, technocrats, and ideologues who controlled the levers of power. The rhetorical irony of the phrase depended on the implied contrast with an "old class" as well as the good old class theory of the orthodox Marxism that once served as the established dogma of half the world. The history of class struggle, which had been history altogether, had culminated in the victory of a proletarian class that in turn had ushered in—or was well on its way to ushering in—a classless society. Or so the grand narrative went. To talk of a "new class," then, conjured up the unquestionable epistemology of class analysis, while simultaneously challenging the notional outcome: instead of the end of the state and classlessness, one was stuck with police states and a new class that, while eminently cooler than the Bolsheviks of yore, still exercised a dictatorship (of the not-proletariat) while skimming off the benefits of unequal power. The phrase turned Marxism against Marxism during those decades when the fall of the Berlin Wall was not even imaginable.

Migrating across the Atlantic, the term took on a new meaning in the last third of the twentieth century as a designator of the rise of a new post-industrial professional class, the cohort of the student movement after 1968 on its trajectory into social, cultural, and political power. At stake was the gradual displacement (if not disappearance) of the old markers of class distinction and the alternative privileging of sets of linguistic and intellectual capacities, combined with the assumption that greater intelligence implied a *de facto* natural claim on greater power: meritocracy means that the smarter should rule. Yet this trope just reiterated, in a new context, the problem of intellectuals and power, a curious echoing of East European rhetoric. As the best and brightest claimed power in order to rule better and with greater radiance, their critics came to dub them a "new class" in order to draw attention to their sanctimonious aspirations to pursue their own interests by remaking society in their own image. Paradoxically, the conservative critique of the new class could make the "Marxist" move of pointing out how universalist claims masked particularist interests. What ensued was a decades-long conflict between, on the one hand, advocates of more enlightened and ever more expansive administration of society, and, on the other, proponents of reduced state oversight, defenders of society against the state, and the deregulated market against the long reach of political power. The political wrangling of our current

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moment still takes place within this framework. The complexity of the new class and its culture, however, is that while it sets out to administer society and establish bureaucracies to regulate social and economic life domestically, at the same time it attempts to ratchet down the political and military power that might be projected externally: a strong state toward its subjects, a weak state toward its enemies!

The new class transition to linguistic, cultural, and technocratic expertise unfolded during the profound shift toward a symbolic service economy—new class ascendancy took place during the era of the dramatic decline of manufacturing and the concomitant shift of unionized labor organization primarily into the public sector—and it privileges capacities of semiotic manipulation over material production or even military prowess. Its signature contribution to foreign policy is "smart power," a term that nobly implies that boots on the ground are dumb and that some—still elusive—strategic rhetorical eloquence will make enemies vanish without ever firing a gun, since language is its ultimate power. The corollary economic policy is negative, defined by discourses of environmentalism that imagine achieving greener national spaces by exporting dirty manufacturing and energy consumption to the developing world: not in our backyard. This is not to deny environmental concerns, but rather to recognize them as laden with implications for traditional economic sectors. Most importantly, the transition to the culture of the new class has, in complex ways, taken part in the revolution of the new technologies, with the new class at first benefiting from them, thanks to their advantaging the educated and wealthy—that social inequality known as the "digital divide." But the new technologies, especially the new networks of communication, have undermined the former concentrations of media power and opinion-making, allowing for the emergence of new populist forces, decidedly not new class in their character and programs.

As contemporary as these developments may seem, it is equally important to recognize how traditional, indeed classical, is the question that lurks inside the problem of the new class: intellectuals and power, enlightenment and politics, conceptual thinking and lived life. From one point of view, the rise of the new class involves the priority of thinking—not any thinking, however, but a technocratically foreshortened, instrumentalist, and administrative thinking—over the lifeworld of everyday interactions, communities, and traditions, and the orders of human nature. It is the assertion of the primacy of logic against the complexity of living, and it runs the risk therefore of collapsing either into an irrelevant ineffectiveness, an idealism incapable of grasping the real, or a destructiveness, when it tries to refashion ways of life into its own invented programs. Human communities frequently show resilience and creativity, and they can survive more than one expects; but those existential resources are not infinite, and aggressive programs of social engineering can eventually destroy the patterns of living, the

structures of meaning—the families, communities, faiths, nations, cultures, traditions—when they try to control them. Dismantling those patterns of familiarity leaves a world less familiar—not more open and freer, as modernists believed, but colder and less welcoming, perhaps the real new class agenda. It lays claim to a higher morality; it wants to make the world better; it wants to make us better, but it may only make us more alone.

Much of the material in this issue explores aspects of the new class and, especially, its cultural formations. Keith Gandal opens the discussion with a historical and sociological look back at the antiwar movement of the 1960s and its relationship to the rise of the new class. His analysis traces how new standards of scholastic merit in the post–World War II mass society shifted symbolic value from traditional military masculinity to the prowess of intelligence. The antiwar movement provided an opportunity for this new cultural capital, the claim on membership in the new elite, to display its self-confidence and the contempt in which it held traditional values, such as military service. The argument provides, additionally, a compelling account for the phenomenon of the gender divide within the "movement," as part of the process of defining the new countercultural hypermasculinity. James Barry follows with an essay that builds a historical bridge from the Vietnam era to the debates around the Iraq War, while shifting the discussion from the sociology of meritocracy to the political-theoretical consideration of the "nonrelation between facts and decisions," as he quotes Arendt. Her essay on "Lying in Politics" is the touchstone for his argument, as he redeploys her earlier arguments into the age of missing WMDs. To be sure, there is a world of political difference between Gandal's critique of the antiwar movement and Barry's dissection of the government's arguments for war; what the two share, however—and what becomes clear in Barry's dogged interrogation of the rhetoric of belligerence—is a concern with the prioritization of the conceptual over the real: "defactualization." For Barry, the issue is not only the politicization of intelligence, not only the ideological occupation of policy formation, but the way certain intellectual domains (on the left or the right) displace experience. Thought crafts the representation of the real to meet its needs; certain facts are disallowed because they conflict with policy goals—a statement that holds arguably as much for the premature assertion of the presence of Iraqi weaponry as to the no less premature insistence on the absence of Iranian nuclear ambitions. First comes the policy, then come the data: is this just the way of Washington or of all political decision-making?

The theory of the new class involves, at its core, the problem of knowledge as power. Mark Rectanus provides a new context by directing our attention to the historicity of knowledge technologies and, specifically, their transformation, not only across recent decades but also in terms of generational divides: participation in the new networks of technologically mediated knowledge is very

much a function of generation cohorts. The results include profound changes in the conventional and established markers of intellectual prominence, especially universities and parts of the publishing industry. This transition in turn implies tensions within the institutions of intellectual elite formation and points to the unresolved question of the fate of the new class within the same "information society" through which it was once able to ascend to power. The question here is not only the anxieties (e.g., for flat-earthers like Thomas Friedman) about global competition in the age of information but the very character of learning and student development within the contemporary educational systems. Can the new class reproduce itself? Can it invent learning environments adequate for contemporary youth culture? Rectanus's essay begins to address a crucial issue that the current public debates over education have largely sidestepped.

The rise of an intellectual hegemony hits different cultural spheres in different ways, perhaps none more directly than philosophy. Do we live in the age of the philosopher king or the managerial technocrat, for whom knowledge is solely instrumental? Postmodernity involved, famously, the end of grand narratives—which would point to the rise of managers rather than reflective philosophers—but the end of history arguably also came to an end through the terrorism of 9/11. Two essays explore the vicissitudes of philosophy. For Chantal Bax, the debates around Wittgenstein, from Marcuse through Lyotard to Badiou, exemplify an insecurity about the role of philosophy and, by implication, the role of the intellectual. Bax argues however that Wittgenstein already provides the answer that eludes his critics, neither succumbing to the temptations of idealist generalizations nor opting for the infinite indeterminacy of a universe of particulars. He allows, she claims, for investigations of the individual and the particular, without reifying either. Andrew J. Mitchell, in contrast, turns to Heidegger, especially Heidegger's reading of Trakl, to elaborate the question of pain—the very alternative to subjective and conceptual thinking, and therefore, the example, no matter how uncomfortable, that Heidegger deploys in order to describe experience and the entry into the world. In Mitchell's words, "…pain is exposure, the mortal experience of the limit and of our essential belonging to what lies beyond (the world)." It signals the capacity for sensation, but it also names the experience of suffering, the reality of which is, after all, the most profound critique of the new class account of the world as solely semiotic.

The issue continues with a set of material introducing a figure new to the pages of *Telos*, Susan Taubes. Born in Budapest in 1928, she emigrated to the United States with her family in 1939. She studied philosophy at Harvard, with a focus on religion: her 1956 dissertation (directed by Paul Tillich), *The Absent God*, explores Simone Weil. She would later publish on African and American Indian myths during the 1960s, and she was active in the Open Theater. She was also the first wife of Jacob Taubes; she describes the end of that marriage in her 1969

novel *Divorcing*. Christina Pareigis provides a capsule introduction to Taubes, an intellectual profile that emphasizes the tension of her relationship with Jacob, as they move between New York and Paris, Jerusalem and Zurich. Pareigis writes of her especially through the private correspondence, now archived at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin, as well as her writings on religion and philosophy. At stake is the emergence of a post–World War II discourse of negative theology, the reflections on the catastrophe of the Holocaust, the metamorphoses of Judaism between secularization and Zionism, and Susan's own intellectual itinerary in relation to and often in tension with Jacob. Her simultaneous alienation from German or more broadly western Christian culture amplified her own ambiguity regarding any ties to a traditional Judaism. She pursues these topics through writings such as her "Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism." Yet whether with regard to Heidegger or to Weil or in her exchanges with Jacob, she is constantly struggling with the legacies of modernism and modernization, the brute unmooring of the century, trying to find an answer that would not unwittingly repeat regression. As she wrote to her husband on February 22, 1952: "the world is mostly in darkness, and judgment does not illuminate it. If there is a supreme judge he is waiting for us to enter into judgment freely. And this for me is the meaning of the day of the Messiah, when we shall all sit around a table, and all will be told and each man shall understand in his way." Pareigis's introduction is followed by a letter of Susan to Jacob of April 4 of the same year. It shows her navigating between Heidegger and Nietzsche, Christianity and Judaism, the suspect "inwardness" of Christianity and the fanaticism of orthodoxy, including Jewish (she writes from her parents in Zurich to Jacob in Jerusalem).

The Susan Taubes section leads to Sigrid Weigel's rich and extensive discussion of certain crucial philosophical and theoretical points. She begins with a reading of Taubes's early "Nature of Tragedy," which, far from a narrowly literary genre theory, investigates the threshold between philosophy and divinity; it draws on Nietzsche as well as on American and British criticism and philology. Weigel places it in relationship to the work of Peter Szondi (see the special issue on Szondi, *Telos* 140) and of the philosopher of religion Klaus Heinrich, while offering a detailed characterization of the important distinctions. Weigel also examines Taubes's work on *The Absent God*, her "religious atheism," and her engagement with thinkers of modernity, both Jewish and Christian: Kafka, Heidegger, Barth, Brunner. Through this thinking, Taubes recovers an encounter with Gnostic thought that blurs confessional distinctions, which take on less importance than shared formulations of negativity, paradox, and absence. As Weigel puts it, "Susan Taubes's specific contribution to a theory of modernity is her identification and illumination of a correspondence: between, on the one hand, a post-assimilatory, post-confessional or secularized culture in which loci of Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers can *no longer* be clearly distinguished; and, on the other

hand, a transitional historical moment in which antique Judaism and early Christianity together largely formed a fused culture, because the programs of Jewish and early Christian Gnostic heresy were *not yet* polarized." Weigel's essay is an important statement that locates Susan Taubes clearly within the history of the philosophy of religion and in the discourses of a critical theory of modernity.

Taubes's engagement with religion and philosophy revolves around the problem of nihilism, the erosion of traditional values and order in modernity. The new class, one can conjecture, represents an effort to impose a conceptual regimen by fiat and then only makes things worse. Aspects of this topic are pursued in the robust collection of notes and reviews with which this issue concludes. Ejvind Hansen posits a homology between Kantian antinomies and digital communication media in order to warn of a constitutively dogmatic element in the new technologies (further problematizing Rectanus's discussion of the media revolution). David Kishik presents a focused examination of life and violence in Agamben, Arendt, and Benjamin (including a surprisingly early Arendt reference to Agamben). While James Barry, earlier, expressed concern about the loss of reality, as "defactualization," in policy formation, Jeffrey Folks looks at the rise of the real and its consequences for public culture in "reality television." The reviews cover a philosophical waterfront. Robert D'Amico, long associated with this journal, is welcomed back with his review of Santiago Zabala's study of Ernst Tugendhat, and Karen Ng reviews Detlev Claussen on Theodor W. Adorno. Paul Gottfried provides a double review, pairing Panajotis Kondylis's *Machtfragen*, with Paul Piccone's *Confronting the Crisis*. Piccone was the founder and long-time editor of this journal, and *Confronting the Crisis* is both a significant philosophical statement as well as a seminal intellectual diary of the late twentieth century. With no finality implied, the issue closes with Roy Ben-Shai's review of Michael Marder's book on Derrida.

Russell A. Berman

Why the Vietnam Antiwar Uprising? The Confluence of Scholastic Meritocracy and Cold War Mobilization in a New Student Class

Keith Gandal

The huge protest against the Vietnam War, which Charles DeBenedetti has described as "the largest and most potent expression of domestic antiwar discontent since the Russian Revolution,"[1] remains a mystery, a stunning and unprecedented event in American history, and one that has not been repeated. More than forty years later, there is nothing approaching a consensus about the 1960s antiwar movement. If anything, the various accounts of its causes and effects have become more divergent. Commentators have argued about whether the movement was effective or counterproductive in its attempt to end the war. They have disagreed about whether the student component of the movement was essentially radical, or only radical on the fringes; they have debated whether the movement made effective alliances with other opposition groups and whether the movement should be faulted or praised for its idealism and partial lack of pragmatism in its rejection of traditional party politics. What is agreed upon is that there was a massive antiwar protest, a huge revolt, unprecedented in American history, and almost all concur that the heart of that protest was on college campuses.[2] All sides also agree that the student antiwar movement, whether essentially radical or not, to a significant extent embraced or popularized countercultural attitudes and behaviors. Historians concerned with the issue of the

1. Charles DeBenedetti, review of *Who Spoke Up? American Protest against the War in Vietnam, 1963–1975*, by Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Journal of American History* 72 (1985): 198–99.

2. See, for example, Melvin Small, "The Doves Ascendant: The American Antiwar Movement in 1968," *South Central Review* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1999–Spring 2000): 45. "The majority of the foot soldiers [of the antiwar movement] were found on the campuses."

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role of women, including those basically sympathetic to the movement, concur that the student movement often subordinated women.[3]

Yet the most basic question of all remains: Why did a massive student antiwar movement arise in response to the Vietnam War? And why did that student movement combine a countercultural aspect and a traditional subordination of women? By focusing on these aspects of the student movement about which there is consensus, I hope to sidestep debates about the *effects* of the movement that seem not only deadlocked but misguided. Framing the debate around the question of whether the student antiwar movement achieved its goal of ending the war is problematic because it assumes that we can identify a single, unified goal of a mass of protesting students. In reality, the mass of student protesters did not possess a unitary, oppositional relationship to the war. They did not simply stand in opposition to it; numerous students who protested the war had a mixed, or complicated relationship to the war, in that they also participated in the "war machine" by taking part in the military's selective service system, accepting and in fact protecting their student draft-deferred status. This is not a matter of hairsplitting. The largest mass student action of 1966 was not the spring march that involved more than 200,000 people simultaneously across the country. The army's scholastic test to qualify for student deferral attracted almost four times as many students across the country on three different days in 12,000 different locations.[4] And thus, given the 765,000 students participating overall in the mass exam, at least one of three testing days (and maybe two or all three) involved more students than what is generally considered the largest single-day mass student action of 1966.

Instead of taking the aims of the student protesters for granted, one might ask what were the mass of students who took part in protests aiming at, not only in their protests but in their other, less dramatic activities: their actions aimed at protecting their deferral status, as well as their embrace of countercultural activities and treatment of women? What were the students doing in relation to the war—and what new historical conditions on college campuses and in the military mobilization enabled them to do it? And what did the students' *various* mass actions produce?

3. For an example of such a sympathetic account, see Barbara Tischler, "The Antiwar Movement," in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, ed. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 384, 389–95.

4. George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940–1973* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1993), pp. 184, 199.

"Richard Nixon was convinced the main reason such college students or 'bums' as he once called them, joined the antiwar movement was 'to keep them from getting their asses shot off.'"[5] Historians, notably Christian Appy in his *Working-Class War*, have shown that the Vietnam War was mostly fought by the working class, and that young men of the middle class not only took advantage of student deferments and medical disqualifications to avoid service, but that, unlike their working-class peers, expected not to serve. Moreover, college-student and college-graduate behavior during Vietnam marked a departure from that during the Korean War, when student deferments were already in place, but there was no large student protest movement and "college graduates enlisted in rough proportions to their numbers (they did not do so during the Vietnam War)."[6] Though, crucially, college students during the Korean War had also been reluctant to serve and ready to question the war: "a 1952 survey of draft-age college students" found that "eighty-two percent did not want to be drafted because military service would disrupt their lives," and "moreover, more than half questioned American involvement in Korea."[7]

The 1960s generation of college students behaved quite differently from previous generations of college students. Yet accounts often fail adequately to distinguish the 1960s draft-age student population from previous generations of college students and draft-age youth, because of an odd inattention to fundamental and dramatic changes in that population beyond its greater size. New, fundamental, and dramatic changes in campus policies of admission, as well as recent, fundamental and dramatic changes in military policies with regard to students, altered the nature of the student body and the nature of the students' relationship to the military. The inattention to these changes is odd because, first, universities

5. Nixon quoted in Small, "The Doves Ascendant," p. 45.

6. Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 30. For the general argument, see chapter 1.

7. Peter S. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2003), p. 259. Many commentators have described Korea, like Vietnam, as a "poor man's war," and, with the Korean conflict, this class disparity was due to the fact of the newly instituted college-student deferments, which students took advantage of because the Korean War was "less popular than the world wars" (ibid.). And though, as Appy asserts, college graduates enlisted in the Korean War in proportion to their numbers, the percentages of students in college and graduating from college was significantly smaller in the early 1950s than in the mid-to-late 1960s. See below for figures.

admissions policies had, since the Korean War, gone through the most radical changes in their history, not only in their mass extension of equal opportunity for college, but also in their historic move, in admission policies, away from traditional privilege and toward scholastic meritocracy. It is also odd because, second, the military had recently, with the Korean War, and for the first time in U.S. history, granted special draft-deferral status to students across the board, that is, to students in all subject areas. What has been missing in analyses of the causes of the student antiwar protest is an adequate history of the status of 1960s college students, who, because of the unplanned or accidental confluence of these dramatic changes in university admissions and the military draft, comprised a large class of young people with unprecedented meritocratic status and prerogatives, granted by the university and the military. A quiet "social revolution" had taken place with the widespread institutionalization of a new system of status, most obviously on university campuses, but it had also been given a national recognition and blessing by the military. One result was a new type of male college student, a new social agent poised to assert and protect these new privileges.

It is safe to say that the relative weakness of the rationale for the Vietnam War was a necessary cause of the student antiwar protest—it is hard to imagine masses of students protesting a war, say, in which America had come under attack—but the relatively weak rationale was not a sufficient cause. To see the lack of inevitability of student antiwar protest against Vietnam, one can simply refer to the fact that there was no mass student resistance to the Korean War, which resembled Vietnam in certain obvious ways, including not only its East Asian geographic remoteness and its Cold War rationale, but also the trajectory of public support for the war.[8] Of course, the Korean conflict did not last as long as the Vietnam War, and there were not as many American casualties. But these differences beg the question, as mass student protest against Vietnam began within the first two years of the war—that is, it began before Vietnam became a longer and deadlier war than the Korean conflict. To be sure, the numbers of students protesting would greatly increase as the war dragged on, draft calls increased, and casualties mounted, but student protest in 1965 and 1966, though involving only a minority of students, and mostly occurring

8. John Mueller, "Reflections on the Vietnam Antiwar Movement and on the Curious Calm at the War's End," in *Vietnam as History: Ten Years after the Paris Peace Accords*, ed. Peter Braestrup (Washington, DC: UP of America, 1984), p. 151.

among "the best students at the best institutions,"[9] was already a mass phenomenon unlike anything seen during the Korean War. (Nor has there been mass protest against the Iraq War, a war which has been compared to Vietnam, which many claim is unjust, which was justified on the basis of a threat that proved false or trumped up, and which, though many fewer American lives have been lost, has lasted longer than the Korean War.) The question naturally arises, what happened on college campuses and to college students (and specifically at elite institutions) between Korea and Vietnam that made the student antiwar resistance to Vietnam possible?

In *The Armies of the Night*, Norman Mailer described the student protestors at the Pentagon, who turned in their draft cards in an act of resistance, with a focus on one in particular:

> [A] tall student from the West, California no doubt, even looked like one's image of the President of the Young Republicans at Stanford. . . . After he dropped his card in the bag, he gave a little talk to the effect that many of these students had been scared when first they burned their cards, months ago—they said goodbye to their girls and family and waited for the clang of the jail gate. But the jail gate never came. "Now we think the government might be afraid to go near us. That gets around. . . . If we get arrested, we make our point, and people won't forget it—our point being with good careers ahead of us, we still hate this war so much that we go to jail. . ."[10]

Mailer comments, "He was almost too good to be true," and then entertains the "suspicion" that the student might have been a CIA recruit infiltrating the march, even imagining "a short novel about a young American leading a double life in college as a secret policeman."[11] Stopping short of Mailer's paranoia here, it is worth pausing to consider the idea that "he was almost too good to be true," that he might have "a double life," that Mailer is right to be suspicious of his own initial impression that the student is thoroughly high-minded and self-sacrificing, and indeed that there *is* something unspoken in the student's comments.

9. Calvin Lee, quoted in Willis Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1996), p. 165. Polls showed that the percentage of students against the war went from about 25 percent in 1965 and 1966 to 50 percent in 1968. Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, pp. 164–65.

10. Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, The Novel as History* (Signet: New York, 1968), pp. 90–91.

11. Ibid., p. 91.

It is noteworthy that these draft-card burners from college campuses have "girls" to say "goodbye" to as they wait for "the clang of the jail gate." Men refusing military service would have been masculine pariahs in previous wartime periods. (Note also the casual and traditional "sexism": they are "girls," not women.) In addition, this student is unusually forthright for mentioning his interest in a career; this is exceptional honesty for an antiwar activist in the period, as it risks revealing an insufficiently "countercultural" or radical stance, thereby endangering the approval of his peers. Yet more to the precise point of Mailer's suspicion, what the student does not say, as he speaks explicitly about the "good careers" that await him and his cohort is that, if he submits to the draft when he finishes college and goes off to the military and Vietnam, he may be killed or maimed before he can undertake that career. Of course, he could burn his draft card without marching on the Pentagon and drawing particular attention to his violation of the law, and so his present action is indeed radical, legally risky, and principled. But submitting to the draft perhaps involves an even larger risk, of losing his life or limbs in a deadly war.

At this point in 1967, the student is still protected by his student deferment—his draft card has the classification "2-S"—the very deferment that has allowed him to continue in college while being of draft age. He has also either passed the government scholastic test, given to almost a million students in 1966 and 1967, or has had high enough grades to retain his deferment and stay out of the army.[12] Yet he will not be safe from conscription when he graduates, and in fact, as statistics show, the American army that fought in Vietnam had, by the late 1960s (when most graduate-student deferments had been eliminated[13] and draft calls had increased), a growing percentage of college graduates.[14] Mailer's student has very good selfish

12. "Unsuccessful students with low class ranks could lose their deferments. The grades required to keep a student deferment varied according to the practice of local draft boards." Appy, *Working-Class War*, p. 35. In March 1966, the government announced that it would now restrict student deferments to students who were either in the upper half of their class or scored at least a 70 on the Selective Service Qualifying Test. Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, pp. 171–72. This test was first used in the Korean War era.

13. Graduate-school deferments in most subject areas were ended in 1967. Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, p. 178.

14. Flynn, *The Draft*, pp. 232–33. "By 1970 roughly 25 percent of American forces in Vietnam had some college education." But note that this figure is still well below "the 50 percent for the age group as a whole." In terms of the overall figures for Americans serving in Vietnam, from 1966 to 1971, 20.2 percent had some college education. In 1966, that percentage had been 14.6; in 1971, it had jumped to 29.9. Appy, *Working-Class War*, p. 26.

reasons for hating "this war so much." What he says implies that he will sacrifice his career to protest the war ("our point being with good careers ahead of us, we still hate this war so much that we go to jail"). But what he does not say is that the war very likely stands between him and his future career.

Traditionally, American college students came largely from families with ethnic and class privilege. Military service, especially leadership, was considered an honorable duty that came with privilege, and, like college, was a manifestation of that privilege. Simultaneously these families viewed military service as proof of manhood. Meanwhile, for working-class and ethnic Americans, service in American wars functioned as a gateway to honor, status, manhood, and, more specifically, college and good careers.[15] The social boost accorded to veterans was obviously especially true for the large majority of American men, white and black, Anglo and ethnic, who traditionally could not afford higher education, but in the two world wars it had also included ethnic American college students (with southern and eastern European backgrounds) seeking greater social acceptance.

In Vietnam, this traditional relationship between military service and social opportunity was for the first time no longer meaningful for a large segment of the draft-age population since by 1970, "50 percent of all college-aged youths attended an institution of higher education."[16] For the new, larger mass of college students who were now meritocratically selected, service in the army was no longer a gateway to education or social acceptance, the latter of which was now registered in meritocratic college admissions policies. Instead, military service simply became a mortal risk that could wipe out the fruits of education and social status. Meanwhile, with traditional Anglo and upper-class privilege eroded by the same college admissions revolution, traditionally privileged students experienced less of a sense of elite responsibility for military service. These related alterations had everything to do with the rise of the student antiwar movement.

Again, Korea, not Vietnam, was the first war in which the army maintained student deferments. The decision to institute student deferments was made in light of the Cold War competition: because the development of science and technology might prove decisive in the struggle with the Soviets,

15. Robert Self, "Last Man to Die: Vietnam and the Soldier as Citizen," unpublished manuscript, pp. 4–5.

16. Kenneth H. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York UP, 1993), p. 77.

much as science and technology had proved crucial in World War II with the atomic bomb, it was deemed advisable to continue programs of college and graduate school education and not to interfere with the production of experts and specialists. College education was re-imagined as part of the national defense.

But between Korea and Vietnam, the landscape of educational opportunity in American had changed in fundamental ways. A new meritocracy had developed, and this transformation, in conjunction with an economic boom and Cold War competition, meant that a greater percentage of American male youths was in college than ever before, and that most of them were there on the basis of scholastic promise, not traditional ethnic and class privilege. Meanwhile, the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 prompted the passage of the National Defense Education Act, greatly increasing government funding for the expansion of colleges and universities.

At the same time, then, the national student body was not only growing, but its nature was changing. University admission became a matter of meritocracy, not social privilege. The Korean War–era contract between the military's Selective Service System and the struggling Educational Testing Service (ETS), which was attempting to establish itself as indispensable to universities nationwide, paved the way for the national success of the ETS and essentially its universal adoption.[17] "In 1957 the number of students taking the SAT every year passed half a million."[18] In 1958, Clark Kerr announced at his inauguration as president of the University of California system, "it is no exaggeration to say we are entering a new era in the history of mankind. . . . We must again concern ourselves with educating an elite. . . . But this time we must train an elite of talent, rather than of wealth or family. . . . Our national welfare and even our survival may depend upon a body of highly trained talent."[19] Kerr's 1960 "Master Plan" established new campuses and guaranteed all California high-school graduates higher education at public expense. It would also channel students into junior colleges, "state" campuses, and university campuses, on the basis of scholastic merit.[20] It was in the 1964–65 school year that Yale accelerated its own transition to meritocracy and turned its "admissions upside down," in favor of the new scholastic criteria. In the 1940s and into the 1950s,

17. Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), p. 77.

18. Ibid., p. 85.

19. Ibid., pp. 121–22.

20. Ibid., pp. 34–35.

Yale, like many other Ivy League schools, took most of its students from elite private boarding schools, nicknamed "feeder" schools (as opposed to public schools), and prized highly such qualities among prospective students as "character" and "leadership." At Yale, "two old favorite criteria for college admissions [were] 'personal qualities' and likelihood of successful performance on Yale's athletic teams." An internal report on the new admissions policies finished in 1966 declared that admission to Yale would now be predicated on "Yale [being] first and foremost an intellectual enterprise" and also admitted that "in the past, at Yale and elsewhere, 'character' and 'leadership' have sometimes been rubrics under which favoritism has been shown to candidates of certain family, economic, religious, ethnic, and scholastic backgrounds." By the 1960s, the new systems of admission were secured across the Ivy League.[21] Meanwhile, due to the Cold War, undergraduate and graduate education was deemed essential to the national defense, and, strikingly, the student deferment was not limited to science and technology fields but was inclusive, even of the humanities.[22] As the director of the Office of Scientific Personnel of the National Research Council involved in the deferment program reported in 1952, the decision-making committees decided that it was impossible to decide in advance which fields were "'essential' sciences and professions."[23]

These combined changes in university admissions and Selective Service meant that for a larger number of young men than ever before, the army had nothing to offer in terms of recognition and social promotion. In fact, the army had already given them recognition with its program of student deferment. Aside from the issue of mortal risk, joining the army

21. Ibid., pp. 149–51. The Yale "Tobin Report" on admissions, quoted in Lemann, *The Big Test*, pp. 150–51.

22. Oddly enough, some otherwise serious and thoughtful books on the subject are unaware of or actually misinformed about this extension of draft deferment to students in all subject areas. Thus, citing Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* and Jerome Skolnick's *The Politics of Protest*, Heineman can misleadingly claim, "the federal government awarded student draft deferments based upon a system which ranked education and humanities majors as least essential to national security and, therefore, least worthy of military service exemptions." Heineman, *Campus Wars*, p. 78. In 1968, Johnson did restrict graduate-school deferments only to students in the health fields, but undergraduate deferments continued to be for students in all subject areas (Flynn, *The Draft*, pp. 221–22). "Student deferments were continued until 1971" (Appy, *Working-Class War*, p. 29). Perhaps the counterintuitive nature of this across-the-board deferment accounts for such a misrepresentation in a serious study.

23. M. H. Trytten, *Student Deferment in Selective Service: A Vital Factor in National Security* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1952), p. 109.

was now seen as a social step downward for men who had just gained a social boost from unprecedented meritocratic initiatives. Christian Appy asserted that in the Vietnam era, "men from wealthier families were likely to view the military as an agent of downward social mobility, an unnatural dislocating move across a social frontier—like moving from a college campus to a factory floor."[24] We might add that this was most of all true of men from a new, growing middle class, whose status hinged on their meritocratic admissions to college and their future careers, as opposed to college men who had the added social status of traditional family privilege. Though student deferments had already existed during the Korean War, college students and college graduates in that era, who were of course also wealthier than their working-class peers but still by and large in college on the basis of traditional privilege, had behaved differently.

This difference indicates a key point that both Nixon and historians aware of the class inequities in Vietnam service have missed. The Vietnam-era student protesters were not only protecting their "asses," to quote Nixon; they were also protecting their statuses. This status, i.e., their difference from their working-class peers, was not just a matter of family wealth. Unlike traditional class and ethnic privileges, status for most students now was newly acquired and thus seemingly precarious, as well as (for the first time in American history) meritocratically granted and thus seemingly earned: something experienced as worth fighting for. One "ex-student, when asked why he and his classmates clung to [their deferments] while other boys were called, explained that the privileged *deserved* their privilege."[25] As Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss put it, "a mother of a draft-deferred son spoke the minds of millions when she boasted of him as 'a boy who knows how to take advantage of *his opportunities*.'"[26] A Rhodes Scholar who became a corporate lawyer was quoted as saying, "There are certain people who can do more good in a lifetime in politics or academics or medicine than by getting killed in a trench." James Martin Davis asserted, "Among some of the college students who successfully avoided the war . . . , there was an elitism, an arrogance and a snobbishness. . . . Many of my generation considered themselves better than the soldiers who had gone to Vietnam. They considered themselves

24. Appy, *Working-Class War*, p. 53.

25. Flynn, *The Draft*, p. 180 (my emphasis).

26. Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Knopf, 1978), p. 36 (my emphasis).

'too good' to have to go."[27] In a 1975 article, James Fallows described some of his Ivy League compatriots who (like him) managed to avoid military service as possessing "disdain for the abilities, hopes, complexities of those who have not *scrambled onto the high road*."[28]

Historians have noted that antiwar feeling began in 1965 and 1966 mostly among "the best students at the best institutions,"[29] but they have failed to add that such students were at these elite institutions on the basis of new, meritocratic admissions policies.[30] These students—the best at the best schools—were the greatest beneficiaries of the new meritocratic policies and they had the most to lose in terms of career potential. More generally, studies conducted during the war showed that, overall, "student activists have higher grade point averages than non-activists."[31] The best students, the ones who would have benefited most from the new meritocratic policies and who had the most to lose professionally, were the ones who tended to protest. If these newly privileged and successful, or meritocratically selected and promoted, students or graduates were to abandon their student deferments, or fail to attempt to get medical exemptions or occupational deferments, and enter the army, they would have forfeited a meritocratic status that they, and in many cases their families, had only just begun to taste. Though it is romantic simply to celebrate the student protesters as principled heroes, it is also misleading simply to dismiss them as "cowards" or "bums" who were trying to save their own skins, for their protesting combined with their clinging to their deferments represented an understandable, and arguably very American, impulse towards status. Through their own (academic) labor, they had managed to get ahead, to "scramble onto the high road," to take a step toward the newest version of the American Dream, and they were not about to let a remote, questionable war take that all away without a fight.[32]

27. Quoted in Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*, p. 262.

28. James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" *Washington Monthly* 7, no. 8 (October 1975): 14 (my emphasis).

29. Calvin Lee, quoted in Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, p. 165.

30. Elite schools continued to admit "legacies" (children of alumni) though in lesser numbers, but it is safe to assume that the "best students" had also been admitted on the basis of their scholastic achievement. The percentage of alumni sons at Yale dropped from 20 percent in 1963–64 to 12 percent in 1964–65. Lemann, *The Big Test*, p. 149.

31. Joseph B. Perry, Jr., Meredith Pugh, Eldon Snyder, and Elmer Spreitzer, "Patterns of Student Participation in a Free University," *Youth & Society* 3, no. 2 (1971), abstract.

32. It is true that students sometimes implicitly or explicitly criticized or protested their own deferments, as in the open letter of 1966 to Lyndon Johnson, signed by student

The decision to grant student deferments across all subject areas, including the social sciences and humanities, was a watershed moment in America history, in which a rising scholastic meritocracy was blessed by the federal government and the military, and a population of talented university students was designated a protected class. At almost the same moment that America moved toward a racially desegregated nation with *Brown v. Board of Education* and the end of racial segregation in the army in the Korean War era,[33] the nation moved toward a fundamentally bifurcated system of meritocratic channeling.[34] The meaning of this Selective Service innovation would not become clear for more than a decade, precisely because during the Korean War, as it had been in World Wars I and II, the military was in the vanguard of the development of meritocracy and inclusiveness, and the nation's universities had yet to catch up. By the Vietnam era, they had caught up enough to make a huge difference, and the difference manifested itself in the antiwar movement.

Mailer's "too-good-to-be-true" student does have a double life, but not the exotic and sinister one that Mailer quixotically imagines. Mailer's keen ability to sense double agency or hypocrisy is, as usual, faultless, but his imagination in the shadow of the Pentagon runs away with him. For, in addition to this student's status as an antiwar resister, a brave, exciting, and moral actor in a national drama, he is also, somewhat less dramatically, a deferred student, and as such a protected asset to the nation and its defense, on his way to a "good career." In fact, he can be an antiwar protester precisely because, thanks to his student deferment—that is, thanks to the government—he has free time as well as membership in a peer community of students who share his strong motive to protest the war. Because the deferment was extended to all fields, social science

leaders from a hundred colleges and universities, which made reference to "the almost universal conviction that the present Selective Service law operates unfairly." But this criticism, as in this case, tended to issue from students who were doubly privileged, either because of traditional prerogatives, based on family, class, and wealth, or because, as here, they were student leaders. And, of course, to address this case, implicitly criticizing the unfairness of student deferments is not the same as renouncing them: students questioning their own privilege is a rhetorically effective device for proving that they are "loyal and courageous young people" and not "radicals." (Letter quoted in Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* p. 124.)

33. Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), p. 126.

34. Appy makes a similar and related observation about the forces in Vietnam: "Precisely when the enlisted ranks were becoming increasingly integrated by race, they were becoming ever more segregated by class" (Appy, *Working-Class War*, p. 22).

and humanities students were also protected from immediate service and left on campus: the very students whose training taught them to question social traditions and organizations, and "from which overwhelmingly dissent was drawn."[35]

Historian of the draft George Flynn cannot understand how some of President Johnson's White House staff members could believe that doing away with all college deferments "would defuse protest on campuses. Given the popularity of such deferments, this was a dubious idea." It may be true that the college deferments had already done their "damage" in creating ripe conditions for student protest, and that the elimination of the deferments at that late date (1967–68) would have been too late to stem the protest given its momentum (and so eliminating them would have only incensed students further). But perhaps the idea of these Johnson staffers, though belated and thus wishful, was not so "strange"[36]: perhaps they understood the mischief that the student deferments—and thus ironically the government itself—had created.

The war is the one large problem standing in the way of Mailer's student's promising career. Because of the larger student populations (for the first time, slightly more than half of all college-age youth were in college), and because of the insularity of campus life guaranteed by the student deferment, it did not matter too much that the leadership of the nation, as well as a great many working-class and older people, did not see his actions as brave, exciting, or moral, but rather as cowardly, aggravating, or irresponsible: thus the rise of the slogan among the young, "never trust anyone over thirty." What mattered was that this student's peers, and especially the females in his cohort, "their girls," saw him as daring, interesting, and in the right. "Girls say yes to boys who say no" was an anti-draft slogan used by the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society),[37] and a famous poster with that slogan was produced around 1968 featuring Joan Baez.

It is perhaps the very particular setting for this student speech—there are "Over-Thirties" in the audience, with careers, including professors and writers—that makes this student speak beyond his cohort and concede

35. Charles Chatfield, review of *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*, by Kenneth H. Heineman, *American Historical Review* 99 (April 1994): 689. See also Perry et al., "Patterns of Student Participation," pp. 211–23.

36. Flynn, *The Draft*, p. 220.

37. Adam Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 127.

something that presumably most protesting students kept to themselves: his interest in a career, which admits an intention to participate in the mainstream and is not particularly sexy in antiwar circles in 1967. Perhaps we are hearing the voice of a protester who may be unusually morally motivated and more so than most of his peers, but who is otherwise less of a self-proclaimed radical and a more mainstream, "liberal" student antiwar resister. But if we understand that antiwar students generally had a "double life" because they were both a protected, elite class interested in maintaining their draft status and a rebel group bent not only on refusing military service in Vietnam but also on presenting themselves as daring, sexy, masculine figures in the process, then some of the riddles of the era unravel.

This double life was a balancing act, involving contradictory behaviors. Some of the same students who protested the government in the streets were also, to the dismay of the SDS leadership, taking the government standardized tests that qualified them for deferments. In March 1966, there were several simultaneous mass marches around the country, involving about 200,000 people.[38] But, again, the largest mass action of the year among college students in regard to the military and the war was the taking of the army test to qualify for student deferral, involving 765,000 students acting in concert on three days.[39] There is no way of knowing precisely to what degree students protesting in 1966 overlapped with students taking the government deferment test or receiving deferments the same year. But we do know that there were overlaps between deferred students and protesting students because in that same year, and the year before, the draft agency had outraged students and university administrators by revoking or threatening to revoke the deferred status of students who took part in particular protests.[40] Indeed, again, studies have repeatedly shown that student activists had higher grade point averages than non-activists: that is, it was very the students who were likely to qualify for deferments, when deferments were tied during the Vietnam War to scholastic achievement, who were also likely to protest.[41] In general, as draft historian George Flynn asserted, "on college campuses many student who enjoyed deferments protested the war."[42]

38. Ibid., p. 88.
39. Flynn, *The Draft*, p. 184.
40. Ibid., pp. 183–85.
41. Perry et al., "Patterns of Student Participation," pp. 211–23.
42. Flynn, *The Draft*, p. 220.

In addition, the steady and dramatic rise in the number of student protesters through the 1960s went hand in hand with a steady and fantastic rise in the number of students with deferrals from the draft, and that latter rise was much steeper than the increase in the college population (which in turn was greater than the increase in the high school population). Not only were there more students in college than ever before, but fantastically more of these students were seeking and getting deferments based on their college status. College population went from 2,257,000 in 1960 to 4,119,000 in 1968, but the number of young men classified 1-S or 2-S, deferred for education, went from a mere 178,871 in 1960 to a massive 2,262,000 in 1970.[43] Not only was college population growing quickly, and more quickly than the percentage increase in high school students (82 percent versus 22 percent) in the eight years between 1960 and 1968, but the population of college students with deferments had grown at a rate of more than 1100 percent in the ten years from 1960 to 1970. As historian Willis Rudy has noted, "college and university attendance" was "used by ingenious 'students' as a means of delaying or evading the draft. Studies made during the mid-1960s revealed that a number of young men who might not otherwise have gone to college were now doing so in hopes that they would get student deferments." Meanwhile, when "graduate school deferments [in subject areas deemed 'non-essential'] were ended in 1967, applications for graduate programs in such areas as liberal arts or business administration declined sharply."[44] As the Vietnam War proceeded and the protests grew, more young people sought college and especially draft deferment for college education.

The only possible sensible conclusion is that many students opposed to the war were also interested in pursuing student deferments to put off their own draft call. This is not a very radical conclusion, and the SDS had to the face the reality of it when its calls to boycott the army deferral test of 1966 "fell on deaf ears." Many students who participated or might participate in the movement saw the deferment as their immediate protection, and "even the SDS realized the futility of asking students to boycott what many saw as their salvation."[45] Evidently many of the student protestors had a double relationship to the army and the government: they were not

43. Flynn, *The Draft*, p. 232. Meanwhile, by 1967, only about 19 percent of American college students, nearly a million, believed in the need for a mass revolutionary party. Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts*, pp. 153–54.

44. Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, p. 178.

45. Flynn, *The Draft*, pp. 180, 184.

simply resisters of government war policy, but also beneficiaries of a draft system that provided them with special deferments on the basis of their college student status. They wanted to be able *both* to protest and to preserve their deferments, and in cases when the first seemed to threaten the second, the students involved sought legal and university aid in preserving their deferred status and their right to protest.

This doubleness of the life of student protesters was a major feature of the movement. While they deferred service and protested the war, students often did so with a dedication to an "outrageous," "militant," or "counterculture" style that was often counterproductive to gaining popularity for their movement with other groups, and thus frustrating to their politically minded leaders,[46] because what was crucially at stake was their masculine "identity." In America, service in war had meant manhood; the association of masculinity with military service had been solidified in the world wars and was confirmed in public discourse as well as familiar customs, such as war monuments and national holidays. Conversely, refusal to serve had meant cowardice, and Vietnam draft resisters and protestors attracted the accusation of cowardice. The movement was dedicated to a redefinition of masculine identity and sexual attractiveness that ended the military monopoly on masculinity: hence the hostility or at least coolness of the New Left to the army and soldiers.[47] "For some [militants], . . . to be against the war in Vietnam entailed denigrating the moral qualities of the American fighting man. Much of the radical antiwar rhetoric portrayed American soldiers as proto-Fascist automatons and wanton perpetrators of atrocities against Vietnamese civilians."[48] Protesting students often enough reconstituted soldiers as ignorant pawns or morally corrupt conformists and themselves as brave individualists.

While in the world wars, and even in the Korean War, a refusal to be in the army was seen in the middle and upper classes as a failure of masculinity and could lead to social ostracism, the student resisters reversed this stigmatization on many college campuses. They reconstituted draft compliance as dishonorable as well as ignorant and draft avoidance as morally righteous as well as enlightened. As Samuel Hynes, who taught literature

46. For example, SDS leader Tom Hayden remarked, "My idea was to go Mainstream, but . . . the movement had gotten itself isolated at the very moment that large numbers of people were ready to be mobilized." Hayden, quoted in Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts*, p. 122.

47. Stephen E. Ambrose, "Foreword" to Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts*, p. viii.

48. Charles C. Moskos, Jr., *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970), p. 34.

on campus during the Vietnam War, remembered, "Anyone who taught in an American college during those years . . . remembers the reigning spirit of evasion. Among the students it was not considered dishonorable to avoid the draft; the dishonorable (and stupid) thing was to go."[49] Student resisters made participation in antiwar protest a condition of social or peer acceptance: now to refuse the antiwar movement was constituted as cowardly, conformist, and uncool—causing one to end up as a social pariah. Students flocked to antiwar protests in much the same way that the young elite in the world wars had flocked to the military: in part to avoid humiliation and ostracism. Instrumental to the success of the identity politics of the protest, to the redefinition of masculinity, was the mobilization of peer pressure. As former activist Jeffrey Herf put it, "By 1969 the New Left had developed an intense and oppressive sense of community. It is impossible to exaggerate the degree of sheer fear, fear of isolation, of being thought cowardly, of losing one's friends, and not being in on the action when the revolution took place, that I and many other veterans of the New Left felt at [the SDS 1969] convention."[50] Also crucial to this redefinition of masculinity was the considerable increase in female college attendance between the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Protesting male students could impress an audience of female peers and thus have "their girls" (to quote Mailer's student) because there was a significant female presence in the college population.

The student movement did not lose focus in sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Along with protest, aggressive and open sexuality, drug use, and distinctive musical forms were instruments for asserting a new masculine identity. The particular form of identity borrowed from the precedents of the Beat writers and the hipster movement of the 1950s. Interestingly, the major Beat literary icons Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs had developed their countercultural rebellion of sex, drugs, and music in response to their own agonizing rejection of the military. Both managed to get psychiatric discharges, and both did so only after the military rejected their applications for officer and pilot status on meritocratic grounds in World War II: Kerouac flunked a mathematics-based test, and Burroughs did not have good eyesight.

The sexism of the protest movement was not accidental but, on the contrary, central to the movement's attempt to associate protest with

49. Samuel Hynes, quoted in Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*, p. 148.
50. Jeffrey Herf, quoted in Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts*, p. 126.

masculinity. The subordination of women in the movement hierarchy and the sexual objectification of women echoed the movement's penchant for violence and its flirtation with the Black Panthers, symptomatic of the male student need to appear unquestionably masculine.[51] Ultimately the movement was very successful in detaching masculinity from military service, at least in elite, college and college-educated quarters.

Moreover, the mass movement, not always in sync with the radical leaders, was geared *both* to end the war and to avoid service in Vietnam. Thus, in addition to what was said, in slogans and speeches against the war, students were also opposed to being drafted and sent to war. As a few commentators have remarked, there was a "Curious Calm at the War's End."[52] After 1971, there were no more mass demonstrations, and one of the things that happened at the end of 1971 and the beginning of 1972 was the diminishment of the draft.[53] "In late 1971 the DOD announced there was a zero draft call for January 1972." Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said there would be none in February either. In June 1972, Nixon announced no more draftees would be sent to Vietnam.[54] The fact is, antiwar protest activities would tail off in part at least because Nixon dramatically curtailed and then finally ended the draft.

The draft, which had lasted from 1941 to 1973, ended and has not been resurrected. The consequent reliance on an all-volunteer force would push the military to invite women into the regular armed services,[55] thus ending the male monopoly on the status of American soldier and further complicating the once simple identification of armed service and masculinity. Finally, the elimination of the draft has helped ensure that there has been no repeat performance of a popular uprising against an American war.

51. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones makes a similar observation: "Young men who refused to serve their country were accused of cowardice and so, against their better judgment, may have suffered from a loss of self-esteem. Ordering women about and flaunting the availability of sex in those envied sixties orgies was a way of restoring a sense of virility." Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now!: American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1999), p. 153.

52. Mueller, "Reflection on the Vietnam Antiwar Movement," p. 151.

53. Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts*, p. 196.

54. Flynn, *The Draft*, pp. 257–58.

55. Conversation with military historians Stephen Bourque and Jennifer Keene, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, June 11, 2008.

The Risk of Total Divergence: Politicized Intelligence and Defactualization in the Age of Imminent War

James Barry

In her 1971 essay "Lying in Politics," Hannah Arendt reflects on the publication of top-secret materials contained in a massive study entitled "History of U.S. Decision-Making Process on Vietnam Policy," a.k.a. the Pentagon Papers. As the title of her essay suggests, Arendt is concerned with the problem of political deception. However, it is not the lies that politicians may or may not tell that form the central theme of her essay. Instead, she focuses on what the Pentagon Papers tell us about the role of ideological thinking and self-deception in the development of U.S. policy bearing on Vietnam. In particular, she focuses on two forms of defactualization in her assessment of the reasons and images that are developed to promote U.S. military action in Southeast Asia: the first arises with the cold war ideology of political leaders, while the second appears with the ever more common calculative practices (e.g., game theory, systems analysis, outcome projections, etc.) of those charged with generating policy options. The ideological convictions shared to a greater or lesser extent by all government leaders (Arendt's "decision makers") shielded them from reality. Their inability to see any other options was grounded in the all-inclusive and powerful explanatory framework of the Cold War in which they came of age.

As Arendt describes it, policy advisors or "problem-solvers" participated in the production of another form of defactualization. Their talent for generating a multitude of scenarios designed to achieve a specific goal made them ideal advisors to their ideologically empowered leaders. They were not any more concerned with the lack of connection between reality and these ideologically determined goals than they were with the

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morally or legally questionable nature of the scenarios they themselves propagated. What mattered for these policy thinkers or "problem-solvers" was the elegance of their theories, the effectiveness of their various cost-benefit analyses, and the ability to anticipate and fend off any argument against the goal that had been set before them. Their powerful calculative capacities both funded and were aided by their liberation from reality.

Taken together, the specific conduct of these two groups served to insulate decisions concerning political and military actions in Vietnam from reality and experience. Even in the face of accurate intelligence, these two groups were able to shield themselves in distinctly different ways from the reality of the situation. It is these forms of protection from reality, the problem of the "nonrelation between facts and decisions, between the intelligence community and the civilian and military services" that Arendt identifies as "perhaps the most momentous, and certainly the best-guarded, secret that the Pentagon Papers revealed."[1]

Similar processes of defactualization were at play in the decision to go to war in Iraq. In the political environment of 2002 and early 2003, going to war became an inevitability funded by what Arendt calls this "non-relation of facts and decisions." However, the politicization of intelligence that contributed to this seeming inevitability goes beyond the complex phenomena of defactualization in the Pentagon Papers. Given that the intelligence services have traditionally provided an ongoing connection between policy formation and actual events and factual reality, any changes that compromise the capacity of the intelligence bodies to know what has happened and what is happening will have grave consequences. If such mutations of the fact-finding roles of the intelligence agencies were real and permanent changes, we would be confronted by another, even more serious, form of defactualization, one that would leave us in the tragically humorous plight of asking "how do we know that we can know" (a plight normally reserved to theoretical epistemologists). In such a scenario

1. Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics," in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harvest, 1972), p. 29. Arendt also identifies the generation and maintenance of public support through image-building and public relations as a crucial battlefront for those developing and implementing policy in fighting the war in Vietnam. Thus, to the extent that the public accepted government pronouncements regarding Vietnam, they also shared in this divorce from reality and experience. The collapse of the distinction between public relations and policy decisions seems a close companion to the collapse of the difference between intelligence and policy. These "streamlining" events are quite troubling insofar as they represent a loss of distinctions that are drawn from factual reality.

where we would find ourselves more fully on the nonfactual side of the ideological divide, we would be left to wonder with Arendt if there has been a "decisive change in the American people's national character."

I. The Presentation of Open Secrets: Colin Powell at the United Nations

> I cannot tell you everything that we know. But what I can share with you, when combined with what all of us have learned over the years, is deeply troubling.
>
> Colin Powell, February 5, 2002

According to Colin Powell, his appearance at the United Nations on February 5, 2002, was motivated by two aims. First, he wanted to echo the reports by Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei concerning Iraqi resistance to disarmament. Second, and this is the endeavor that took up almost his entire presentation that day, was "to provide [the UN Security Council] with additional information, to share . . . what the United States knows about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction as well as Iraq's involvement in terrorism."[2] Powell's stance is clear: he will share intelligence with the Security Council (and the world watching the broadcast). He will not only present the intelligence, but he will also serve as a sort of public intelligence analyst, explaining to his audience what they have heard or seen and what it means. Further, he will show how all of this intelligence presents "an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behavior."

Throughout Powell's presentation, he refers to "a variety of sources," both technical and human, which have provided dramatic and undeniable evidence of Iraqi misbehavior. He emphasizes the reliability of these sources, a reliability that he characterizes as if it borders on certainty:

> My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence. I will cite some examples, and these are from human sources.

Sentences like these are repeated a number of times throughout the presentation to emphasize that the intelligence findings "are not assertions . . . [but]

2. "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses U.N. Security Council," White House Press Release, February 5, 2002.

facts, corroborated by many sources, some of them sources of the intelligence services of other countries." In the presentation, audio tapes and satellite photos are presented and interpreted, and then corroborated by human sources, principally the statements and reports of Iraqi defectors. The support of technical intelligence by human sources is portrayed as increasing the irrefutability of the conclusions of the report. Powell makes this point a number of times, but emphasizes it most boldly in his account of a satellite photo which apparently shows activity at a chemical weapons site:

> What makes this picture significant is that we have a human source who has corroborated that movement of chemical weapons occurred at this site at that time. So it's not just the photo, and it's not an individual seeing the photo. It's the photo and then the knowledge of an individual being brought together to make the case.

The role of defector accounts in Powell's presentation is crucial. He uses them to support his interpretation of tapes and photos. One wonders why the satellite photos in particular would not have been decisive in themselves. Why depend on what was already suspected by many in the U.S. intelligence community to be unreliable and self-serving reports by Iraqi defectors and ex-patriots, such as Khidhir Hamza and Ahmed Chalabi? Such dependence on questionable human sources would seem to weaken rather than strengthen the case for strong intelligence. What we find in this melange of intelligence and rhetoric is a trace of how the Powell presentation came into existence. Powell's material was drawn from the intelligence work of various agencies, some traditionally assigned the task of intelligence analysis and other newly created or ad hoc entities. Through a convoluted process, Powell and his advisors cobbled together what they took to be the strongest evidence of the imminent threat posed by Iraq. Their sources were not only the result of challenged and verified intelligence work, but much of it was also borrowed from work done by groups and individuals who had not been trained in intelligence tradecraft. We now know that Powell, his chief of staff Lawrence Wilkerson, and several intelligence and administration figures spent the week just prior to Powell's UN presentation checking sources on the mixed intelligence material.

Despite Powell's many accomplishments, he was never an intelligence analyst. His task at the United Nations that day was not to analyze

and interpret raw intelligence but to make a case for war on the basis of what he thought was solid intelligence analysis by the CIA and several other agencies. However, the sense that Powell was offering new facts, which had the appearance of classified information, gave his presentation its convincing power. The underlying narrative of Powell's appearance at the United Nations that day was of a man who had been convinced by hard facts of something of which he did not want to be convinced: Iraq must be invaded because it poses a real and imminent threat to the United States.

Powell had been portrayed by many as the most moderate member of the Bush cabinet, as the "reluctant warrior." Thus, his appearance at the United Nations was viewed by the public and the press as a confirmation of the diagnosis that we have to go to war. His portrayal of various examples of satellite photos and reports from defectors as hard intelligence was taken as irrefutable evidence of the facts, even though much of what he offered was seen by various intelligence analysts as very weak and questionable. In short the presentation to the UN Security Council was, first and foremost, a public relations endeavor, and, as a public relations campaign, his bearing of open secrets to the United Nations that day was a tremendous success. Powell's portrayal of all available intelligence as speaking with one voice meant that the war was now, in the opinion of the great majority of the press, pundits, and the public, a foregone necessity. The fact that the intelligence community was not united behind the case that Powell offered at the UN seemed to have been a matter of little importance.

II. Defactualization and the "Uncertain Business" of Intelligence

The solid, irrefutable facts of the spring of 2003 became questionable after the invasion of Iraq, when no evidence of stockpiles of unconventional weapons were found. Two and half years after his presentation at the UN Security Council, Powell described the presentation as a painful "blot on my record." What he told the United Nations turned out to be false. He attributes the problem to a "failure of intelligence," because there "were some people in the intelligence community who knew at that time that some of these sources were not good, and shouldn't be relied upon, and they didn't speak up."[3] The human sources were not trustworthy and the raw technical intelligence turned out to be subject to various interpretations. As Powell's chief of staff at the State Department, Lawrence Wilkerson, put it in 2006,

3. Colin Powell, interview by Barbara Walters, *20/20*, ABC, September 5, 2005.

"I've been a consumer, a user of intelligence at the tactical, operational, and strategic level for close to 35, 36 years. And I've seen many errors in intelligence. And I know it's not a perfectible business. Not by any stretch of the imagination."[4] Thus, as Powell and his chief of staff saw it—and indeed most of the committees, panels, and other bodies that took up the question ultimately agreed with them—the problem stemmed from the flawed nature of intelligence and the unwillingness of certain analysts to share this frailty with Powell and others. When asked in 2007 if he "felt responsible for giving the UN flawed intelligence," Powell replied that he "didn't know it was flawed," that "everybody was using it," and that the "CIA was saying the same thing for two years."[5]

Yet, should not such unanimity in the intelligence findings on Iraq have alerted a seasoned policy advisor to a potential problem? Powell seems to acknowledge he had such concerns when he explains how he tried to give an honest assessment of the intelligence by removing threatening language, that he "gave perhaps the most accurate presentation of the intelligence as we knew it—without any of the 'Mushroom clouds are going to show up tomorrow morning' and all the rest of that stuff." However, the larger problem was not the rhetoric of a nuclear dawn but rather the fact that the intelligence was so convincing. Perhaps someone of Powell's experience and keenness of mind should have questioned this remarkable univocality. Instead, he lent his voice to support the irrefutable conclusions that the unquestionable information provided by the intelligence agencies asserted.

Some senior analysts have since argued that they did not present such rock-hard intelligence analysis, some even claiming that they were censored when they tried to offer other possible readings of raw intelligence. Paul R. Pillar, CIA National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia from 2000 to 2005, presents a very different picture of the role of intelligence analysis concerning Iraq, circa 2002–2003. He argues that what is "most remarkable about pre-war intelligence on Iraq is not that it got things wrong and thereby misled policymakers; it is that it played so small a role in one of the most important U.S. policy decisions in recent decades."[6] Pillar argues that the normal blurring between analysis and

4. Lawrence Wilkerson, interview by David Brancaccio, *Now*, PBS, February 3, 2006.

5. Walter Isaacson, "GQ Icon: Colin Powell," *GQ*, October 2007.

6. Paul R. Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 85 (March/April 2006): 15–27.

policy that often takes place was exacerbated in the year before the invasion of Iraq, that the "Bush administration's use of intelligence on Iraq did not just blur this distinction; it turned it upside down . . . [using] intelligence not to inform decision-making, but to justify a decision already made."[7]

What is most important about Pillar's account is his description of the various concrete ways in which this inversion of the intelligence-policy relationship (the "politicization of intelligence") occurred. In addition to the analysts' understandable desire to *not* be the bearers of bad news (i.e., that Iraq is not an imminent threat), of information that did not support what they knew to be the administration's position (and that of the Congress, the press, and the public), Pillar identifies the decision regarding the "specific questions to which the [intelligence] community devoted its energies" as the chief way in which this inversion occurred:

> As any competent pollster can attest, how a question is framed helps determine the answer. In the case of Iraq, there was also the matter of sheer quantity of output—not just what the intelligence community said, but how many times it said it. . . . In an unpoliticized environment, intelligence officers decide which rocks to turn over based on past patterns and their own judgments. But when policymakers repeatedly urge the intelligence community to turn over only certain rocks, the process becomes biased.[8]

Rather than depend on the experience and judgment of veteran analysts to evaluate the piles of raw intelligence and determine what it all meant, by the questions that were put to the analysts, policy makers "prequalified" the material that the analysts were called on to interpret. In other words, before the analysts had done their job, the job had already been done.

If we reflect on Arendt's account of the inherent problem in U.S. policy in Vietnam, we find a similar disconnection between intelligence and policy. However, Arendt does not ascribe the problem to a failure of intelligence, but rather to a gap between what is actually happening and what the policy-makers understand to be happening:

> It is this remoteness from reality that will haunt the reader of the Pentagon papers. . . . [As Richard Barnet describes it, the] "bureaucratic model had completely displaced reality: the hard and stubborn facts, which so

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

> many intelligence analysts were paid so much to collect, were ignored." I am not sure that the evils of bureaucracy suffice as an explanation, though they certainly facilitated this defactualization. At any rate, the relation, or, rather, nonrelation, between facts and decision, between the intelligence community and the civilian and military services, is perhaps the most momentous, and certainly the best-guarded, secret that the Pentagon papers revealed.[9]

This is Arendt's first mention of the term "defactualization," although the concept is actively at play in her earlier essay "Truth and Politics." In tracing the dynamics of this defactualizing process, Arendt points to three groups: the decision-makers, the problem-solvers, and the base-level analysts. Arendt describes the position of the analysts who are responsible for gathering information and evaluating it, as relatively free from ideological entanglement:

> The fact-finding branches of the intelligence services were separated from whatever covert operations were still going on in the field, which meant that they at least were responsible only for gathering information, rather than for creating the news themselves. They had no need to show positive results and were under no pressure from Washington to produce good news to feed the public-relations machine, or to concoct fairy tales about "continuing progress, miraculous improvement, year in and year out."' They were relatively independent, and the result was that they told the truth, year in and year out.[10]

Arendt describes a sort of firewall between those responsible for intelligence analysis and those responsible for policy decisions. As Pillar points out, although this firewall exists, it has never been more than a provisional barrier. Analysts are not sequestered: they live normal lives and are quite aware of the political issues of their time. Nonetheless, the analyst's ability to evaluate what is actually going on and what it most likely means and report these findings honestly, so that those who craft political decisions may do so on the basis of actual threats, is a crucial element in effective foreign policy. In her account of the Pentagon Papers, Arendt asserts this capacity for independent intelligence analysis is still intact in the Vietnam era. This relative independence of intelligence analysts (and by describing

9. Arendt, "Lying in Politics," p. 20.
10. Ibid., p. 22.

it as "relative" Arendt is acknowledging that such analysts are always touched by the political attitudes of those for whom they provide intelligence analysis) represents a crucial difference between 1968 and 2003. We cannot say of those analysts who were with Colin Powell the night before his UN presentation that "those who were responsible for intelligence estimates were miles away from the problem-solvers, their disdain for facts, and the accidental character of all facts."[11] Not only were they in the room, they were also in the space in which it was not a question of whether we should go to war but rather how to make the best case for a war that must take place. In short, something has changed, at least temporarily, to bring these senior analysts closer to the ideological bubble in which the Iraq War had become a necessity that must be planned, executed, and publicly justified.[12]

Several writers have pointed to the questionable role that the Policy Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group (PCTEG), led by Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, played in the production of intelligence analysis made available to high-ranking members of the administration.[13] Further, there is little doubt that these materials were already preformed and preselected on the basis of making as convincing as case as possible for invading Iraq. However, much less attention has been paid to the work of the Director of Central Intelligence's Counter Terrorism Center (CTC). After collaborating with the CIA Near East and South Asia office (NESA) on presidential briefings in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the Deputy Director of Intelligence ordered the CTC to write a report on its own, a paper published on June 21, 2002, under the title "Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship." The CTC's account of why this paper stressed more fully a possible connection between Iraq and al-Qaida, and therefore differed from the earlier reports it co-wrote with NESA analysts, is quite revealing:

> This intelligence assessment responds to senior policymaker interest in a comprehensive assessment of Iraqi regime links to al-Qa'ida. Our

11. Ibid., pp. 22–23.

12. The collapse of the distinction between public relations and policy decisions seems a close companion to the collapse of the difference between intelligence and policy. These "streamlining" events are quite troubling insofar as they represent a loss of distinctions that are drawn from factual reality.

13. These writers include Paul R. Pillar, Jeffrey Goldberg, Gordon Mitchell, and others.

> approach is purposefully aggressive in seeking to draw connections, on the assumption that any indication of a relationship between these two hostile elements could carry great dangers for the United States.[14]

Here we find a legitimate intelligence department at work. The CTC staff were all professional intelligence analysts charged with aggressively showing the possible links between Iraq and al-Qaida. The title of the paper in which their findings were published may be read as warning that the connection between Iraq and al-Qaida is at best a murky one. However, to understand how dangerously intimate the relationship between policy and intelligence analysis had become, one has only to consider how the Deputy Director of Intelligence explained the charge she gave to the CTC:

> What happened with the "murky paper" was I was asking the people who were writing it to lean far forward and do a speculative piece. If you were going to stretch to the maximum the evidence you had, what would you come up with?[15]

Why does the Deputy Director set the CTC staff free to "lean far forward" and "stretch to the maximum the evidence"? Under Arendt's description, intelligence analysis should seek to understand what is happening. However, intelligence work also involves trying to determine what might happen. Especially in times of great danger, the stakes are such that stretching the evidence can mean snapping the connection between reality and intelligence analysis. Clearly, speculation becomes an ever more valuable tool when one is trying to understand a "murky relationship" between Iraq and al-Qaida that might conceivably pose an ominous threat. As Robert Gates described it in 2003, in times of such threat and danger, intelligence assessments must balance evidence and risk:

> If the stakes and the consequences are small, you're going to want ninety-per-cent assurance. It's a risk calculus. On the other hand, if your worry is along the lines of what Rumsfeld is saying—another major attack on the U.S., possibly with biological or chemical weapons—and you look at the consequences of September 11th, then the equation of risk changes. You have to be prepared to go forward with a lot lower level of confidence in

14. *Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Pre-War Intelligence Assessments on Iraq*, Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Senate, July 7, 2004, p. 305.

15. Ibid., p. 307.

> the evidence you have. A fifty-per-cent chance of such an attack happening is so terrible that it changes the calculation of risk.[16]

The calculative implications are clear: the grave threats posed to the safety of the United States raise such a high level of risk that speculation is the order of the day. In such an extreme situation, the interpretation of intelligence must be taken to a "higher plane." In other words, the gap between intelligence, the meaning of which is almost never certain, and ideological thinking, which is by its very nature always deductively certain of its claims, must be closed.

III. Integrated Intelligence: Closing the Gap between Risk and Policy

The evidence-risk analysis discourse lies at the heart of the dramatic changes in the role of intelligence in the period 2001–2003. In some sense, what Gates describes is not all that new. Risk evaluation has always been part of the intelligence analyst's job description. However, what has changed is the way in which risk is understood. During the Cold War, the threat of an annihilating nuclear attack was always part of the risk equation. However, the certainty of who and where our attacker would be, and the stability of the opponent, made this risk seem manageable and reasonable. Ironically, despite the fact that the scale of threat that potential opponents represent in the War on Terror is tiny in comparison to the Cold War, the risks that such attacks represent are portrayed as much larger. Where deterrence and a balance of threat were effective risk reduction principles during the Cold War, a new threat has emerged, one that, at least rhetorically, dwarfs the threat posed by the Soviet Union, because of its uncertainty. As a result, a new principle of risk reduction must be devised to address the uncertainty of when, how, and by whom the United States might be attacked:

> The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case

16. Robert Gates, quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg's "A Reporter At Large: The Unknown, The C.I.A. and the Pentagon take another look at Al Qaeda and Iraq," *The New Yorker*, February 10, 2003. It is worth noting that Gates was not a government official in 2003, but rather the president of Texas A & M University. He had served in various government capacities before that time, including the position of Director of the C.I.A.

> for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack.[17]

A national security strategy built around the principle of anticipatory defense clearly heightens the need for an effective intelligence system. One can only take the chance of first strike against an enemy if one is certain that they are about to attack or that they are planning an attack with devastating implications. The problem with this view is that an effective intelligence system may be able to ascertain an opponent's weapons capability with good accuracy, but (short of declarations of war) a potential enemy's intentions can be determined with much less certainty. Yet it is precisely the intentions of our adversaries that define the risk management approach at the heart of the 2002 National Security Strategy. While the scale of destruction that our new enemies threaten may be small by Cold War standards, the risk posed by them is multiplied by their intentions and the uncertainty of when and where they might attack us. Under such a system of risk assessment, an effective intelligence system will be defined less by its ability to report on the destructive capabilities of a potential enemy, and more on its ability to predict the imminence of the threatening intentions of our enemies: "Intelligence—and how we use it—is our first line of defense against terrorists and the threat posed by hostile states."[18]

The 2002 National Security Strategy identifies intelligence as one of the essential tools for defeating the imminent threat of terrorism. Like every other sector of the national security structure, intelligence must be transformed to meet this new threat imminence:

> We must transform our intelligence capabilities and build new ones to keep pace with the nature of these threats. Intelligence must be appropriately integrated with our defense and law enforcement systems…[19]

On the surface, this idea of creating an "integrated intelligence" system sounds reasonable. However, the specific role of integrated intelligence is spelled out earlier in the document in a discussion of threat prevention: "To support preemptive options, we will build better, more integrated intelligence capabilities to provide timely, accurate information on threats,

17. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p. 15.
18. Ibid., p. 30.
19. Ibid.

wherever they may be emerging."[20] Here the uncertainty inherent in intelligence analysis is elegantly resolved. With the integration of intelligence into a system that views itself as always at war with an imminent and dire threat, the frailty of intelligence has been corrected.

Total Divergence: Politicized Intelligence in the Age of Imminent War

As National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley explained in a White House briefing in 2005, "Our statements about the threat posed by Saddam Hussein were based on the aggregation of intelligence from a number of sources and represented the collective view of the intelligence community."[21] Hadley was better positioned than most to understand the fundamental significance of this "aggregation" and "collective view" of intelligence, since he was an essential participant in the dynamic of policy-driven intelligence analysis that gave rise to such reports. However, his words are meant to relate the way in which the facts gathered by the intelligence community provided a foundation for the statements made by the president and other administration officials pertaining to Iraq. Thus, even when intelligence has become little more than a way of justifying policy decisions that have already largely been made, the intelligence is nonetheless cited in support of these decisions

Hadley's use of the words "aggregation" and "collective view" is also important and interesting when we consider the role of intelligence in the decision to go to war. They are helpful terms that serve to remind us of the first principle of solidarity for the sake of security, which drove both policy development and public discourse in the wake of the 2001 attacks. This principle was still operating in the early months of 2003, eloquently stated by then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* on March 26:

> We seek nothing less than safety for our people. Many members have suffered from terror themselves; all understand the awful price of terrorism and the potentially catastrophic danger from weapons of mass destruction.[22]

20. Ibid., p. 16.

21. Walter Pincus, "Ex-CIA Official Faults Use of Data on Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2006.

22. Condoleezza Rice, "Our Coalition," *Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2003.

The link between WMD and terrorism is asserted once again, emphasizing the imperative that all concerned come together in the face of a threat. The goal is security, and in the face of such a psychologically troubling threat every resource of government, including the intelligence agencies, must contribute to meeting this goal. What makes this link between WMD and terrorism so convincing, and therefore what makes the invasion of Iraq so compelling, is the ideology of imminent threat. It sets the stage for preemptive behavior by building a convincing imaginary of threat and risk that justifies taking extreme action: "We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries."[23]

This ideology of imminent threat closes the gap between intelligence fact-finding and policy decisions because it elevates risk to such a level that even the most ambiguous evidence—even, indeed, the absence of evidence—supports the need for military intervention. Unlike the strategy of deterrence that defined most of the Cold War, threat imminence does not lead to an uneasy steady state. Rather, imminent threat implies the sphere of threat is always changing, so that it may include any number of states or groups operating in states. All of this leads to a dramatic change in the role of intelligence work, because principles of accuracy and factuality can play no more than a secondary role in the face of a threat that can strike anywhere and anytime. What makes Powell's appearance before the Security Council so telling and remarkable is that he played all three of the roles that Arendt describes—intelligence analyst, problem-solver, and decision-maker—in his presentation. One might be tempted to assume that in playing these three roles, Powell would have been less subject to ideological self-deception. The opposite is in fact the case. Beyond the personal and professional difficulties that Powell faced because of his multiple roles, Powell's performance represents a snapshot of a greater problem. What we find at the heart of the so-called intelligence failure of 2002–2003 is a greater failure, namely, the collapse of the distinctions between these crucial roles and corresponding responsibilities traditionally associated with the various sectors of the national security structure. The result of this collapse—the fact that the findings of intelligence analysts were shaped by policy rather than the other way around—was that the decision to go to war was based less on the factual threats posed by the Iraqi regime than on possible threats produced by a combination of

23. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, p. 15.

speculation on worst case scenarios and possible responses generated in the light of risk calculus

At least for a time, it appeared that the intelligence agencies were swept up in the convincing ideology that placed Iraq at the center of the War on Terror. Notwithstanding the retrospective reports of analysts like Pillar, the intelligence community was portrayed by Powell and almost every other informed government leader as cohesively behind the view that Iraq was an imminent danger. This view turned out to be false, based on weak intelligence findings that in turn were propped up by those who were convinced that regime change in Iraq was the next necessary step toward reestablishing U.S. security. The circular reasoning at play here exhibits the two interrelated features that Arendt describes as essential to all political ideological thinking: defactualization and self-deception. The first characteristic concerns the ability to develop convincing explanations of what is happening that do not depend on the facts of the situation, but rather that serve to shield those charged with making security decisions from facts which call their ideological commitments into question. The second characteristic, without which this defactualizing capacity itself would falter, reveals that those who are most responsible for the development and promulgation of such ideological accounts are the most deceived of all. The fact that they are themselves instrumental in promoting this condition of self-deception does not diminish but instead enhances the overall effect. In her reading of the Pentagon Papers, Arendt stresses the danger of the "disconnect" between what was happening in Vietnam and the myths, often supported with social scientific thinking, that shaped the thinking of the decision-makers. As she pointed out, the greatest danger in allowing ourselves to be guided by ideological myths does not merely lie in ignorance and impotence. On the contrary, the divergence between effective intelligence and policy can lead to vast displays of power that preempt reality altogether. After all, despite all the evidence, and lack of evidence, Iraq is now a terrorist stronghold. The power of politicized intelligence is that it can make something real by actions that have little or no basis in reality. Preempting reality by such extreme policy-based intelligence thinking leads to a reality that confirms what the ideological position insisted was the case all along.

The intelligence disasters of 2001–2003 have sobered intelligence agency directors. For the moment they seem more careful to apply "a very rigorous scrub using all the tradecraft available, using the lessons of

2002."[24] Further, according to the Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, unclassified summaries of the NIEs will not be routinely released, because he does not want "a situation where the young analysts are writing something because they know it's going to be a public debate or political debate."[25] Likewise, the major press outlets seem to more careful to look beyond the statements and materials provided by government officials. One might be tempted to assume that it was just the shock and disorientation of the events associated with September 11 that led to a singular "perfect storm" of defactualization. And yet, the Pentagon Papers serve to remind us that this sort of defactualization has its precedents.

The nebulous space of the imminent war threatens to have no end. This dynamic space is fueled by the production of images and opinions. It is only hindered by factual reality. Insofar as this war space can control the appearance of facts, both by selectively paying attention them and reworking them through political or military action, this represents a manageable hindrance. Whatever the outcome in Iraq, the greatest threat does not lie in a given terrorist organization or rogue state, but in the divergence from reality that imminent war theory imposes upon us. As Powell said in 2007:

> What is the greatest threat facing us now? People will say it's terrorism. But are there any terrorists in the world who can change the American way of life or our political system? No. Can they knock down a building? Yes. Can they kill somebody? Yes. But can they change us? No. Only we can change ourselves. So what is the great threat we are facing?[26]

Powell echoes the concern expressed by Arendt in the closing pages of "Lying in Politics," namely, that "in order for this country to carry adventurous and aggressive policies to success there would have to be a decisive change in the American people's 'national character'."[27] Arendt's conclusion is that the failures in the Vietnam era represented a sobering and chastising reminder of the principles that have defined the United States and its people since the beginning. In other words, the embarrassing losses

24. Pamela Hess, "Iran Halted Nuclear Arms Plans, U.S. Says," *Washington Post*, December 3, 2007.

25. Walter Pincus, "Delayed Intelligence Report On Iran to Be Finished Soon," *Washington Post*, November 14, 2007.

26. Isaacson, "GQ Icon: Colin Powell."

27. Arendt, "Lying in Politics," p. 46.

experienced in Vietnam were also a political gain for the United States, because they showed that the greatest dangers we face stem less from the successful attacks by enemies but rather from our own attempts to pursue such aggressive ideological endeavors in the name of defending ourselves. The Vietnam era ended with the protracted realization that we were not prepared to wage a war at any cost if that cost included a loss of the very principles that established this nation. This realization was supported by a factual reality whose meaning could be postponed but ultimately not denied. We are left to wonder if these limiting factors of factual reality and political principles are still intact. In the age of imminent war, where aggressive policies always drive intelligence, where the next threat to security will certainly appear, facts may lose their capacity to hinder our actions. At the beginning of the space race and the second decade of the Cold War, Arendt insisted that we must take stock of where we find ourselves, "from the vantage point of our newest experiences and most recent fears. This is a matter of thought, and thoughtlessness—the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty—seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time. What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing."[28] This proposal was written at a time when war was constantly threatened between the two superpowers. In that age, the threat of a war that more than implied the destruction of the world served to restrain the two parties and their allies. In our time, a new specter of war has emerged, not a war that will destroy the earth and its inhabitants in a single conflagration, but one that threatens to destroy the framework for coexistence based upon fact and rational exchange. With the loss of this framework, war is no longer an option but a persistent reality.

28. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.

Performing Knowledge: Cultural Discourses, Knowledge Communities, and Youth Culture

Mark W. Rectanus

In a interview concerning the Internet and cyberculture, communications professor Nobert Bolz was asked how he prepares his children for a world in which the authority of experts is in competition with emerging lay communities of knowledge production, such as Wikipedia. Bolz replied: "I try to constantly hammer in that they should read books. I just always say, read books, otherwise you'll belong to the losers. This is the only objective for educating my own children that I've given myself—with only modest success." With regard to his students, however, Bolz added: "On the other hand, when I see my own students, they are really only able to peripherally consider books. In their case, I've given up. I note that one can only work through certain things with the help of books. But I let it go at that."[1]

Despite his plea for the value of the book, Bolz sees the role of networked knowledge, such as Wikipedia, as legitimate and significant in creating new knowledge bases and access to information. The destabilization of expert knowledge and the de-centering of the book in youth culture signal fundamental shifts in the social construction of knowledge involving a number of interrelated topics: (1) the status of the book and scholarly publishing; (2) the digitization and virtualization of libraries and the role of search engines, databases, and books, e.g., in Google Book Search or the Google Library Project, as well issues related to open access, copyright, and intellectual property; (3) the construction of encyclopedic projects,

1. My translation of the original text in "Der Kommunikationswissenschaftler Norbert Bolz über die alltägliche Selbstentblößung im Internet, wegfallende Schamgrenzen und das Ende der Expertokratie," *Der Spiegel* 29 (2006): 68–69, here p. 69.

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such as Wikipedia, that valorize lay-knowledge communities; (4) the role of social networking (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube) and social software (wikis, blogs, threaded discussions) in youth culture, university learning environments, and the social construction of knowledge; (5) the deterritorialization and virtualization of learning, research, and scholarly communication, which is redefining notions of knowledge communities.

As Nico Stehr observes, a central aspect of the definition of knowledge resides in the notion that it:

> requires an active actor. Knowledge involves appropriation rather than mere consumption. It demands that something be done within a context that is relevant beyond being in the situation within which the activity happens to take place. Knowledge is conduct. *Knowing*, in other words, is (cognitive) doing.[2]

Knowledge production is not only a process of "cognitive doing," involving reflection and analysis, but also includes the physical acts of production (e.g., writing or composing), and mediating or acting-out (e.g., presenting, reading, interpreting). How do increasingly performative and affective dimensions of social networking alter the discourse networks and the frameworks within which knowledge is constructed? What are the consequences of the blurring of institutional boundaries between universities or libraries and commercial spaces for accessing information and constructing knowledge?

Performing Knowledge: Interventions

The historical trajectories of media culture in the United States and Germany—from the late 1960s into the twenty-first century—reflect global shifts in knowledge production, especially the renegotiation of the status of print and electronic media in terms of their function and production. For example, paperbacks (both academic and trade) flourished during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of youth markets and new production technologies, while television accelerated its presence in the media landscape. What is interesting about the German context, in contrast to the United States and the United Kingdom, is that the transformation from family-owned (trade) publishing houses to international conglomerates occurred

2. Nico Stehr, *Knowledge Politics: Governing the Consequences of Science and Technology* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005), p. 34.

in a relatively short time (roughly from 1980 to 1990).[3] While the United States was advancing digital technologies in Silicon Valley, German conglomerates such as Bertelsmann and Holtzbrink were consolidating their market share in print media (e.g., Bertelsmann's acquisition of Random House in 1998).[4]

In *The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read*, André Schriffin traces fundamental changes in late twentieth-century publishing by examining the negative impact of marketing and profit-oriented program development on trade publishers, in particular the impact of global media conglomerates on acquisition policies.[5] Schiffrin examines the popularization of critical social thought within trade publishing programs since the late 1960s through books such as: Jerry Rubin's *Do It!* (Simon & Schuster), Paul Mus and John McAlister's *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution* (Harper & Row), or Todd Gitlin's: *Uptown* (Harper & Row). While programmatic shifts to overtly socio-critical works may be seen as a response to market demand, Schiffrin emphasizes the significantly different institutional parameters within which trade editors operated and the latitude they were granted, in comparison with subsequent media ownership.[6] These works contributed to critical social discourses even though they originated within commercial publishing.

Student movements in the late 1960s generated social revolutions that resonated within the international book and media marketplace. In Germany, the impact of social and aesthetic theory of the Frankfurt School on the trade market was even more pronounced. Literary series in paperback, such as the *edition suhrkamp*, *reihe hanser*, or *Quarthefte*, became icons of 1960s youth culture. The visual communication of these series resonated within the intellectual avant-garde and reflected forms of subtle

3. Germany epitomizes the changes in European print culture, as a historical locus of publishing and printing and as a broker of intellectual property (i.e., the Frankfurt Book Fair as an international rights marketplace).

4. Bertelsmann also gained public attention for its acquisition of Napster and a subsequent copyright infringement suit. See Brooks Boliek, "BMG Settles Napster Infringement Case," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 1, 2007.

5. André Schiffrin, *The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* (London and New York: Verso, 2000). See Schiffrin for comparisons to France and other European contexts. Similar but distinct processes of privatization of cultural institutions (e.g., museums, theaters, symphonies, and universities) have been at work since the early 1980s in Europe and North America.

6. Schiffrin, *The Business of Books*, pp. 65–68.

social subversion linked to popular culture. Heinz Edelmann, who had worked on the Beatles' film *Yellow Submarine*,[7] employed similar design concepts for the cover art for the *reihe hanser*. In the 1980s, Suhrkamp commissioned works by Andy Warhol for its promotion of Hermann Hesse's books, as well as a Warhol image of Goethe for its Deutscher Klassiker Verlag. Scholarly discourses, including student discourses at universities during the late 1960s and early 1970s, responded in both critical and affirmative modes to media culture, in particular to visual media (film) and performance (music and festivals).

These new scholarly discourses emerged at the intersections of print, visual (including television and film), and performative culture. Editors who acquired lists in literature, culture, and social theory developed an expanded definition of editing as a form of intervention in social space.[8] Editing as a social intervention not only involved a socio-critical program profile; it also reflected collaborations with authors and alternative media that did not distinguish between publishing, political activism, and public debate, or draw programmatic boundaries between theory, cultural analysis, essays, and literature. Klaus Wagenbach's collaboration with Günter Grass in Germany provides one example of an alternative publishing program, and model, that fused literature, theory, and politics, and that also reflected Wagenbach's commitment to political action.[9] Although public presentations and performative interventions by authors and intellectuals (readings, interviews, discussions, or political interventions) were not new, the collective impact of print media for and by students and intellectuals, the expansion of television and film during the 1960s and 1970s, and the rapid growth of cultural institutions provided multiple and diverse venues for the performance of knowledge and politics.

The social movements of the 1960s also generated demands for the democratization of cultural institutions, including increased access to universities, museums, symphonies, and the performing arts. In Germany, Hilmar Hoffmann's policy of "Kultur für alle" ("Culture for Everyone") epitomized the shift to a cultural politics of access, education, and later

7. Heinz Edelmann was the lead art director and a designer for *Yellow Submarine*. See references at the Internet Movie Database website, at http://www.imdb.com.

8. Mark W. Rectanus, "Editing as Intervention in Social Space," *Performance Research* 7, no. 1 (2002): 103–20.

9. See the interview with Klaus Wagenbach in "Überzeugungstäter und Verrückte," *Anzeiger: Das Magazin für die österreichische Buchbranche* 139, no. 1 (2004): 20–23.

diversity.[10] However, Gerhard Schulze has argued that this new policy was ultimately linked to metrics of audience acceptance, attendance figures, or sales.[11] The democratization of cultural institutions became fused with notions of market acceptance rather than historical models of "state culture" mediated by cultural elites—or what Schulze identified as a shift to "post-utopian cultural politics."[12] The blurring of cultural barriers between "high" and "low," "elite" and "popular," was undoubtedly part of socio-political interventions of the 1960s and 1970s that challenged these boundaries, however they were also increasingly appropriated by corporations for the aesthetic mediation of product culture.[13]

Scholarly Publishing

"Post-utopian cultural politics" meant that the institutional aperture for engaging alternative democratic cultural models had been redefined as a "democracy of markets" by the end of the 1970s. This policy was manifest within the context of the Reagan-Thatcher-Kohl cultural politics of privatization and corporatization that were superimposed on cultural institutions in the 1980s.[14] In trade publishing, the freedom granted to editors to develop socio-critical programs was short-lived. As major trade publishers in the United States were sold to global media conglomerates, their programs also shifted to commercially marketable topics.[15]

Scholarly presses filled some of the gaps in trade publishing while responding to significant changes in disciplinary boundaries in the humanities and social sciences that emerged during the 1970s. Texts by leading intellectuals created a new canon of works in postmodern and poststructural theory.[16] Scholarly presses (both university and commercial) in North

10. Hilmar Hoffmann, *Kultur für alle. Perspektiven und Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1984).

11. Gerhard Schluze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1992), pp. 499–501.

12. Ibid.

13. See my discussion of these developments in Mark Rectanus, *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 61–98.

14. See Rectanus, *Culture Incorporated*, and Chin-Tao Wu: *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London: Verso, 2002).

15. Schiffrin, *The Business of Books*, p. 68.

16. For example, influential works by Susan Sontag, Robert Venturi, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Linda Hutcheon, Zygmunt Bauman, Scott Lash, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe. With regard to the impact on postmodern discourse and culture, see

America and the United Kingdom introduced numerous new series that reflected the redefinition of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary studies. The added income from new programs, coupled with marketing and promotion strategies during the 1980s, enabled many scholarly presses to survive at a time when revenues from libraries and subventions from universities declined.[17]

Scholarly presses have played a pivotal role in reflecting and shaping scholarly discourse in the humanities since the 1970s. Despite the fact that only approximately 10 percent of all new titles in the United States originate from scholarly presses, i.e., member presses of the Association of American University Presses (AAUP), the collective impact of scholarship in cultural fields—ranging from film and television to gender studies and art—resonates within academic curricula as well as within urban cultural contexts of performance. Nonetheless, one should not overestimate the impact of books from scholarly presses on public opinion and commercial media. A more differentiated view is that scholarly presses perform multiple functions in the media and communications industry precisely because they have staked out positions on the borders between knowledge- and information-mediation and the cultural marketplace—in part by acquiring books that will reach academic and trade markets as well as embracing online distribution. In this regard, scholarly presses have become hybrid publishers.[18] Nonetheless, it became increasingly difficult for small trade presses or scholarly presses to access the trade marketplace as retail bookstores were dominated by chains and their logics of scale.[19]

Paul Michael Lützeler, "Von der Postmoderne zur Globalisierung. Zur Interrelation der Diskurse," in *Räume der literarischen Postmoderne: Gender, Perfomativität, Globalisierung,* ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2000), p. 3.

17. In the 1980s and 90s, series included the burgeoning field of Cultural Studies, as well as Film and Television Studies, Visual Studies, Media Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Queer Studies, Jewish Studies, Holocaust Studies, Performance Studies, Popular Culture, and Museum Studies.

18. John Feather, *Communicating Knowledge: Publishing in the 21st Century* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2003), p. 186. It is important to note that some of the small presses in Europe, the United States, and Germany that were considered alternative during the 1970s have become an institutionalized sector with audiences who support alternative knowledge discourses.

19. Online dissemination of books by scholarly and small presses has undoubtedly enabled them to communicate more rapidly with their core readership, however it is questionable whether these presses have reached significantly new audiences.

By the 1990s, academic presses, librarians, scholars, and professional associations were all referring to a "crisis in scholarly publishing."[20] A major factor in the crisis was, as Dominique Pestre points out, the growing "privatization of knowledge on a global scale" beginning in the 1970s—particularly within the sciences and technology—which subsequently led to "new definitions of intellectual property rights."[21] Here, Timothy Luke underscores the corporatization of universities as a key dimension of the market-driven production of knowledge.[22] The commercialization of the scientific journal market had a dramatic impact on university libraries and their ability to acquire books and journals in the humanities. While university libraries in the United States spent an average of 44 percent for books and 56 percent for journals in 1986, by 1997 they were only spending 28 percent for books with 72 percent allocated for journals.[23]

Most scholarly presses have been able to survive into the twenty-first century, but their existence is increasingly precarious.[24] Selling to the trade market involves additional resources in targeted marketing and promotion, which may only be possible for books with higher sales potential, a market reality to which most university presses have had to adapt. According to AAUP statistics, only 25 percent of book sales by scholarly presses, on average, are still made to libraries, with the balance sold to trade, textbook, direct-mail, or online customers. Publishers must increasingly negotiate the disparate networks of scholarly information, knowledge production, *and* the marketplace for trade books, which demands greater accessibility both in terms of contents and formats.[25]

20. Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing, "The Future of Scholarly Publishing," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (January 2003): 65–82, here p. 74. See also Stephen Boyd and Andrew Herkovic, "Crisis in Scholarly Publishing: Executive Summary," Stanford Academic Council Committee on Libraries, available online at http://www.stanford.edu/~boyd/schol_pub _crisis.html.

21. Michael Eckert and Helmuth Trischler, "Science and Technology in the Twentieth Century: Cultures of Innovation in Germany and the United States," *GHI Bulletin* 36 (Spring 2005): 130–34, here p. 133.

22. Timothy W. Luke, "From Pedagogy to Performativity: The Crises of Research Universities, Intellectuals, and Scholarly Communication," *Telos* 131 (Summer 2005): 13–32, here pp. 23–25.

23. Lynne Withey, "Crises and Opportunities: The Futures of Scholarly Publishing. Remarks at the 2003 ACLS Meeting 2003," available online at the Association of American University Presses website, http://www.aaupnet.org.

24. Ibid.

25. Feather, *Communicating Knowledge*, p. 186.

Lynne Withey has suggested that the boundaries between professional journals and book monographs (for publications between 30 and 300 manuscript pages) may be dissolving.[26] In addition, digital journals and on-demand printing will undoubtedly play an increasing role in scholarly publishing. However, many of the cost savings resulting from technology (e.g., digitized text or camera-ready copy) have already been realized. What has actually occurred is cost shifting, i.e., to professional organizations and faculty/authors (and their universities), rather than ongoing cost savings.[27]

Despite the de-centering of the book within the *process* of scholarly research, and the recommendation of professional organizations like the Modern Language Association (MLA) that peer-reviewed digital publishing be recognized as a legitimate product of scholarship, the book remains the most visible product, indicator, and validation of humanities scholarship.[28] From a sociological perspective, researchers in the humanities have a high degree of identification with books, not only because they represent the primary object and medium of cultural transmission in literature and history, but also due to their status within scholarly communications networks that reinforce the reception of book publication through forms of public recognition and performance.[29]

The paradox of scholarly research, particularly in the humanities, is that the process of information analysis and knowledge production, i.e., knowledge creation, is accomplished through interactions with search engines, digital databases, and print, while the products and primary forms of scholarly validation (promotion/tenure and recognition by the media and professional associations) are bound to print (most notably the book

26. Withey cites cooperative projects between publishers, universities, and professional organizations, such as The History Cooperative, a collaboration between the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians with the University of Illinois Press.

27. Lisa Freeman, "The University Press in the Electronic Future," in *Scholarly Publishing: The Electronic Frontier*, ed. Robin P. Peek and Gregory B. Newby (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 147–53, here p. 151. As Freeman points out, costs for peer evaluation and editing are increasingly assumed by series editors (or their institutions) or by professional organizations.

28. For recent discussions and recommendations regarding the "tyranny of the monograph" in the humanities, see "Report of the MLA Task force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion," *Profession* (2007): 9–71, here pp. 37–38, 60.

29. These might include invited lectures, keynote addresses, and interviews in cultural media such as National Public Radio.

monograph). While the unbundling of diverse text types, facilitated by online e-texts, may increasingly integrate digital and print formats (e.g., PDFs), Luke suggests that this is ultimately "a rearview mirror approach to scholarly communication that pushes discourse ahead while its participants look into the rearview mirrors at print rather than scanning ahead out through the windshield for all the merits of e-text."[30]

Another dimension of this paradox relates to visual culture, electronic media, and the Internet, all of which have become a focus of critical inquiry in scholarship but are rarely used to transmit scholarship within professional communities (with the possible exception of multimedia software and documentaries). As outlined above, the intersections of texts, performance, and visual culture that became more visible during the late 1960s marked a fundamental shift in what constituted or defined notions of textuality (as well as how texts were theorized),[31] but also signaled the increasing destabilization of text-based print culture through digitization in the decades to follow. Undoubtedly, the contexts in which knowledge production takes place have been transformed by the acceleration of visual technologies—ranging from television to film to virtual environments—and their central role in consumption. While artifacts of visual culture are integrated into scholarly books and print media, primarily through still photos or occasionally CDs and links to websites, scholarship in the humanities remains bound to print, or print-like formats in e-text. Despite their hybrid status—on the boundary between trade media and university research—scholarly presses (or their authors) have only begun to explore how they might mediate knowledge by actually employing the very objects of scholarly inquiry (e.g., visual and digital culture) that they address.[32]

30. Timothy W. Luke, "The Politics and Philosophy of E-Text: Use Value, Sign Value, and Exchange Value in the Transition From Print to Digital Media," in *Libr@ries: Changing Information Space and Practice*, ed. Cushla Kapitzke and Bertram C. Bruce (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), pp. 197–210, here pp. 207–8.

31. See for example and Jean-François Lyotard's critique, which as Steven Best and Douglas Kellner observed, rejected the pantextualism of poststructural theory "which privileges text and discourses over experience, the senses, and images." Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), p. 149; Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours, figure* (Paris: Klinksieck, 1971), p. 11.

32. N. Katherine Hayles has suggested how literary scholarship might move more productively and creatively in this direction by exploring and exposing the relations among materiality, hypertexts, and literature. See N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines*

Libraries: Deterritorializing Knowledge

The changing role of libraries illustrates many of the emerging issues surrounding the mediation of knowledge, the de-centering of the book, and youth culture. Although many research libraries are attempting to reduce their dependence on journal subscriptions from corporate publishers in the scientific, technical, and medical (STM) disciplines, due to dramatic increases in subscription costs and the consequent impact on acquisitions in the humanities and social sciences,[33] the demand for electronic materials from commercial sources is increasing, in part due to the proliferation of new media formats. Under Digital Rights Management (DRM) contracts, their use for scholarship is "always more restrictive than copyright law," as Lynne Brindley, the British Library's chief executive, observed.[34] Universities now manage two libraries: a digital one and a physical one.[35] Although databases and search tools have made research faster and more convenient, many scholars in the humanities fear that access to books will be reduced as university libraries shift space and resources to other services, including electronic support.

In response to the rising costs of STM journals and the larger crisis in scholarly publishing, university libraries have supported open access projects, such as SPARC (The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), founded in 1998. Developed by the Association of Research Libraries, SPARC is an international project designed "to stimulate the emergence of new scholarly communication models that expand the dissemination of research and reduce financial pressures on libraries."[36] The goals of the SPARC project include reducing the cost of journals, particularly in STM fields; supporting collaborative models for editorial boards while maintaining high standards for peer review; and creating greater access to published works for authors and scholars through agreements that favor open access for research libraries and users.

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (South Bend, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

33. James M. McPherson, "A Crisis in Scholarly Publishing," *Perspectives* (October 2003), available at the American Historical Association website, http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2003/0310/0310pre1.cfm.

34. "Library warns of 'more restrictive' DRMs," June 8, 2006, available online at the eGov Monitor website, http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/6263.

35. Remarks by Olivia Madison, Dean, Iowa State University Parks Library, Library Liaisons Meeting, December 12, 2005.

36. "About SPARC," SPARC website, http://www.arl.org/sparc/about/index.html.

The Creative Commons has attempted to provide greater public access to publications by offering a spectrum of copyright modalities, ranging from full copyright ("all rights reserved") to public domain.[37] Like SPARC, the Creative Commons was a response to the growing influence of global corporate media and their attempts to monopolize intellectual property. In his book *Free Culture*, Lawrence Lessig, founder of Creative Commons, discusses how the U.S. Supreme Court in *Eldred v. Ashcroft* and the U.S. Congress in the Eldred Act have increasingly supported a "permissions culture" (a culture of rights management and licensing) that favors global media, leading to a "feudalization" of the information society.[38]

In the context of SPARC and Creative Commons, and in part as a response to debates regarding open access and file sharing, Google launched Google Book Search and the Google Library Project in collaboration with a number of international research universities and libraries. These projects are designed to search for, *and* provide access to, digital pages of the original books (both in print and out of print), with limited access to copyrighted material. Google has claimed that the library will eventually include "all of the books of the world"—as many as 100 million.[39] Yet the Google project has been controversial among book historians and publishers. The former have argued that the project can at best supplement but not supplant interactions with the physical book, particularly for a deeper analysis of the text,[40] while the latter have raised copyright issues. Jeffrey Toobin believes that publishers are "hedg[ing] their bets in a digital world that they have yet to master" by at once collaborating with Google but also participating in a legal suit against the company for scanning copyrighted material without permission—a suit that Toobin believes will be settled as a business agreement.[41] University libraries also seem to be pursuing both strategies: collaborations with Google, Microsoft, or other companies

37. "About the Creative Commons," Creative Commons website, http://creativecommons.org/about/.

38. Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 267.

39. See the Google website regarding the relationship of its project to others linked to professional associations such as Project Gutenberg, at http://books.google.com/googlebooks/newsviews/history.html. Microsoft and Amazon have launched similar projects, e.g., the Open Content Alliance. See Jeffrey Toobin, "Google's Moonshot," *The New Yorker*, February 5, 2007, p. 35.

40. See discussions regarding Google on the SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing) listserv by searching relevant topics archived online at the SHARP website, http://www.sharpweb.org/archives.html.

41. Toobin, "Google's Moonshot," pp. 32, 34.

that will provide open access to digital libraries, while also attempting to underscore the physicality and auratic qualities of the book. Anthony Grafton argues that the serious reader of the future will have to visit both the digital and the physical library.[42] Nonetheless, for research and university libraries, digitization projects are accelerating the expansion of the digital library and the virtualization of interactions with their users, while the physical library is placing increasing numbers of books in storage and shifting their sites to mixed-use centers for social and cultural networking.[43] Digital libraries, or "cybraries," are thus more than the digitization of print artifacts; they involve the manner in which e-texts of all types create new emerging ecologies of information and knowledge production. In this regard, Luke has observed that we first need to recognize the institutionalization of the cybrary before we can fully grasp the implications of e-textuality:

> Despite the fact that many proponents of e-text believe computers will be the only mode of generating and storing text, the realities are more complex. Accepting diverse modes of discourse and multiple forms of text must be conceded before the unintended consequences of e-textuality disable the positive side of print media as cybraries arise out of these transformations. Who will build cybraries, how they will be built, why they must be built, and where they might be built, are all questions whose answers will reshape academic life and the larger societies that cybraries serve in the years to come.[44]

In order to understand the transformation of libraries, it is necessary to situate them within the larger contexts of the social production of knowledge. Students arrive at universities with clear expectations and established patterns of media use and information retrieval (e.g., Google as "one-stop shopping"). In response, libraries and bookstores have developed new strategies to engage young adults in the *experiential contexts* of reading as a shared cultural behavior, which underscores the *affective* components of the book in the context of shared social interaction. Many new or remodeled university libraries include a café or a branded (Starbucks) café as a

42. Anthony Grafton, "Future Reading," *The New Yorker*, November 5, 2007, p. 54.

43. The percentage of library budgets expended on digital resources has also increased significantly. See Christopher Conkey, "Libraries Beckon, but Stacks of Books Aren't Part of Pitch," *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 2006.

44. Luke, "The Politics and Philosophy of E-Text," p. 209.

site for student interaction and events. Christopher Conkey summarizes the motivation of many university librarians as follows:

> Threatened with irrelevance, the college library is being reinvented—and books are being de-emphasized. The goal: Entice today's technology-savvy students back into the library with buildings that blur the lines between library, computer lab, shopping mall and living room. Imposing rows of stacks, uncomfortable wooden furniture and rigid rules are giving way to open spaces, cafes and chatter. Librarians are looking the other way on food and drink, encouraging conversation and even responding to students' text-message queries for research help or technology tips.[45]

The emergence of the (physical) library as a social and cultural center is a logical extension of attempts to maintain legitimacy within a competing marketplace of offerings among all cultural institutions. Architecture and design play an important role in reconfiguring and aestheticizing the spaces of knowledge production as sites for social interaction. After the completion of a new addition to the Seattle Central Library, designed by Rem Koolhaas, the library recorded a dramatic increase in visitors of 40 to 50 percent, including tourists and local residents.[46]

As libraries become increasingly integrated into networks of urban tourism and cultural attractions, and as they assume the logics of cultural branding and entertainment (e.g., shops, cafés, and events), they also alter the manner in which knowledge is acquired. Processes of knowledge acquisition shift to the cybrary, accessed via the internet, while the physical library structure becomes a site for the performance of (socio-cultural) knowledge. As the cybrary becomes the locus of knowledge acquisition, it becomes a space that can no longer be definitively located, as well as one that can be appropriated and reconfigured for other uses. In this regard, James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan, remarked that while Starbucks cafés are now "*in* the library," in the future "Starbucks will *be* the library."[47]

Despite the hyperbole, Duderstadt's comment underscores the deterritorialization of learning that is occurring throughout education.[48] This

45. Conkey, "Libraries Beckon."

46. Robin Pogrebin, "Inside the Year's Best-Reviewed Buildings," *New York Times*, December 26, 2004.

47. James Duderstadt, Presentation at Iowa State University, February 28, 2006.

48. For extensive treatment regarding the implications of emerging virtual learning environments, including theoretical and applied perspectives, see Joel Weiss et al., *The*

process not only involves distance learning, but it also signals the emergence of corporations as mediators in global education programs, ranging from Apple's iTunes to Disney's educational programs to Volkswagen's theme park Autostadt in Wolfsburg, Germany. Themed environments fuse non-promotional discourses with promotional ones through common siting,[49] e.g., when Volkswagen collaborates with Klett Publishing by using the Autostadt as a site for language-training programs.[50]

Luke, referring to Baudrillard, argues that:

> Digital texts can no longer be seen as "the maps," "the doubles," "the mirrors," or "the concepts" of any terrain metaphorically regarded as "the real." On the contrary, in the virtual world, all abstract frames of the real effectively function as simulations, and these simulations are what must be regarded as hyperreal materials to be captured, catalogued, and circulated.[51]

While the engagement with e-texts undoubtedly shifts notions of what defines textual authenticity, materiality, and origin, they may paradoxically create new demands for the experiencing "the real." The deterritorialization of learning and interaction with texts, which the cybrary or online learning facilitates, simultaneously shifts the locus of interaction to themed environments. These sites, ranging from internet cafés at universities and bookstores to theme-park campuses, foreground sensual interaction, visuality, and performance. While themed environments may create and represent new forms of virtual realities and/or virtual spaces, they also reestablish links to material consumption (e.g., food, sports, music, theater, shopping), which e-texts lose when considered primarily in terms of their production and mediation. Thus, the manner in which e-textuality becomes instantiated and received in material and virtual environments adds an additional layer of complexity. In these environments, the affective dimensions of knowledge production are increasingly visible, particularly as they are linked to consumption (both material and virtual).

International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments, vols. 1 and 2 (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

49. Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture* (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 182–83.

50. Klett makes extensive use of the Autostadt collaboration in its 2006 catalog. The publisher refers to the notion of *inszenierte Bildung* (staged education) in the theme park as a site for staging learning, as a performative activity.

51. Luke, "The Politics and Philosophy of E-Text," p. 202.

Indeed, contemporary networked culture reveals some similarities with alternative movements of the 1960s, i.e., by creating new spaces for defining knowledge and community at the intersections of (e-)text, performance, and visual representation, and by operating in critical and affirmative modes. However, contemporary cyberculture creates its own aesthetics of interaction and legitimizes new forms of knowledge production (most visibly in the form of emerging virtual communities) that were not possible before the Internet.

Social Software

The reconceptualization of (knowledge) communities and the position of the individual within different types of communities play a pivotal role in determining how the contexts of knowledge creation are being reconfigured. Digital access to information, course delivery, social software (including blogs, wikis, and podcasting), and social networking sites (such as Facebook and MySpace)[52] are changing the learning and knowledge-acquisition behaviors of students and faculty, as well as how they perceive reading, e-texts, and the book. This is not leading to the demise of the book and print texts within youth culture but rather to an extension of how they are defined and used. Thus, the book is both electronic and print, e.g., an online workbook for a course, a PDF file of a book chapter, or a paperback novel for a literature course. Reading is both an individual experience and a networked one.[53]

The emergence of a wide range of e-text formats, ranging from e-mail to wikis to online books, makes it even more imperative that students can communicate precisely and effectively.[54] Social software is changing

52. Social networking may range from chat rooms to websites that provide virtual places for social interaction, particularly for group projects or distance learners. As Todd Bryant suggests, "Places" software will also allow students to explore the physical contours of parts of cities, and their inhabitants, in part by using geographic information system (GIS) software indicating the locations of users or spaces they inhabit. Todd Bryant, "Social Software in Academia," *Educause Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006).

53. Research conducted by the Center for the Digital Future suggests that Internet use among book readers does not, at present, correspond to a decrease in book reading—unlike newspapers and other media. Comments by Jeffrey Cole, Director, Center for the Digital Future, "Just an Essential Part of Everyday Life," April 11, 2006, presentation at Iowa State University.

54. Douglas Kellner, "Technological Transformation, Multiple Literacies, and the Re-visioning of Education," in *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments*, 1:241–68, here p. 249.

the discourse networks of youth culture as it creates new "places" in cyberspace and is, as Todd Bryant observes, increasingly accepted as a legitimate set of tools in academia.[55] Threaded discussions or blogs on course sites extend the parameters of classroom or seminar discussions by providing a non-threatening space for opinions and perspectives—insightful, trivial, or occasionally objectionable—that are frequently left unstated in class. These discussions externalize the discourses found in disparate media (from Internet blogs to online news sources) that frequently inform students' approaches to course discussions and research.[56] Discourses shaping these discussions that were previously considered insignificant or "invisible" (e.g., telephone conversations, discussions in a café about a film, concert, or media personality) have become more transparent, and legitimate, through social software in academia.[57] Social software and the deterritorialization of learning erase the distinctions between scholarly discourses defined as expert knowledge systems and the universe of communications in cyberspace. This process at once provides an aperture for participation in the production of knowledge by communities while simultaneously decentering and challenging institutional authority, or expert knowledge, be it the authority of a course textbook or the instructor.

An additional dimension, relevant to the definition of knowledge production and the legitimation of what constitutes knowledge, is how *information* is conceptualized. In discussing differences between information and knowledge, Stehr observes that "Information is much more self-sufficient. Information travels and is transmitted with fewer context-sensitive restrictions. Information is detachable. Information can be detached from meaning. . . . Information is not as situated as knowledge."[58] In his book, *Critique of Information*, Scott Lash distinguishes between two types of information that are closely linked. The first type is based on

55. Bryant, "Social Software in Academia."

56. *Der Spiegel* reports that 95 percent of all students attending the German high school consult Wikipedia for class work. See "Du bist das Netz!" *Der Spiegel* 29 (2006): 60–74, here p. 74.

57. The most controversial, "non-academic" sites for social communication have been MySpace and Facebook. See John Cassidy, "Me Media: How hanging out on the Internet became big business," *New Yorker*, May 15, 2006, pp. 50–59.

58. Stehr, *Knowledge Politics*, p. 35. With respect to information, scholarly publishing, and culture see Mark Rectanus, "Informationsgesellschaft und Kulturgesellschaft: Wissenschaftliche Kommunikation und Universitätsverlage in den USA," in *Das Buch in der Informationsgesellschaft*, ed. Ludwig Delp (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), pp. 31–58.

the intensive production of knowledge through intelligent technologies, information products, and services.[59] Here we are dealing with cognitive knowledge rather than the material production of information.[60]

The second type of information, according to Lash, is in some respects a consequence of the first. While the first deals with the areas of rationality, intelligence, and knowledge of a (global) *information society*, the second is based on the affective dimensions of a (global) *information culture*. While the first type is more "social-scientific," or "post-industrial," the second type is more "literary" or "postmodern."[61] The second type deals with the consequences and unanticipated results of the first type, i.e., with information overload. The reduction of complexity that becomes necessary through information overload within the information society leads to a different kind of uncontrollable complexity within an information culture that tends toward irrationality and disinformation.[62]

However, Lash emphasizes that it would be a misunderstanding to conclude as a result that the information society is fundamentally disinformed. For Lash, disinformation can be transformed into information and back again.[63] Stehr's observation that information is less context-sensitive than knowledge helps us arrive at a fuller understanding of how information becomes disinformation—a process that is also linked to the mutability of (digital) texts. Lash's concept of (dis)information illustrates how encyclopedic projects such as Wikipedia may function in both modes. Through the ongoing process of editing by writers-editors-readers-users, information may be potentially transformed into disinformation—not just into factual inaccuracies but into more promotional and commodifiable information. Wikipedia is based, in part, on the premise that errors—factual, evaluative, or interpretative—are corrected or negotiated by writers-editors-readers-users. However, information is also transformed into disinformation through more direct, but covert, manipulation that eliminates or rewrites texts that may be unfavorable to personal, commercial, or political interests. For example, an employee of Diebold, a manufacturer of voting machines, was found to have altered an unfavorable text regarding the reliability of electronic voting devices.[64] Thus, the fundamental mutability of digital

59. Scott Lash, *Critique of Information* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 141.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 144.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 154.
64. Rhea Kelly, "Spin Doctor," *Campus Technology*, November 2007, p. 6.

texts not only reflects the dynamic state of information and knowledge production, but it also increases the possibilities for undermining or eroding the integrity of the knowledge that is produced from information.

While Wikipedia may have been conceptualized to complement rather than supplant other information bases, it reflects more generalized shifts from expert knowledge to lay knowledge. Larry Sanger, a co-founder of Wikipedia, has proposed that rather than relying solely on Wikipedia's "epistemic egalitarianism," there should be a "meritocracy" that would provide experts "a prominent voice in declaring what is known" about our shared knowledge.[65] Sanger's intention is to set up a checks-and-balances model whereby lay knowledge and expert knowledge could mutually amplify, modify, and inform one another.[66] Yet, it also implicitly establishes a hierarchy that Wikipedia's organizers have rejected.

The social regulation of knowledge takes place in a contested space. The "demystification of experts" (Stehr) not only represents a fundamental change in how the public perceives all experts, but particularly scientific expertise, as "the boundaries of science and society become more fluid and porous."[67] The appropriation of expert and scientific knowledge and its use for ideological, political, and social agendas is scarcely new. However, it is a strategy that has become widely utilized in mass media and the Internet, and that has been deployed in culture wars. Debates over scientific evidence on global warming provide one example. From this perspective, we might speak of "epistemic populism." The individualization of media channels, ranging from blogs to talk radio to chats to listservs, provides the opportunity for users and communities to identify and deploy information within multiple contexts—in some instances by creating alternative experts who ostensibly speak as the "vox populi." This epistemic populism represents an inversion of knowledge hierarchies by replacing expert knowledge with tacit knowledge as an expression of power.[68]

65. Larry Sanger, "Who Says We Know: On the New Politics of Knowledge," *Edge*, July 2007, available online at the Edge website, http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/sanger07/sanger07_index.html.

66. Sanger founded "Citizendium," an alternative encyclopedia to Wikipedia. The fundamental principles of the project are stated online at http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/CZ:Fundamentals.

67. Nico Stehr, *The Fragility of Modern Societies: Knowledge and Risk in the Information Age* (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 115, 116.

68. Lash concludes that "Power works . . . perhaps primarily neither on the level of the reflective intellect nor on the level of the unconscious, but on the level of tacit knowledge."

Luke underscores the potential for computerization and digitization (e.g., at universities) to operate simultaneously in modes of individualization (e.g., individual learners on the Internet) and as "a tool for accessing many other collective traditions through new relations grounded in many different cultures, networks, or identities."[69] Both in the individual as well as the collective mode, networked communication has a growing populist dimension, ranging from the redefinition of expert knowledge to online communities of craft production, such as the do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) movements, which tentatively challenge notions of corporate labor.[70] The grassroots, anti-corporate dimensions of D.I.Y. movements also reflect notions of community and craft linked to the 1960s, albeit within a very different socio-political and ideological context. What links both historical moments are anti-institutional, anti-corporate discourses that shape populist movements—many of which are less easily defined by notions of left and right.

In some respects the current inflections of online populism suggest a historical trajectory. The opening of cultural institutions (e.g., universities, museums) in the United States and Western Europe, which was initially driven, in part, by alternative social movements, became institutionalized as a cultural politics of democratization (Hoffmann's "Culture for Everyone"). Alternative political movements were redefined in terms of anti-elitist (populist) access to cultural institutions and democracy of markets, which measured institutional effectiveness and legitimacy through audience approval (i.e., Schulze's "post-utopian cultural politics").[71] Multiculturalism and diversity were instrumentalized by cultural politics during the 1990s to defuse socio-economic difference and simultaneously became a form of niche marketing.[72] Thus, notions of access, democracy,

Lash, *Critique of Information*, p. 25.

69. Timothy W. Luke, "Digital Discourses, Online Classes, Electronic Documents: Developing New University Technocultures," in *The Virtual University? Knowledge, Markets, and Management*, ed. Kevin Robins and Frank Webster (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), pp. 249–81, here p. 279.

70. Rob Walker, "Handmade 2.0," *New York Times Magazine*, December 16, 2007, pp. 76–81.

71. As Andrew Wernick has observed, promotional discourses linked those discourses that have not traditionally been promotional or commercial in nature (e.g., universities and museums) with promotional contexts through similar strategies of signification. Wernick, *Promotional Culture*, p. 182.

72. Although I recognize distinct differences in the chronologies and contexts of cultural politics, between Western Europe and the United States, there are some striking

and individualization are being reconfigured and transformed into various forms of populist cultural politics of empowerment that are being played out in twenty-first century mediascapes and virtual environments enabled through the Internet.

Knowledge Communities

One of the fundamental issues for knowledge production is how communities of knowledge producers are defined and constituted.[73] Professional associations undoubtedly play a key role in developing models that more fully address digital knowledge production, dissemination, and use, while engaging user communities outside of professionally circumscribed boundaries or discourses. Scholarly discourse in virtual spaces (e.g., listservs for researchers, practitioners, and publics) make it possible for experts and lay audiences to participate in multiple (professional) communities. However, we do not understand enough about how new and seemingly disparate communities of knowledge production in virtual spaces will be sustained over longer periods of time or how they might be institutionalized and supported by using alternative models.[74]

In the case of universities, the integration of internal and external information in wikis, blogs, chats, and discussion threads—some of which may flow into course projects—are incrementally constituting generalized knowledge bases for course work. That is, the combination of social software and student-generated information bases involve performing knowledge, i.e., the integration of social interactions (e.g., blogs) and tacit knowledge (e.g., gleaned in part from wikis). If McLuhan's conclusion that "the medium is the message" holds true for social software, then these formats are altering the definition of knowledge and how it is produced. Within the specific context of the humanities and social sciences, a critical pedagogy of media use would include not only the function of social software and the Internet, but also cultural, social, and historical explorations of print culture, the book (and e-books), libraries, open source, file sharing, online sources, concepts of plagiarism, intellectual property, and virtual

similarities. See my discussions of these issues in "The Politics of Multicultural Promotion," *New German Critique* 92 (2004): 141–58.

73. Regarding professional learning environments, see the projects discussed in Weiss et al. *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments*.

74. See some suggestions on how professional communities may be constituted in Weiss et al., *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments*.

communities. As Douglas Kellner observes, media literacy has largely remained "an unfulfilled challenge."[75] In approaching this challenge, he argues for multiple literacies, e.g., technological literacy (in how computers and digital devices operate), media literacy (in interpreting images, sound, and media culture), as well literacies that enable users to navigate hyptertext environments, including print, digital, and visual genres—all of which will require critical pedagogies.[76]

The deterritorialization of education is shifting the sites of learning to new spaces. YouTube and iTunes have become platforms for university course lectures. Virtual communities such as Second Life, with almost ten million "inhabitants," are emerging as prominent and influential forms of social interaction for education, politics, and e-commerce. As Michael Bugeja points out, universities are creating experiential learning environments on Second Life, politicians are creating meeting spaces, and think tanks are creating "islands" for their communication with consultants and public policy advisors.[77] Bujega has raised questions regarding public access to information (which is mandated under state-regulated "sunshine laws") if public officials and institutions are allowed to shift sites of their meetings to Second Life, or other virtual spaces that are not governed by state or local law but rather by corporate owners who resist transparency. He has also asked how universities will deal with ethical questions surrounding harassment and free speech when learning environments are transported into virtual communities, even if they do so on their own "islands" within Second Life.[78] Bugeja and Jeffrey Cole (Director, Center for the Digital Future) agree that "the difference in cultures between the structured world of the university and the 'anything goes'… frontier of [Second Life] could not be more different" (Cole).[79]

The significance of affective dimensions of learning reveals tensions between social interaction as empowerment and the need for critical frameworks within which course contents can be theorized, negotiated, analyzed, and discussed by instructors and students. Put differently, the relations between cognitive and affective dimensions of learning are being renegotiated here. The integration of virtual communities and

75. Kellner, "Technological Transformation," pp. 248–49.

76. Ibid., pp. 254–57.

77. Michael J. Bugeja, "Second Life, Revisited," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 12, 2007.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

social software into courses creates very different types of interactions and outcomes, which require reflective, critical forms of assessment. One component of a critical approach could include greater collaboration and/or interaction among theoreticians, artists, practitioners, students, faculty, and communities/publics. Electronic communications may enable the integration of diverse voices into localized contexts and communities of learning—providing potentially productive perspectives in course discussions and projects. Yet, without creating "islands," "educational grids," or protected websites for structured learning environments, virtual learning communities are also open to external voices that do not share the community's purpose or values.[80]

Despite the deterritorialization of learning, universities in physical and virtual space will continue to play a central role in shaping knowledge production. However, social interactions and experiential learning, social networking, and knowledge communities are assuming a pivotal position in this process. Janet Conway has discussed the importance of negotiating both the praxis and politics of knowledge in conceptualizing a democratic imaginary that "places a premium on practice. It is through practice that the movements are producing the knowledges they need in the making of another world with the space for many worlds within it."[81] How new communities of knowledge production can be (re)imagined with respect to how responsibilities for learning and knowledge are defined and theorized, as well as how the practices of knowledge communities are (re)negotiated, is an important project for current and future knowledge politics.

80. Regarding the clash of values and use of "educational grids," see ibid.

81. Janet M. Conway, *Praxis and Politics: Knowledge Production in Social Movements* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137–38.

Wittgenstein and the Fate of Theory

Chantal Bax

In philosophy, or in philosophy of the continental kind, "1968" has come to represent a specific type of thinking. Or, rather, it has come to mark the decline of one type of theorizing in favor of another, namely, the kind that is suspicious of all-embracing theories.[1] Though the philosophers associated with the Paris upheavals are figures like Jean-Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse, around the same time several thinkers entered onto the stage (such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard) who were to make an entire career out of undermining the theoretical constructions of their predecessors. These then up-and-coming philosophers claimed that the grand narratives regnant during most of the twentieth century had ignored, repressed, and even annihilated everything that did not fit their schemes. To such inherently totalitarian theories—totalitarian no less in practice than in theory—the only right response seemed to be a continuous emphasizing of alterity, plurality, and difference.

Yet the philosophers of difference, in turn, have been criticized for the practical or political consequences of their views, too. As thinkers as diverse as Alain Badiou, Seyla Benhabib, and Luc Ferry[2] have argued, the

1. As is often pointed out, in the 1960s the so-called "masters of suspicion" (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) gained influence at the cost of the "three H's" (Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger). See Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Alan D. Schrift, *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

2. Though their arguments can by no means be said to be the same, these thinkers all point to a certain impotence or irresponsibility accompanying the persistent subversion of all debates on (most notably) truth and subjectivity. See, e.g., Alain Badiou, "The (Re)turn of Philosophy Itself," in *Manifesto for Philosophy,* trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany:

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willful undermining of all theorizing about the world and the way it should be, is in fact powerless in the face of injustice. An excessive distrust toward thinking accordingly fares no better in the practical realm than the overly ambitious projects of, say, existentialism and Hegelianism.

Now it is impossible to summarize the recent history of continental philosophy in such a way that all of the thinkers involved neatly fall into one of the stages identified. Still, the previous century can be said to have seen a development from grand narratives to a theorizing about the dangers of such narratives, soon followed by a plea for a return to proper theory. Interestingly, the positions successively occupied can be illustrated by means of the response their defenders gave to the view of a relative outsider, namely, the later Wittgenstein.

Having passed away long before May 1968 and often identified with analytic rather than continental philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein was neither the first nor the only one to (supposedly) long for an end to metaphysical theory. He has nonetheless become widely known as the anti-philosopher *par excellence*. As such, his writings have been greeted with either outright hostility or unreserved enthusiasm by the participants in debate about the desirability of theory.

According to Marcuse, to begin with, Wittgenstein's fixation on ordinary language games is "destructive of . . . critical thought."[3] For, Marcuse claims, philosophy's task is not to sanctify everyday linguistic facts but instead to show how these really are occurrences in the "historical struggle of man"[4] so as to be able to "free thought from its enslavement by the established universe of discourse."[5] Wittgensteinian therapy can in Marcuse's eyes only add to the "defamation of alternative modes of thought."[6]

Lyotard values Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy in an entirely different way. Unlike Marx, Lyotard "no longer expect salvation to rise from [the] inconsistencies"[7] that result from applying the logic of

SUNY Press, 1999), pp. 113–38; Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism," in *Situating the Self* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 203–41; Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *French Philosophy of the Sixties*, trans. Mary Schnakenberg Cattani (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 64–67.

3. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 176.
4. Ibid., p. 185.
5. Ibid., p. 199.
6. Ibid., p. 173.
7. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), p. xxiv.

efficiency to all domains of human life. Postmodernity rather "refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable."[8] Wittgenstein's insight "that there is no unity to language" and that "this dispersion is good in itself" can therefore hardly be overestimated, Lyotard maintains, for "[it] is deadly when one phrase regime prevails over the others."[9]

With Badiou, the balance tips to the other side again. Taking the opposition "between statements endowed with meaning and others devoid of it" rather than the one "between truth and error"[10] to be fundamental, Badiou even argues that Wittgenstein should be considered to be the great "modern sophist."[11] And though philosophy should never strive "for the annihilation of the sophist," Badiou declares that "following the sophistic or post-modern appraisal of the disasters of the century,"[12] the time has come to affirm that philosophy is not only possible, but indeed necessary.

If it makes sense to say that there is a moral to the debate about the desirability of theory that characterizes much of recent continental philosophy, it seems to be that one cannot wholly do without theorizing, but that an excess of theorizing can be dangerous, too. Yet if the challenge that philosophy faces is to respond to the imperative to think while avoiding the risks it harbors, I feel that Wittgenstein has in fact a significant contribution to make. For contrary to what Marcuse, Lyotard, and Badiou assume—whether approvingly or reproachfully—Wittgenstein did not aspire to put a stop to philosophical theory by unthinkingly celebrating the plurality of ordinary language games. On my reading, that is, Wittgenstein's writings incorporate the very insight that theory is both necessary and full of risk. It is therefore to this relative outsider that I would like to turn in what follows. Outsiders can, after all, make for fresh perspectives on long-standing debates.

8. Ibid., p. xxv.

9. Jean-François Lyotard, "Wittgenstein 'After'," in *Political Writings*, trans. Bill Readings (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 20. It should be noted that, though Marcuse has a very different understanding of Wittgenstein, he too prefers multi- over one-dimensional language and explicitly rejects everything that smacks of totalitarianism, as Lyotard does. In this respect Marcuse can hardly be said to fit the account of the recent history of philosophy just given. Moreover, to the extent that Lyotard (successfully) addressed topics such as justice and the social bond, he obviously does not fit the picture of postmodernists as un- even or anti-political thinkers.

10. Badiou, "The (Re)turn of Philosophy Itself," p. 117.

11. Ibid., p. 116.

12. Ibid., p. 135.

Wittgenstein on Essences

That it was Wittgenstein's main ambition to prevent all attempts at formulating philosophical theories is a picture that Marcuse, Lyotard, and Badiou share with much of Wittgenstein scholarship, or is in any case a caricature that does not seem to be contradicted by the more prevalent readings of his methodological remarks.[13] Though it would go too far to say that there is one standard rendering of Wittgenstein's aim and method, there seems to be a broad consensus among many of his commentators as to the radical difference between Wittgenstein and (traditional) philosophy. The gist of this difference can be conveyed by means of the notion of essence, a notion that also received much attention from the philosophers who were suspicious of grand narratives.

If philosophy can be defined as the investigation into the nature or essence of things, as Wittgenstein is taken to claim, then it has no reason to exist. Questions about the nature of things solely arise when our actual use of language is ignored or distorted; as a result, philosophical problems effectively form artificial non-problems. But this only means that their solution is in fact as simple as it is effective. If philosophers have merely lost sight of the role that words like "mind" and "being" play in or everyday lives, then their problems can literally be dissolved by bringing these words "back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."[14]

Hence, instead of one more theory about the nature or essence of, say, mind or meaning, Wittgenstein is held to offer a kind of therapy that should make all theory formation redundant. This basically implies that (though commentators may not want to put it in these words) Wittgenstein is more concerned with the delusions that other thinkers suffer from than with the essences in which they are interested. Allegedly taking philosophy to be a confused activity, his method is said to be designed to remove this confusion at its roots.

On my view, such an attitude toward philosophical inquiry is neither admirable nor true of Wittgenstein. I do not think such a stance is laudable as it effectively places a thinker beyond the reach of argument. From the

13. See e.g. Mark Addis, *Wittgenstein: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 77–96; Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 468–91; Robert Fogelin, *Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 1976), pp. 125–27.

14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), §116.

perspective of the more common reading, that is, it seems that doubts as to whether a certain philosopher's thesis is really confused, or whether one of Wittgenstein's counterexamples is actually valid, can solely result from not yet having reached his level of enlightenment.[15] Wittgenstein should after all be considered to be capable of avoiding even the smallest misstep, where other thinkers necessarily fail to do so.[16] Who doubts or disagrees with what Wittgenstein says, can then only be advised to listen to him more carefully.[17]

But that Wittgenstein considered all others thinkers to be confused is fortunately as inaccurate as it is would be unpraiseworthy. In most of his later writings, Wittgenstein does not place himself above other thinkers at all. Far from pretending to possess an insight superior to that of other thinkers, he typically brings out both the strengths and weaknesses of the positions he explores, and he casts doubt on his own suggestions almost as soon as he makes them.[18] A closer look at Wittgenstein's remarks on method reveals that these entries need not be considered to form an exception to this rule.

Wittgenstein does not commence the remarks that are today taken to form the *Investigations*' discourse on method (namely §§89–133) by distancing himself from other thinkers—or even from their interest in essences. As he explains in the very first paragraph of this methodological manifesto, what distinguishes philosophy from the other sciences is that

15. To repeat, this is probably not something that any Wittgenstein scholar would be prepared to defend, but it still seems to follow if one thinks through the logic of certain readings.

16. As is pointed out in Harry Stein, *The Fiber and the Fabric* (Amsterdam: ILLC dissertation series, 1997), it is very difficult to reconstruct an argument from Wittgenstein's writings that actually succeeds in rejecting philosophy *tout court*; neither the claim that philosophers transgress pre-given linguistic rules, nor the claim that they operate in isolation from all practical contexts, can be made to stick (see pp. 131–39).

17. Compare this to the concern voiced by Popper, who considered Wittgensteinian analysis to be intolerant of criticism and accessible only to a small circle of insiders (see Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemy*, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1971), p. 20). That Wittgenstein allegedly attacked Popper with a poker during a Moral Sciences Club meeting may seem to justify these worries, but I will show that the dynamics of Wittgenstein's writings in any case give one no reasons for calling him dogmatic.

18. It should be noted that commentators such as Stanley Cavell and Stephen Mulhall repeatedly argue precisely for the wholly undogmatic character of Wittgenstein's writings. See Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 20–27; Stephen Mulhall, "Philosophy's Hidden Essence," in Erich Ammereller, ed., *Wittgenstein at Work* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 63–85.

it does not occupy itself with mere "facts of nature" but with "the basis, or essence, of everything empirical."[19] The objective of Wittgenstein's explorations does not differ from traditional philosophy's in this respect. One could in any case say, he states a few remarks later, that "we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of [for instance] language."[20] Apparently, Wittgenstein is just as interested as other thinkers are in understanding what, say, mind or meaning is.

He does, however, go on to question whether looking for essences will actually satisfy the philosopher's desire to understand such things. For if he too is trying to understand the essence of language, Wittgenstein continues, it is its essence in terms of "its function, its structure."[21] Yet that is not always how philosophers understand their subject: "For they see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies beneath the surface."[22]

Or, as Wittgenstein puts it a little further on, his investigations deviate from traditional ones in working from the insight that, if one tries to understand what language is, one should not be disappointed to find "a family of structures more or less related to one another" instead of some pure and "formal unity."[23] This unmistakably echoes the observations, made earlier in the *Investigations*, about language as a family resemblance phenomenon. On my view, these observations form the key to Wittgenstein's take on the nature of things—as well as to his take on the relationship between theory and practice.

In §65, Wittgenstein introduces an interlocutor protesting that, as an attempt to understand what language is, his investigations clearly miss the point. You keep on giving examples of different uses of language, (s)he objects, but you nowhere explain "what the essence of [language] is" or "what is common to these activities," while that used to be "the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself the most headache."[24] Wittgenstein responds that the interlocutor is right in observing that his present approach differs from his earlier one, but wrong in assuming that this is a difference between probing the nature of language and

19. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §89.
20. Ibid., §92.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., §108.
24. Ibid., §65.

simply evading the problem. Indeed, the *Investigations* do not "[produce] something common to all that we call language,"[25] but still it is rather the interlocutor herself who is obstructing the path to an understanding of language. For (s)he equates "the nature of language" with "what is common to all these activities," whereas a phenomenon need not have such a core trait at all.

Take for instance the different things we count among the games, Wittgenstein points out. "Card games, ball games, Olympic games and so on" do not share some one fundamental characteristic but are connected through "similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that."[26] It is not because games have one thing in common but because of this "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing"[27] that we call them by the same name.

Something similar holds for language, Wittgenstein maintains. Just as the word "game" stands for an open-ended collection of diverse proceedings, the various uses of language do not form a static and homogeneous phenomenon either. Anyone trying to understand what language is, should accordingly not look for one distinct characteristic common to all language use; (s)he had better describe the similarities and differences between the numerous uses of language so as to sketch the family of structures they collectively make up. Paradoxical as it may sound, if one seeks to know the nature of a thing, one should not try to find its essence.

A Different Approach to the Nature of Things

The upshot of the discussion with the interlocutor introduced in §65, then, is not that (s)he is mistakenly asking what language is. Wittgenstein is merely exposing and contrasting their respective views on what it is one asks for when one wants to know such a thing. This suggests that the prevailing picture of Wittgenstein as an anti-essentialist and anti-philosophical thinker is incorrect in the sense that he does not reject philosophy altogether for hoping to understand the nature of things. It is only correct in the sense that he thinks philosophers should not use "nature" and "essence" interchangeably. But to take issue with particular ideas about the nature of things is not to dismiss philosophy as inherently confused; rather, it is to fully participate in the philosophical debate.

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., §66.
27. Ibid.

Returning to the remarks that are today known as Wittgenstein's discourse on method, it can be seen that many of these entries reiterate and elaborate on the earlier dispute with the interlocutor. Indeed, far from frowning upon philosophical inquiry per se, Wittgenstein can be said to be engaged in a debate on the most adequate way to conceive of and approach the nature of things.

While the remarks on family resemblance start off from the observation that phenomena need not belong together because of one shared thing, a large part of the methodological manifesto focuses on one particular consequence thereof. For if the different kinds of games and the various uses of language do not have an essence in the sense of one common core, their nature does not come in either a homogeneous or a pure and precise form. Philosophical inquiry can therefore go wrong, Wittgenstein argues, to the extent that it conceives of the nature of, say, mind or meaning as something superbly exact.

In the eyes of those who adhere to this notion, something vague or indefinite cannot be of interest to philosophy, just like "[an] enclosure with a whole in it is as good as *none*."[28] Philosophy seeks to know the nature of things, and its nature qua essence must be "*prior* to all experience," that is to say, "no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it."[29]

To the extent that the philosopher can be said to be engaged in an erroneous activity, this is where (s)he makes a fundamental mistake. For, Wittgenstein argues, this "crystalline purity [is not] the *result of investigation*; it [is] a requirement."[30] Far from enabling one to understand the nature of complex matters like mind and meaning, this requirement is likely to make one dissatisfied with the things we normally call by these names, sending one "in pursuit of chimeras."[31] In so far as philosophers expect to see some crystalline core behind all language use, they may think that they are "tracing the outline of the thing's nature" whereas instead they are "merely tracing around the frame through which [they] look at it."[32]

But that philosophers fail to achieve what they set out to do precisely when they are looking for simple and sublime essences, does not mean that

28. Ibid., §99; compare §§68–77.
29. Ibid., §97.
30. Ibid., §107.
31. Ibid., §94.
32. Ibid., §114.

all philosophical endeavors have to be put to a stop. According to Wittgenstein, the only thing to realize is that if our "real need" is to understand the "spatial and temporal phenomenon of [for instance] language," we should not be telling stories about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm."[33] Instead, we should be sketching the family of structures that our actual uses of language collectively make up. A similar message is conveyed in the passage where Wittgenstein famously claims that "we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation* and description alone must take its place."[34] Rather than dismissing all philosophical theses as nonsensical, this remark can be said to probe the boundary between the philosophical and the scientific practice.

Though Wittgenstein's repeated emphasis that philosophy deals with nothing over and above the empirical could give the impression that the philosopher conducts the same investigations as the scientist, it should be clear, Wittgenstein explains, that philosophical "considerations could not be scientific ones."[35] The scientist's interest is namely in "causal connexions."[36] (S)he starts off from ordinary phenomena but goes on to look for their causes, for elements that may not appear at the everyday empirical level but form and shape this level nonetheless.

The philosopher, by contrast, seeks to sketch the relations of similarity and difference between ordinary phenomena. (S)he explores the family resemblances between these things and does not look for the laws and processes behind them. That Wittgenstein prefers description over explanation thus merely reflects his view that the philosopher should not speculate about things underlying or surpassing ordinary phenomena but should instead give an account of the structures (s)he finds on the everyday empirical level.

The passages in which Wittgenstein gives an outline of the way he himself plans to meet this requirement, also indicate that his doubts about certain philosophical investigations do not yet make him into the epitome of anti-philosophical thinking. An account like the one desired by the interlocutor of §65 may inevitably violate the heterogeneous nature of matters like mind and meaning, but Wittgenstein does not therefore

33. Ibid., §108.
34. Ibid., §109.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., §89.

commit himself to end all investigations into their nature. Instead, he aims to leave their multifariousness intact.

Wittgenstein's well-known language games are means to precisely this end. They are set up, he explains, "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."[37] Language games thus form a worthy alternative to the "pre-conceived idea" of crystalline purity "to which reality must correspond"[38] and that makes for philosophical frustration, at best.

But the concept that is most central to his approach, as Wittgenstein himself proclaims, is that of a "perspicuous representation."[39] That this type of representation, of which the defining characteristic is that it "produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions'," is of "fundamental significance"[40] to him, need not come as a surprise. For if it is Wittgenstein's objective to understand the nature of things, and if he takes this nature to come in the form of complex relations of family resemblance, someone can be said to grasp the nature of a thing when (s)he succeeds in seeing such connections perspicuously.

At this point, however, a question as difficult as it is important arises. For how exactly would someone ever be able to provide a perspicuous representation of these connections? Assuming that the phenomena in which philosophers take an interest form open-ended clusters of heterogeneous structures, it seems downright impossible to capture their nature—let alone in a perspicuous way. Ironically, the remarks in which Wittgenstein explicitly speaks of his approach do not offer any details about the form a perspicuous representation should take, and they are therefore of no avail in solving this puzzle.[41] In order to see how Wittgenstein thought to be able to combine the perspicuity or generality that theory demands with

37. Ibid., §130.
38. Ibid., §131.
39. Ibid., §122.
40. Ibid.
41. In fact, the sole (explicit) example of a perspicuous representation to be found in Wittgenstein's entire oeuvre is the color octahedron discussed in *Philosophical Remarks* (a collection of remarks preceding the *Investigations*). See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees and trans. Raymond Hargreaves (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), pp. 51 and 278. Apart from the fact that it is unclear whether Wittgenstein, when compiling the *Investigations*, was thinking of the color octahedron as the ultimate perspicuous representation, it remains to be seen whether such a diagram can be given to capture the nature of all phenomena that a philosopher could be interested in (as is perhaps indicated by the

the vagueness or multifariousness that characterizes the things it investigates, one needs to examine the remarks in which his method is implicitly demonstrated.

Intermezzo: Wittgenstein on Grammar

However, before I go on to do so, I have to deal with an important objection that may have been on the reader's mind from the very beginning. I have been claiming all along that Wittgenstein expected to be able to investigate something like the nature of things themselves, yet it could be objected that one of his main accomplishments was to have demonstrated the sheer naïveté of precisely such expectations. For did Wittgenstein not argue again and again that the only access we have to the world is through language and that, moreover, our language or grammar does not serve to mirror some essential structure of reality?[42] That Wittgenstein dubbed his explorations "grammatical"[43] should therefore be taken quite literally; they clarify the use of our words but, given that grammar does not stand in a justificatory relation to reality, ultimately leave the things themselves untouched.

My response to this objection would be that the claim that grammatical rules are neither true nor false does not yet imply that grammar tells us nothing about the way the world is. That would perhaps follow on the added assumption that language and world are two separate entities entering only into a wholly one-sided relationship, with language standing over and against the world and imposing its reign without the world having any say. Yet that is not an assumption Wittgenstein seems to make.

As he points out, we cannot "choose [our concepts] at pleasure" since their formation is influenced, or in any case constrained, by certain "general facts of nature."[44] Grammar should accordingly be said to be a product of human interaction with the world. On Wittgenstein's view, that is, *homo sapiens* did not enter onto the world stage equipped with a fixed and rigid set of linguistic rules, but human beings have developed (and will continue to develop) their language in a practical engagement with the things around them. Or as he put it in *On Certainty*, the remarks that perhaps

fact that Wittgenstein himself never provided a perspicuous representation of this specific type of some of the phenomena he was most concerned about).

42. See e.g. Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 54–55, 269–71, 320.

43. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §90.

44. Ibid., p. 230.

most clearly stress the dynamic character of our conceptual structures: "Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination."[45]

Hence, the relationship between grammar and world as it is depicted in Wittgenstein's later writings is not one between two separate poles, one active and one passive. The picture he paints is rather a highly dynamic and thoroughly interactive one. To insist that a remark like "Essence is expressed by grammar"[46] imprisons us within our linguistic structures, is consequently to adhere to a dichotomy that Wittgenstein was trying to move away from. Far from conveying purely conceptual knowledge, his grammatical investigations are also a means of coming to grips with the world around us.

Example: Wittgenstein on the Nature of Mind

To come back to and recapitulate my reading of his methodological manifesto, it seems that Wittgenstein, like Lyotard, is very much concerned not to distort the plurality of everyday practices. However, his response to this concern need not be described as the antidote or antithesis to proper philosophy, as Marcuse and Badiou both claim. That is to say, Wittgenstein strongly opposes a particular take on the nature of things, and some of his remarks indeed seem extremely anti-philosophical, but an interpreter exclusively focuses on these slogans only at the cost of ignoring certain possibilities that Wittgenstein's writings offer.

Contrary to the prevailing picture of him, I think that Wittgenstein exposes not so much a confusion but rather a tension inherent in theory formation: a tension between the heterogeneity that characterizes everyday phenomena and the generality or clarity that theory demands. But instead of therefore refraining from making any philosophical claims, Wittgenstein's actual practice can be said to show how neither generality nor multifariousness needs to be sacrificed. In the remainder of this essay, I will demonstrate this by examining Wittgenstein's remarks one preeminently multifaceted subject, namely, the human psyche.

The collection of entries that have become known as Wittgenstein's "philosophy of psychology"[47] may at first sight appear to be an utterly

45. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. and trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), §475.

46. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §371.

47. Including (but not without overlap) the second part of the *Investigations* and both the *Remarks* and the *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. See Ludwig Witt-

unsystematic bulk of mere observations, questions, and examples. Indeed, Wittgenstein sometimes seems to be more interested in specifying what a description of the inner should *not* look like than in giving one himself. The difference with a proper account of the nature of mind could hardly be bigger, it seems.

Yet looks can be deceiving. The characteristics of Wittgenstein's distinctive style are in fact—or on my reading—entirely in line with his ideas on how to conceive of and approach the nature of things.

His numerous descriptions of psychological phenomena, to begin with, can be said to be informed by the insight that things like the mind do not come in the form of a pure and precise entity. For this implies that who wants to know what the mind or the inner is, is well advised to give an overview of the many different things that we take to be inner. This explains why Wittgenstein gives so many examples of different psychological phenomena: of thinking and imagining, of having pain and pretending to have pain, and so on. Far from having no constructive rationale, the remarks on these diverse phenomena aim to bring the relations of family resemblance between them to light.

That many of his entries indicate how not to conceive of the inner does not disqualify Wittgenstein as a positively philosophical thinker either. This characteristic, too, can be said to be reflect his ideas on the nature of things. For the cluster of phenomena that we refer to with a word like "mind" not only lacks a shared essence but also, as a result, can not always be clearly demarcated from other such groups. This implies that one who wants to know what the mind or inner is, is also advised to explore the similarities and differences between, say, psychological phenomena and bodily processes or material objects. Hence, when Wittgenstein argues that pain is real but not therefore an inner entity,[48] he is not, or not only, freeing Cartesians from philosophical confusion. He can be said to be working toward an account of the human psyche himself.

However, and in contrast to the way Wittgenstein is often portrayed, he does not always rest content with showing others to be mistaken or with describing specific cases. Once in a while he seems to summarize his

genstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vols. 1 and 2, trans. and ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vols. 1 and 2, ed. G. H. von Wright and trans. C. G. Luckhardt (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

48. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §293 and §304.

findings and to make claims of a more wide-ranging nature. These general claims include, for instance, Wittgenstein's observation that first-person statements (like "I am in pain") are expressive while third-person statements (like "She is in pain") are descriptive,[49] or his claim that the human being is the best picture of the human soul.[50]

The occurrence of these general claims does not conflict with Wittgenstein's care for particular cases, as they do not serve to articulate his view on the nature of mind all by themselves. The remark about the human being as the best picture of the human soul, for instance, sums up the moral of the entries investigating in what sense we say that the inner is something private, like the one asking: "Is a thought also 'private' in the case where I utter it out loud [and] no one hears me?"[51] But the "human being is the best picture of the human soul" claim itself has to be supplemented in order to prevent it from being misunderstood, with the entries exploring the differences between mind and body. For Wittgenstein is not saying that "the soul [is] merely something about the body"; he is, as he explains, "not that hard up for categories."[52]

There is, in other words, a certain interaction taking place between the particular cases that Wittgenstein describes and the general claims that he makes. It is, moreover, in this interaction that Wittgenstein can be said to strive for a balance between the perspicuity that theory demands and the heterogeneous nature of the things it describes.

Wittgenstein's general claims may not be able to convey each and every psychological family resemblance relation all at once, but they do create some order in (what can still appear to be) a chaos by connecting groups of remarks with each other, by highlighting certain trains of thought, and by summing up the most important insights in which these result. By themselves these statements may not convey the multifariousness of mind in all aspects, but that is made up for by the fact that they refer to other remarks that collectively cover more parts of this terrain in more detail. These other remarks, in turn, may by themselves lack the kind of clarity that Wittgenstein claims to be aiming for; but that is, in turn, made up for by the fact that they are reshuffled and recapitulated in the claims of a more wide-ranging nature.

49. See Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2:§148.
50. See ibid., 1:§281.
51. Ibid., 1:§565.
52. Ibid., 2:§690.

The remarks of a synoptic nature, then, in interaction with the remarks they synopsize, all illuminate certain parts of the landscape that we cover with the word "mind."

Conclusion

This brings me back to the development in continental philosophy that I sketched at the beginning of this essay. To the extent that 1968 marks the transition from grand narratives to a theorizing about the dangers of such narratives—an outlook that has in turn been deemed suspect for being insufficiently concerned with political practice—Wittgenstein cannot be identified with that movement. If a label is to be assigned, he should probably be categorized as post-68 *avant la lettre*.[53]

That is to say, fully aware of the tension inherent in any attempt at getting a comprehensive outlook on heterogeneous rather than uniform matters, Wittgenstein did not respond to this danger by indiscriminately celebrating the plurality of ordinary language games. Instead, his writings oscillate between the description of specific cases and statements of a more general nature; he accordingly places the particular in a larger framework and inscribes the general with particularities at the very same time.

So if the challenge that philosophy faces is to respond to the imperative to think while avoiding the risks it harbors, I do not think that one should straightforwardly accept—as Marcuse, Lyotard, and Badiou all do—the caricature of Wittgenstein as the antithesis to philosophy. For his writings actually suggest a well-balanced solution to the debate about the fate of theory.

If grand narratives run the risk of overlooking subtleties and particularities, Wittgenstein's method seems to be designed to prevent such neglect. However, he does not focus on particularities at the cost of all similarity and identity. The dynamics of his writings bear witness to the insight that what goes for the danger of overemphasizing communality and hypostasizing identity, also goes for an approach to the particular. While differences should not be ignored, they need not be considered to be good in and of themselves either.

The pertinence of a Wittgenstein-like approach can perhaps be illustrated by briefly bringing it to bear on the loss of communal identity that Western countries are often said to have suffered since the 1960s. Apart

53. To be sure, not necessarily post-68 in the same way that, for instance, Badiou is.

from the fact that the people *in casu* possibly never formed truly homogenous and harmonious wholes, both Wittgenstein and the philosophers suspicious of grand narratives have given us ample reason not to long for forms of identity that preclude even the slightest divergence. However, it seems that excessive notions of identity are not adequately countered by uncritical praise of alterity of the kind associated with '68 thinking—but, as I have argued, no part of Wittgensteinian philosophy.

A mere celebration of non-identity, first of all, makes it hard to account for the fact that human beings do understand themselves as belonging to certain groups or communities, whether national, regional, or of another kind. Moreover, a narrow focus on alterity seems to leave one empty-handed when it comes to observing that the differences between some of such groups are not dealt with in an appropriate way. While one desires uncompromised unity only at the cost of those who can or will not conform, one undermines all accounts of identity only to find oneself incapable of criticizing or even conceptualizing marginalization.

Given that the description of similarities and differences is possibly not where philosophy ends but only where the most delicate problems begin, the reading of Wittgenstein I have offered is not meant to demonstrate that he can make all philosophical problems disappear. Still, I hope to have indicated that his particular approach, accommodating both generality and particularity in the way that it does, seems quite suitable for investigating matters like identity and community—theorizing about which still seems to be as difficult as it is necessary.

Entering the World of Pain: Heidegger

Andrew J. Mitchell

> We are pressed on all sides by innumerable and measureless suffering. We, however, are unpained, not given over to the essence of pain.
>
> Martin Heidegger, "The Danger"[1]

To give oneself over to the essence of pain is to give oneself over to the world. Pain is a fact of the world and in accepting this fact, in entering that world, we break with the tradition of metaphysical subjectivity that dates back to the Greek determination of the human as *zôon logon echon*. For Heidegger, pain is the surest sign that we wholly *belong* to this world; in fact, pain is nothing other than our contact with the world and our "openness" to it. In what follows I will first present those aspects of Heidegger's view of pain that clearly break with the notion of a self-enclosed subject and reveal pain to be our opening to the world (that pain is not a sensation, is nothing internal, is an intimate relation suffused by mood). Following this, I briefly contrast Heidegger's view with two views of pain prevalent today—the psychoanalytic view of Sigmund Freud and the humanist view of Elaine Scarry—to show that neither of these is adequate for understanding the positive, world-entering role of pain.[2] Finally, I will turn to

1. Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. Petra Jaeger, vol. 79 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), p. 57.

2. A more thorough account of Heidegger's conception of pain must include consideration of Friedrich Nietzsche and, most importantly, Ernst Jünger. Heidegger's relation to Jünger could be said to pivot around their differences regarding pain. This is the subject of a work I am currently preparing, "The Painful Overcoming of Metaphysics: Heidegger and Jünger."

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Heidegger's rich readings of Trakl to articulate the ways in which giving oneself over to pain transforms the individual, the things of the world, and the world itself. My proposal is that in giving ourselves over to the essence of pain, we give ourselves over to a mortal world of sense. In my concluding remarks, I clumsily sketch a few traits of such a world.

1. Pain Against Subjectivity

The first point to be made in regard to Heidegger's understanding of pain is also the boldest, that pain is not a sensation. Heidegger states it in no uncertain terms: "The essence of pain remains closed to every opinion that represents pain by sensation."[3] Sensation (*Empfindung*) harbors a host of presuppositions and potential pitfalls that Heidegger finds inappropriate to a "mortal" understanding of pain: that pain would be something that we receive, something that befalls us from outside, that pain registers itself within some interior, indeed, that pain would be something we are cable of "having" in the first place.[4]

The idea of pain as sensation is ultimately rooted in an "anthropological" conception of the human. Heidegger had already explained in the first chapter of *Being and Time* (¶10) that the anthropology of the Christian and Greek world "stands in the way of the basic question of Dasein's being."[5] Such anthropological views define the human as *zôon logon echon* and leave both the animality and the rationality in question unexamined in their ontological foundations:

> "Man" is here defined as a *zôon logon echon*, and this is Interpreted to mean an *animal rationale*, something living which has reason. But the kind of Being which belongs to a *zôon* is understood in the sense of occurring and Being-present-at-hand. The *logos* is some superior endowment; the kind of Being which belongs to it, however, remains quite as obscure as that of the entire entity thus compounded.[6]

3. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 181 (translation modified).

4. Something so fully possessed by the subject that it could even proceed to give names to its pain: "I have given a name to my pain and call is 'dog.' It is just as faithful…" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §312.

5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 48.

6. Ibid.

The anthropological obstruction that we are interested in, however, lies in the third term of this definition, the one that Heidegger does not explicitly address, the *echon* or "having."[7] The anthropological conception of the human is not merely a matter of an unexamined animality with a superadded and unexamined rationality (as per the *animal rationale*), but of the unexamined coupling of the two in a "having." The Greek definition of the human ascribes "having" right into the essence of the human being, where such "having" ultimately makes of the subject a watchman standing guard before a treasure trove of collected possessions, accrued sensations, lived experiences, etc. It leads, in other words, to a conception of the subject as possessing an interior. Concomitant with the anthropological view of pain as sensation is interiority as the site of reception.

Heidegger cautions us away from such a thinking of pain: "We should not imagine pain anthropologically as a sensation that makes us feel afflicted; we should not construe interiority [*Innigkeit*] psychologically as that wherein sensitivity is nested."[8] In making pain a sensation and lodging that sensation within a subject, we act as though we might stand outside our pain and comprehend it, surround it, or encompass it. Such a conception actually serves to insulate us from our pain. We are not really in pain, so much as pain is in us, contained. In short, by such a view pain becomes our possession (as though pain did not run right through us), rather than, as Heidegger sees it, our opening to the world. The psychological interiority (*Innigkeit*) that Heidegger objects to in the anthropological account of pain, is better understood by him as a relation of intimacy (*Innigkeit*).[9] The interior is not cordoned off from the world, and pain is not sequestered away to be contained there. Instead, the interior is already riven by

7. It is perhaps worth noting that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is even willing to claim that "Dasein has language" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ¶34), something he adamantly rejects at almost every opportunity in the later work. Any number of references could be gathered toward this point. They would all agree in the charge that "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man" (Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter [New York: Harper & Row, 1971], p. 146).

8. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 205 (translation modified).

9. Heidegger articulates such a sense of intimacy in his readings of Hölderlin, from whom he adopts the term. In "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," he writes that "What keeps things apart in opposition and at the same time joins them together, Hölderlin calls 'intimacy'" (Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller [Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000], p. 54). We shall soon see that this is almost synonymous with Heidegger's understanding of the joining power of pain.

pain. There is nothing interior that would escape an utter exposition to the world, nothing that is not brought into relation with that world, nothing without relation.

The Heideggerian conception of pain begins with this exposition of what is supposedly interior. Once interiority is understood as intimacy and thereby as relation, pain can no longer be thought in terms of an internally felt sensation. But Heidegger's goal is not to do away with pain (in fact, the problem is that we do not experience pain enough!). If anything, Heidegger wishes to bring us back to our pain and this bringing back is no retreat, but a movement to our limits. As is well known, the limit of a thing is not where it ends but where it begins, and the same holds true for us. Our limit is our opening to the world. Interiority as intimacy rips open the subject and empties it onto the world. Pain is nothing other than that from where we begin, this rip or tear:

> Pain rends [*reißt*]. It is the rift [*Riß*]. But it does not tear apart into dispersive fragments. Pain indeed tears asunder, it separates [*scheidet*], yet in such a manner that at the same time it draws everything to itself, gathers it to itself. . . . Pain is what joins [*das Fügende*] in the rending that divides and gathers. Pain is the joining of the rift [*die Fuge des Risses*].[10]

Pain tears the subject without dividing that subject into isolated shards. Pain indeed separates and rends us, but only in order to grant relation. For this reason, Heidegger will speak of a "contrary essence" of pain.[11] Pain joins us to the world inextricably. No pain is so great that it would annihilate us (this is the true horror of existence, that it can always continue, is always supported by its relations, no matter how atrocious the pain it suffers or afflicts). Pain is a wound of relation, and insofar as the tear of pain joins us to the world, this pain is always a shared pain. The discontinuities of pain bring us into continuity with the world.

Such a continuity evidences itself in mood, and pain is what enables these dispositions to flow through us from beyond us and to pass through just as ephemerally as they arrived. The opening of pain is saturated by mood, and the relational essence of pain is likewise determinative for mood. Moods are not discretely opposed to each other. As ways of being outside oneself, even moods like joy and sadness are said to "play into each

10. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 204 (translation modified).
11. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 180 (translation modified).

other."[12] There is no end of one that is not already exposed to its other, and essentially so.[13] But ultimately it is pain that first opens the medial space for this relationality, spilling us into this world *between* subject and object. Pain is consequently nothing opposed to joy or identical to sadness, but what allows them their hold upon us in the first place. Pain "lets the far be near and the near be far."[14] Pain provides joy with its heights and sadness with its depths: "The play itself which attunes each [of these moods] to the other by letting the far be near and the near be far is pain. This is why both, highest joy and deepest sadness, are each in their own way painful."[15] In opening us to the world, pain likewise brings the world to us, and thereby delivers us over to the ineluctable vagaries of mood. Thus when Heidegger writes that "Everything that is alive is painful,"[16] this says nothing other than "All life is painfully exposed and disposed in mood."

2. Heidegger Contra Freud and Scarry

Before turning to the Trakl readings in greater detail, it is worth pausing to note how Heidegger's conception of the worldliness of pain distinguishes his view from both classical psychoanalytic models and contemporary humanist accounts of pain, as exemplified by the work of Sigmund Freud and Elaine Scarry. Where Heidegger finds a contrariety in pain that serves to expose us to the world and to run that world right through us, both Freud and Scarry view pain as more or less a retreat from the world, as in the Freudian notion of a withdrawal of cathexis or Scarry's idea of a world "contraction."

In regard to Freud, when we consider the contrary essence of pain in terms of a joining and rending, we approach the source of the psychoanalytic insight that pain occasions a withdrawal of cathexes from the world. "It is universally known, and seems to us a matter of course," Freud writes, "that a person suffering organic pain and discomfort relinquishes

12. Ibid., p. 153.

13. See also the first Hölderlin lecture course, *Hölderlins Hymnen: "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, 2nd ed., ed. Susanne Ziegler (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), where Heidegger determines that it is the character of a *Grundstimmung* (fundamental attunement) to carry within itself a relation to its other. In the case of "sadness" this is "joy." On this point, see especially section 11.f, entitled "The Opposition between Sadness and Joy in the Fundamental Attunement" (ibid., pp. 147–48).

14. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 153 (translation modified).

15. Ibid. (translation modified).

16. Ibid., p. 181.

his interest in the things of the outside world, in so far as they do not concern his suffering."[17] For the psychoanalyst, pain is a retreat from the world on the part of a subject; the one in pain "withdraws his libidinal cathexes back upon his own ego, and sends them forth again when he recovers."[18] If we think cathexis as an "interest" that we take in the world, or rather a "value" that we place on it, then its withdrawal leaves a world bereft of value. The Heideggerian sense of pain, however, does not simply urge a subject back into itself; instead, it opens it to this "valueless" world beyond our particular interests and agendas. As we shall see, pain allows the world to show itself removed from our everyday world of utility and use-value.

Elaine Scarry also recognizes a withdrawal operative in pain. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, she terms this a "contraction" of the world: "It is in part the horrible momentum of this world contraction that is mirrored in the sudden agonized grimace of a person overcome by great pain."[19] The world contracts when pain forces our attention upon the body because, Scarry holds, the world is a world of meaning, culture, and language, terms that she opposes to the physical body. For this reason, she can likewise claim that "Intense pain is world-destroying."[20] Since Scarry opposes the world to the body, the latter remains in some sense "outside" the world. It is the silent accomplice of world, but nothing significant on its own. Pain cannot be meaningful for Scarry; in fact, it is precisely what drains life of meaning, and her notion of contraction rests on the latent dualisms of her thinking.

Contra such views, pain for Heidegger is no flight from the world but the fact of that world's obdurate insistence. In pain we encounter the inescapability of the world. The person in pain is unable to help themselves, to be sure. But what is overlooked is that this helplessness is at once a supplication. Helplessness is not something that befalls a person in isolation from others; it is, on the contrary, the greatest appeal to others. Helplessness is the laying bare of a connection to others in the world.[21]

17. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," in *General Psychological Theory*, ed. Phillip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1991), p. 64.

18. Ibid.

19. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), p. 32.

20. Ibid., p. 29.

21. Kant seems to recognize this fact in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* while detailing the nature of imperfect duties to others in a discussion of the categorical

Our helplessness before pain, our unguardedness in the experience, offers us up to the world and makes of this offering the essence of our being. Pain gestures beyond the self; it makes up our interface with the world.

For this reason it is perhaps saying too little to speak of pain as an "opening" to the world. The idea of an opening would seem to entail that somewhere else we would be "closed," that only this opening would be our portal to the world, and that everywhere else surrounding this portal would be the closed-off walls of the cabin. But to exist is not to reside behind a door or even behind a window (Dasein has no windows, as we know from the 1928 Leibniz interpretation); rather, it is to be wholly exposed, touched at every point and fronted at every surface. When Heidegger speaks of pain in the Trakl interpretations, it is in terms of a threshold or a limit and in such a conception we can perhaps intimate a break with the language of openness that organizes *Being and Time*. The Trakl interpretations present the transformations that occur in human, things, and world once we accede to our own limits in an experience of pain. In the readings, Heidegger follows Trakl in thinking of pain as a "flaming vision,"[22] and each aspect of the phrase is crucial to an understanding of the Heideggerian thinking of pain.

3. Pain in the Context of Trakl (Flaming Vision)

The contrary essence of flame makes it a figure of displacement in Heidegger's analysis. Flame provides warmth and repose when it burns at the hearth, suffusing the cottage with a welcoming glow of firelight, but it can

imperative. While some may wish to evade a duty to helping others by agreeing in reciprocation to seek no help from them either, Kant writes that this is impossible, since "it is impossible to will that such a principle should hold everywhere as a law of nature. For a will which decided in this way would be in conflict with itself, since many a situation might arise in which the man needed love and sympathy from others, and in which, by such a law of nature sprung from his own will, he would rob himself of all hope of the help he wants for himself" (Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton. [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], p. 91). The point is not so much that we will later need help, as that we need help now, or rather, that we are so constituted as to always enjoy the possibility of being helped and of helping.

22. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 181; Georg Trakl, "Das Gewitter," in *Die Dichtungen*, 6th ed, vol. 1 of *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Karl Röck (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1948), p. 183; and in Trakl, *Dichtungen und Briefe*, 2nd ed., Historisch-kritische Ausgabe, ed. Walther Killy and Hans Szklenar (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1987), p. 187. Subsequent references will include page numbers for both the sixth Salzburg edition, used by Heidegger, and the historical-critical edition of Killy and Szklenar.

always also exceed the bounds of the hearth in a conflagration threatening to reduce everything "into the white of ashes."[23] These contrary moments are so essential to flame that each is never found without the other, and, as a result, flame is never wholly in place. Just as pain cannot be housed in a psychological interior, so too can flame never be wholly in place at the hearth.

Flame is thus a figure of wandering between locations, of what Heidegger thinks in terms of a being "underway." The bulk of Heidegger's Trakl reading is devoted to the textual pursuit of a soul that is underway in Trakl's poetry and such a soul figures in both of the poems that Heidegger analyzes in his two readings.[24] Trakl terms this soul a "stranger on earth,"[25] and for Heidegger this means that the soul is "transposed into the foreign."[26] The soul underway is *no longer* at home, but to be underway is likewise to *not yet* be at one's destination. The transposed soul occupies this middle ground—or "between"—of pain. The flame of the "flaming vision" is thus a wandering underway (pain sets us underway).

Turning to "vision," each of Heidegger's Trakl readings reveal this medial zone between home and destination to be a scene of encounter and transformed appearance. Each shows a way in which pain transforms the relation between human and world. In the first of these scenes (in "Geistliche Dämmerung"), the transformation concerns a human who wanders to the forest's edge and catches sight of a blue deer, effecting a transformation of the *animal rationale* (or *zôon logon echon*) into one of the mortals (*die Sterblichen*). In the second (in "Ein Winterabend"), a wanderer arrives at the threshold of a cottage to behold a transformation of things, as bread and wine come to brilliantly shine upon a table. By following Heidegger's interpretive pursuit of these figures, we will ourselves draw near to the transformative essence of pain.

3.1. The animal rationale*, the Blue Deer, and the Mortal*

The transformation of the *animal rationale* (as delineated in "Language in the Poem") begins with a wandering soul who is led out to the very edge of a forest. The liminal character of the spatial setting is complemented by

23. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 179 (translation modified).

24. "Ein Winterabend" in the earlier essay "Language" and "Geistliche Dämmerung" in the longer essay "Language in the Poem,"

25. Trakl, "Frühling der Seele," in *Die Dichtungen*, p. 149; and *Dichtungen und Briefe*, p. 141.

26. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 180 (translation modified).

the temporal setting of twilight. The color that designates this "between" time is blue (neither the bright light of day, nor the black of absolute night). In these conditions, the soul catches sight of something standing out ahead at the forest's edge, a blue deer (*das blaue Wild*). The blue deer evinces a transformed animality: "Face to face with blueness and at the same time brought up short by glaring blueness, the animal face freezes and transforms itself into the countenance of the wild deer [*das Wild*]."[27] The animality of this animal is no longer something that can be defined (domesticated) by mutually exclusive and discrete categories such as those of the animal and the rational. The blue deer is said to "abandon the hitherto essential figure of the human," the *animal rationale*.[28] It does so because it is no longer defined by what it contains, but by that to which it is exposed, what it encounters at the limit: "The blue deer is an animal whose animality presumably does not consist in its animal nature, but in that thoughtful looking [*schauenden Gedenken*]."[29] Instead of determining animality by an exclusive opposition, animality is determined by a look that looks past its own limits, is determined by what lies beyond its own borders, so much so that the irrational animality of the *animal rationale* is transfigured and made "thoughtful." Because this animality is determined by exposure, it is nothing fixed: "This animality is still far away, and barely to be seen. The animality of the animal here intended thus vacillates in the indefinite."[30]

This transformation of the blue deer is simultaneously a transformation of the human, whose oppositional identity as *animal rationale* is likewise upset through exposure: "This animal, namely the thinking animal, *animal rationale*, the human, is, according to a word of Nietzsche's, not yet determined [*noch nicht fest gestellt*]."[31] This does not mean that the human is without determination; Heidegger even emphasizes that today the human is perhaps more determined than ever before. Instead the "not yet established" human is understood to always exceed the determinations it bears, including that of the *animal rationale*. Every circumscription or definition of a thing, Heidegger would have us see, is simultaneously the

27. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 166 (translation modified). The noun *das Wild* is itself a problem for English translation, as neither "deer" nor "game" will exactly do. The etymological richness of the term is evident by perusing Grimm's *Wörterbuch*. *Das Wild* does, however, bear a direct connection to the word "forest" (*der Wald*).

28. Ibid., p. 167 (translation modified).

29. Ibid., p. 166 (translation modified).

30. Ibid. (translation modified).

31. Ibid., pp. 166–67.

description (or even exscription) of an exposed surface. In abandoning the "hitherto essential figure of the human," human and animal come together in a community of mortals (*die Sterblichen*): "The name 'blue deer' names the mortal, who thinks of the stranger and with him would like to wander into the native place of the human essence."[32] Mortality is a matter of determination through exposure to the other, an occurrence of the limit as site of contact between one's own and what lies beyond (the wild). The mortals arrive at the limit by getting underway, and it is only out along these exposed twilight paths that we find the "native place of the human essence." Metaphysics cannot address this intermediate and liminal manner of existence while still thinking in terms of closure: "Perhaps the way into the 'underway' is still blocked for it."[33]

The abandonment of the *animal rationale* is not only a transformation of its animality, but of its rationality as well. This rationality is a direct inheritance of the *logos* possessed by the *zôon logon echon*. The logos is something that the animal would "have." But the mortal who steps to the limit of the forest, who stands at the threshold of the cottage, is so thoroughly exposed to what lies beyond that nothing remains closed. The mortal has no sphere of ownness to contain a language; it cannot have language as a possession. Once we have determined that the mortal has no inside but is exposed through and through, it is likewise no longer possible to think language as a means for the expression of an inner world. The whole essay "Language" is an assault on the idea that language would be an expression, a notion presupposing the very interiority that obstructs exposure. The mortal cannot "speak" if speaking means the vocal expression of inner ideas. What we thought was most ours, that which metaphysically determined us as the *zôon logon echon*—i.e., the possession of *logos*—is not ours at all. We are tunneled through by language, and it turns us inside-out, dispossessing us and extruding us, exposing us beyond ourselves.

3.2. From Object to Thing

But pain as flaming vision is not only a transformation of the *animal rationale* into the mortal; it is also a transformation of the things of the world. In the encounter found in the essay "Language," which treats Trakl's poem "Ein Winterabend," the effect of this transformation can be read from the "shine" of things. A wanderer is again underway, but this time instead of

32. Ibid., p. 167 (translation modified).
33. Ibid. (translation modified).

arriving at the edge of a forest, he comes to stand at the threshold of a cottage. The soul is again at the limit, and now, while at the threshold, the wanderer is welcomed into a shining world of appearing:

> Wanderer, quietly enter here;
> pain has turned the threshold to stone.
> There in pure brilliance shines
> upon the table, bread and wine.[34]

The wanderer's assumption of this liminal position reveals the shine of things as they appear in brilliant light. Heidegger is clear as to where and why this brilliance shines: "Upon the threshold, in the carrying out [*Austrag*] of pain. The tear of dif-ference [*des Unter-Schiedes*] allows the pure brilliance to shine."[35] Our separation from the world, our self-division in pain, our purchase at the limit, grants to things a space of appearance. To abandon the encapsulated identity of the metaphysical subject entails an abandonment of metaphysical objectivity as well, otherwise there is no difference. Things are no longer confined and trapped in themselves as objects, and these objects are no longer opposed to a subject across an empty void. As we have seen, this middle ground is essential to those beings defined by exposure and what lies beyond them. This "between" is no longer an absence bounding present objects. Instead, it is a welcoming space that we enter in pain and into which the things are immersed. This immersion in the world is their shining. In entering the world, they radiate beyond themselves. There could be no such entering, no such shining, in a void.

The shining thing is no longer objectively confined, it becomes a being of relation. Things are not just what they are; they belong in place and are implicated in the world (they gesture the world, Heidegger will say). For this reason, they cannot be identified as simply present-at-hand or completely available for assessment and a subsequent assignment of value. As the contextual entities that they are, something essential for things remains beyond them (in another vocabulary, we would say that "withdrawal" is of their essence and that their shining is the shining of the abyss). Without this readily assignable value they do not serve as means for the purposes of a subject. Their shining is a shining of this freedom from subordination and objectification.

34. Trakl, *Die Dichtungen*, p. 126; and *Dichtungen und Briefe*, p. 102.
35. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 205 (translation modified).

Shining is just this phenomenon of surface and limit, of things being so essentially defined by exposure and what lies beyond them that they radiate or "gleam" into that beyond. Nowhere do we encounter anything other than the surface of the thing.[36] Shining is the phenomenality of surface and limit. The bread and wine shine so brilliantly upon the table because they are wholly at their surface. Nothing lies behind, beneath, or inside of the things that they would hold in reserve from the wanderer at the threshold (everything is *arriving*). The things at the table reach out in *offering* themselves to the wanderer. This is their invitation, the invitation of things.

3.3. The World of Sense

Pain opens us to spill us onto the world. The paradox is that in leaving ourselves we do not lose ourselves in an assimilation with the world.[37] Instead, it is only by first entering the world that we are able to take a distance from it (for the far to be near and the near to be far). The transformations in the *animal rationale* and in things are accompanied by a transformation of world as well, the space of appearing, the medium of encounter, the twilight blue between human and deer, the light of the flame through which the things on the table shine. What enters this medium, what traverses it? The phenomenal shine of things, the winds of mood, but also *logos*. The transformation of the human into mortal is likewise a liberation of *logos*. No longer is *logos* a possession, but it now becomes the very medium of the world of appearing. Language suffuses the world with its sense. Pain and language are not opposed to each other (pace Scarry); they are instead *the same* (*das Selbe*). Like pain—i.e., *as a medium*—language bears a "contrary essence" in the nature of its call. Language is a calling out that bids what it calls to draw near: "Calling calls in itself and thus constantly

36. Heidegger had said as much in "On the Origin of the Work of Art," where a consideration of the phenomenal qualities of stone reveals that there is never anything other than surface to be found in stone, no matter how far within it we may look: "The stone presses downward and manifests its heaviness. But while this heaviness weighs down on us, at the same time, it denies us any penetration into it. If we attempt such penetration by smashing the rock, then it shows us its pieces but never anything inward, anything that has been opened up. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull weight and mass of its fragments. If we try to grasp the stone's heaviness in another way, by placing it on a pair of scales, then we bring its heaviness into the calculable form of weight. This perhaps very precise determination of the stone is a number, but the heaviness of the weight has escaped us" (Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002], pp. 24–25).

37. In point of fact, this is Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche, Jünger, and Rilke.

away and back; away into absence, back into presence."[38] Language invites things "to come to the between of dif-ference [*Unter-Schied*],"[39] the same difference that allows the brilliance of things to shine. The worldliness of the world, the matrix of all appearance, is nothing abstract, void, or mute; rather the worldliness of the world unites phenomenality with meaning (*logos*) in a world of sense (where both "physical" sensuality and "intellectual" sensibility must be heard in unison). Pain is our entry into this world, and pain, too, is not unrelated to *logos*. The etymology of the Greek word for pain, *algos*, as presented by Heidegger in "On the Question of Being," attests to a continuity between pain (*algos*) and language (*logos*) as well: "Presumably, *algos* is related to *alego*, which as the *intensivum* of *lego* means intimate gathering [*innige Versammlung*]. In that case, pain would be the most intimate gathering."[40] The intimacy of this gathering would not be the most intimate if it did not also include things.

Emblematic of this coalescence of pain, thing, and language is Heidegger's treatment of stone, which is featured in both of the Trakl essays when the discussion turns to pain. The guiding thread of these reflections is the verse announcing that "Pain has turned the threshold to stone."[41] Does the threshold petrify in order to better resist the pain? By Heidegger's account, such is not the case: "The pain that has been appropriated to stone [*der zu Stein ereignete Schmerz*], however, did not harden itself in the threshold in order to stiffen. Pain essences in the threshold enduringly as pain."[42] The threshold does not turn to stone in order to desensitize itself to pain. On the contrary, the threshold turns to stone in order to experience pain in the first place, in order to endure it: "The carrying out of the between requires what is enduring and, in this sense, hard."[43] The hardness of stone allows it to maintain itself in pain, the better to endure it.

This pained enduring is nothing mute or senseless; stone is no mute material. If the world is to be a world of sense, then stone, too, would have to have a share of the intelligible. Stone would have to be a figure of

38. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 199 (translation modified).

39. Ibid., p. 206.

40. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, various trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). p. 306 (translation modified). Liddell, Scott, and Jones do not provide the etymology for the term, but they do define it in terms of both pain of the body and pain of the mind.

41. Trakl, *Die Dichtungen*, p. 126; and *Dichtungen und Briefe*, p. 102.

42. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 204 (translation modified).

43. Ibid. (translation modified).

sense. Heidegger's reading of the following stanza from Trakl's "Heiterer Frühling" proves it to be just this:

> So painfully good and true is what lives;
> and calmly an old stone touches you:
> Truly! I will always be with you.
> O mouth! that trembles through the silvery willow.[44]

By Heidegger's reading, the stone is pain: "The old stone is pain itself, insofar as it looks earthily upon the mortals."[45] But the stone of pain is nothing mute. The old stone (pain) touches us by speaking: "The colon after the word 'stone' at the end of the verse shows that here *the stone* speaks. Pain itself has the last word."[46] Neither stone nor pain are bereft of sense. Thoughtful animality finds its complement in speaking materiality.

To conclude, the experience of pain is an experience of mortality whereby the *animal rationale* is emptied of its possessions (becomes poor) in order to enter a world of sense wherein things shine in their appearing. In a word, pain is exposure, the mortal experience of the limit and of our essential belonging to what lies beyond (the world). But is it so certain that we are the mortals? "The human is *not yet* the mortal."[47]

44. Trakl, *Die Dichtungen*, p. 26; and *Dichtungen und Briefe*, p. 50.
45. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 182 (translation modified).
46. Ibid., p. 182 (translation modified).
47. Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, p. 56 (my emphasis).

Searching for the Absent God: Susan Taubes's Negative Theology[*]

Christina Pareigis

> Creation is always violent.
>
> Susan Taubes to Jacob Taubes, Zurich, April 4, 1952

"I love you dear child and it is very hard to be reduced to a *reines Bewusstsein* [pure consciousness]."[1] Susan Taubes wrote this sentence in Paris on February 18, 1952, to her husband Jacob Taubes in Jerusalem. Following ten months together with him in the holy city, she had been living for six weeks in one of the most prominent centers of secular modernism. From now on she would live alone. Her arrival in Paris formed the sequel to an extensive correspondence allowing the pair to keep in touch in the first three years of marriage (1949–52), despite geographical distance for much of that time. After having become acquainted in New York in 1948 and then marrying the following year, the couple had spent a first study-period in Israel. But while Susan returned to the States in 1950 to get her B.A. in philosophy at Bryn Mawr College (she received the degree a year later), on Gershom Scholem's invitation Jacob taught classes in the sociology of religion at the Hebrew University. The shared months in Jerusalem—a locus that in the course of the correspondence would become a central scene of intellectual and personal conflict—preceded the start of Susan's preparations for her doctorate while on a Bryn Mawr stipend at the Sorbonne.

* Translated from German by Joel Golb.

1. Susan Taubes to Jacob Taubes (henceforth ST/JT), Paris, February 18, 1952 (citation is of the original English and German).

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Between Hegel and us, the Deluge

The intimate gesture of longing at the start of the letter ends up culminating in a direct reference to the conflicts bound up with Jerusalem for the couple: "I know I chose it, for objective reasons—perhaps a little bit out of wrath, also because I resented and revolted against the Israeli decision." The "Israeli decision" was *against* sharing a life stamped by insecurity and dependence in Israel—the political situation of the recently founded state was precarious and the personal quarrels at the Hebrew University intense—and *for* an effort to build a common life in America after the Jerusalem and Paris time had finished. Until they tentatively followed through on the decision in the summer of 1952, it would be accompanied by tormented debates. For while Jacob viewed Israel as both a national territory and "spiritual center" (*merkaz ha-ruach*), hence as embodying the possibility for a renewal of Jewish life after the Holocaust, Susan saw the Jewish state as grounding its legitimacy *paradoxically* through Judaism's spiritual inheritance, hence as holding a potential for violence that was not to be underestimated. On January 19, 1952, she thus wrote to Jacob that the "existence of the Jewish state may improve the status of jews all over the world, personally it makes me feel ill at ease. Unless, the state means the renunciation of the jew's religious pretensions *as a group*. But it doesn't mean that. The devil is a master of 'syntheses'."

What generated the discomfort was the synthesis of politics and religion, understood as an interplay of religious needs articulating themselves as a claim to political power and a political exercise of power whose justification took the shape of a religious promise. But to prevent the continuous reproduction of long-familiar structures of violence following this pattern, every tradition of thinking considered valid had to be subject to a radical critique. This process involved the tradition's application to present circumstances, since philosophy was never neutral but always also had historical and political implications: an insight that was constitutive for the debates marking the intellectual ferment of postwar American and European culture.

To this extent, Susan Taubes's above-cited epistolary sigh, taking the form of an ironic distance to the language of German Idealism and its "pure consciousness," points to one particular context for her letter: a context extending past the private sphere and into that of the same public debates, and that is centered around the question of the actuality of established philosophical systems and religious certainties in the Holocaust's wake. Referring to preparations for a Hegel seminar, Jacob thus writes Susan:

"I intend to show that between Hegel and us the deluge took place, i.e., the Christian premises for the concepts of truth, science [*Wissenschaft*], etc.... were taken away."[2] The total questioning of dominant philosophical premises attests to a skepticism aimed not only at the validity of a set of concepts but, above all, at the uninterrupted continuation of the conceptual currents that produced them. In one form or another, artists and intellectuals working in this period tried to move against these currents through a critical re-reading of Western religious and philosophical history. This process might be considered a variation of modern *Zivilisationskritik*: as an effort, unfolding in an age of technological progress, to integrate the experiences of war and extermination into a description of alienation, homelessness, and imprisonment that nevertheless is tied to hopes for a concrete realization of a post-diluvial society grounded in freedom.

On the Religious Use of Tyranny

Particularly when studying in America and France, Susan Taubes was in contact with theologians and philosophers who contributed to the debate in essential ways, among them Karl Löwith, Paul Tillich, Jean Wahl, and Albert Camus. These figures represented intellectual movements—for example critical theory, theology of crisis, existentialism—that left a decisive mark on the period's cultural climate. It was a period in which a renewed proximity between Jewish thinking and Europe's broader philosophical traditions was gradually becoming manifest; and in which Susan Taubes's own conceptual labor involved an effort to integrate a partly personal, partly collective experience of extreme violence into a distinctive mode of civilizational critique: one catalyzed by a dialectic secularizing movement in which nihilism is transformed into a negative theology.

In this manner, all the scholarly writings on religion that Susan Taubes will present to the American intellectual public between 1953 and 1956 take on their contour during the year in Paris. In her essay "The Absent God" (1955),[3] she thus examines a conceptual figure of modernity—the articulation of the experience of an absent God by way of a negative theology itself grounded in a dialectic of negation manifest in contemporary

2. Jacob Taubes to Susan Taubes (henceforth JT/ST), Jerusalem, February 6, 1952. Throughout this essay, all citations from letters of Jacob Taubes have been translated from the German.

3. Susan Anima Taubes, "The Absent God," *The Journal of Religion* 35 (1955): 6–16.

philosophy.[4] To exemplify this process, she focuses on the writing of Simone Weil, explaining this choice a little later in her essay "The Riddle of Simone Weil" (1959): similarly to Kafka, the French philosopher and mystic embodies, she argues, a significant aspect of Jewish existence in modernity in general, one directly connected with that dialectic, namely, "the configuration of a double estrangement to which the Jew may be predisposed in contemporary civilization. For . . . [Weil] was born outside the Church as a Jew, and at the same time stood outside of Judaism and this not by an act of revolt, but simply by circumstance."[5]

To be part of a minority standing apart from the ubiquitous majority culture, while at the same time being alienated from one's own tradition: for Susan Taubes, this "configuration of a double estrangement" constitutes the historical starting point for consideration of hidden theological traces within German philosophy. In "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism" (1954),[6] for example, she examines the potential for interpreting contemporary circumstances in a conceptual framework of gnosis. Within this framework, the differences between Jewish and Christian thinking recede (but by no means vanish) in the presence of specific connecting traces: those of the theological connotations at work in central topoi of modernism such as negation, nihilism, nothingness, absence, and paradox. Taubes again thematically addresses and presents an actualization of such topoi, circling as they do around a basic experience of estrangement, in her Harvard dissertation of 1956, "The Absent God: A Study of Simone Weil," which she wrote under Paul Tillich.[7] On the typescript's cover, the

4. The present description of Susan Taubes's work on religious philosophy largely follows Sigrid Weigel, "Die Religionsphilosophin Susan Taubes: 'Negative Theologie' und Kulturtheorie der Moderne," in Bernhard Greiner and Christoph Schmidt, eds., *Arche Noah: Die Idee der 'Kultur' im deutsch-jüdischen Diskurs* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2002), pp. 383–401 (in revised form in Sigrid Weigel, *Literatur als Voraussetzung der Kulturgeschichte. Schauplätze von Shakespeare bis Benjamin* (Munich: Fink, 2004), pp. 127–45), and Weigel, "Hannah Arendt und Susan Taubes: Zwei jüdische Intellektuelle zwischen Europa und den USA, zwischen Philosophie und Literatur," in Angelika Huml and Monika Rasenecker, eds., *Jüdische Intellektuelle im 20. Jahrhundert: literatur- und kulturgeschichtliche Studien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 133–50.

5. Susan Taubes, "The Riddle of Simone Weil," *Exodus* 1 (1959): 55–71.

6. Susan Anima Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," *The Journal of Religion* 34 (1954): 155–72.

7. Taubes was in Paris until the summer of 1952, after which she was at the University of Rochester from 1952–53, and then at Radcliffe from 1953 on. While there, she held the Josiah Royce Fellowship of Radcliffe College (1953–54) and the Benjamin White Whitney Fellowship (1954–55).

crossed-through subtitle "On the Religious Use of Tyranny" is still legible. (The essays on Heidegger and Weil thus form a significant juncture in Susan Taubes's writing, pointing to the shift from the gnostic elements in Heidegger's thinking to the actually realized dissertation on Weil.[8])

Hidden Authorships: Before the Archive

For a long time, these and a few other texts by Susan Taubes, the scholar of religion, although published (dissertation excepted), had been widely forgotten.[9] They were rediscovered by Sigrid Weigel in the course of bibliographical research itself sparked by an encounter with Susan Taubes, the author of fiction: first published in the United States in 1969, her book *Divorcing* had appeared in German translation in 1995—which is to say, twenty-six years after her suicide—under the dubious title *Scheiden tut weh* ("Divorce Hurts"), with Susan referred to on the book jacket as the "divorced wife of the philosopher of religion Jacob Taubes."[10] The book is in fact a virtuoso, multilayered interweaving of scenes from dream and memory, settings, and linguistic registers, autobiographically recounting the story of the deceased protagonist, Sophie Blind, a woman with many biographical similarities with Susan Taubes.[11]

Susan had become acquainted with Jacob Taubes in 1948, nine years after having emigrated with her father from Hungary to the United States as Judit Zsuzsanna Feldmann at the age of eleven. (As Sandor S. Feldman, her psychoanalyst father would serve as a professor of clinical psychiatry

8. The shift actually announces itself early on, as a remark in a letter to Jacob (Zurich, April 20, 1952; referring to the same Löwith article mentioned in the first letter cited above) makes clear: "As for my 'thesis' it breaks down insofar as I am not competent to show the 'gnostic' elements in Heidegger in their real historical sitting. H. writing in the 20th C. *after* the history of the gnostic-self . . . and the secularization of the gnostic eschatology in Marxism . . . and having to come to terms with historicism . . . lives in a different horizon then the early gnostics who actually experienced the 'newness' of a revelation, who stood at the beginning of a new era. H's in an end-vision—a catastrophic vision."

9. Other texts from the 1950s are the essay "The Nature of Tragedy," *The Review of Metaphysics 7* (1953): 193–206, and the book reviews of Albert Camus's *L'Homme Révolté*, in *Iyyun* 3 (1952): 173–75 (Hebrew translated from the English), and of Herbert Weisinger's *Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall*, in *Ethics* 64 (1954): 321–25.

10. Susan Taubes, *Divorcing* (New York: Random House, 1969); Susan Taubes, *Scheiden tut weh*, trans. Nadine Müller (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1995).

11. On the novel, see Weigel, "Hannah Arendt und Susan Taubes," pp. 133–38; Sigrid Weigel, "Hinterlassenschaften, Archiv, Biographie: Am Beispiel von Susan Taubes," in Bernhard Fritz and Hannes Schweige, eds., *Spiegel und Maske: Konstruktionen biographischer Wahrheit* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2006), pp. 33–48, esp. pp. 38–40.

at the University of Rochester.) The setting for the meeting was a literary party at the salon of a mutual acquaintance, Ruth Nanda Anshen, a philosopher and prominent figure in the American intellectual scene.[12] Jacob had just arrived in the United States to teach the philosophy of religion at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Eighteen years after the marriage came the divorce; the children were ten and fourteen then. Accompanying the personal crisis was an increasingly turbulent life spent between Paris and New York and a withdrawal from the academic stage. After receiving her doctorate, she worked at Harvard as a research assistant under the philosopher Paul Oppenheim. She then moved to Columbia and Barnard as an Associate in Religion, teaching there into 1963,[13] but the private discontinuities made steady scholarly activity difficult—a situation reflected in the near absence of scholarly publications from this period.[14] Instead, she applied herself to imaginative literature: following publication of two stories evoking I. B. Singer's fusion of absurdity and dream[15] came *Divorcing*; all three texts, and the stories, drama, and poetry that would follow in the 1960s, attest to Susan Taubes's considerable skill and sensitivity as a writer.[16]

As indicated, research on the traces left in libraries and archives by Taubes the author of imaginative literature led back to that other work of hers referred to throughout her 1950–52 correspondence with Jacob:[17] to what might be considered the *hidden authorship* of Taubes the scholar of religion,[18] and beyond that to material that her children Tania and Ethan

12. Anshen's books included *Language: An Enquiry into its Meaning and Function* (1957) and *Anatomy of Evil* (1972). She was in fact close to both Susan and her father.

13. Taubes became a University Associate in the University Seminar on the Theory of Literature 1967 and was listed as a participant from 1967 to 1970 (one year after her suicide).

14. See Susan Taubes, "On Going to One's Own Funeral" (review of Genet's *The Blacks*) in *The Supplement*, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 27, 1961, pp. 1 and 5 (revised as "The White Mask Falls," *Tulane Drama Review* 7 [1963]: 85–92); Susan Feldmann, ed., *African Myths and Tales* (New York: Dell, 1963); Susan Feldmann, ed., *The Storytelling Stone: Traditional Native American Myths and Tales* (New York: Dell, 1965).

15. Susan Taubes, "The Sharks," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 41 (1965): 102–8; Susan Taubes, "The Patient," *The Transatlantic Review* 23 (1966/67): 101–8.

16. The archive contains many unpublished manuscripts, most of them stemming from the 1960s; these include both fragments and complete stories, plays, and poems, together with a second novel.

17. The extant correspondence is incomplete, with substantially more letters from Susan to Jacob than vice versa.

18. Weigel, "Hannah Arendt und Susan Taubes," p. 138.

preserved, as something like archival heterotopes,[19] in chests and suitcases in New York, where until very recently it led a neglected afterlife. This material is presently being inventoried and examined at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin.[20] Alongside many scholarly and literary manuscripts, it includes private documents and the correspondence between Susan and Jacob, which is stamped with a quality of "precarious testimony"[21] in a double sense: on the one hand, by being located on the archive's threshold, "where personal testimonies and intimate information are transformed into public documents";[22] on the other hand, because in this particular correspondence political and everyday questions, those that are intimate and those centered on the philosophy of religion, are inherently intertwined.

"The Ghosts of Judaism": Life in a World without God

In this way a reading of the correspondence offers insight into the circumstances in which that other authorship emerged, hence into a dense mesh of complicated private issues that were, however, embedded in a context of public debate centered on contemporary philosophy and the Jewish history of ideas. At the debate's core was the question of the relation between Jewish exile and German philosophy after 1945, and above all that of what conditions would allow a continuation of Jewish tradition in a Godless world.[23] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the differences between the responses of Susan and Jacob Taubes would appear to correspond, at least in part, to the different sense these two figures had of their own Jewish socialization: Jacob grew up in a rabbi's family in which memories of mystical

19. See Michel Foucault, "Andere Räume," in Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, *Idee, Prozeß, Ergebnis: Die Reparatur und Rekonstruktion der Stadt: Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987* (exhibition catalog) (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), p. 338. Weigel refers to Foucault when she describes "remainders" (*Hinterlassenschaften*) as "documents located as it were before the archives," hence as archival heterotopes: "capable of being localized but without the status of a locus" (Weigel, "Hinterlassenschaften," p. 41).

20. For the history of Taubes's literary remains, see Weigel, "Hinterlassenschaften," pp. 40–46.

21. Ibid., p. 46.

22. Ibid., p. 47.

23. "World without God" is a topos used by Stéphane Mosès, among others, to encapsulate the problem of how to reconcile such a historical situation with a continuation of the Jewish tradition. See Jens Mattern, Gabriel Motzkin, and Shimon Sandbank, "Vorwort," in *Jüdisches Denken in einer Welt ohne Gott*: *Festschrift für Stéphane Mosès* (Berlin: Vorwerk, 2000), p. 10.

Chassidism and an awareness of the conceptual world of the Haskalah were equally alive, and in which Jewish communal affiliation was firmly anchored. Susan herself, although her grandfather was Chief Rabbi of Budapest, grew up in a widely assimilated bourgeois milieu that was only beginning to consider its Jewishness as grounds for distance from their trusted surrounding—indeed from an idea of "belonging" in general—with the beginning of Nazi persecution. Susan alludes to this simultaneously collective and individual experience in the words she addressed to Jacob: "I was in fact, after a long period of peace, again haunted by the ghosts of Judaism. . . . It remains an unintegrable fact in my existence which I must carry with me like a sealed box containing I don't know what, maybe dynamite, maybe just stones."[24]

At the same time, the differences may possibly reflect incipient tensions in the marriage between Susan and Jacob, tensions that were now being largely expressed spiritedly and affectionately, but that would eventually turn bitter in a manner fictionally reflected in *Divorcing*. Readers may, or may not, wish to consider this possible personal context in evaluating the substantive contents of Susan Taubes's comments in the correspondence on politics and religion, contents that in any case are clearly the result of both an inner and external, individual and collective crisis reaching far beyond her relation with Jacob.

Where Jacob saw the material and spiritual stability of the collective Jewish tradition as withstanding even a world without God and in ruins, for Susan it represented no such guarantee. Her relation to that tradition itself oscillated between facets of non-affiliation, the religious congregation offering no locus of safety and shelter. Rather, she tended to perceive the fact of being a Jew as a source of a disintegration unremittingly inflicted on her body: a process she alternatively experienced as an incalculable explosive force and as paralyzing ballast condemning her to being imprisoned in memory. Jacob tenderly described this viewpoint to her as "pagan antisemitism";[25] prominent acquaintances condemned it as a betrayal of Judaism and Jewry, as she also indicates in the letter cited above:

> I have been told by Bergman, Levinas, and others[26] of my perfect ignorance of what Judaism is. Nevertheless I would hazard to say the

24. ST/JT, Paris, January 22–23, 1952.

25. JT/ST, Jerusalem, May 1952 (precise date on original ms. unidentifiable).

26. Susan Taubes had personal contact with Hugo Bergman—Kafka's school-age friend in Prague and the first president of the Hebrew University—during her stay in

> following. The positive and imperishable element in Judaism is a sense of fidelity which pierces through the very center of man, sanctifies his earthly bonds and establishes a bond between heaven and himself. You have told me and it is true that by disloyalty to the past we jeopardize our own self-identity. The world of faithfulness becomes tragic when a man loses irrevocably his mate, his friend, his family, his people, his country. How can one remain faithful and continue to live? Not only death and destruction, but birth also, the entrance of a new reality, a new possibility into the old frame, a new discovery which is in itself legitimate and irrefutable, can shatter the world of loyalties. At this moment fidelity to the past and fidelity to the future cease to be identical, and one must choose between loyalty to the dead and loyalty to the living.[27]

How can we continue to believe and simultaneously *live?* Arguably, the fact that the summarized ambivalence culminates in this question does not reflect ignorance regarding what "Judaism is" but rather a particular understanding of tradition whose progressive potential depends on the living presence of those who continuously renew it. But what would the conditions be allowing the Jewish collective and the Jew as an individual to carry on in view of all the dead, when this very presence lies in ruins? This question, however we evaluate it from our present perspective, had a tragic framework, generally defining the situation facing surviving Jewish intellectuals in the postwar years—and also for the personal and intellectual

Jerusalem. *Iyyun*, the journal in which her review of Camus was published, was edited by Bergman. She met Lévinas several times in Paris. In a letter of January 24–25, 1952, she reports on a meeting in which an underlying conflict between their approach to Jewish tradition was sparked in relation to Simone Weil: "He was so shocked at my sympathizing with a 'traitor' that in the end he preferred not to take me seriously and describe our conversation as a 'plaisanterie'."

27. ST/JT, Paris, January 25, 1952. In light of both the criticisms Susan Taubes refers to in this citation and some of the material in her letters cited below, a general clarification of context may here be helpful: It becomes clear from the correspondence that throughout her years as a scholar and author, she maintained active contact with the wise old men of the Jewish Theological Seminary (e.g., Louis Finkelstein and Saul Liebermann) and various key figures in the Hebrew University scholarly community, as well as important Jewish intellectual figures in Paris. Although of course not a Judaic scholar, Taubes does seem to have engaged herself seriously with Jewish sources: the letters indicate some reading of the Talmud, Maimonides, and other Jewish philosophical and religious sources, as well as the Hebrew Bible (at about the same time of her first stay in Israel, she started to learn Hebrew). It is perhaps also worth noting that Susan's father, while becoming a psychoanalyst, himself grew up in an orthodox Jewish environment. Despite their sometimes harsh criticisms, it is also clear that Bergman and others continued to esteem her unusual intellect and insights.

interaction between Susan and Jacob Taubes. Hence both figures called the validity of traditional conceptual orders radically into question; but the consequences each drew from this process were different. On the one hand, for Jacob a juncture between the secularized culture of Western knowledge and fidelity to the Jewish tradition offered a path to saving Jewish existence. On the other hand, from the beginning of the correspondence, Susan applied—in a manner as impartial as it was radical—universalistic concepts underscoring the fragility of precisely that tradition. A year earlier, she thus wrote Jacob from Rochester:[28] "lit my Sabbath candle and prayed with you—that we should live and think rooted in creation in the essentials of human existence and not built Babel-towers in the vacuum."[29] And a year later, directly before her "Israeli decision," she again actualized the biblical account from a perspective that we can understand as having become radically universalistic, transforming what she saw as the image of a fruitless effort at an exclusive encounter with God into the idea of a national bulwark with regressive tendencies: "Again: the center of the 'crisis' is not in the 'Jewish problem': the question is not posed, nor can it be solved within Judaism. Retreat into the clan, into national enthusiasm, preoccupation with national problems, is an evasion, because we were not only the 'victims' but the accomplices as well of European history."[30]

Historical Obsession and Pure Cult

Within this conceptual framework, the potential for renewal of the Jewish historical dynamic has expressed itself as a flight into nationalism. Elsewhere Susan Taubes describes this process with another biblical image: "wake up and fight the devil…he is always 'behind,' behind everything; but we must go ahead. Its better not to look back or one turns into a pillar of salt."[31] But the result is not only a backward-looking paralysis; it also involves an endless repetition of what Susan Taubes viewed, from her perspective as it had developed, as archaic structures of violence—her remarks on this prompting a turn to what she views as the regression's sources in the next letter:

28. Following a short transitional period in Pittsburgh after arriving in the United States, she had moved with her father to Rochester, where she lived until high school graduation in 1945. She then spent time there intermittently in breaks from college and between periods of graduate study.

29. ST/JT, Rochester, January 20, 1951.

30. ST/JT, Paris, January 17–18, 1952.

31. ST/JT, Paris, March 17, 1952.

> [T]he historical obsession, while it is naïve and optimistic in Judaism where it has its source, has driven the Occident into Nihilism; what has happened between the healthy, if crude, self-glorification of the children of Israel and the tortured historical mysticism of Heidegger. The history of the Jew in the Occident may be one of torture but the history of the Occident itself is self-torture; the Jew has a problem only within the Occident, once "at home" he is content with himself: The Occident is problematic to itself. Even without Christ: Plato, Epicure, Stoics.[32]

From this perspective in the "Occident," the proud Children of Israel, always in flight, emerged as a collective that in a historical-philosophical sense was never the subject of its own fleeing movement, itself always unfolding apart from the nations and cultures that made history. For Susan Taubes, the Jewish re-conquering of territory has transformed this "obsession" into the institutionalized discourse of these same nations and cultures: a discourse empowering a history that declares as victorious the very people that for centuries was its victim.

In this manner, Susan Taubes's use of the concept of "Geschichte" not only reveals the thematic presence of a tense ambivalence inherent to the concept, but also the unmistakable stamping of her own modality of writing by *actualization* rather than historicization, though the historical index is irreversibly inscribed in it through the withdrawal of affiliation that she suffers. The doubled estrangement she sees at work in both Weil and Kafka is here not simply a historical starting point for her theoretical reflections but both a starting point and a vanishing point for a relationship with her own Jewish heritage that was indeed—whatever its complex reasons—broken in various respects: hence for a position in which any recourse to identities defining their self-understanding through ideological, confessional, national, and similar affiliations has lost its claim to validity.

This is, certainly, a position that always opens up the difference with Jacob Taubes's heterodoxy anew.[33] It expresses itself especially in a rejection of any that Susan Taubes viewed as holding a potential for violence itself conveyed by concepts stemming from a particular form of speculative

32. ST/JT, Paris, January 20, 1952.

33. Martin Treml, "Aus einem Non-Lieux des Archivs: Jacob Taubes an Aharon Agus, Berlin 11. November 1981," *Trajekte* 10 (2005): 8–11, uses the concept of heterodoxy to define Jacob Taubes's relation to Judaism. Treml observes that the "relation to advanced forms of Jewish mysticism—extending to radical heretical groups—is evident, but its form of expression above all attests to life in a world without God" (ibid., p. 8).

reason: the reason conceived by those arbitrarily defining the meaning of the existence of other individuals. For her, these concepts emerge not only from Christianity but from essential elements of Jewish thinking. To this extent the rejection is a consequence and origin of the actualization movement at once: this because the rejection addresses, in the perceived conceptual violence of these institutions, an alliance of politics and religion necessarily blocking an unfolding of new options in society: "My complaint against Judaism + Catholicism is that they are political religions; this means the exploitation of the cult for ulterior motives."[34] In any event, however harsh the epistolary tone of comments such as these may seem, we may perceive a struggle on her part to prevent the radicalism of her critique from becoming one-dimensional. Rather, it consistently is aware of the human search for paths out of the prison of real historical institutions, for example when she asks the following: "How can a man pray to be relieved of his sins if he doubts or at least does not know if there is a god? If he excludes both certainty and faith. . . . Beyond a dialectical faith (which I despise) there may be a dumb faith (which you probably despise) which is simply to surrender to the stranger, whoever and whatever."[35] And to the question of how to escape from the alternative of "negative theology" ("I fear"[36]) and a religion subject to political abuse, she answers that "the alternative . . . is not 'inwardness'—but an attempt at pure cult."[37]

The Day of the Messiah

With "inwardness," Susan was introducing one of the theological concepts repeatedly sparking the debate between her and Jacob. In the letter from Zurich, she transferred the concept from the realm of philosophy and religion to the inner-worldly sphere of human cooperation. A few weeks earlier, she had discussed it in connection with another central concept: salvation. In her texts on Simone Weil, she pursues the observation that in view of real-historical disappointment in the hope for salvation, Weil displaces it to a realm of inwardness, with the salvational moment affecting the individual soul alone.[38] This argumentation had its echo in the quarrel between Jacob Taubes and Gershom Scholem in the early 1980s, in the

34. ST/JT, Paris, March 16, 1952.
35. ST/JT, Paris, February 22, 1952.
36. ST/JT, Paris, March 16, 1952.
37. Ibid.
38. See Taubes, "The Riddle," p. 65.

course of which Scholem expressed the view that Weil's idea of inwardness was genuinely Christian, thus marking a basic separation from Judaism, while Jacob Taubes designated inwardness as a "crisis within Jewish eschatology itself."[39] In the correspondence of three decades earlier, above all Susan had insisted on the transparency of the dividing line between Judaism and Christianity—a parallel suggesting that Jacob's attention had first been drawn to Simone Weil by his wife, and not by Scholem, as Jacob later let it be known.[40] Nevertheless, Jacob also had a painful awareness of what in the Zurich letter Susan described as "the brokenness within the world," a violently inserted dividing line. The pain emerges in a letter written against a specific historical backdrop, the public showing in Israel of photos of the Nazi death camps in connection with reparation negotiations with Germany: "I believe we must bear all of that in mind when we move on the 'heights' of German philosophy. The events of National Socialism are part of the cross of our age and address us as well. I'm still standing without the shadow of an answer—my entire compass is destroyed, for the rift [*Riß*] between 'Europe' and my people is a rift straight through myself. Those in the church have it easy!"[41]

For Susan Taubes, however, the rift is not in the first place between Europe and "my people," and also not between Judaism and Christianity. Rather, it runs right through the world, regardless of affiliation, exploding the coordinates of the compass that Jacob is trying to reactivate, despite the prospect of their irreversible destruction. The coordinates include the old theological topoi like the law, justice, salvation, whose Christian premises have been washed away by the "flood." As she sees things, in a world without God their rehabilitation from the prospective of Jewish tradition would simply be a displacement of the problem from one religious context to the other. The contexts are structurally more similar than those wishing to view the gulf between Christian and Jewish thinking as absolutely unbridgeable can accept. To show this, she presents what she sees as the consequences of such rehabilitation measures; in a general manner, her focus is on question of trial and justice representing the great conflict-laden

39. Jacob Taubes, "Der Messianismus und sein Preis" (1983), in *Vom Kult zur Kultur: Bausteine einer Kritik zur historischen Vernunft: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Aleida Assmann et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), pp. 43–49, here p. 44.

40. On the Taubes-Scholem controversy and the question of the role Susan Taubes's ideas played in it, see Weigel, "Die Religionsphilosophin," pp. 390ff.

41. JT/ST, Jerusalem, January 2, 1952.

center of debate between Susan and Jacob Taubes. At the same time, she tries to take on a then highly topical theme that again, however we now weigh the position presented, clearly reflects the radical universalism of her basic stance:

> I don't know if there is "judgment." And if there were, what would it mean? That all nazis (or why just the nazis, why not all the white people who have enslaved, exploited, and uprooted primitive peoples and prospered and are not submitted to a Nuernberg trial) will burn in hell and that Jacob Taubes will be forgiven his lesser sins? . . . perhaps what we really crave is not so much that a bolt of lightning should slay the unjust man . . . as that a light of realization should fill the darkness between man and man, a light of recognition which makes them ashamed for their dishonesty and brings remorse to their hearts for the harm they have done to others.[42]

She responds to critique with her own idea of a messianic age apart from any dichotomy between Jewish and Christian salvational thinking—but also from a form of salvation that is purely inward. In a world without God, a religious praxis of the "pure cult" could amount to the enactment of a messianic age as a processual event; in its course, *human beings* would practice, in the form of perception, a radical re-interpretation of *one* central ground for suffering and misfortune. Lack of affiliation would then no longer be a violent act of dispossession, but rather a form of "revolutionary action" (as the end of the Zurich letter puts it) of deliverance from national, religious, and "racial" attributions carried out in this world. To be sure, this would neither take place by itself nor by necessity, for "the world is mostly in darkness, and judgment does not illuminate it. If there is a supreme judge he is waiting for us to enter into judgment freely. And this for me is the meaning of the day of the Messiah, when we shall all sit around a table, and all will be told and each man shall understand in his way."[43]

42. ST/JT, Paris, February 22, 1952.
43. Ibid.

Letter from Susan Taubes to Jacob Taubes April 4, 1952

Foreword

This letter is part of a correspondence belonging to the estate of Susan Taubes. It documents the private and intellectual relations between her and Jacob Taubes, whom she married in 1949. The two spent most of the period until 1952 geographically separated from each other, a situation due to their changing work and study circumstances. Susan spent the first half of 1952 in Paris, preparing her dissertation at the Sorbonne; Jacob took up Gershom Scholem's invitation to teach the sociology of religion at the Hebrew University. In this year, intellectual debates stemming from the ferment of postwar American and European culture would determine the epistolary relation between Susan and Jacob more intensely than either before or after. Pressing questions at play here centered on the possibilities of Jewish life after the Holocaust and, closely tied to this, that of the relation between German philosophy and Jewish thought.

The letter of April 4, 1952, mirrors the thematic spectrum marking the correspondence since the start of the year. Susan wrote from Zurich, where she was visiting her parents in law between March 30 and April 24. The differences between the correspondents are especially evident in their assessments of the ties between religion, politics, and violence. These are accompanied by an exchange about readings in philosophy and by a discussion—at this time intensely formulated and touching on controversial topics—concerning the prospects for a shared life in Israel. The original plans were for Susan to fly directly from Zurich to Jerusalem, the couple then returning together to the United States; these plans fell apart. Instead, Susan traveled back to France, from where she finally set out for the United

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States together with Jacob in the summer. Until their separation in 1963, they would live together in America.

The original letter is located in the Susan Taubes archive of the center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin. We thank the copyright holders Ethan und Tania Taubes for permission to publish the letter.

Christina Pareigis

April 4, 1952

Dear Jacob,
I wonder how you are, beloved child. Now that I am with the parents[1] and so much love is poured on me I think more of your lonelyness[2] than mine.

The parents are very good to me and let me work. I read the Löwith article.[3] It gives a clear presentation + criticism of H.'s[4] "Kehre," shows that the later writings are not a continuation but a reversal of the fundamental position of *S.u.Z.* [*Sein und Zeit*].[5] What I wonder is if *S.u.Z.* leads (as E. Weil[6] thinks) to an impasse of subjectivism so that H. "turned" in order to be able to go on ontologizing—or whether the categories of *S.u.Z.* couldn't be developed into an ontology—not from the side of Being but from the side of finite logos.

1. In Zurich Susan Taubes stayed in the apartment of Jacob Taubes's parents, Fanny (née Blind) and Chaim Zvi Hirsch Taubes.

2. From several letters it becomes clear that in Jerusalem Jacob was sometimes in a depressed mood, tied to the bad state of his finances but above all the difficult human relations at the Hebrew University. On February 23, 1952, he wrote from Jerusalem to Susan in Paris that "I feel very alone, without a friend."

3. Karl Löwith, "Les implications politiques de la philosophie de l'existence chez Heidegger," *Les temps modernes* 2 (1946/47): 343–60.

4. "H." stands for Heidegger, whose work is often referred to in the exchange of letters. Directly after her arrival in Zurich on April 30, 1952, Susan Taubes traveled for one day to Freiburg, in the fruitless hope of meeting Heidegger in his apartment.

5. With the term *Kehre* ("turn"), Heidegger designated a shift in his thinking following *Sein und Zeit*, starting in the mid-1930s. Where, in his understanding, that work had been anthropocentrically oriented toward *Dasein*, henceforth *Sein* would be grasped on the basis of a truth within which being "opened itself" to human beings in its original state, before any metaphysical interpretation.

6. In Paris, Susan Taubes had personal contact with Eric Weil.

Otherwise I am preparing the documentation of the gnosis[7] which I can do better in Zürich since I can take out the books from the library.

If as you say "inwardness" needs no philosophy—nor, for that matter religion—then all genuine "spiritual" problems must find their formulation in the mundane, social sphere. If there is something to be healed, the brokenness is within the world. To ask for the eradication of brokenness as such is to wish the annihilation of the world. To heal the broken relations within the world, requires first that we acknowledge the reality of these relations (instead of fleeing into the imaginary) + then drawing from the tree of life, science, art, wisdom, cultivate + transform them. The powers of creation, of life are also the powers of destruction; every transformation passes through chaos. Creation whether the solar system or the jewish people at Sinai—creation is always violent. Religion insofar as it is a living force (+ not the transcendental temperature of a philosophy professor's soul) must concentrate the forces that link humanity to the sources of creation; religion is violent—either the (sterile) violence of bigotry, fanaticism (e.g. inquisition jewish orthodoxy today) or the violence of cultic discipline + cultic orgy—of which traces are still preserved in both "higher" (decadent) religions, Catholicism, judaism.

God is with the mighty (or there would be no failure, no tragedy, nothing to seek or shun—Christianity just reverses the + and − signs in the formula—God is with the "poor"—so we must strain ourselves to become poor!) But who is mighty? + what is might? Every being has its "place"—the locus of its maximal power. The locus of might is different for different beings + the many loci are interrelated in an order; if the order is "right" the individuals are in their right place power is creative, neither wasted nor boarded.[8] But the "Wille zur Macht"[9] can only end in madness unless it

7. The reference is to preparations for a dissertation on the Gnostic foundations of Heidegger's ontology, from which an article emerged two years later: Susan Anima Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," *The Journal of Religion* 34 (1954): 155–72. Susan Taubes would end up writing her actual dissertation on Simone Weil.

8. This passage recalls Nietzsche's critique in *The Genealogy of Morals*, where the philosopher designates as "slave morality" an attitude where those who are socially disadvantaged consider themselves as "good" solely because they view the rulers as "bad." He sees this approach as cultivated within Christian morality.

9. Containing posthumous writings of Nietzsche, the compilation *The Will to Power* was one of Susan Taubes's favorite books in the 1950s; she felt that the text opened up highly topical questions. On March 17, 1952, she thus wrote from Paris to Jacob in Jerusalem: "The Nietzsche book is great, especially the criticism of Paul. Did N. really believe that 'Nihilism' could be overcome? And if we are really exhausted and at the end?"

is concretely bound to one's place in the social order—or to the vision of a new order. There is always the task of reorganizing one's self internally but this is part of the ritual of life (like sleep) and one should make as little noise about it as possible. All talk about inwardness is suspicious.

I hate Christianity; the jew by retreating into his jewishness continues the farce and plays her game. As long as there is a Christian world the jew is not innocent in his religion. And the Torah on our doors [= the mezuzah] is a curse upon our children like in the time of the Pharao.[10] The "sacrifice" is not to God but to the Moloch. Only in simplicity is their blessedness but today simplicity is self-deception we must be scheming and conspiring, we must be complicated—not in theological dialectics—but in revolutionary action. I am just a stupid woman, I can't make a revolution; but we must at least plant the seeds.

Write to me dear one how you are + you must be cheerful even "alone in Jerusalem"; it is not a question of "feeling" but of "service" cheerfulness should be like prayer, fast and feast.

Mother bought me a lovely pair of red shoes. I must come to Zürich to look like Folie Bergère.

Be blessed my dearest, my wonderful being. I embrace you—

S AΩ[11]

[The following is originally in German:] Dearest Jacques, Susan is very pretty and good. With God's help you'll have many children; when Susan holds Madeleine[12] in her arms, she is even more beautiful. We speak a lot about you and Ribeisen + Co.,[13] love you very much, and truly miss you. Heartfelt kisses, Mirjam

10. Susan Taubes is here of course suggesting an analogy between the mezuzah located on the doorpost and the lamb's blood smeared on the Israelites' doorposts to avoid their first-born being killed, in the Passover story.

11. As a designation of the unity of end and beginning, the intertwining Greek letters alpha and omega are frequently found at the end of Susan's letters to Jacob. The use of a formula with partly Gnostic resonance in a play with religious symbols signals a private, mutually erudite understanding, hence an intimate love-language.

12. Madeleine was the daughter of Jacob Taubes's sister Mirjam Dreyfuss, née Taubes and Armand Dreyfuss.

13. Reference unclear.

Between the Philosophy of Religion and Cultural History: Susan Taubes on the Birth of Tragedy and the Negative Theology of Modernity[*]

Sigrid Weigel

The caesura of tragedy, more precisely tragedy as the scene of a caesura upon which an interruption occurs in the relation between divine grounds and human will, stands at the center of Susan Taubes's confrontation with tragedy. Moving beyond an explication of generic history, she analyzed the "Nature of Tragedy" (1953) as a phenomenon emerging from a cultural-historical threshold situation, illuminating tragedy's origins in the framework of her approach to ritual, religion, and philosophy. In respect to the history of theory, these reflections are located at a transition point between religious and cultural history. Her argument that tragedy maintains a dangerous balance between the extreme poles of nihilism and hope,[1] brings two categories into play that very clearly do not stem from the register of antique tragedy itself, rather illuminating the historical-philosophical context serving as a foundation for her work on tragedy. Namely, nihilism and hope tie her interest in tragedy with her writing on negative theology as a new religion within modernity, with Simone Weil, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, and gnosis here having the leading roles.

By negative theology, Susan Taubes means a new religious experience that emerged in the twentieth century from a transformation of atheism. Mostly written in the first decade after the end of World War II, her most important texts are stamped by recent historical catastrophes and reflect

* Translated from German by Joel Golb.

1. Susan A. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 7 (December 1953): 195.

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the intellectual impact of Nietzsche's dictum "God is dead." In circumstances defined by an absent God, she is especially interested in a thought where experiences of strangeness and hopes for salvation combine. The focus is here above all on the German philosophical tradition in its role as "smuggled theology"[2] and the position of non-confessionally bound Jewish intellectuals in the twentieth century, their linguistic and conceptual figures being examined in view of traces of Gnostic motifs and ties to early Gnostic movements. In this manner her work reveals a correspondence between two transitional scenes: starting from a specific dialectic of secularization that arrives at a negative theology under the sign of an absent God, philosophical reflections thus taking on the character of a new religion, she looks back historically at transitional constellations whose manifestations—as in tragedy and gnosis—emerged from negotiations between myth, religion, and philosophy. In that for Susan Taubes religio-philosophical reflections on modernity's negative theology represent the conditions for a cultural theory of tragedy, her reading of traditional religio-historical, philosophical, and literary traces itself moves between Jerusalem and Athens.

The Scene of Tragedy: Between Ritual, Religion, and Philosophy

In the essay "The Nature of Tragedy" Susan Taubes offered a theory of tragedy as a distinct presentation of life "that stands over and against ritual, religion and philosophy."[3] In contrast to an approach based on generic history, she situates tragedy on the threshold between divine order and philosophy, more precisely where "a moment of pause, tension and reflection slips in between the divine counsel and the human deed."[4] Her work is tied, as indicated, to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, but also to British classical philology (Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray) and American literary criticism and theory (Francis Fergusson, Kenneth Burke); but the theoretical significance of her study goes beyond such sources in that she develops a cultural-historical reading of the tragic that has passed through the school of religious philosophy—comparable in this way to the later projects of Peter Szondi and Klaus Heinrich.

2. Susan Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," *The Journal of Religion* 34 (July 1954): 155.

3. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," p. 193.

4. Ibid., p. 198.

To be sure Susan Taubes's perspective differs from Szondi's *Versuch über das Tragische* (1961), with its philosophical-historical orientation, in that her return to tragedy's origins involves emphasizing an opposition between philosophy and tragedy. At the same time, the difference between her approach and Heinrich's readings of antique tragic constellations is more directly grounded in an explicit renunciation of psychoanalytic interpretive models, which play a central role in his work.[5] Because of the inheritance of ritual and myth and the continued presence of moments of divine order within tragedy, Susan Taubes locates it outside a sphere describable in human psychological categories, which she understands in terms of personal characteristics. She thus declines

> to interpret the divine powers in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles or Shakespeare, as allegorical symbols for psychological realities. In the beginning the oracle sounds from a realm beyond the human psyche; divine purpose remains distinct from human will. Choice by tragic irony falls into the pattern of fate, but fate does not thereby become the source of choice, nor choice of fate. The powers behind man's destiny and man's personal motives belong to two distinct and independent orders that cross and interplay to yield a single dramatic action.[6]

Within this perspective, tragedy as the locus of a conflict-laden opposition between two different orders is placed at the point of transition, or rather is itself described as the scenario of a cultural-historical transition, as the onset of an interruption in the relation of divine order and human will. We have no direct indication that Susan Taubes was interested in Walter Benjamin, whose work was in fact little known at this time. But she could have become familiar with some of his theorems and texts during a stay in Jerusalem in 1949–50—Jacob Taubes was then teaching sociology of religion under Gershom Scholem at the Hebrew University. In any case the basic dialectic figure in which she situates tragedy evokes the topos of the caesura as Benjamin cites it from Hölderlin in "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften." In Susan Taubes's theory of tragedy, the caesura occurs when non-religious justification emerges on the scene: when human decision[7]

5. E.g., Klaus Heinrich, *Floß der Medusa: 3 Studien zur Faszinationsgeschichte* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1995).

6. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," p. 196.

7. Playing a central role in Benjamin's thinking, the decision here as well is an essential sign of human action addressing the divine order. Cf. Erich Auerbach, *Dante als*

and reflection appear where previously the rule of the gods' laws determined events; this would seem to represent an inverse configuration, as it were, to Benjamin's arrival of a "beyond of poetry" that "breaks off" the poet's word within a secularized culture.

Describing the origin of tragedy, this dialectic constellation is described by Taubes in an alteration of competing perspectives—between "a rational point of view" and "a religious perspective."[8] For not only a reading of tragedy is at issue here. Rather, this is itself described as a drama unfolding between differing sign systems, hence as a drama of readings: "Human action tends to become tragic whenever the 'time is out of joint,' the oracles grow obscure and even treacherous; human action becomes tragic whenever the divine order loses coherence so that man, *misreading the signs of heaven*, becomes the instrument of his own destruction."[9] Within the history of theater, Taubes sees above all antique Greek and Elizabethan theater as corresponding to the tragic model in their unfolding on stages in which the border between the divine-demonic and human spheres has become porous.

Methodologically the configuration of Taubes's theory of tragedy can be located in the realm of cultural theory in that she discusses the tragic in relation to various symbolic forms and registers from the cultural history of knowledge: ritual, religion, philosophy. Tragedy is thus first examined in its position facing ritual on the one hand, religion on the other hand—this in view of both the concept of the hero and the problem of transgression. While in each case we find an exploration of both commonalities and differences, the relation of philosophy to tragedy is also addressed in passing. Ritual and tragedy, for instance, are tied together through an experience of the demonic, the gods' destructive aspect; together both oppose the approach taken by religion, for which the numinous sphere takes the form of a personal God.

It is the case that this way of approaching the birth of tragedy is by no means new. What is remarkable, however, is the manner in which Susan Taubes renders it structurally dense, in order to sharpen its import in terms of her own basic orientation. And it is striking that she, in particular, is not interested in the intersection between epic, myth, and tragedy, but rather

Dichter der irdischen Welt (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), p. 7, who describes the decision as a specific feature of tragedy.

8. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," pp. 196, 205.
9. Ibid., p. 195 (my emphasis).

in stressing tragedy's religious-historical genesis—with rite here playing an important role as an archaic or pre-religious form. Hence although, she indicates, the use of ritual models as a basis for tragic form has already often been analyzed, the most important question has not been addressed: "what it is that converts the *agon*, *anagnorisis*, *threnos* and *peripeteia* into specifically *tragic* categories?"[10] In this way precisely the break with the ritual spell tied to the emergence of tragedy becomes an important moment: the exit from ritual's magic circle, opening up the moment of reflection in concepts of human action and founding the caesura referred to above.

Hence Susan Taubes connects the tragic *agon* to the endowment of reality, reflection, and decision with a strictly human significance—to the emergence of human beings as self-reflective and autonomous agents on the stage of a divine plan. The appearance of the subject is here described as tragedy's primal scene. Similarly to what Szondi argues in his *Versuch über das Tragische*, for Taubes the subject is suited for tragic status from the beginning. For as a neutral arena for the confrontation of conflicting powers, tragedy admits neither a solution nor a reconciliation. Instead, in the ideal tragic situation the three moments of action, suffering, and knowledge are inseparably bound, with each in fact emerging from the other. Tragic heroes gain their insight precisely from the suffering that necessarily produces their actions. At the same time, the position of tragedy at the transitional locus between myth and reason renders it philosophically suspect. Although, in Taubes's view, tragedy indeed represents the advent of reflective consciousness in the archaic world (or: a reflection of that world's crisis), at the same time it keeps a foot in the old order: "The philosopher emerges to wage war against the tragic poets."[11] On the other hand, Taubes explicates the relation between tragedy and religion contrastively, in terms of the motif of the human struggle against divine injustice as presented in Greek tragedy—Aischylos's *Prometheus*—and the Hebrew Bible—the book of Job. Where for Taubes Job represents a passive form of suffering, inflicted on him as a test, Prometheus places himself on a neutral stage against the gods: "there is no ultimate court of appeal, the combatants face each other in an open arena bounded only by an impersonal power of fatality."[12] To be sure, tragedy and religion are linked through their view of human beings as agents of evil and through

10. Ibid., p. 197.
11. Ibid., p. 200.
12. Ibid., pp. 202f.

the theme of their transgression of the divine order; but this transgression is interpreted by religion as a sin while in tragedy it is manifest in the model of heroic action. In violating the law of the gods, tragic heroes not only set themselves against established order but, beyond this, reflect with their action on a contradiction in the cosmic order itself: "The hero may be driven to break the law in one sphere in order to fulfil it in another."[13] We can here think, for instance, of Antigone, who in her breach of Creon's law evokes that of the subterranean gods, the order of the *daimon*.

Now for Taubes, the question of how the tragic hero's downfall can become a source of aesthetic and ethical pleasure cannot be separated from a specific tragic interpretation of transgression; that is, it cannot be answered in strictly poetological terms. In face of a one-dimensional understanding of transgression by an either purely religious or purely rational consciousness, in Taubes's perspective tragedy opens something like a third position that reflects on each of these delimitations. In light of more recent research,[14] we could say that it opens a scene of negotiations between and upon philosophy and religion. To this extent in tragedy evil receives trans-ethical significance. Taubes describes this as a cognitive-theoretical surplus. Where religion and philosophy both stand for the universal validity of a certain rule (in the one case divine creation and revelation, in the other case truth), precisely because of its overstepping of the border between the human and divine, tragedy enjoys a wider-ranging cognitive possibility:

> Both religion and philosophy are grounded on the faith in the universality of a single principle, whether an ultimate rationality or an omnipotent god. They tend to suppress any independent sphere of being which defies either reason or divine nature, and tend therefore to explain evil as a negative attribute, a privation in man's reason or will. . . . Tragedy shows that he who transgresses the line that separates man from the gods gains a profounder insight into their relation.[15]

We might say that in the tragic, what is thus at stake is gaining an insight won qua transgression, but at the price of suffering, hence as it were along

13. Ibid., p. 203.

14. See for example Renate Schlesier, "Maskierte Texte: Religiöse Anspielung und Verheimlichung in der griechischen Tragödie," in *Mimesis, Bild und Schrift: Ähnlichkeit und Entstellung im Verhältnis der Künste*, ed. Birgit R. Erdle and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), pp. 221–38.

15. S. Taubes, "The Nature of Tragedy," pp. 203f.

a ritual path—but nevertheless through rational decision. As a straddle between the borders of the divine and human, the hero of tragedy stands for a knowledge that equally reflects the knowledge of religion and philosophy, but that can only be gained at the price of the hero's destruction. Just as tragedy offers no solution, it offers no victory by one of the struggling spheres—in its structure, any victory is suspended. At the same time, what is at play here is not an annulment of religion but—to speak with Benjamin—a science of thresholds, which is to say specific insights only made possible through conflict. Susan Taubes thus describes tragedy as a cultural-historical stage possessing cognitive-historical prominence and that emerged from the conflict between religion and philosophy.

In this manner, what becomes characteristic for tragedy is a nearly paradoxical constellation or precarious balance that appears to explain its strong fascination—relevant here is Benjamin's reference to the tragic word as an "edge of decision." This balance maintains tragedy's openness to readings from the perspective of contemporary conflicts. Taubes locates such readings of "the tragic play" as balanced "perilously between the extreme poles of hope and nihilism."[16] But where in the tragic model hope and nihilism maintain a balance, with hope emerging precisely out of negativity and furnishing tragic action with meaning, value, and dignity, in the "drama of the self on modernity" articulated by the language of gnosis nihilism seems to have kept the upper hand. For with God's death, the conditions for a tragic constellation or *agon* have also vanished. Susan Taubes declined to take the psychoanalytic path, which had in a sense given the subject back a part of his tragedy and thus might be considered its heir.

Negative Theology: God's Absence as Religion of Modernity

In her essay "The Absent God" (1955), Susan Taubes explores a way of thinking, typifying modernism, in which the experience of God's absence has found expression as a negative theology. As in other essays, she here uses Nietzsche to supply her cue: when the philosopher "announced that God is dead," she explains, "he planted the seed for a new kind of atheism which has become a major theme of European thinkers in our century."[17] As an example for a "most uncompromising formulation," for such a new, religious atheism, she makes use of the writing of Simone Weil, whom she

16. Ibid., p. 195.
17. Susan Anima Taubes, "The Absent God," *The Journal of Religion* 35 (1955): 6.

terms a "French philosopher-mystic-saint." She first describes this negative theology—or, in her formulation, "religious atheism"—as follows:

> Atheism, which used to be a charge leveled against skeptics, unbelievers, or simply the indifferent, has come to mean a *religious* experience of the death of God. The godlessness of the world in all its strata and categories becomes, paradoxically and by a dialectic of negation, the signature of God and yields a mystical atheism, a theology of divine absence and nonbeing, of divine impotence, divine nonintervention, and divine indifference.[18]

This passage encapsulates some of the leitmotifs from other religious-philosophical texts that Taubes published in the 1950s. She paid special attention to those paradoxical conceptual figures grounded in the religious investment of divine absence; and she focused with equal intensity on a dialectic of negation in the philosophy of modernity—this a good decade before Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1966). For Taubes, Simone Weil was an important example of such negative theology: literally an example, since, as she indicates in "The Case of Simone Weil," an essay appearing four years after "The Absent God," "recent analyses have traced similar patterns in the writings of Kafka, Heidegger and the dialectical theology of Barth and Brunner."[19]

This list of authors makes clear that Susan Taubes's discussion of religious atheism does not unfold within the canon of Jewish tradition—although the experience of non-confessionally-anchored Jewish intellectuals plays no unimportant role in her analysis. In the second of her essays on Weil, she thus proposes a proximity between Weil and Kafka, and this in connection with a discussion of Weil's love of tradition, popular culture, and myth, and their derivation from the experiences of a person lacking her own tradition:

> Through the study of the past she remedied in herself the uprooted homelessness she found in the modern masses. In Simone Weil, as in Kafka,

18. Ibid.

19. Susan Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," typescript, published as "The Riddle of Simone Weil" in *Exodus* 1 (1959): 55–71 (German: "Das Rätsel um Simone Weil," in *Der Pfahl: Jahrbuch aus dem Niemandsland zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, trans. Birgit Leib [Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1995], pp. 205–20). "The Case of Simone Weil" is a typescript without indication of place or year but published in 1959 as "The Riddle of Simone Weil" in the journal *Exodus*. Page numbers for subsequent citations refer to the typescript.

> we see the configuration of a double estrangement to which the Jews may be predisposed in contemporary civilization. For she was born outside of the Church as a Jew, and at the same time stood outside of Judaism and this not by an act of revolt, but simply by circumstance.[20]

Hence in the linkage of authors as different as Kafka and Weil, what is at play is the experience of a "double estrangement"—an experience of some importance for Jews in the twentieth century, and that has paradigmatic status for the culture of modernity. Kafka and Weil are thus understood as representatives of a way of thinking also significant for German philosophers—without either a "German-Jewish" or "Christian-Jewish" discourse emerging from such ties in Taubes's writing. Instead of the problematic hyphen prevailing in such discourse,[21] we find a study of the communicating channels existing between, on the one hand, the specific constellation of Jews both outside of religious tradition and, on the other hand, the hidden theological traces within German philosophy. For: "Nietzsche once remarked that German philosophy is a smuggled theology." This is the approach taken in her discussion of "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," which appeared in *The Journal of Religion* in 1954.[22] The title defines the perspective in which Taubes investigates the concealed connections between Jewish experience and German philosophy. And in the continuation of the above-cited passage from "The Case of Simone Weil" considering similar patterns of writing and thinking in Kafka, Heidegger, Barth, and Brunner, Gnosticism is directly introduced as a common point of reference:

> These writers do not merely revive an ancient heresy, rather they render the contemporary reality in gnostic terms. The gnostic language lends itself to contemporary experience because it responds to the same problem: how can man caught body and soul in the wheels of an oppressive, inhumane and dehumanizing system, reserve an inalienable point of inwardness, a spark of absolute selfhood invulnerable to the forces of demoralization, delusion and tyranny.[23]

20. Ibid., pp. 17f.

21. On the hyphen's significance, see Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich zwischen 'Jüdischem und Christlichem'* (Düsseldorf: Parerga, 1995).

22. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 155.

23. S. Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," pp. 6f.

This thesis can be considered the thread uniting all the philosophical texts of Susan Taubes: the twentieth-century experience of an absent God is given expression in the form of a masked or negative theology, or a religious atheism, its conceptual figures corresponding to those of the historical Gnostic movement. Within this constellation, the differences between Jewish and Christian discourse recede before traces of masked theological signification, for the most part unificatory by nature, within central philosophical topoi of modernism, for example negation, nothingness, nihilism, absence, and paradox. A range of scholarship serves as a starting point for Taubes's reflections: the interpretation of Gnosticism in the work of Rudolf Bultmann[24] and Hans Jonas, but also contemporary French research such as that of Simone Petrement (1947) and Henri-Charles Puech (1945). She clearly attributes great importance to Hans Jonas's study *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (1934), with its reformulation of gnosticism in terms of Heideggerian existentialism.[25] We thus read in her essay in Heidegger that:

> It is one of Jonas' major contributions toward the understanding of negative theology that he traces the origin of the progressive tendency toward conceiving god through negative attributes, to the negativism of the gnosis. The negativity of the gnostic god serves to undermine totally the positive empirical reality of the world and its claim to any value or validity.…All interest is introverted in the contemplation of the negative acosmic self. The fullness of the god is finally emptiness. The emphasis is on an emotional relation to this emptiness.[26]

As a follow-up to Jonas,[27] in Taubes's Heidegger article absolute concepts from existential philosophy such as self, anxiety, "thrownness," and

24. Taubes cites Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandanischen und manichaischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 24 (1925), and Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zürich: Artemis, 1949).

25. See Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, vol. 1, *Die mythologische Gnosis* (1934; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964).

26. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," pp. 159, 160.

27. In Jonas's *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, the catalogue describing the "logos of Gnosticism" contains the following topoi (with quotation marks used where they are used with the original German terms: (1) the "strange" (*Das Fremde*); (2) the "beyond" (*Jenseits*), the "outside" (*Außerhalb*), "this world" and "that world" (*diese Welt*, *jene Welt*); (3) "worlds" (*Welten*) and "eons" (*Äonen*); (4) the world-enclosure (*das Weltgehäuse*), living (*Wohnen*); (5) "light" (*Licht*) and "darkness" (*Finsternis*); (6) "mixing"

strangeness organize a discussion of the relationship between Heidegger's thought and the so-called drama of the gnostic self. Above all strangeness represents the linkage between modernism and Gnosticism. It stands at the center of the leitmotifs "that run through all the various Gnostic systems and speculations. The first great symbol of the gnosis is 'Strangeness.' The 'Strange God' of Marcion corresponds to the 'Strange Life,' the exile of Mandaean Literature. 'Strangeness' is a complex dialectical concept."[28] We can here see that while Taubes' explication of negative theology is grounded in a reading of Gnosticism via existentialist concepts, her perspective is different from Jonas's in an important respect: she is more strongly interested in the correspondences between the historical context of Heidegger's thinking and the historical Gnostic movements; and in this way she renders Jonas's own expansion of transmitted sources into a "basic state of gnosis"[29] and brings it back together with specific cultural-historical situations.

As above all the second part of her Heidegger essay shows, Taubes's study is not only based on a consideration of Heidegger's writing, especially *Sein und Zeit*, *Holzwege*, and *Was ist Metaphysik?* but also a study of the historical Gnostic movement. In that context she discusses the delimitation of Gnostic concepts from the cosmological thinking of Greek philosophy and stoicism. The latter's cosmological "optimism" and Gnosticism, Taubes indicates, stood in extreme opposition:

> In all its variations and sects spanning the eastern part of the Roman Empire, running from the mystery religions through early Christianity to the Mandean sects east of the Jordan, one motif prevails: man is not "at home" in the cosmos. The *logos* of the gnosis is "not of this world." The Gospel of John as well as parts of the Pauline epistles give abundant

(*die Mischung*); (7) "fragmentation" (*die Zersplitterung*), unity (*Einheit*) and multiplicity (*Vielheit*); (8) "falling" (*Fall*), "sinking" (*Sinken*), "capture" (*Gefangennahme*); (9) "thrownness" (*das Geworfensein*); (10) angst (*Angst*), erring (*Irren*), homesickness (*Heimweh*); (11) stupefaction (*Betäubung*), sleep (*Schlaf*), drunkenness (*Trunkenheit*); (12) to become cut off (*abgeschnitten werden*); (14) the world's noise (*der Lärm der Welt*); (15) the "call from outside" (*der Ruf von außerhalb*); (16) the "strange man" (*der fremde Mann*); (17) the content of the "call"; (18) the answer to the "call"; (19) collecting one's self (*sich-selbst-Sammeln*) (Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, pp. 94ff.). It would be interesting to explore the rhetorical politics of the citation within this catalogue, i.e., the distinction between concepts set in quotation marks and those lacking such punctuation.

28. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 158.

29. Christoph Markschies, *Die Gnosis* (Munich: Beck, 2001), p. 27.

> evidence to this deep estrangement of man from the cosmos. The equation *κόσμος* = *σκότος*, "world = darkness," formulates the gnostic pathos. Here cosmos stands for all empirical and psychic reality.[30]

The Marcionic, Mandianic, and Manichean Gnosticism[31] in which Taubes was so strongly interested comprised a religio-historical movement in which Jewish Gnostic sects had contact with early Christian movements. She was most concerned, not with the controversy about the movement's authentically Jewish or Christian origins, but with the phenomenon of transitional constellations—in this respect coming very close to the recent research that interprets Gnosticism as historically a type of experiment.[32]

In this way Susan Taubes's specific contribution to a theory of modernity is her identification and illumination of a correspondence: between, on the one hand, a post-assimilatory, post-confessional or secularized culture in which loci of Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers can *no longer* be clearly distinguished; and, on the other hand, a transitional historical moment in which antique Judaism and early Christianity together largely formed a fused culture, because the programs of Jewish and early Christian Gnostic heresy were *not yet* polarized. In light of this research alignment, it appears that Susan Taubes's theory of modernity emerges as, in Benjamin's sense,

30. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 158.

31. Marcion (85–160), founder of an early Christian gnostic sect, was expelled from Rome's Christian congregation in 144; his counter-church would last into the sixth century. As a "philologist of biblical texts" he radicalized the "Pauline antithesis of law and gospel" (Markschies, *Gnosis*, pp. 87f.). Marcion is clearly one of the most fascinating figures for research on Gnosticism; see for instance Adolf von Harnack's Christianizing appropriation of the movement in his *Buch Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (1923), where Harnack argues for a programmatic rejection of Jewish sources, above all the Hebrew Bible (Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996] p. 217). With its name derived from the Aramaic *manda,* perception, the Mandianic Jewish-Gnostic sect was located east of the Jordan River. Manichaeism was a late-antique Gnostic movement founded by the Persian Mani (216–17); it would have significance in the Roman Empire until the fourth century—among other things for Augustine's intellectual formation.

32. Markschies describes the historical Gnostic movement as an "experimental phase of Christian theology" (Markschies, *Gnosis*, p. 90), a "phase of abrupt change in the history of Christianity" (ibid., pp. 116f.), and as a "transformational process": "The second century must thus be understood as a sort of laboratory in which, in very different corners of the empire, experiments were arranged by very different individuals with very different gifts, so as to see how to arrive at a Christian theology capable of competing in antiquity's ideological market" (ibid., p. 117).

a dialectic image, with the pre- and post-history of philosophy and religion coming together in a single formation. For Taubes, negative theology represents a vanishing point for a range of philosophical reflections regarding the "death of God," in which religiously homeless twentieth-century intellectuals with Jewish and Christian backgrounds meet, aligning themselves with a tradition of "smuggled theology" characteristic of German philosophy. The figure Taubes thus discovers within the dialectic of secularization is clearly significant. For if we postulate a continued topicality of Gnosticism, then, in the words of Christoph Markschies, "the thesis of an increasing secularization of society in the modern age would need to be very thoroughly scrutinized."[33]

Mainly conceived in the 1950s, Susan Taubes's work likewise reflects a specific historical-theoretical context: that of a critique of civilization, formulated against the backdrop of the recent war and Holocaust, that still seemed capable of being conveyed as a description of alienation, homelessness, and imprisonment in an age of technological-scientific progress. Her argumentative approach is comparable to that of Adorno's, with its interplay of civilization-critique and a "thinking after Auschwitz"; it is also in accord with the relatively abstract ideas concerning Nazi annihilatory policies prevalent in the 1950s. This was the general framework for Taubes's focus on Simone Weil as the chief figure in an ensemble of modern Gnostics. Hence in "The Absent God," in the course of a discussion of the slavery-topos in Weil's writing, we find numerous references to the Holocaust—more precisely, to Weil's theme of the "senseless suffering of the concentration camps." Taubes here underscores that Weil's concept of "affliction" needs to be distinguished from "simple suffering." For Weil, she indicates, the slave

> emerges as the model of affliction in a technological society whose blind mechanism makes both heroism and martyrdom meaningless as human possibilities and which finds its image in the impotent victim, in the industrial worker, or in the prisoner in a concentration camp, who suffers not as a man in the hands of men but as a thing battered around by impersonal forces. It is a world in which man as such, man as an autonomous person and source of action, has no being; personality and organism crumble in a calculus of forces.[34]

33. Markschies, *Gnosis*, p. 119.
34. S. Taubes, *The Absent God*, p. 8.

In Taubes's reading of Weil, then, slaves are "the model of affliction" in that they lack the status of autonomous agents, thus falling into an apersonal status blocking any path towards martyrdom or heroism. In this reading, Weil's mysticism emerges as a historical continuation and intensification of Nietzsche's postulate "God is dead," with God's present absence, perceived as absolute, having been preceded, Taubes argues, by a number of revolutions of consciousness. These extend from the historical critique of sacred Christian history to the twentieth century's moral catastrophe; each "voiced its particular challenge to Christianity." They include (1) the scientific revolution and the resulting conceptual predominance of blind mechanical process; (2) the empirical scrutiny of religious tradition, relativizing dogma; and (3) the progressive undermining of belief through both Marxism and psychoanalysis, which elevated religious symbols into fictions—producing the inverse reaction of a widespread contemporary religious hunger.

Where in Taubes's Heidegger article the correspondences between nihilism and gnosticism are determined above all by strangeness and nothingness, in the Weil article this role is taken by the concept of affliction and the pathos of a non-existing God, both framed, as indicated, by recent historical experience. In modernity, a vanished divine order has been replaced by a religious atheism or nihilism, defined by Taubes as a negative theology. This serves as the axis of her cultural theory of modernism.

The Place of Susan Taubes in the Philosophy of Religion[35]

Together, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism" (1954) and "The Absent God" (1955) form a significant constellation in Susan Taubes's work. On the one hand, they appear to be the only publications whose author is designated as Susan *Anima* Taubes (the tragedy essay as "Susan A. Taubes"); on the other hand, they announce her decision to change her dissertation project from a study of the theological elements in Heidegger's philosophy, as announced in an identically worded author's notice accompanying both articles in the highly respected *Journal of Religion*, to the work she would actually complete a year later under the title

35. I am grateful to Susan Taubes's son Ethan Taubes and daughter Tania Taubes for all information about Susan Taubes's writing going beyond the published work. As agreed on with Tania and Ethan Taubes, together with Christina Pareigis I take care of the editing and publication of Susan Taubes's scholarly estate at the Susan Taubes Archive in the Center for Literary Research, Berlin.

"The Absent God: A Study of Simone Weil," with the crossed out subtitle "On the Religious Use of Tyranny" still being decipherable on the title page.

The Ph.D. thesis was submitted by the twenty-eight year old at Harvard in 1956—Taubes had studied at Harvard Divinity School and Radcliffe College as a Josiah Royce Fellow from 1953 to 1955. Following completion of her work in philosophy at Bryn Mawr, with a B.A. received in 1951, she had continued her work at University of Rochester, attending lectures delivered by the historian of religion Arthur D. Nock[36] and by both Isaiah Berlin and Herbert Marcuse.[37] Most of her essays appeared in the years between her B.A. and Ph.D. Alongside those mentioned, there was also a Hebrew-language article with the title (in translation) "A Critical Discussion of Camus' 'L'Homme révolté'," published in *Yiun: Philosophical Journal of the Hebrew University*, and her discussion of "The Nature of Tragedy" in the *Review of Metaphysics*. The Camus article was evidently written during the first half of 1952, which she spent in Paris for a study visit as a Bryn Mawr European Fellow, while Jacob Taubes stayed in Jerusalem where he taught sociology of religion under Gershom Scholem at the start of the 1950s; the tragedy essay was written in Rochester after her return to the States. But importantly in our context, Susan Taubes's study sojourns in Paris also took place in the same period—as is made clear in both several of her letters to Jacob Taubes during the early 1950s and the *Journal of Religion* author's notice, stating identically in 1954 and 1955 that, along with the award of the B.A., she received a Bryn Mawr European Fellowship, "which enabled her to study in Paris and Jerusalem."

On the basis of this information, we can presume that Taubes's familiarity with Simone Weil's work was grounded in her stays in Paris in 1952 and afterward, Weil's posthumous publications having just appeared then in France: starting in 1949 with *L'Enracinement*, continuing in 1950 with *Attente de Dieu* and *La Connaissance surnaturelle*, followed by five additional books ending in 1953 with the two-volume *Cahiers*. The speedy dissemination of Weil's work is apparent in the English-language

36. See the remarks on Susan A. Taubes in note 33 of the introduction to Jacob Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur: Bausteine einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Aleida Assmann et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996), p. 32.

37. The Susan Taubes Archive contains two papers written for a seminar taught by Isaiah Berlin on "Concepts and Categories of the Human Sciences" at Harvard and one for a course on "Marxist Ideology" taught by Herbert Marcuse, also at Harvard.

publication of her writing in the United States in 1951 and 1952. In the same year that Susan Taubes's first text on Weil appeared, Ingeborg Bachmann published her own essay on the French author, assessing her writing as an "attestation of pure mysticism."[38] In this light, it would see more probable that Jacob Taubes learned of Weil's work from his wife, and less probable that things transpired as he recounted:

> I was at Scholem's and he got terribly excited about a lady whose name I hadn't yet heard of, and he as well until four weeks before, namely Simone Weil. And he cursed like a trooper, explaining while cursing that he'd thrown Simone Weil's books, the first publications in France then, into the garbage. And as he recounted this about the woman, *eieija*, I went over to the garbage bin and pulled out the stuff.[39]

However doubtful the accuracy, through the symbolism of an image from memory this anecdote is of real value, since it points to a primal scene in a later conflict between Taubes and Scholem: that over the sharpness of difference between Jewish and Christian messianism; it appears that the work of Susan Taubes helped lay the scholarly foundations for this conflict. As Thomas Macho explains in his discussion of Simone Weil's influence on both Jacob and Susan Taubes, it was precisely the aspect of inwardness in Weil's writing that negatively fascinated Scholem. This is spelled out in a letter he wrote to Georg Lichtheim in 1950:

> What draws me to this very gifted unfortunate maiden is the abhorrent scent of inwardness, which perhaps here more than in other so much more well-ordered texts makes clear why I find Christianity so completely unbearable. . . . There of course the deception of pure inwardness—God protect us from it—proceeds at a truly great tempo, and I can only say: happy are the Jews, who very decisively did not abandon themselves to it in world history.[40]

It is well known that one of the main points of attack in Jacob Taubes's polemic against Scholem is that for him inwardness is far more than a mere

38. Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster (Munich: Piper, 1978), 4:147.

39. Jacob Taubes, "Gespräch mit Peter Sloterdijk," January 1987, unpublished typescript, cited in Thomas Macho, "Der intellektuelle Bruch zwischen Scholem und Taubes," in *Gershom Scholem: Literatur und Rhetorik*, ed. Stéphane Mosès and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 148f.

40. Gershom Scholem, *Briefe*, ed. Thomas Sparr (Munich: Beck, 1995), 2:16f.

idiosyncrasy, rather representing, particularly from a religio-historical perspective, a watershed between Judaism and Christianity.[41] In a talk Jacob Taubes delivered—against resistance—on "Messianism and Its Price" at the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem in 1979, he used Scholem's Eranos Talk of 1959, *Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum*, to criticize Scholem's method of dividing "the messianic cake"[42] between Judaism and Christianity. In this text, Scholem had tied a fundamental difference between the two religions to different concepts of salvation: in the Jewish case, a salvation that "takes place in the public sphere, on the stage of history and in the medium of the community"; in the Christian case "the reinterpretation of the prophetic promises of the Bible into a realm of inwardness."[43] In support of his own thesis that "such a static opposition between Jewish and Christian salvational ideas" obscures the inner dynamic of the messianic idea, Jacob Taubes offers the example of a historical situation in which messianic hope was disappointed:

> Imagine the dialectic in a group's messianic experience at the moment when the prophesying of salvation is not fulfilled. The "world" does not fall apart, but the hope for salvation crumbles. If, however, the messianic community does not totter due to inner certainty, then the messianic experience has to turn inward, salvation has to be understood as an event occurring in the spiritual sphere, which is mirrored in the human soul. Interiorization is no dividing line between "Judaism" and "Christianity" but typifies a crisis within Jewish eschatology itself—in Pauline Christianity as much as in the seventeenth-century Sabbatian movement. How else can salvation be defined, after the Messiah has not, in fact, redeemed the external world, than as a displacement into interiority?[44]

This description of a maintenance of messianism in face of the real-historical disappointment of salvational hopes, and the ensuing necessary interiorization, appears to apply perfectly to Simone Weil's position—and to correspond closely to Susan Taubes's own description of that position two decades earlier. For in "The Case of Simone Weil," she emphasizes that Weil cannot embrace either the Christian concept of a sacred history

41. See, in that respect, Sigrid Weigel, *Entstellte Ähnlichkeit: Walter Benjamins theoretische Schreibweise* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch, 1997), pp. 72f. and Macho, "Zum Streit zwischen Taubes und Scholem."

42. J. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*, p. 44.

43. Gershom Scholem, *Judaica* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 1:7f.

44. J. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*, p. 44.

or the Jewish concept of a holy people, the time of salvation's arrival rather having meaning for the individual soul alone. Susan Taubes thus directly situates Weil's mystic atheism, emerging from the specific experience of her age, beyond the traditional, rigid conflict

> between belief in a Messiah who is expected to come and establish the kingdom of God at the end of time, and faith in the messiah who has already redeemed the world and who will return to rule the world at the end of time. The difference between Jewish and Christian messianism becomes insignificant since Simone Weil rejects the belief in redemption as a temporal event, as a fact accomplished or to be accomplished at a specific historical moment once and for all.[45]

In these comments from the late 1950s, Weil's mysticism is defined as, precisely a response to the concrete historical experiences of her time. And the meaning of the polemic Jacob Taubes formulated twenty years later against Scholem's postwar dogma of a strict opposition between Jewish and Christian messianism only emerges against the template of this historical reading: as the critique of an approach that inadequately considers the experience of recent events in the reflection on religio-historical certainties.

The personal and thematic constellation outlined above can be examined from various angles. Regarding the intellectual relation between the couple Susan and Jacob Taubes, it is remarkable that at the same time that Susan was producing her work on Weil, Jacob defined the "everlasting conflict between the principle of law and the principle of love" as an "indissoluble difference" between Christianity and Judaism"—this a schema clearly in debt to Scholem.[46] But at the same time, there is a clear proximity between Susan Taubes's writing from the 1950s, Jacob Taubes's preceding dissertation on occidental eschatology,[47] and his later work from the 1960s to the 1980s—above all in respect to Gnosticism, in both his fascination with the "prince of the world" and his discussion of Marcion. Here Jacob Taubes's Heidegger essay of 1975 and his Marcion essay of 1984 are of special interest.[48]

45. Susan Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," p. 12.

46. See Jacob Taubes, "Die Streitfrage zwischen Judentum und Christentum: Ein Blick auf ihre unauflösliche Differenz" [1953] in *Vom Kult zur Kultur*, pp. 85–98.

47. Jacob Taubes, *Die Abendländische Eschatologie* (Bern: A. Francke, 1947).

48. Cf. Taubes, *Vom Kult zur Kultur*.

For her part, as a philosopher of religion Susan Taubes appears to have disappeared from the academic scene soon after the studies of Weil. After the Ph.D. thesis, she worked at Harvard as a research assistant under Paul Oppenheim, then moved to Columbia and Barnard as an Associate in Religion, teaching there into 1963, became a University Associate in the University Seminars on the Theory of Literature in 1967 and worked as a curator at the same university's Bush Collection. She edited anthologies of African myth and Native American stories in this context. But afterward we only find a short reading of Genet's *The Blacks* published under the title "On Going to One's Own Funeral" in *Columbia Daily Spectator*; this appeared in 1961.[49]

In contrast, a biographical event produced a major piece of imaginative literature: the 1969 novel *Divorcing*. Shortly after its publication Susan Taubes committed suicide. The novel is itself narrated from the autobiographical perspective of a dead person, Sophie Blind. Its representational mode alternates between dream and mnemonic images, fantastic and satirical scenarios, and highly realistic scenarios from the everyday life of a female intellectual;[50] at numerous points it corresponds to the life history of its author.[51]

It may be the case that Susan Taubes's own early experience of expulsion, forming the index for her studies in philosophy and religious history, may have sharpened her sense of modernity's negative theology. In any event, the gesture of her writing is less characterized by the historicizing perspective than through an unpronounced actualization. It is here not easy to say what her own attitude is toward the conceptual figures she describes—both negative theology and the unspoken traces of citations of Gnostic heresy. Possibly her insight into what she points to in her Heidegger essay as a necessary approach for a knowledge contaminated by

49. See Susan Taubes, "On Going to One's Own Funeral" (review of Genet's *The Blacks*) in *The Supplement*, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 27, 1961, pp. 1 and 5 (revised as "The White Mask Falls," *Tulane Drama Review* 7 [1963]: 85–92).

50. See Sigrid Weigel, "Susan Taubes und Hannah Arendt: Zwei jüdische Intellektuelle zwischen Literatur und Philosophie, zwischen Europa und USA," in *Jüdische Intellektuelle im 20. Jahrhundert: Literatur- und kulturgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Ariane Huml and Monika Rappenecker (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 133–49

51. A granddaughter of the Chief Rabbi of Budapest, Judit Zsuzsanna Feldmann, was born in 1928 and emigrated to America in 1939 together with her father, a psychoanalyst. During her studies in the United States she met the five-years-older Jacob Taubes, a Vienna-born philosopher and rabbi who had moved to Zurich in 1936; she married him in 1949 at the age of twenty-one.

Gnosticism also applies to herself: "The gnosis, the 'knowledge' which contains the teaching of the way of redemption, is in itself a step in the drama of redemption. The knowledge (gnosis) is not objective; it is not simply the narrative of a spectator *about* redemption; it forms an inner constitutive moment in the process of redemption."[52] Such an approach has nothing to do with empathy. This is especially clear in the remarkable manner Susan Taubes succeeds, in her description of Weil's texts, in tying a lucid critique of the universalization of historical experience to an open-minded explication of Weil's critique of Judaism. At the end of "The Absent God," in the context of a discussion of the social implications and political effects of Weil's negative theology, she thus comments:

> The purity of Simone Weil's experience of the Cross and her genuine desire for identification with the injured and the oppressed render her religion of suffering all the more tragic. For her mystical atheism offers a religion to the afflicted only at the price of blindfolding one's self to the fact of those who profit from their affliction and consequently serving their ends.[53]

Weil's observation on the price of mystic atheism in a totalitarian age is criticized by her as a transformation of negative theology into a type of negative theodicy. Through this theodicy, a historically determined impotence is misjudged in that it is presented as a characteristic of God's created beings: "but is not Simone Weil in her way also guilty of projecting the impotence and the hopelessness of a particular human society into the divine being?"[54] But considered from a human perspective, this comprises an attack on human justice.

Despite this clear critique of the way Weil's mysticism is caught up in the violent dynamic of history, in her second Weil essay Susan Taubes tries to loosen a resistance to Weil's writing that had been manifest in Jewish intellectual circles by clarifying Weil's antagonism to the Hebrew Bible and some principles of Judaism, for instance the idea of a tribal God and that of chosenness, together with Weil's radical critique of Christianity's spiritualization of the Hebrew God. In this respect, she situated Weil's texts historically through recourse to, among other things, the traces of Gnostic tradition apparent in them:

52. S. Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations," p. 160.
53. S. Taubes, "The Absent God," p. 15.
54. Ibid., p. 16.

> Whether we agree with Simone Weil's interpretation or not, the fact [is] that we would search in vain for a spirit of grace and equity in the Old Testament chronicles of the Wars of Yahweh. And are we to reproach Simone Weil for an almost incredible naïveté in applying the yardstick of a highly evolved spiritual consciousness to a primitive text, when this text serves in fact as the liturgy of the Jewish community, and its symbols persist in Jewish religious thought?[55]

A decade after the end of the war, this very far-reaching acceptance of Weil's critique of what Susan Taubes understood to be central dogmas of Jewish orthodoxy would not have been particularly relished in Jewish intellectual circles. Arguably, it attests to a remarkable intellectual independence on the part of a twenty-eight year old. In distinction to the understanding she shows for Weil's position, her assessment of the political meaning of Weil's "religion of suffering"—with which, as Taubes puts it, she made herself guilty in her own way—is much more direct. The concept of the tragic applied in this context—in the reference to Weil's "religion of suffering" as "all the more tragic"—is again related to Taubes's own reflections on the tragic. Since Susan Taubes ascribes meaning and dignity to tragic action, we may assume that, despite the political misjudgment and what was bound up with it, she would have granted the status of historical action to Weil's effort to hold on to the idea of salvation vis-à-vis the historical experience of her time.

55. S. Taubes, "The Case of Simone Weil," pp. 8f.

Kantian Antinomies in Digital Communications Media

Ejvind Hansen

I.

It is probably no controversial claim to state that there has been a major change in the communicative landscape during the last 10 to 20 years, due to technological innovations that have created utterly new types of digital communicative media. In the following, I apply an analysis, rooted in Kant's analysis of the antinomies of reason in *Critique of Pure Reason*, by which I argue that we can see a dogmatic strain in the digital media.

Kant arrives at the discussion of the antinomies in book two, "The Dialectical Inferences of Pure Reason." The aim of the transcendental dialectic is to articulate some important insights about the relationship of reason to experience, or the logical possibilities that ground the "concepts which understanding frames in regard to objects."[1] Kant is concerned to combat the rationalist orthodoxy that would derive experiential laws from pure reason. Out of this overriding project, Kant concerns himself not just with disputing the claims of the rationalists, but also with tracing those claims to the "illusions" of reason. It is here that the antinomies take on their philosophical importance.

The antinomies demonstrate that our knowledge about the world is fundamentally indeterminate, since the conflicts that arise between the formal rules of reason and the inductions of understanding cannot be solved by finding one or another side involved in a contradiction:

> Since this unity of reason involves a synthesis according to rules, it must conform to the understanding; and yet as demanding absolute unity of synthesis it must at the same time harmonise with reason. But the conditions of this unity are such that when it is adequate to reason it is too great for the understanding;

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 324.

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> and when suited to the understanding, too small for reason. There thus arises a conflict which cannot be avoided, do what we will.[2]

The realization that the indeterminate character of our knowledge is embedded in the relationship between reason and human understanding is an important source for critical reflection. Since we are inevitably bound up in a dialectics between finitude and infinitude, we are never allowed to fall back into a self-assured conviction of the infallibility of our understanding.

I will, however, argue that digital media are characterized by a fundamental finitude. This poses a potential bias in digitally mediated communication of which it is important to be aware. Kantian transcendental dialectics thus proves to be relevant in framing our communication within the digital systems—and in the creation of new media. The point is not that there is never room for critical reflection in digital media, but rather that digital media in certain respects diminishes our awareness of the need for critical reflection.

Before going on to the actual analyses, it is, however, appropriate to make a conceptual clarification. When contemplating digitally mediated communication, it is helpful to distinguish between communicative *meaning* and the transferred *information*. I will use the term *information* in order to designate what is being distributed between the digital tools, over the domain of which a given algorithm will have control, and which constitute representations in various media. Information designates the bits, bytes, numbers, letters, etc. This informational content can, if represented through a proper interface, be interpreted meaningfully. Communicative meaning, on the other hand, is what we exchange when we communicate. In order to get from digital information to meaning, we need a proper interface and an interpreting, spontaneous subject. In this note I will start out with some reflections on the nature of digital information, and from this extract some implications for the resulting communicative meaning.

II.

Ever since Turing in 1936 published his paper on computable numbers,[3] it has been clear that the possibility of reducing the flow of necessary information into a finite number of discrete units, as opposed to the continuously variable flow exploited by analog media, gives us a much more flexible communicative technology. These thoughts came to be a fundamental starting point in the development of the digital media in the late twentieth century. Digital technology can thus be defined through the *discrete* and *finite* character of the communicated information.

2. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 394.

3. A. M. Turing "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem," *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society*, ser. 2, vol. 42 (1936–37), pp. 230–65.

Digital information is thus finite in its character. Any digital system is at the outset determined as to its reach. The divisibility and extensibility is decided by the system developer(s). This can be demonstrated by considering a simple digital alphabet that contains the letters {A, B}. In a binary digital system with only one bit, which represents the letter A if set, and B if cleared, it is not possible to communicate anything outside the range of {A, B}. An attempt to express either C or @ will be transmitted either as A, B, or nothing at all.

Digital computation is certainly much more complex than what is demonstrated in this example. If the range of {A, B} is too simple, it is possible to create systems in which bits are grouped together, letting specific patterns of successive settings represent various alternate symbols or groups of symbols.

Due to technological advances in digital media, the possible extension and divisibility of various forms of representation has reached a level that seems to be pragmatically adequate. Without this pragmatic adequacy, the media would certainly not have been successful. But on the one hand, this does not change the fact that the degree of extension and divisibility is determined by what the system-developer has decided to make representable, ranging over the possibilities encoded within the brackets of his basic set. On the other hand, human creativity continuously challenges existing systems, and what at one time seems to be adequate may later prove to be a straitjacket or a dead end.

This turns out to be significant because, unlike analog media, the set of information outside of the range chosen does not impinge inside digital media as noise. In analog media, information that is unsuccessfully coded for transmission is most often distributed as various kinds of noise (in a broad sense). The inadequacy of digital media tends to be silent. An attempt to express "C" in the simple system sketched above, will either be transmitted as "A," "B," or nothing at all. The addressee will not be able to determine (at least when looking at the received data in abstraction) that anything else has been sought to be communicated. The fact that there is no residual is not, in other words, synonymous with the fact that there is no problem. There is simply no way, inside the media, to see the problem.

III.

Much can be said about how these characteristics are essential in the overwhelming applicability of digital communicative media. In the following I will, however, mainly focus upon some drawbacks that are also the result of these characteristics. These drawbacks stand out as soon as we turn to an important intuition in Kantian epistemology, which we touched upon in section one.

In the chapter on the antinomies of pure reason, Kant articulates (among other things) a necessary dialectic between infinitude and finitude. According to the theses of the first and second antinomy, the world is finite as to its spatial and

temporal extension and divisibility. According to the antitheses of the first and second antinomy, space and time are infinitely extendable and divisible.

Kant's point is that both the theses and the antitheses are unavoidable. They are conclusions

> into which reason of itself quite unavoidably falls. It certainly guards reason from the slumber of *fictitious* conviction such as is generated by a purely one-sided illusion, but at the same time subjects it to the temptation either of abandoning itself to a sceptical despair, or of assuming an obstinate attitude, dogmatically committing itself to certain assertions, and refusing to grant a fair hearing to the arguments for the counter-position. Either attitude is the death of sound philosophy, although the former might perhaps be entitled the *euthanasia* of pure reason.[4]

Reason is trapped inside this dialectic because it has a spontaneous, systematizing side that focuses upon certain aspects of reality that are granted the status of being more salient or essential than other aspects (in Kantian terms, this is the spontaneous source of knowledge). This aspect of reason tends toward the worldview that is represented in the theses: the world has certain clear limits. On the other hand, reason cannot but be receptive toward the diversity of reality. Insights are not reasonable if they are not somehow in accordance with the world toward which they are directed (in Kantian terms, this is the receptive source of knowledge). This side of reason points toward the worldview represented in the antitheses: any limit or border that is determined is always to some extent an unjustifiable reduction of what the case is. Reality is not reducible to firm and fixed systems. There is always more to it than what can be accounted for in concepts and principles. There is, as it were, a necessary conflict between the attempt to come to grips with the world in a systematic and finite way, and the attempt to account adequately for the worldly manifold in all its complexity.

The finite divisibility and extensibility of digital information points toward the worldview represented in the theses. When communicating through digital media, the received information is determinately finite and discrete. The resulting meaning (knowledge) is thus not challenged by the conclusions of the antitheses. This is not to say that we cannot gain knowledge through digital media. The information that stems from the digital media may have both a receptive and a spontaneous (in the Kantian sense) side. But since the receptive side has been necessarily reduced from its indeterminate diversity to a determinate message, the knowledge that is gained from the digitally mediated communication does not have the same unstable character as knowledge gained through other sources. This is so because the receptively presented information in the digital media is determined by limitations in the system-transcending possibilities. In the example

4. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 385.

with the simple digital alphabet {A, B} you cannot suddenly be confronted with the surprising information of "C" or "between-A-and-B" that could force you to reconsider your approach to the topic of the exchange. Nothing on the other end of the line will indicate that the speaker wanted to upset the initial set of choices.

This point very quickly becomes less simple as soon as we leave the simple single-bit system and turn toward the more complex systems that characterize actual digital media. Human creativity sometimes manage to find "cracks" in the systems whereby the users are able to introduce elements of communication that were not envisioned by the system developers. This can be done by combining the possible states of information in surprising ways, by embedding the information in surprising combinations of new (and unforeseen) patterns of interpretation.[5] But this does not change the fact that every digital media has certain limits in what can be presented, and that these limits are absolute. Even as the media grow more complex, the rules on combinations still apply: no combination can contain an element that is systematically excluded from the schema of representation. Given this, there is a tendency toward stabilization of the gained knowledge as if excluded elements were not excluded contingently, but excluded because they did not exist.

One might ask in what sense this situation poses a problem. Is it not a good thing that we hereby eliminate possible sources for conflicts? Is not the triumph of digital over analog technology all about the triumph over noise? To have stable knowledge would by many seem to be the very point of the techne. One of the important insights that springs from Kantian epistemology, however, is that knowledge that is not challenged by the intractable character of the given, tends to become dogmatic and loses its relationship to worldly matters. This is so because reasonable inferences happen through a focus upon certain aspects of the world (to extract the special out of the general in a process of abstraction).[6] And this process of abstraction tends to shed the connection to worldly matters outside of the pattern of its expectations if it is not continuously challenged by system-transcending incidents.

IV.

If we generally communicate through media with a thetic character, it is reasonable to expect that the epistemological outlooks will be shaped in that direction as well. The epistemological outlooks thus tend to become dogmatic (in the Kantian sense). My claim is thus that the modern digital communicative media tend to reduce our awareness of the importance of critical reflection and receptivity.

5. An example of this can be found in the introduction of the "smilies" in the ASCII-based emails. I have elaborated this example in a paper called "Explicit Emotions in E-mail Communication" (yet to be published).

6. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 300–2.

And the source of this tendency lies in the absolute degree of the modern digital constitution. There is nothing new in the point that communicative media shape and reduce communication in order to be effective. But what is little noted is that the absolute character of the digital constitutions makes the reduction imperceptible, because any transcendence of the digital system is reduced to silence, not to noise.

This is not to claim that there can be no critical engagement through modern digital communicative media. It is also not to say that there cannot be critical *gains* in the introduction of digital media. To make such claims would demonstrate an outrageous lack of sensibility as to what has happened inside, for example, various chat, email, and blog communities since the general expansion of the Internet (the digital communicative media par excellence). These communities have amplified critical voices who speak up against, for example, neoliberal globalization (e.g., the Seattle and Attac movements) and non-democratic regimes (e.g., Iranian blog communities).

So my point is not that digital media *can never* further critical engagement. My point is rather that the dogmatizing character of the digital media may entail a diminishment in our capacity for critical contemplation—except for problems that have already been designated. If our horizon is formed by media in which the indeterminacy of the world is put into fixed frames, we tend to lose our awareness of the unpredictability of the world. More than two hundred years after its publication, we have yet to fully absorb the lessons of *Critique of Pure Reason.*

Life and Violence

David Kishik

> How light power would be, and easy to dismantle, no doubt, if all it did was to observe, spy, detect, prohibit, and punish; but it incites, provokes, produces. It is not simply eye and ear: it makes people act and speak.
>
> Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men"[1]

The word for "life" and the word for "violence" are etymological neighbors in many languages. Compare, for example, *vita* and *vis* in Latin, *bios* and *bia* in Greek, *jivah* and *jiya* in Sanskrit, as well as the Indo-European **guiuos* and **guiie* (all the former stand for "life," "aliveness," or "living," while the latter stand for "violence," "force," or "strength"). But when you try to trace a genealogy of this decisive link within the field of theory, rather than that of linguistics, you soon come to face a founding text that is actually a phantom. In a letter to Gershom Scholem from April 17, 1920, Walter Benjamin reveals that he has just finished writing "a very short but timely note" called "Life and Violence" (*Leben und Gewalt*).[2] In another letter, dated a month later, Benjamin promises to send his friend a copy of the essay, now entitled "Violence and Life," but Scholem claims that it never reached him.[3] Scholars believe that this lost piece was planned to be part of a larger work on the subject of politics, the sole sure survivor of which is "Critique of Violence" from 1921. Perhaps, "Critique of Violence" *is* "Violence and Life." But even if there were a separate lost text, the surviving essay must be our starting point.

Giorgio Agamben formulates the basic thrust of "Critique of Violence" in the following terms:

> The aim of the essay is to ensure the possibility of a violence (the German term *Gewalt* also means simply power) that lies absolutely "outside" (*außerhalb*) and "beyond" (*jenseits*) the law and that, as such, could shatter the dialectic between lawmaking violence and law preserving violence (*rechtsetzende und*

1. Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men," in *Power*, ed. J. D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000), p. 172.

2. Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 162.

3. Ibid., p. 164.

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> *rechtserhaltende Gewalt*). Benjamin calls this other figure of violence "pure" (*reine Gewalt*) or "divine," and, in the human sphere, "revolutionary."[4]

An act of pure violence is a very peculiar one, since it has nothing whatsoever to do with the law: it is not meant to transgress or oppose a law (as in criminal activity or civil disobedience); it is not meant to preserve or uphold a law (as in regular police enforcement or special military rule); and it is not meant to create or make a law (as in political revolution or aggressive protest). In fact, pure violence is not *meant* to achieve any particular *end*. A regular violent act that is not a "pure" one is often perceived as legitimate as long as it has a justified outcome (as in "just war"). By contrast, "pure violence" is the name Benjamin gives in the first paragraph of his essay to the kind of human activity that exists "within the sphere of means themselves, without regard for the ends they serve."[5] How then can we conceive of an act of pure violence within the world as we know it here and now? Where can we find this special type of violence that Agamben conceives "as the extreme political object, as the 'thing' of politics"?[6]

So far, we have seen what pure violence is *not*: to summarize, it is related neither to a law nor to an end. The difficult part, which will take us to the limit of Agamben's interpretation of this elusive Benjaminian notion, is to find a way to explain pure violence in unequivocal positive terms. Agamben's first and most daring attempt to do so can be found in "On the Limits of Violence," one of his first essays from 1970, where he claims, quite surprisingly, that the only violence that could truly be seen as "pure" is *sacred* violence.[7] He explains that the function of primitive sacrificial rituals is to allow the profane continuum to break down and so enable time to be "reborn." Unlike standard modern revolutionary violence, the primitive rites of sacred violence are not meant to destroy for good the old world order and then to establish a new and lasting one instead, but to repeatedly regenerate the community, to make it possible for one cycle to end and another to begin. Agamben considers this phenomenon of revitalization to be a kind of self-violence or self-sacrifice that the community inflicts upon itself in order to begin, time and again, anew. He therefore writes about this "violence that experiences its own self-negation in the negation of the other, and carries the consciousness of its own death in the other's death."[8] The hypocritical convenience that stands behind

4. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 53.

5. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Marcus Bollock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004), p. 236.

6. Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 59.

7. Giorgio Agamben, "Sui limiti della violenza," *Nuovi Argomenti* 17 (January–March 1970), p. 168.

8. Ibid., p. 170.

this justification of the physical killing of a sacrificial victim as a reflection of one's own consciousness of death, or the perception of the negation of the other as self-negation, did not escape its author, who will dedicate pivotal passages in his future books to a full-on battle against this myth of the sacred. Pure violence will never again find its proper manifestation as sacred violence in Agamben's work.[9]

It is therefore rather surprising to discover that Arendt explicitly refers to Agamben's early understanding of the sacred in a footnote from *On Violence*. (Arendt apparently managed to read Agamben's essay in Italian, which the young philosopher personally sent her in the beginning of 1970.)[10] At the end of the first chapter of her book, after a long diatribe against Sartre and Fanon's glorification of violence, she concedes that there are times in which violent acts can disrupt predictable, automatic, or thoughtless behavior, and interrupt the continuous chronological "progress" of history, though, she adds, such a theoretical argument is yet to be made. This is the point where you could find her nod to Agamben, but only in the German edition of the book, which she retitled *Macht und Gewalt*, or "Power and Violence."[11] The opposite of violence, Arendt claims, is not non-violence but power. She characterizes violence as instrumental in its nature, as means to an end that can be achieved by a single agent, while power is conceived as action in concert, as a sharing of words and deeds, which has no particular end in mind (recall in this context Agamben's later interpretation of pure violence mentioned above). One of the theoretical targets of Arendt's critique is a widespread misreading of Nietzsche's and Bergson's philosophies of life, which leads many to believe that violence is "creative," that it arises from "biological" processes, and that it is therefore inextricably linked with the "sheer factuality of living."[12] It is hard to see how the young Agamben's idea of sacred violence could escape its association with this problematic line of thinking—which reduces life to what he would later call "bare life"—thus making Arendt's footnote all the more puzzling.

The intricate and problematic link between life and violence remains unsolved unless one takes into account more esoteric clues scattered in the writings of Benjamin, Arendt, and Agamben; clues that point toward a certain form of life that

9. See, however, Agamben's recent essay, "Hunger of an Ox: Considerations on the Sabbath, the Feast, and Inoperativity," where he returns to a similar set of ideas (in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella [Stanford: Stanford UP, forthcoming]).

10. Letter from Giorgio Agamben to Hannah Arendt, February 21, 1970; Letter from Hannah Arendt to Giorgio Agamben, February 27, 1970. Available online at The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/arendthtml/arendthome.html.

11. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1970), pp. 30–31; *Macht und Gewalt* (Munich: Piper, 1971).

12. Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 74.

makes use of a novel understanding of pure violence. Take, for example, the curious side-remark that Arendt makes toward the end of her book:

> For better or worse—and I think there is every reason to be fearful as well as hopeful—the really new and potential revolutionary class in society will consist of intellectuals, and their potential power, as yet unrealized, is very great, perhaps too great for the good of mankind. But these are speculations.[13]

You could also hear an echo of this idea (let's call it "intellectual violence") in Agamben's early essay. Following squarely in Arendt's footsteps, he begins by admitting that on the face of it any link between violence and politics seems contradictory, because politics is the sphere of language, which has to do with the power of persuasion, from which brute violence is strictly excluded. Nevertheless, he argues that today we are witnessing with our own eyes the emergence of a new phenomenon that he calls "linguistic violence."[14] Probably the most obvious example for the way our modern age transforms the apparatus of language into a special form of violence is propaganda (in late capitalism, we seem to prefer the terms "public relations" or "advertising"). Violence can become an integral part of language at the moment in which the latter crosses the thin line between rational persuasion and psychological manipulation. On the other hand, one could add that today it becomes clear how certain acts that we would traditionally label "violent"—from independent terrorist attacks to established wars—are nothing but twisted means of persuasion or manipulation of public opinion. Linguistic means and violent means—which were completely separated in Arendt's mind—therefore enter a zone of indetermination, where the expressions "linguistic violence" and "intellectual violence" no longer appear to be contradictory at all. Agamben further claims that even the modern world of letters is sometimes suffused with the sort of powerful linguistic violence that already led Plato to call for the banning of poetry from the Greek city. He therefore treats the Marquis de Sade as an author who exercised, by means of his writings, an exemplary form of this linguistic violence. An intellectual violence, Sade predicts,

> would go on having perpetual effect, in such a way that so long as I lived, at every hour of the day and as I lay sleeping at night, I would be constantly the cause of a particular disorder, and that this disorder might broaden to the point where it brought about a general corruption so universal or a disturbance so formal that its effects would still be felt even after my life was over.[15]

13. Ibid., p. 73.

14. Agamben, "Sui limiti della violenza," pp. 161–63.

15. Ibid., p. 162. Marquis de Sade, *Juliette*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove, 1968), p. 525 (translation modified). In the novel, these words are uttered by Clairwil.

The hypothesis that I would like to advance is that the field of human actions that may be called "intellectual violence" or "linguistic violence" is very close to, or even the same as, what Benjamin calls "pure violence."[16] In order to prove this point, let us finally turn to the "thing itself," the very text of "Critique of Violence" that I have ignored so far. In it, Benjamin describes "divine" violence as certain acts of God that have nothing to do with laws or boundaries, acts that are not meant as His retribution for the wrongdoing of the people. Such divine acts are supposed to evoke in the people neither fear nor guilt, but expiation or atonement. When humans witness an act of divine violence they come to change their ways, their minds and hearts, but not because of the threat that breaking God's word will lead to dire consequences (like little children who finish their lunch only in order to be allowed to go out and play). Though divine violence might certainly be lethal, its aim is not the bloody annihilation of the bare lives of its victims, but, first and foremost, the transformation of the form of life of those who remain alive.[17]

Benjamin's only example of this divine violence is the Biblical story of Korah and his followers, who rebelled against Moses and were consequently swallowed alive by the earth. But I think that even more illustrative is the story of Jonah, to whom Scholem dedicated an essay from 1919 that appears to be the model for Benjamin's conception of divine violence. Scholem explains there that what is so striking about the Book of Jonah is that it substitutes law for justice. Since it contains very little concrete prophesy, it is essentially a "*pedagogical*" or "*didactic*" book: "A human being is taught a lesson about the order of what is just. And there is indeed no figure more representative for the teacher than God himself, nor one more representative for the student than the prophet."[18] Jonah's rebellion against God and his subsequent expiation (after spending three days and three nights inside the belly of a whale) furnish a perfect example for the education of the prophet, who is presented to the reader, according to Scholem, as "*a childlike person*."[19]

Going back to Benjamin's essay, we could now better understand his decision to move away from the notion of divine violence to an assertion that is one of the most decisive, and most neglected, in his entire cryptic essay: "This divine violence," he writes, "is not only attested by religious tradition but is also found

16. Arne De Boever pursues a somewhat similar end (by other means) in "Politics and Poetics of Divine Violence: On a Figure in Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin," in *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life*, ed. Alex Murray, Nicholas Heron, and Justin Clemens (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), pp. 82–96.

17. Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," pp. 249–50.

18. Gershom Scholem, "On Jonah and the Concept of Justice," trans. E. J. Schwab, *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 354.

19. Ibid., p. 355.

in present-day life in at least one sanctioned manifestation. Educative violence (*erzieherische Gewalt*), which in its perfect form stands outside the law, is one of its manifestations."[20] How, then, are we to understand this "educative violence"? In the narrow sense, it could stand for the (rather ineffective and usually controversial) violent measures (from spanking to detention and beyond) used by teachers or parents in order to achieve their pedagogical goals. But isn't it possible to define in a more general way any effective form of education as a form of pure, immediate, and bloodless violence, which appeals to neither a law nor an end, but to a different way of thinking and living? Of course, education in this sense goes way beyond what we tend to reduce to "formal education" within the confines of the "education system." The state's monopoly on educative violence in the past two centuries is quite impressive, but far from being complete. From this perspective, education can be strictly distinguished from indoctrination into an explicit or implicit set of laws or rules, since it has a particular end in mind. In fact, education could be seen as something that you primarily do to yourself much more than something that is done to you. The care of the self, as Foucault demonstrates, may be more original than any external imposition. The model here is the autodidact, the self-taught person, who is perhaps the pure incarnation of what Agamben calls "self-violence." Any linguistic or intellectual endeavor, any human deed or act, that has the power to make or remake a human being, that allows one to see or do things differently, that has some ethical or political effect, has from this perspective an educative power. Of course, the unalloyed violence inherent in language, education, and intellect can be, and is, exploited to the nth degree (for example, when the thinker transforms into the professor, or when the care of the self transforms into disciplinary methods). Then we no longer deal with pure, potential means, but with just another type of tool that aims at the same sorry end that we call "domination." This is probably why Arendt writes that, when it comes to intellectuals, she is both hopeful and fearful.

Despite Arendt's struggle against the confusion of violence with power, the sphere of the coming political power could be ultimately indistinguishable from the sphere of pure violence, as long as both are conceived in their mryiad of intellectual, linguistic, or educative manifestations. Following this lead, it becomes apparent why the opposite of bloody wars is not peace but what we sometimes call "cultural war," which could be understood as the unalloyed form of civil war, or as the continuation of war by means without end. Here the guiding question is not *whether* we are going to live, but *how* we are going to live. The true threat (or blessing) is not necessarily death but a different form of life, which is, when push comes to shove, what we need to fight for (or against). But it is also important not to forget Arendt's warning that "words used for the purpose of fighting lose their

20. Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," p. 250 (translated modified).

quality of speech; they become clichés," which then leads to what Benjamin calls an "impotent language, degraded to pure instrument."[21] Linguistic, intellectual, or educative violence could thus properly be called "pure" only when it remains within a sphere of means that are not directed at a particular or ultimate end, only when it merges with the life that Agamben calls "form-of-life," for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself, and what is above all at stake in living itself is a way of life.[22]

21. Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," in *Essays in Understanding* (New York: Schocken, 2005), p. 308. Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 80.

22. Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 3–4.

The Final Rose

Jeffrey Folks

At the beginning of the series, a dozen young women are introduced as potential mates for the eligible young bachelor. The audience accompanies the couples on their limo-escorted dates, meets the bachelor's family and friends, listens to their evaluation of the bride, and watches expectantly as the smiling Prince Charming singles out a few finalists for his attention. As the weeks pass by, one by one, tearful young women are dismissed from the show as the presentation of the final rose that signifies singular devotion draws near. In the end, only two young women remain, and only one can receive the final rose.

It is hard to understand the popularity of shows like *The Bachelor*, *Fear Factor*, or *The Apprentice*. Do I really want to engage in vicarious dating and courtship, with all the miscues and embarrassment that that awkward rite of passage entails? Do I want to watch as contestants maneuver convertibles beneath semi-trailer trucks, launch themselves as human cannonballs across yawning abysses, or devour handfuls of wriggling grubs? Do I wish to monitor teams of clueless apprentices as they embark on what, in all too many cases, it would seem, is their first contact with the real world? Do I want to cheer as haplessly dysfunctional families are made over, or exalt as the perpetrator of "cold case" crimes is hauled out of senility to face a corps of smart-faced forensic inquisitors?

Frankly, I do not, but apparently a great number of viewers do. For these fans, it would seem, the mesmerizing quality of the shows resides in the way that reality television appears to mirror everyday experience. The situations are so ordinary, the language so commonplace, the contestants such average Joes and Jessicas that one is left with the flattering illusion that the entire universe centers on oneself. Not only is the viewer the center of attention, but no demands are made on the intellect or sensibility. Everything is familiar, uncomplicated, reflexive. Like the contestants who can "earn" a million dollars just by conning their way through a few elimination rounds, the viewer has entered a virtual space of decreased expectations.

In an age when self-help, self-promotion, self-analysis, and pure selfishness are encountered everywhere, perhaps the dominant media of our culture *should* pander shamelessly to the narcissistic inclinations of the viewer, but it was not always so. Just a generation ago, the reading of imaginative fiction played a

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central role in human culture. Fiction was taught as a subject of great cultural importance, and novelists achieved the status that rock stars—or contestants on reality television—now achieve. The publication of an important new novel was an event of national and even international significance because the best works of fiction were regarded as far more than mere entertainment: they were guides to existence, signposts for the soul's journey toward something more than *self*-improvement. Now, few have time for reading of any sort, much less for lengthy works of fiction. The average teenager now spends only seven minutes a day reading: little of this, I suspect, devoted to signposts for the soul.

The unique virtue of imaginative fiction, as Robert Lewis Stevenson understood, lay in its ability to "show us the web of experience, but with a single change: That monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours struck out."[1] It is precisely the demand that the reader's ego *not* be left out, however, that characterizes the present culture in which self-importance, instant gratification, and the illusion of a familiar and unexamined sort of reality are so closely intertwined. The reading of serious fiction—the Great Tradition that stretched from Richardson and Austen to Dickens, Eliot, and Conrad—demanded sustained periods of reflection, and in these quiet moments the reader took time to consider life in relationship to others, to mortality, and to God. The mediated nature of imaginative literature, which required one to peer beyond the self and imagine the consequences of an unfamiliar train of events, nurtured qualities of compassion and self-restraint in generations of readers and contributed to the creation of a civilization of unprecedented humanity. Yet this same civilization of civility, concern, and tolerance is now being rapidly dismantled and replaced with one of insistent selfishness and rampant materialism.

The dismantlement was precipitated with the misguided efforts of Lawrence, Joyce, Faulkner, and a host of their contemporaries to retain a basis for order in the myth of the self-creative artist. Seemingly heroic, these self-creative struggles only led us away from our comfortable home within an ordered and purposeful universe. Unknowingly perhaps, their "heroic" example of agonistic self-determination contributed to a cultural shift in which conventional sources of order and authority were increasingly discredited. The voyeuristic and fetishistic qualities that Joyce associated with the character of Leopold Bloom are amplified and coarsened in our own passive and self-absorbed consumer culture, but they were already implicit within the modernist tendency to construct impenetrable private mythologies. The forms of entertainment that we now consume have everything to do with a cultural movement extending back to modernism, and beyond that to romanticism and the enlightenment, that recognized the exploration of the self as

1. Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts: A Cyclopedia of Quotations*, compiled by Tryon Edwards et al. (n.p.: Standard Book Company, 1961), p. 211.

the central task of human existence. Yet, too easily, this undertaking devolves into self-indulgence rather than self-discovery; too soon, the self is delimited by rights and privileges rather than obligations; too readily, the clarity of objective reality is undermined by the self's convenient withdrawal into a private fantasy-life that is deemed equally meaningful and "real." What we watch for hours every day is both the product and confirmation of this altered sensibility.

As Czesław Miłosz wrote in *The Land of Ulro*, the unmediated force of history, with its "intractable nature . . . destroyed the idea of the novel as a 'mirror in the roadway.'"[2] In place of the realist tradition of fiction (which bears no relation to the sort of "reality" now under discussion), "we have recourse to the fable, poetic distillation, metonymy, or we shun art and literature altogether in favor of memoirs and nonfiction." Here Miłosz identified a crucial shift in cultural sensibility: where once fiction was read as an imaginative analog and guide to human experience, it has now come to seem staged and remote. What does seem relevant, apparently, is a mode of narrative that appears, and, indeed, often enough is, artlessly direct. Unfortunately, this form of narrative, the sort of narrative that suffuses television and increasingly film and print media as well, has devolved into a servile tool of marketing that operates by appealing to the public's most self-indulgent fantasies. It is a mode of expression that flatters incompetence and sloth and that panders to the ego's illicit illusion of supreme self-importance.

We need to remind ourselves that the purpose of art is not to peer into the mirror and admire ourselves as we are. In great narrative or dramatic art, the self is stripped and assaulted, as it is in *The Brothers Karamazov* or *King Lear*, to the point that one is made aware of one's significance as a divinely created being but also of one's relative insignificance in relation to the greater world. In this art, we are not encouraged to see ourselves as the center of creation, nor are we misled into thinking of ourselves as perfect or perfectible. We are not made comfortable but made to question; we are not content with mediocrity but led to confront our failings and to address our weaknesses, including that fundamental lack whose very existence underlies our relationship to the divine. Through this miraculous process of art, we are led to reflect on our relationship to the world and to its creator in order to improve and purify those relationships.

Now we are offered a culture that lacks this mediation and this reflectiveness, and the ethical implications of the cultural shift are alarming. As one defender of the reality media has written, we are now offered shows such as *Wife Swap* in which "Value systems are smashed into each other, like atoms in an accelerator."[3] Yet from the perspective of reality culture, it is impossible to distinguish between knowledge and ignorance, beauty and ugliness, health and illness, right

2. Czesław Miłosz, *The Land of Ulro*, trans. Louis Iribarne (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985), p. 41.

3. Michael Hirschorn, "The Case for Reality TV," *Atlantic* 229 (May 2007): 138–40.

and wrong; there is no reason to reflect, to discriminate, or to exercise prudence since, in a virtual world in which nearly all behavior meets with approval or disapproval depending on whether that behavior appeals to the whim of a self-absorbed sensibility, it is impossible to arrive at a definite meaning for these terms. How can one conceive a prudent course of action, much less marshal the self-restraint to embark upon it, if one is convinced that no single course of action is any more prudent than another? How can one engage in reflection of any sort in the absence of meaningful distinctions of real consequence?

Within reality culture, the conditioned reflex takes the place of the discriminating mind. The weak-minded literalism of believing everything that one sees or reads is bad enough, but a more insidious appeal to emotional reality, in which a shameless special pleading takes the form of an appeal not just to literalism but to the most vulnerable emotions, underlies much of contemporary American culture. To employ James Bowman's term, an appeal to "evocative meaninglessness" now suffuses much of what we hear on network television, including much of what is represented as hard news. The insidious thing about the appeal to raw emotion is that it leads us into that purely narcissistic world of ego against which Stevenson warned. If all of objective reality can be swept away, even made to seem criminal because it does not conform to our irrational reflexes, then we have entered the anarchic world in which the only basis for decision-making is emotional appeal, with the most pathetic or sensational expressions of emotion trumping all others. There are, of course, no objective criteria for determining whose emotions are the most "worthy" of consideration, and so, in the absence of reason and facts, the basis for determining whose needs take precedence over those of others is reduced to a matter of political will.

The problem is not just a dwindling ability to discriminate; it is that once one sets off on the merry pathway to "reality," the reality that one demands becomes more and more "real." This inflation of expectations has given rise to an "extreme culture" within which every television broadcast, and every product and service, is marketed as radically superior to what one has been accustomed to in the past. The inflation of expectations is especially evident in sports broadcasting. Stock car racing, the nation's second-most popular spectator sport after footfall, offers continuous action and the apparently irresistible prospect of spectacular and occasionally fatal crashes. "Extreme fighting," a species of gladiatorial combat that John McCain has termed "human cock-fighting," has garnered a devoted media audience of over a million, comprised mostly of young American males. The appetite for fast-paced action and violence, and for the live coverage of situations such as hostage standoffs and high-speed car chases that involve the likelihood of carnage, attests a growing callousness in our national sensibility.

The loss of narrative mediation is a crucial step in this decline since, lacking the distance from which fiction observed and rendered its subject and, in effect,

heightened and refined our perception, we now begin and end with narrative that purports to a greater truth but that actually embodies only the lowest common denominator of human behavior. The purpose, if one can call it that, of reality television would seem to be the validation of the viewer's ego in the same way that retailers spotlight a display of torn jeans and dreary T-shirts in order to create a comfort zone for the consumer. Yet, without the effort of striving toward greater beauty, justice, or truth, that comfort zone is continually degraded. There can be no beauty or justice or truth in a world which believes that just anything goes.

Reality TV is only the latest manifestation of a cultural decay that began decades ago. Over the past forty years, sports programming has become increasingly action based and brutal, soap operas ever more graphic and bizarre, and talk shows vastly more intimate. Since the Vietnam War, the coverage of world or national events has featured less analysis and more explicit imagery: we have grown accustomed to a routine airing of live combat, executions, accidents, and massacres, so much so that we do not even notice the degradation of standards in what ought to be shown, and these forms of violence have been matched with an explosion of pornography. Reality TV is not just a craze: it is the latest symptom of an ongoing vulgarization of sensibility through a blatant emphasis on sensationalism.

Amid the general vulgarity and lowering of standards, what particularly stands out is the loss of delicacy and respect that for centuries comprised an ideal of human relationships. The ideal of chivalry, though sometimes honored more in the breach than the observance, nonetheless exerted a powerful influence on actual behavior since it provided a model for courtship and married life that involved consideration, kindness, and forbearance. These qualities appear sadly lacking in the wasteland of modern domesticity, and they are lacking because there exists no overriding ideal to provide direction or support to our imperfect selves. In place of that ideal, we endure the sort of sniggering degradation of romance that has long been the norm on *The Simpsons* or the casual cynicism served up on any number of talk shows whose hosts never seem to miss the opportunity to dissect the latest celebrity infidelity or break-up. Now, in the absence of an overarching myth of romance of the sort that the chivalric ideal provided, the embittered romantic instinct has turned against itself. Not only is it totally uncool to appear romantic in the old style, but it is deemed socially criminal. One hesitates to open a door or utter a flattering remark for fear of a lawsuit. The innocent popular songs of the past that celebrated "one love," "true and endless love," have been supplanted by a grossly offensive rap vernacular or by rock lyrics of self-absorbed nihilism.

Reality culture involves an element akin to the pornographic, an exploitation of human desire directed not only toward sexuality but, what is worse, toward the very core of human idealism. Everything about this demotic culture seems to

originate in a loss of faith in the potential for goodness and virtue. Even as they are hyped as "extreme" and "ultimate" challenges, the trials of reality TV, unlike those of actual life, are fantastically brief and undemanding. In the artificial situations of *Fear Factor*, a course of adolescent challenges has been arranged in which nothing is really at risk. The danger is that, after watching the average Joes exert themselves for all of three or four minutes and accepting that this virtual labor represents "real" effort, one is less likely to make an effort oneself; after watching the inevitable coronation of the last-standing bachelorette or the flippant ascent of the latest apprentice, one understands less, not more, of the mortal stakes involved in courtship or professional life.

It is not just on television that reality has taken over. Among contemporary works of fiction, we are faced with a mode of narrative that merges fiction with a debased depiction of reality devoted to accounts of society's victims: those whose victimization, we have been led to believe, occupies a unique and incontestable niche in creation. In this perverse fascination with victimization, the story of the author's life has supplanted genuine artistic invention. It's all too much like *Survivor: Exile Island* as we attend to the plight of these struggling souls amidst ringing, self-indulgent cris de coeur of resentment and accusation. Meanwhile, our traditional ideal of literature as an imaginative creation intended to illuminate and support virtue, the essential role of Western narrative from Homer and Dante to Austen and Dostoevsky, has come to seem boring and irrelevant. Why should we wish to read those unlikely accounts of Elizabeth Bennet and Dmitry Karamazov, characters who never "really" existed, when we can be inspired by the piteous tale of some real-life victim—someone who the camera confirms actually exists among us and whom we may find it possible, with our unlimited powers of self-will and creativity, to redeem and make whole?

In the popular mind, the great conspiracy of our times is, after all, the effort by authority, no matter what shape it may take, to exert control or correction over the unregulated free will of the individual. Accordingly, one of the central messages of reality culture is, to parrot the sophomoric terms in which it is everywhere proclaimed, the idea that everyone has a right to do what he or she likes as long as it does not harm another human being. This oft-repeated credo of relativism conceals oceans of harm since its response to nearly all ethical quandaries is simply, "Whatever." Yet this belief in the autonomy of the self is the defining feature of contemporary culture, and the crucial failing of reality literature lies in the hubris that attaches to gazing idolatrously at our own image. This narcissistic pleasure is hardly an innocent one, for it amounts to a denial of the circumstantial nature of existence, the order of natural law within which we live, and the self-sacrifice that is required to endure and succeed. With such a self-centered view—the suggestion that whatever exists comprises not just the mean average of human behavior but the limit, the predetermined condition—the accepted norm of

human behavior declines week by week into a smug, self-assured complacency, buttressed by the assurance that what one sees on the screen or reads in the narrative of victimization is all that exists. In practice, however, it is even worse. What the reality culture celebrates is not just the average: it is the ironic, the derisive, the defeatist.

This goes well beyond the decision of a women's sports team to wear flip-flops to the White House or the ascent of Paris Hilton—or her mother—to the role of social arbiter. The standard of unexceptionality applies to school and workplace expectations, to domestic arrangements, and to the very ability to think, reflect, and discuss. The vacuous barbarians that populate reality TV, from *Wife Swap* to *The Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Competition*, inevitably become paradigms of aspiration rather than the inane losers they actually are. The underlying message is "Be comfortable," "Follow your impulses," "Consume more"—this, of course, a convenient mantra for those who advertise in the media. The transformation of the American public from hard-working, thrifty savers into loose-spending, self-indulgent debtors works to the advantage of every outfit with cheap goods to sell and of every financial firm with easy credit to offer. Under the barrage of advertising and the none-too-subtle pressure of programming content itself, the public has been led to believe that the meaning of life is circumscribed by consumption and that debt is a privilege.

Fifty years ago Hannah Arendt foretold an identical fate for Western civilization. She warned of the expansion of the social sphere—the sphere of "expert" behavioral scientists and powerful government agencies authorized to manage the private affairs of citizens—and of the loss of the public and private realms of existence. The present reality culture accurately reflects this shift, for within this culture every aspect of life has been socialized; nothing is private, and nothing is any longer a matter of ethical choice. From *Survivor* to *Big Brother*, everything is enacted in groups, every intimacy is open to view, and every consideration is a collective one. No truly public institutions or traditions remain credible. All authority is vested in the social realm, a sphere of shifting whim and frightening possibilities of oppression. Within this realm, our understanding of the imperatives of society takes on far more urgency than the workings of individual judgment or our allegiance to long-standing structures of belief.

From this perspective, what reality culture would seem to be "about" is the legitimizing of the new social basis of authority. The problem is that the reduction of life to the social sphere destroys everything that makes individual existence rewarding or even possible. Within the social realm, human beings possess no relationship to the sacred or to the past; they exhibit no inbred inhibitions of the sort suggested by the words "conscience" or "shame"; they live within society's infinite present, discarding all conceptions of individual responsibility in favor of a maddening politics of social priority. Yet the social, as it turns out, is a harsh

taskmaster, much harsher than was the classical-Christian civilization that it seeks to displace. For one thing, the ethics of the social sphere is entirely arbitrary and, thus, easily manipulated. Within the social arena one's rights depend neither on a stable body of law nor on traditional mores of the sort that existed in human communities for thousands of years but rather upon a new and unreliable conception of correctness. This conception sweeps away inherited understandings of obligation and replaces them with an anarchic system of social rhetoric mindlessly ruled by grandiose concepts of equality, fairness, openness, and tolerance of a sort that is easily twisted to support one party or another. With absurd irony, the concept of equality has been made to justify the institutionalization of preference programs based on inequality; the concept of tolerance has been deployed to restrict the use of "negative" or derogatory speech; the concept of individual rights has been deployed to block the prosecution of criminals who routinely violate the rights of others (by murdering them, for example).

Similarly, the failure of reality culture lies in its simplistic notion that if only we could unleash the natural impulses of the contestant and viewer, we would arrive at a happy land of creativity and contentment—just that Edenic condition that existed before the rise of Western civilization. We could all just get along in a narcissistic Shangri-la of indulgent equality, unlimited personal freedom, and unfettered materialism. Yet in order to return to this imagined Eden, the supposedly repressive structures of law, ethics, and religion and the restrictive inequalities of property, education, and culture must first be abolished. With an instinct for cultural suicide, many in the West now devote their lives to just this sort of destruction, yet in place of the civilization that they wish to destroy, the modern barbarians promote a sensibility of astounding simplicity, one that V. S. Naipaul has characterized as "tribal" in nature. Like the final scene of *Survivor* in which the tribal council meets to vote one contestant off the show, this sensibility is merely a compound of social scheming, personality contest, and schoolyard bullying. In its remarkable naiveté, the reality culture thinks it possible to replace Western civilization with an ad hoc arrangement that resembles nothing so much as the frenetic competition of adolescents for the attention of their peers.

Survivor, *Fear Factor*, and the rest are not just contentless and mindless entertainments for slackers. Consciously or not, they promote a pernicious ideology of suspicion that takes direct aim at our inherited civilization. The Robinson Crusoe motif that runs through many of these shows carries with it the suggestion that the civilization that we have known for thousands of years can be effortlessly discarded and replaced with a makeshift rationality and morality that are the momentary creation of a dozen young castaways. Such a view implies not only enormous arrogance; it also implies astounding cynicism in its assumption that a few mediocre individuals can so easily engender a civilization that replaces the efforts of all human beings of the past.

This assault on existing culture might be understandable if it at least proceeded out of an idealistic, albeit misguided, program of moral revolution, crudely resembling that of Rousseau or Descartes. Unfortunately, in the social primitivism of the reality generation there is something considerably less attractive at work: not an active doubt in search of truth but a degrading passivity and sloth akin to the moral vacancy of infancy. With its message that everyone is a little less than average, reality culture furthers this impulse toward passivity. The laughable average Joes, the biggest losers, the final bachelorettes, and the objects of makeover are, after all, no better than any of us—they are worse—and now they are offered a starring role. It is the old story of the leading lady or man plucked from the chorus line or the cast of bit players, but in this case the starring role goes not to the undiscovered genius of a Joan Crawford or a Clark Gable but to some total nonentity: somebody utterly undeserving and possessed of no talent or vitality or faith to begin with, indeed someone rather nasty and derisive. The starring role is delivered straightaway to someone who bears a striking resemblance to the miserable slacker reclining on the couch watching the proceedings.

With the appearance of ever more ridiculous fare each season, there seems to be no end to the wave of reality, but what reality culture never provides, and can never provide, is a compelling conclusion. Lost on a desert island, the castaways fend off shortages of food and drink, ride out storms, endure snakes, swarms of mosquitoes, and squabbles over sleeping arrangements, but as long as the show maintains its ratings, they can never depart the island. The island simply moves from one location to the next, with one identical squad of castaways replacing another. The biggest losers conclude their training with a stunning collective loss of weight, but then we learn that they have gained it all back and more. The accommodating supernanny commutes from one dysfunctional household to another, tidying up one mess of parental folly and neglect after another, all the while coolly smirking at that more profound level of domestic commitment that would make lasting improvement possible. Such narratives can have no meaningful conclusion: they just go on, week after week. There can be no development or improvement for those who do not wish to develop or improve. Nothing really changes in a world of flaccid indifference. One simply becomes more flaccid and indifferent, and puts off facing the consequences.

There's something terribly frightening about the complacency that lies at the heart of reality culture, and yet an ending does suggest itself outside the purview of the narrative itself. The only possible ending for a culture so devoid of imagination is the gradual demise of the larger civilization of which it is a part. In this scenario, the world appears a very different place from the comfortable and protected space of virtual reality. A culture of diminished expectations results in an actual decline of abilities, knowledge, and achievement. The effect of reality culture is not just bad TV but the overall coarsening of sensibilities.

The result is a greater acceptance of callousness, intolerance, and incivility. It is hardly coincidental that as Americans have lost the ability to comprehend great literature, they have slipped into a society in which bullying, road rage, litigiousness, and offensiveness are commonplace. For those who live in the age of reality, the real-life ending will involve something more alarming than the fake hazards and indignities endured on *Fear Factor*: it will entail the actual loss of our self-respect, the actual meanness and shabbiness and demoralization that accompany a civilization's decline. In this scenario, quite distinct from the glib complacency of reality TV, we will find ourselves truly lost, truly the biggest losers, and none of us will be awarded the final rose.

Heideggerian in Spite of Himself

Robert D'Amico

Santiago Zabala, *The Hermeneutic Nature of Analytic Philosophy: A Study of Ernst Tugendhat*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. Pp. 199.

As far as I know, this is the first book-length study of Ernst Tugendhat in English. That is a bit of a surprise since Tugendhat is the last of Heidegger's students who went on to develop a significantly distinct philosophical approach, and it was one closer to the practice of philosophy in the United States and England than in Germany. The fact that this book is the author's expanded translation from the Italian probably indicates that this lack of attention to Tugendhat remains in the English-speaking philosophical community. But we have to start somewhere, and this book is a useful introduction to a controversial and yet quite significant philosopher.

Born in 1930 in Czechoslovakia, Tugendhat did graduate degrees in classics and philosophy at the University of Freiburg (after spending 1944–49 at Stanford University studying classics). After teaching as an assistant at Tübingen, he spent 1965 at the University of Michigan. He finally won a professorship at Heidelberg in 1966. What is distinctive about Tugendhat is not just that he spent time in American universities, but that he launched a philosophical career and even a style of writing, thinking, and arguing that embraced analytic philosophy even while he claimed to use this approach to pursue problems raised by Heidegger. To say that this combination was unusual in the years of his philosophical work is an understatement. He also was distinct from many of his German contemporaries in his critical independence from and distrust of much of the mainstream of continental philosophy. His sense of being a thinker apart certainly stands in contrast to such Heideggerian acolytes as Otto Pöggeler and even Gadamer, who always presented their work as faithful to and simply a further exposition of Heidegger. After retiring from the Free University of Berlin, he made a radical shift in his intellectual life, and aspects of that shift appear in Zabala's interview with him appended to this book. (Another interview between Tugendhat and Ulrike

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Hermann appeared in *Die Tageszeitung* in July 2007.[1] This interview, unlike Zabala's, focused entirely on the late shift in Tugendhat's life, and I will briefly refer to some comments he makes there later in this review.)

Zabala divides his overview of Tugendhat's philosophical work into four sections plus the interview: first, Tugendhat's critical assessment of Husserl; second, Tugendhat's criticism, or what Zabala prefers to see as modification, of Heidegger's defense of metaphysics; third, Tugendhat's linguistic treatment of the problem of being; and fourth, a broader discussion of linguistic analysis as a philosophical method.

Before discussing some of these topics, I should make some prefatory remarks on the difficulties of the project and the constraints that Zabala has given himself. First, Tugendhat covers a very wide range of philosophical territory, often in great detail, and neither his articles nor his books are easy to summarize or digest. Tugendhat is a digressive inquirer whose conclusions are often tentative and who seeks highly refined and detailed versions of philosophical positions, and that is commonly the approach found in analytic philosophy.

While Tugendhat writes commentaries on historical figures such as Hegel, his style is closer to such analytic philosophers as Jonathan Bennett, Barry Stroud, or Bernard Williams (all of whom wrote on the history of philosophy). Tugendhat parses historical texts to extract key philosophical claims that he then subjects to further argumentation all the while keeping his views separate from the views of the thinker being studied.

He has also questioned the kind of historical work that emerged in continental philosophy after Heidegger. As others have pointed out, including Heidegger himself later in his career, Heidegger's early *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* is a case in point for contentious history of philosophy. It has a deeply idiosyncratic reading that simply fails as a historical understanding of Kant's work and yet then uses this commentary on Kant to advance a view about the significance of fundamental ontology. But Heidegger's claim to find his own view hidden in Kant by commentary, instead of arguing for it separately, is disingenuous, and furthermore it simply confuses Heidegger's project with either Kant's position or what might be held to follow from Kant's position.

Second, Zabala has views about these philosophical matters that emerge in his comments, his summaries, and even in the organization of the book. Zabala's views are strongly influenced by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Richard Rorty, among others. These influences, however, are at odds with Tugendhat. For example, while Tugendhat defends Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology, his writings repeatedly challenge Heidegger's formulations and absence of argument. Tugendhat even more deeply and unequivocally rejects both Gadamer's understanding

1. An English translation of this interview is available online at the signandsight website, at http://www.signandsight.com/features/1487.html.

of Heidegger and Gadamer's own philosophical approach. While Zabala keeps these matters separate for most of the book, when he is discussing, for instance, Tugendhat's criticisms of Husserl or Heidegger (discussed further below) Zabala often mutes the dissonance between himself and Tugendhat. I will discuss a specific example of this problem when I turn to what "hermeneutics" means in the title of Zabala's book.

Zabala highlights the assertion that continental and analytic philosophy are not two separate traditions but one. He specifically raises this point in his interview with Tugendhat, who promptly rejects it. But Zabala also comments that analytic philosophy suffers in comparison with continental philosophy because analytic philosophy is both dogmatic and anti-historical. These criticisms of analytic philosophy (and they are seemingly at odds with Zabala's statement that the traditions are not distinct) echo Richard Rorty's essays on the inferiority of analytic philosophy as compared to continental philosophy. But Rorty made such criticisms to show that analytic philosophy was a dead end and based on a massive error, not that it was in the same business as continental philosophy.

Tugendhat, in contrast, argues that analytic philosophy represents the only way to study and make progress in philosophy, and specifically the only way to pursue the project of a fundamental ontology. Thus Zabala's book, as I said, too often squeezes Tugendhat within limits that Tugendhat either does not discuss or explicitly rejects.

I will begin with Tugendhat's criticism of Husserl. My discussion below has to do first with Tugendhat's criticism. However, I will then briefly discuss a passage from Zabala that raises a quite different criticism, in my opinion, from the one Tugendhat has.

Tugendhat focuses on a small part of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* where Husserl outlines a theory of meaning. Tugendhat holds that Husserl's ideas in this section are both critical to the entire project of phenomenology as well as being irreparably flawed. In this section Husserl treats meaning as resting on the phenomenon of intentionality that he argues is both basic to philosophy and the central organizing concept in *Logical Investigations*. Intentionality is the mental state of being directed toward conceptual contents (following Frege, Husserl sometimes calls them senses *Sinne*) and/or objects. To understand intentionality as foundational is to hold it is not reducible to non-intentional states and it is not capable of further conceptual analysis (intentional concepts cannot be clarified by non-intentional concepts). Thus, for Husserl, any possible philosophy of language rests upon a prior philosophy of mind since the intentionality of mental states is what makes meaningful expression itself possible.

Tugendhat's central charge is that Husserl's theory of meaning is fatally flawed because it rests exclusively upon object-designation and reference as foundational to meaning. But, Tugendhat argues, a theory of meaning cannot be constrained to cover only the phenomena of referential, object-directed thoughts.

Language is more than reference and of course non-referential features of language are meaningful. Thus if the theory of meaning behind Husserl's project is faulty, all of the results will prove inadequate.

Tugendhat's criticism actually rests on a larger claim that intentionality cannot ground linguistic phenomena, not just in Husserl but in any theory of meaning. But that larger claim is not fully defended by Tugendhat, even though he raises objections to various theories of intentionality. For instance, John Searle and Paul Grice developed theories of meaning that like Husserl's theory are based on intentionality. But neither Searle nor Grice restricts meaningful expression exclusively to naming or object-designating expressions. Thus Husserl's basic claim that linguistic phenomena are dependent on prior intentional states has not been shown to be fatally flawed, even if Tugendhat shows that Husserl failed to see its many ramifications and difficulties.

Second, and this point is more important, Husserl's *Logical Investigation* is intended to provide foundations for a theory of knowledge. His brief comments on meaning are subservient to that aim. For the purpose of studying knowledge Husserl focuses attention on referring expressions as preparatory to turning to the topic of how justification of knowledge is based on a priori aspects of reason.

But focusing on referring expressions in this way does not imply, as Tugendhat asserts it does, that Husserl also meant to restrict any theory of meaning to only the acts of reference and naming. Husserl holds that once a theory of knowledge had been properly founded the appropriate sciences (including linguistics) simply continue their empirical inquiries. It is just that those inquiries are not part of philosophy, and specifically not part of epistemology; those empirical inquiries are made possible by philosophical clarification. While Husserl's basic view about the autonomy of philosophical inquiry (especially in relation to the sciences) has been a minority position for some one hundred years and even remains controversial for philosophers today, that is not enough to show it is fatally flawed.

In summarizing Tugendhat's criticism, Zabala expands it and takes it in a different direction. "Phenomenology . . . being linked to the 'seen' model, reaches the conclusion that the fundamental phenomenon of consciousness is intentionality: being consciously directed toward an object. . . . Phenomenology, adapting itself to the model according to which an object is thought about in analogy to a visual image, believes not only that facts exist but, most of all, that these facts may be intentionally experienced" (19).

Zabala is making two points here that are not part of Tugendhat's argument against Husserl on meaning discussed above. Zabala is claiming that Husserl's project is deeply flawed because it fails to suspend existence claims, as it intended to do. The reason for this failure, and this is his second point, is that phenomenology is modeled on visual perception (intentional states are like perceptual states) and thus committed to the existence of facts (I assume Zabala is using "facts" as synonymous with something like states of affairs and not something like a mental

idea). Thus, to perceptually experience such and such entails that such and such exists. To see facts entails that facts exist. Zabala claims that Husserl is then committed to the view that whatever one thinks about must have factual existence.

I put Zabala's argument this way since he cannot be claiming in these passages that Husserl held that intentionality is perceptual or visual. Husserl held, in contrast, that while perception is an intentional state, not all intentional states are perceptual. Nor did Husserl hold that to direct the mind toward facts entails that facts exist. Husserl repeatedly asserts the opposite (again assuming of course that Zabala is using "facts" as Husserl does). The argument must be, as I suggest, that Husserl cannot suspend existence judgments even though Husserl builds his entire phenomenological method on what he calls the act of placing the existence of all objects of thought within parentheses. Husserl has, according to Zabala, introduced a massive ontology of facts without realizing it.

But Husserl is not an empiricist nor a sense-data theorist. Without ignoring his writings, we need to start from those basic claims. Husserl's central point remains that thinking about, referring to, picturing, or remembering (in other words, all intentional states, whether or not they are perceptual) occur independently of what does or does not exist or even could or could not exist.

Should we agree to Zabala's contrary claim that directed mental states require positing the existence of facts toward which they are then directed? If we could defend such a claim, we would have a criticism of Husserl and in effect any theory of intentionality and we would also have a defense of some sort of sense-data theory of the mind, such as the one Bertrand Russell held. But I do not think Zabala's claim is defensible as stated.

In fact this point could be said to be among the least controversial of Husserl's main ideas these days. For instance, independently of Husserl, Elizabeth Anscombe and Roderick Chisholm reached the same conclusion on the basis of studying the syntax of intentional verbs. But aside from these technical matters, what supports Husserl's approach is simply a basic feature of everyday, common expression that can be seen in the following examples. We talk about, refer to, and even describe a fact we know does not exist (Santa Claus) or a fact that we are not certain as yet exists (a black hole) or a fact that, if it exists, would be beyond all accessible evidence (God, an event of the remotest past). Thus, the simple conclusion to draw is that the existence of facts cannot simply follow from the act of thinking about them or referring to them, just as Husserl held they could not.

Zabala returns to his defense of Tugendhat's criticism as follows: "Although Husserl does not make the mistake of conceiving of meanings as objects, according to Tugendhat, he still establishes the relation between expression and objects exclusively by means of their meanings. . . . Husserl is obliged by his approach to extend to all the other expressions this particular characteristic of names: every expression is also related to some object" (20). This passage is a fair summary of Tugendhat's reasons for dismissing Husserl's discussion of meaning, but I

think clearly it does not require the larger objection to intentionality Zabala raised above.

In the chapter entitled "Correcting Heidegger," Zabala holds, rightly, that Heidegger's *Being and Time* remains the touchstone for Tugendhat's philosophical career. Tugendhat's *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination* has been in English since 1986, and one can find there detailed and subtle philosophical accounts inspired by (while nonetheless rigorously critical of) the early sections of *Being and Time*. But that book cannot be discussed in the space of a review, and unfortunately Zabala does not discuss it. Instead, Zabala focuses on an earlier work by Tugendhat on the concept of truth in Heidegger.

Before we turn to Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger, Zabala argues that it is not a criticism at all: "I believe that Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger's concept of truth, more than simply being a 'correction' is a 'confirmation' that Heidegger was not looking for a mere concept of truth or a concept of true as distinguishing true from false, un-valid from valid, good from evil, but, on the contrary, a 'different conceptual platform' or 'locus'" (30).

Tugendhat's approach to truth is traditional. He rejects the so-called redundancy theory of truth and thus accepts that truth is a substantive concept as well as a necessary precondition for meaningful expression in general. I say that his view is traditional because he retains something of Aristotle's view that truth involves an assertion (or state of belief) that picks out, represents, or means that some state of affairs is the case. Thus, an assertion is said to be true when that state of affairs that it means or expresses obtains and false when it does not obtain. In Tugendhat, then, the principle of contradiction holds since it is necessarily false to assert (or believe) a claim and deny the very same claim at one and the same time.

The relevance of this point to Zabala's book is that it leads Tugendhat into an interesting study of the concept of truth in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. To put it briefly, Tugendhat shows how critical Heidegger's replacement of the concept of truth with disclosure or uncovering (*Unverborgenheit*) is to the entire project of that book. But as Zabala understands it, Heidegger's rejection of the concept of truth is also a rejection of thinking of truth as embodied in sentences or expressions rather than in the "event of this unconcealment" (28). Thus, Heidegger and Tugendhat differ on the question of whether Heidegger is continuing within the traditional Aristotelian conception on this point.

Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger in the essay Zabala relies on holds that the concept of disclosure is ambiguous and, worse, parasitical on the concept of truth it was meant to replace. In other words, understanding Heidegger's concept of disclosure or uncovering presupposes the traditional idea that the truth is the grasp by the mind of the thing as it is in itself. But while Tugendhat does conclude that Heidegger's discussion of disclosure advances our philosophical understanding of truth, as Zabala emphasizes, he also holds that Heidegger's ideas remain compatible with what Tugendhat calls the "assertoric" understanding of truth

(that is Tugendhat's name for the traditional view wherein truth requires linguistic assertions).

I want to briefly mention another approach by Tugendhat to the problem of truth in Heidegger that Zabala does not discuss. While I think it fails, it might (for reasons explained below) reinforce Tugendhat's criticism of Heidegger's search for an alternative "conceptual platform," as Zabala puts it.

In *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, Tugendhat argues that Heidegger fails to show that truth is coextensive with disclosure. The reason he gives is that the concept of truth shares with the concepts of the moral good and knowledge the requirement of justification, reason, or proof. Since justification or reason or proof disappear with disclosure, Tugendhat concludes that Heidegger's claim to deepen our understanding is illusory.

We can make Tugendhat's point a little clearer by using the concept of knowledge. To know that such and such is the case, one must of course believe that such and such is true (and such and such must be true), but one must also have reasons for believing it true. If not, then lucky guesses concerning whatever beliefs happen to be true would count as knowledge, and they clearly are not knowledge. Moral concepts are more complicated than Tugendhat assumes, but he appears to hold that if someone believes such and such an act is morally wrong but lacks any reason why it is wrong (and assuming moral intuitionism is false), then the very possession of a moral concept is in question.

However, even granting Tugendhat his analogy, it breaks down with the concept of truth. The truth of a belief conceptually implies that whatever the belief means is the way the world is. Heidegger and Zabala are worried, in part, about concepts such as representation, mirroring, or copying becoming a part of the account of truth. They may be right to worry, but that is another debate, since even if we think that the concept of truth does not require representation, for instance, we have not shown that it does require reason or justification. To say that some claim is true is not to say that one knows that it is true, nor even that one has a reason for it being true. Those claims concern epistemic attitudes, not truth itself. To say a claim is true is simply to say that such and such is the case, such and such is how matters stand.

Truth then does seem trivial, as Richard Rorty has emphasized in arguing that philosophy ought to abandon the concept of truth entirely. But trivial does not entail mistaken. Also the word trivial is a rhetorical device for dismissing some matter that may very well be foundational. For instance as Heidegger argues, at least he does so in his early writing, the faults of traditional philosophy lay in ignoring ordinary, pre-philosophical understanding that it then dismisses as trivial. Perhaps here is just such a case.

While Tugendhat has not made his case for the requirement of reason in the idea of truth, the notion that truth is a primitive precondition for any meaning does entail that substituting another concept, such as disclosure, will prove idle since

it can reach no deeper understanding. Perhaps then Tugendhat's criticism can in that way be salvaged.

Now I turn to philosophical methodology and the importance of hermeneutics as the central method of philosophy that is the major theme of Zabala's book. I'll begin by paraphrasing a passage in Tugendhat that lends some support to Zabala's approach, before I raise some concerns about it.

In his discussion of Husserl's theory of meaning, Tugendhat begins by making the following distinction. He holds that Husserl's theory of meaning cannot coexist with the rest of analytic philosophy; if Husserl is correct, then the rest of analytic philosophy must be wrong. But Tugendhat then contrasts this disjunctive choice with the practice of hermeneutics within continental philosophy. Here he counters that hermeneutics is largely compatible with analytic philosophy, so one is not driven to choose ranks on that topic. But I think Zabala has misread this passage by taking it to support the conclusion that Tugendhat practices hermeneutics as Gadamer does or that such a view is foundational for a single philosophy, erasing the difference between analytic and continental philosophy.

It may be helpful here to insert the following clarification. Husserl defended phenomenology early in his career as a common method by which philosophers could adjudicate their disputes (while I agree with calling that proposal a method, I doubt there is such a method). Later in his career, however, he defended a version of transcendental idealism, but did so by calling it a method. But transcendental idealism is a philosophical position, not a method. One cannot claim to adjudicate philosophical disputes while building in one's desired conclusion into the definition of philosophy (though that has not stopped philosophers from trying to pull off such a trick). Neither idealism nor materialism can be stipulated as the default method of philosophy, any more than Kantian ethics can be stipulated as the default ethics of philosophy. Such an approach leads to the death of intellectual debate, as it did for instance in the Soviet Union.

Where does this point leave hermeneutics as a method? Tugendhat, in contrast to how Zabala understands his view, thinks that hermeneutics is only compatible with all philosophy when it is shorn of Gadamer's conception of it. In fact Tugendhat speaks of linguistic analysis as what he then calls "reduced hermeneutics" and "first-floor hermeneutics." Thus, for Tugendhat the term hermeneutics amounts to nothing more than basic, ordinary linguistic understanding. Tugendhat sees himself on this point as a follower of Wittgenstein, not Gadamer. I do not think this commitment is what Zabala has in mind when he speaks of all philosophy as hermeneutics. But the whole matter may well be moot. There is as yet no agreement on whether there is a philosophical method nor even on what linguistic analysis is, let alone whether hermeneutics is mere understanding or, as Gadamer thought, genuine first philosophy.

Tugendhat's intellectual shift late in his life is a matter of some irony. Tugendhat not only abandoned the study of philosophy to campaign against ecological

catastrophe and for ecological ethics, but then embraced various mystical religious beliefs as well. This of course echoes Heidegger's own career to some extent. When Tugendhat studied with him, Heidegger had largely forsaken philosophy for the study of poetic mysticism that he found either in the pre-Socratics or Hölderin and he extended those insights, such as they were, into criticisms of industrial society.

When asked about this topic in the Hermann interview, Tugendhat grants that Heidegger's discussion of death in *Being and Time* influenced him in what he describes as a personal crisis late in his life, but he pursues the link no further and does not treat the religious mysticism as a vestige as well. Yet he stresses that he takes these mystical beliefs literally and therefore distinguishes himself from what he considers Habermas's purely sociological interest in religion. What is curious about all of this is not only these echoes of his teacher's life, but also Tugendhat's sudden abandonment of reason in the face of what he now calls his wonder that anything exists at all.

While the topic of the difference or similarity between continental and analytic philosophy is too messy and confused for brief comments, we can usefully ask the following question. Who among twentieth-century philosophers defended the autonomy of philosophy? Here we have very few in either tradition, while the majority of philosophers for more than a century have announced the death of their discipline so as to embrace science, religion, or ideology. For instance, Foucault shares much more with Quine than he does with Husserl, while Wittgenstein and Derrida could be seen at times in their writings as philosophy's oddest bedfellows of all. Early in his career Tugendhat was a stalwart defender of philosophy's autonomy, thus his leaving it all behind with his turn to mysticism is a matter for some regret as well as some wonder.

The so-called revolution against philosophy and the philosophical tradition (announced again and again from positivism to postmodernism) has produced little more than rhetoric and dust (as well as unintentionally lending support to the growing obsolescence of university education as against pre-professional training). While we are living through another rabidly anti-philosophical era, Tugendhat's work remains an ignored tour de force with its healthy suspicion of the quick answer, the partisan's cliché, or the comfort of obscurity. Throughout his writing there is serious and hard-won critical thought well worth the effort and attention it demands of its reader. Perhaps it was Tugendhat's search for a wider audience or simply his sense of discouragement, a point he mentions in his interview, that finally turned him from philosophy to faith. Sadly, it seems ever to be so.

Reflections on an Impossible Life

Karen Ng

Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 440.

Since 2003, no less than four biographies have been published on the life and works of Theodor W. Adorno. With the exception of David Jenemann's *Adorno in America*, which was published in English in 2007, the other three, Lorenz Jäger's *Adorno: A Political Biography*, Stefan Müller-Doohm's *Adorno: A Biography*, and Detlev Claussen's *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, were all published in their original German in 2003 on the centenary of Adorno's birth. Claussen's is the last to be translated into English, and if Jäger's is the most critical of Adorno the man as well as his philosophy, Müller-Doohm's the most complete and comprehensive, then it is Claussen's that is the most stylistically difficult, and perhaps also the most complex and nuanced in its approach to presenting Adorno's life and works, perhaps one could say, the most "Adornian." Although for the most part proceeding chronologically, Claussen's narrative is non-linear, and neither puts forth a clear thesis nor presents us with a unified account of a decidedly "non-identical" life. The Adorno that emerges from the pages of *One Last Genius* forms itself around the constellations of people and places that come to make up the life of an individual, rather than around the presentation of an essential character or personality. Indeed, no biographer of Adorno can, in good conscience, proceed as if their subject had not declared that the categories of "life" and "the individual" had been perverted to such an extent that the very writing of biography as the unproblematic retelling of the unified life of the individual was necessarily ideological. With this in mind, Claussen quotes the following in his introduction from a letter that Adorno wrote to Leo Löwenthal:

> At bottom, the concept of life as a meaningful unity unfolding from within itself has ceased to possess any reality, much like the individual himself, and the ideological function of biographies consists in demonstrating to people with reference to various models that something like life still exists, with all the emphatic qualities of life. And the task of biography is to prove this in particular empirical contexts which those people who no longer have any life can easily claim as their own. Life itself, in a highly abstract form, has become ideology,

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> and the very abstractness that distinguishes it from older, fuller conceptions of life is what makes it practicable (the vitalist and existentialist concepts of life are stages on this path). (5–6)

Thus, the continual proliferation of biography as a legitimate literary undertaking belies the fact that "life does not live,"[1] that something like a livable, unified life is no longer possible under present conditions, and that by extension, the individual itself as an intact, self-determining subject reconstructed through biographical details is nothing more than ideology, a fiction to cover over the very disappearance and impossibility of its own subject matter. To his credit, Claussen does not simply present us with another such fiction; rather—through an approach that tests the knowledge, imagination, and patience of his readers—the pieces of his puzzle are intricate and often incomplete, offering no definitive version of Adorno and no final resolution on the messy details and events of his life. Sometimes, the direction of a particular narrative does not become clear until many pages into its unfolding, but Claussen is masterful in drawing his reader along in a voice that speaks at once from the distance of an objective observer *and* from a position of deep immersion and investment in both his subject matter and its surrounding intellectual, artistic, and political histories. *One Last Genius* is not a book for the casual or uninformed reader, and Claussen assumes from his audience a familiarity not only with Adorno's critical theory, but also with the work of his colleagues and contemporaries, with German history, with aesthetic modernism, and with American politics and culture in the 1940s and 50s.

If all biographers of Adorno face the task of coming to terms with the contradiction of writing a biography about a man who was not only himself highly critical of biographical writing, but whose entire intellectual circle was equally so, Claussen faces the additional task of dealing with Adorno's critique of the idea of "genius," insofar as this word is also used to describe his late teacher. Adopting the term from Horkheimer, who also described Adorno as a genius after his death, Claussen in fact never slips into presenting *Adorno* as a genius, but rather, the term genius is better suited as a description of Adorno's texts.[2] He writes, "the present study aims to let his texts speak for themselves instead of using biographical information to explain Adorno's works" (5). *One Last Genius* is thus an intellectual biography, one where the primary object of investigation is not so much Adorno the man, but the texts that he left for posterity and their

1. A quote from Ferdinand Kurnberger that Adorno uses as an epigraph to part one of *Minima Moralia* (Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott [London: Verso, 2005], p. 19).

2. "The element of truth in the concept of genius is to be sought in the object, in what is open, not confined by repetition" (Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed. Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann, and Robert Hullot-Kentor [Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997], p. 171; quoted in Claussen, p. 3).

enduring significance for thinking through the events of the twentieth century and the prospects for the twenty-first. Apart from the personality that shines through the texts themselves, what we do learn about Adorno the man is gleaned from the letters that were exchanged between Adorno and his many correspondents, including Siegfried Kracauer, Thomas Mann, Max Horkheimer, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, and Hanns Eisler, to name just a few. Claussen is sensitive to and takes seriously Adorno's suggestion that the concepts of "life" and "the individual"—the full realizations of which were "the promise of the bourgeois world" (11)—are no longer possible given the experiences of the Second World War, and consequently, the presentation of Adorno "the individual" can only be partially reconstructed through "the testimony of Adorno's contemporaries" and "the history of his friendships," in short, through the community of peers that shared and took part in the common experience of a damaged life (8). Through Adorno's correspondences and the correspondences of his contemporaries, we begin to get a glimpse of the individual who made critical theory famous and infamous, as well as a view into the context out of which something like a critical theory became necessary.

Claussen instructs us from the outset that each chapter in his book can be read independently of the others and that Adorno's works will be interpreted throughout as a palimpsest, a thought that culminates in the final chapter, "The Palimpsest of Life." Behind this metaphor lies what is as close to a thesis as Claussen allows himself: that it is in Adorno's works themselves that we discern what the life that no longer lives might look like, that it is only through his works that something like a biography of Adorno might be written given the impossibility of life itself. Along with Claussen's instructions on how to read the text, one can also add that his method of proceeding throughout is best described by the Adornian conceptions of "constellation" and "parataxis." The term constellation describes a "juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle."[3] Adorno often described his own writing as a constellation of paratactic concepts that were both irreducible to a generalized theory or thesis as well as formed the constituent parts of an organized ensemble. Although the structure of a constellation is neither irrational nor arbitrary, the elements that make up *One Last Genius* also do not fit easily into a unified whole, and each part tells its own story, a story not causally related to any other, even as it contributes to clarifying the overall picture of Adorno's life and work. Claussen paratactically places Adorno's relationship with Eisler alongside his relationship with Fritz Lang; a discussion of Felix Weil, the founder of the Institute for Social Research, alongside a discussion of Georg Lukács; Benjamin alongside Alban Berg; Paul Lazarsfeld alongside Adorno's jazz critique. Even Adorno's names, born Theodor Ludwig

3. Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984), pp. 14–15.

Wiesengrund and later changed to Theodor W. Adorno, when placed alongside one another, tells a certain story of both growth and displacement that Claussen does not reduce to a unified or linear account. Rather, he presents the name change from Wiesengrund to Adorno from various perspectives, with each perspective offering a different account of the matter in question: from the perspective of Adorno's childhood and his relationship with his mother and his aunt, Maria and Agathe Calvelli-Adorno; from the perspective of professional ambition and the difficulty of securing an academic position; from the perspective of the German-Jewish émigré in America; and from the perspective of Adorno's critique of the identity principle, and the corresponding notion of non-identity.

This latter conception of non-identity, so important for Adorno's thinking, is the driving theme of Claussen's biography, and the Adorno that results from his careful reconstruction of texts and correspondences is nothing if not non-identical. Beginning from Adorno's bourgeois upbringing as the only son of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, Claussen presents Adorno's childhood as relatively idyllic and traces the utopian motifs of his philosophy back to this period of his life. Before the impossibility of life and the individual, "Adorno could still experience the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie as a living reality in which the individual might be oppressed, but by which he was also strengthened, if not indeed produced" (32–33). Paradoxically, this meant that Adorno himself experienced what he later deemed to be impossible, and Claussen reports that much later, Adorno comes to justify his return to Germany from exile by stating, "I simply wanted to return to where I spent my childhood, and ultimately I acted from my own feeling that what we realize in life is little more than the attempt to recover one's childhood in a different form" (14). Considered a child prodigy, Adorno was very early on pulled by both musical and philosophical interests, two aspects of his genius that were never quite reconciled, as evidenced through his texts. Claussen shows how Adorno brought social theory to bear on musical practice while studying composition with Alban Berg in Vienna (152), and how Adorno's background in music later informed his theory of society. Although his musical aspirations were eventually superseded by theoretical pursuits, this is a fact that Adorno himself describes as a "trauma" (133), one that gains expression through his continual engagement with music in his philosophical writings.

Non-identity is also the lens through which Claussen presents Adorno's experience as an émigré, as a German-Jewish intellectual forced into exile during the Second World War. Here, the non-identical expresses itself both literally and figuratively through the idea of homelessness, where one is displaced both geographically and spiritually. For Adorno, this experience amounted to "a life lived in contradiction," and Claussen traces the famous statement "There is no right life in the wrong one" to a description of the émigré experience (285). In America, Adorno was also confronted with the problem of the relation between theory and

practice as he faced his first experience with empirical research working with Paul Lazarsfeld on the Princeton Radio Research Project, an experience that, according to Claussen, "changed Adorno's view of himself" and culminated in his transformation from Theodor Wiesengrund to Theodor W. Adorno (181). Adorno was highly suspicious of Lazarsfeld's positivism and of "researching" empirical data as if it were not always already shot through with theoretical and ultimately ideological assumptions, and Adorno's uneasy relationship to American socialization, both in and outside of academic institutions, was formative for the development of his later critical theory. Claussen writes of Adorno's decade in America that it "was marked by the tension between theory and empirical knowledge," and the text that he identifies as the "accompaniment" to Adorno's troubled identity as an émigré is *Minima Moralia* (183).

Indeed, according to Claussen, it is *Minima Moralia* that tells us the most about Adorno's experience in America, as well as being the key text in which the conceptions of "negative dialectics" and "non-identity" find their beginning. He writes, "The key theoretical category of non-identity, which would come to occupy a place in the heart of [Adorno's] work, had its roots in the day-to-day émigré experience in California. *Minima Moralia* should be seen as the reflection of the way in which that life was experienced—or else it runs the risk of not being properly understood" (140). Most of Claussen's remarks concerning Adorno the man, particularly during his years of exile, circle around his interpretation of *Minima Moralia* and are drawn directly from the aphorisms of the book itself. By "letting Adorno's texts speak for themselves," Claussen opposes and dispels the typical characterization of Adorno as a withdrawn, reclusive, elitist intellectual who hated America, and instead shows how Adorno's social critique operates at a level beyond that of simply opposing "German depth to Anglo-American superficiality," an opposition that "Adorno had long since come to detest" (184). According to Claussen, *Minima Moralia* expresses the *collective* experience of exile that Adorno shared with other German-Jewish intellectuals, and the importance of this community in the formation of something like Adorno's own non-identical "identity." Rather than presenting a straightforward picture of exile and return in which the former was rejected and the latter embraced, Claussen paints a picture of continual displacement, claiming that there is a sense in which neither Adorno nor Horkheimer ever truly returned from exile (220). Far from being the return to childhood that Adorno had hoped for, the Germany to which Adorno and his contemporaries returned was experienced as "uncanny," and the reality of postwar Germany was no less ideologically saturated than the America which they had left behind (201).

Claussen remains faithful to his own instructions—that of letting Adorno's texts speak for themselves—throughout his book, refusing to revel in the events surrounding Adorno's clash with the student movement near the end of his life.

Instead, Adorno's years as an intellectual upon his return from exile continue to be cast along the lines of his relationships with other members of the Frankfurt School as well as his philosophical texts, the key works from this period being *Negative Dialectics*, which he called "his main task," and *Aesthetic Theory* (320). The formative significance of *Minima Moralia* is confirmed by Adorno's intentions to continue to work on this project after the completion of *Aesthetic Theory*, this time focusing on "'life after my return'" (321). In the last years of his life, Claussen tells us of an exhausted and overworked Adorno, obsessed with completing what he saw as his life's work. Claussen objects to the standard story of an Adorno who was destroyed by the upheaval of the student movement that brought troubling disruptions to his classes, demonstrating instead an Adorno who had full understanding of the situation, writing to Samuel Beckett, "The feeling of suddenly being attacked as a reactionary comes as something of a surprise. But perhaps you too have had the same experience in the meantime" (338). *One Last Genius* ends by giving Adorno and his correspondents the last word, as Claussen includes in an appendix a series of important letters exchanged between Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Horkheimer, Claus Behncke, and Otto Herz that further illuminate the constellations of people, places, and events that have constituted his disjointed narrative. Presented in a form that is both faithful to his teacher and impressive in its depth and scope, Claussen has written what is an impossible biography, one that perhaps even Adorno himself might have approved of.

Two Students of Contemporary History

Paul Gottfried

Panajotis Kondylis, *Machtfragen: Ausgewählte Beiträge zu Politik und Gesellschaft.* Ed. Volker Gerhart. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006. Pp. 172.

Paul Piccone, *Confronting the Crisis: Writings of Paul Piccone*. Ed. Gary Ulmen. New York: Telos Press, 2008. Pp. xxv + 368.

There are two main reasons for pairing these posthumously published essays of Paul Piccone (1940–2004) with those of Panajotis Kondylis (1943–1998). One, both of these authors, who died in the last few years, were my friends, whose lives moved along much the same general trajectory as my own. None of us could be described as an academic luminary; although neither Paul, who mentored later successful professors, nor Panajotis, who called himself a "Privatgelehrter," periodically associated with Heidelberg and the University of Athens, had as close an association as I've had with a long-term academic post. These brilliant social thinkers spent their lives on the edge of a university world that would have benefited greatly if they had been linked to it in appropriately high places.

This description would also apply to Gary Ulmen, who helped introduce me to these other friends. A distinguished Schmitt scholar and a onetime close associate of the famous Sinologist Karl A. Wittfogel, Gary was a longtime guiding spirit of *Telos* together with Paul and a small circle of their associates. He also edited and introduced this anthology as a tribute to his deceased friend, a gesture that he might also have performed for Kondylis, whom he got to know at Heidelberg. Although to my knowledge Gary has never belonged to the faculty at Columbia, he has lived for decades on Riverside Drive, near the university campus, when he is not in Europe. His apartment is in a building reserved for and largely inhabited by Columbia professors. No one has ever questioned Gary's right to be there, as an extremely productive, polyglot scholar, who may have published more than anyone else in his building.

Two, Piccone and Kondylis both represented a thankless persuasion but one that has imprinted my own thought and work. They were historicists who focused on shifting power relations and on the way these relations were influenced by acts of human will. Neither thinker found much permanence in the flux of human events, except for the constant elements in human nature, and the possibility of unmasking political ideologies. Although both, and perhaps more defiantly the

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upper-class Greek Kondylis, who came from a strongly anti-Communist military family, had started out as Marxists, they each moved dramatically away from their early position and, perhaps without fully admitting it, toward the right. Both illustrate an observation that I had made long before knowing these figures, about James Burnham in *The Search for Historical Meaning*. There are some thinkers, e.g., Sidney Hook, who never left the Left but also never became real Marxists; there are also those, like James Burnham and to a lesser degree Will Herberg, who were never inwardly on the left but who once called themselves Marxist-Leninists.

Paul had been attracted to the Italian Hegelian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, and one of the most absorbing essays in the anthology is his treatment of the Hegelian tradition in Italy, from Bertrando Spaventa and Francesco DeSanctis in the nineteenth century through the aesthetic and historical work of Benedetto Croce, down to Gramsci's apparent departure from Croce's liberal Hegelianism and toward something vaguely resembling Marxist materialism. Gramsci's theory of social consciousness, as Piccone points out, never entirely lost its idealistic-Hegelian moorings. This was significant seeing that the Sardinian social theorist was one of the creators of Italian Communism. And even as late as his prison journals, *Quaderni dal Carcere*, composed while he was under house arrest during Mussolini's regime, Piccone notes, Gramsci combined German and Italian idealist philosophy with favorable references to the Soviet experiment. His knowledge of what the Soviets were actually doing was entirely limited, for Gramsci never went to Russia, and what he knew about Soviet Communism came from what others told him.

Paul Piccone's adventures on the American and European New Left, leading to his founding of *Telos* as an anti-Soviet but still avowedly Marxist journal, revealed the same degree of eclecticism as Gramsci's tortuous road toward Marxism. In Paul's case, this path also led in other directions, starting with his well-known preoccupation with the Frankfurt School. But Paul's choice of Frankfurt School key texts was always highly selective, and in this sense he never became a real groupie, if such a hypothetical member is expected to embrace the antibourgeois, Marxist-Freudian stance of the interwar German school. Paul's interests were sometimes markedly different, even when he was applying the language and concepts of Adorno and Horkheimer.

An essay, originally published in *Telos* in 1991, "Artificial Negativity as a Bureaucratic Tool," might have been written by my late friend Sam Francis, who fervently admired Paul. This examination of how the managerial state begets false opposition to itself, in order to contain and neutralize its adversaries, was not unique to the founder of *Telos*. It should be familiar to anyone who has read my book *After Liberalism* or has browsed through Sam's essays about the managerial revolution. The same perspective could already be found in Paul's writings in

Telos, going back to the 1970s, and as a lifetime critic of bureaucratic centralization, Paul arrived at his views about the present age by combining Gramsci's notion of hegemonic ideology and Theodor Adorno's analysis of "enlightened" administration with Herbert Marcuse's occasional insights in *One Dimensional Man.*

What enhanced Paul's use of such texts was his remarkable life, leading from his childhood in the Italian Abruzzi through study for his doctorate at the University of Buffalo, teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, and an intense involvement with Italian Hegelians, the social criticism of Adorno, German phenomenologists, the works of Carl Schmitt, and various American social thinkers. An essay in the anthology, originally from 1971, dealing with phenomenological Marxism, stopped me in my tracks, since I had not been previously aware of any conceptual link between the Marxists and the epistemological investigations of Edmund Husserl.

When I first saw this essay, I had to wonder whether the overlaps in question had not been shaped by a biographical fact, which is that Paul's interests in phenomenology and neo-Marxism had been formed at about the same point in his life. But then I learned something else about Paul's career, that he had introduced and edited the English edition of Enzo Paci's *The Future of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, the work of a leading Italian historian of philosophy in the mid-twentieth century. Paci, whose books on Husserl, Nietzsche, and German historicism Paul had undoubtedly studied, was interested in the same task that Paul later took on, from a quasi-Marxist perspective, integrating phenomenology into a broader theory of historical epochs. (Paci's best known book, written after World War Two, was appropriately named *Existenzialismo e Storicismo*.)

Paul also shifted the leftist focus of the Frankfurt School away from capitalist social oppression and diatribes against sexual inhibitions, and toward a more up-to-date and specifically political target, i.e., the role of the managerial state in destroying traditional communities and in undermining any social bond not "mediated" by the political class. Paul's interest in Schmitt's investigation of the nation state and the reasons for its decline and his later fascination with such neglected social thinkers as Donald Warren, who wrote on "Middle American radicalism," were both related to his emphasis on the antagonism between public administration and real communities.

The same interest also fed his passion for such political movements as the Lega Nord in his native Italy, which was organized to resist bureaucratic centralization from Rome and later, from the EU. Paul fully accepted what Ulmen treated as Schmitt's advance over Marx and Max Weber. Unlike earlier social thinkers, Schmitt appreciated power relations as the moving force in history, but he also brought them back to two vital reference points, the permanence of friend-enemy distinctions and the rise and fall of the historic state as it had existed into

the twentieth century. The "state" for Schmitt and Piccone was not any form of administration but a particular time-bound phenomenon, one that was based on limiting violence within its own borders, representing the political will of a nation, and restricting the expansion of neighboring states. For Piccone and Schmitt, the rise of modern ideology as well as the advance of military technology and a global economy all worked to weaken such a ruling arrangement. Neither administration providing social welfare nor revolutionary doctrines such as Marxism and global democracy could restore the "European order" of historic nation states.

But this German legal thinker did present possible future alternatives, which Paul investigated at various times in his scholarly work. One was a division of the world into "spheres" controlled by various regional powers. The other, which Schmitt had warned against, was the march toward a global empire held together by a single ideology. This would not put an end to friend-enemy distinctions, but merely outlaw every society or individual who did not accept the universally proclaimed creed. In the global order it would be argued that only those who embraced the universal creed could be peaceful. Despite his traditionalist European background, and even during the Cold War, Schmitt seemed to fear American hegemony more than he did the economically backward Soviet Union. In Piccone's work, however, Schmitt's anti-American strain is entirely missing, and one notices instead an emphasis on the shared fate of Americans and Europeans in the late modern age.

A detailed account (in the anthology) of a conference, held at Elizabethtown in April 1991, on "Populism and the New Class," revisits those debating points around which the *Telos* circle had once come together in "its post-New Left phase." (I'm not sure this quarterly ever had an earlier phase unless Paul and Gary had changed their worldviews fundamentally before I got to know them.) At the 1991 gathering at my college, one that featured Christopher Lasch, Claes Ryn, and various historians of populism, beside his usual editorial crew, Paul raised certain themes that were then near and dear to his heart—the need for a Roman imperial model that is consistent with communal arrangements and the contrast between liberalism and democracy. The call for an imperial structure in the piece published in the anthology came in a period when Paul still believed that the EU could be made to accommodate post-national European communities. Paul also believed back then that populist forces, which he identified with the rising electoral fortunes of Pat Buchanan, could be made to serve "democratic ends." This would take either the form of decentralization or a regional reconfiguration of our centralized American government, a process that Paul mistakenly thought in the 1990s was already taking place.

Paul's attacks on liberalism as "the abstract formalities legitimating a managerial ethos," which he placed in contrast to democratic "organic communities," related to a point on which he and I had repeatedly disagreed. For years Paul had

considered me "the resident liberal," although we had actually agreed on both his harsh analysis of the administrative state and the danger of its human rights doctrines. While Paul viewed "liberal democracy" as a classical liberal distortion of "democracy," which was to be understood as an organic communal way of life, my own interpretation differed then and afterward. In my view, "liberal democracy" is neither liberal in the bourgeois-constitutionalist sense nor democratic in the communal one. It is the name assigned to itself by a particular version of the modern managerial state. (This was also the view of the social theorist Robert Nisbet, but clearly not Paul's.) For him, and for the traditionalist Catholic Jim Kalb, who soon entered this battle on Paul's side, a more or less straight line could be drawn between the contractual theorists of the early modern period through later liberal constitutionalists down to the "democratic pluralists" and finally, multicultural advocates of the present age. According to Piccone-Kalb, the apparent rule of law was really a mask for social chaos, and the proliferation of managerial regulations reflected the need for increasing damage control once individuals had been cut loose from organic structures.

This process of dissolution had gone on for centuries, and according to this negative view of the post-medieval age, modern public administration was fully consistent with liberalism's stress on individualism and the surrender to market forces. I shall leave it to the reader to judge this posthumous restatement of Paul's historical view, which is partially defended by Jim Kalb in *The Tyranny of Liberalism*. My alternative interpretation has been amply fleshed out in my last four books.

I should, however, mention in my defense of my now deceased friend and longtime debating partner that no matter how diligently I tried to uphold my side, he would always beat me by dint of his forensic energy. Paul held forth on the liberal tradition and its connection to bureaucracy not only in his written compositions and during formal discussions (to whatever extent Paul engaged in any discussion that could be thus described) but afterward as well, during dinner, while walking on the street, and in his automobile while driving foreign guests to or from one of the three New York airports. Although the anthology provides an accurate reproduction of his written works, there is no way it can do justice to the personal aspect of Paul's thinking and style. Those who read his written words must simply add that dimension of its author's life that no text can reproduce.

Kondylis's last published thoughts, on the role of human will in the construction and defense of worldviews, may seem less accessible than do Piccone's essays. What renders these particular reflections particularly inaccessible is the ponderous prose; and it is hard to see how the editor could characterize them as stylistically elegant. All the essays center on several interlocking arguments, which presuppose the same historicist outlook. Conceptual contents (*Denkinhalte*) supposedly have meaning only in the context of specific circumstances; and

all intellectual encounters, whether scientific, theological, or philosophical, must be understood as confrontations in the guise of something else. In the clashes of ideas or principles, it is ultimately human wills that are coming into conflict. And in the struggle for power between contending sides, rival actors formulate their positions by focusing on real or assumed enemies. Kondylis does not explicitly say that there is no rational standard to which competing views or creeds can be submitted by mutual consent. Rather he applies Carl Schmitt's "criterion of the political," as the drawing of friend-enemy distinctions, to a never-ending battle waged among rival epistemological and ethical creeds.

It is of course possible to take Kondylis's radical historicism seriously while only accepting its premises in a limited way. But as a preliminary step, one might do well to disencumber what he calls his "value-free decisionism" from certain surrounding questionable assumptions. For example, Kondylis offers this syllogism intended to make him appear like a skeptic while leaving intact his unproved premises: If a "view of the world that is based on relativism is true," "it does not follow from this premise that the resulting position is false." Furthermore: "That my theory like others is historically conditioned does not demonstrate its relativity, but merely confirms the principle of historical conditioning as a case in point." But there are two obvious problems with this defense. First, Kondylis is not presenting here a "syllogism," but putting forth two premises, the second of which is a denial of the first. Second, he does not explain how "relativity" and exemplifying "historical conditioning" differ from each other as limiting conditions for his truth claims.

Moreover, his central essay, "Power and Decision in the Battle Lines of Spirit," would seem to call into question the validity of human reasoning: "Rationalists happily structure their polemics in such a way as to allow them to tie their power-claims to something symbolic, which is what they call 'Reason.' Whatever rationalists happen to be arguing is made to appear to be a direct logical emanation of 'Reason'." Further: "Concrete questions that offer a scientific observation in the investigation of concrete situations really come down to the following: When is something likely to be viewed as rational or irrational; and who is likely to accept it as one or the other? With whose truth- or power-claim is what is designated as 'rational' or 'irrational' to be brought into line?" Finally, "the polemical intent in the structuring of theoretical patterns shows itself dramatically in the frequent situation in which the polemical implications overshadow the logical ones. At that point the striving to discredit one's opponent comes to the fore, even at the price of overlooking or taking for granted the weakness in one's own argument."

Kondylis also tells us that certain contradictory positions are sometimes forced together into a single worldview in a way that allows partisans to triumph over their enemies. For example, Christian theologians included in their creeds a legend about man's divine origin and inherent nobility together with the

supposedly antithetical notion of human sinfulness. These apparently antipodal aspects of a specifically Christian worldview were pasted together to gain the edge in a protracted struggle against paganism. These views were also supposedly necessary to elevate the Church into a vehicle for restoring a fallen humanity to its divine potential.

All such statements betray a tendency toward overgeneralization. Certainly there are multiple examples of Kondylis's targets, but his reductionist approach sometimes gets in the way of his arguments. Although those engaged in debate often organize facts to fit their non-intellectual purposes, it might be stretching a point to ascribe all discussions about ideas to a confrontation of wills. Surely it is possible to perceive intellectual curiosity or something other than a tendentious application of "Reason" in the sifting of hypotheses about why things occur or about the moral ends of human life. Kondylis also confuses the parts with the whole. Because there is an exercise of volition involved in the selecting of facts and because the assertion of statements often takes place in a dialectical fashion does not mean that the explanations and thoughts are reducible to exercises of will or power.

Kondylis might be showing the traces of his Marxist youth, by looking for a *single* cause or source to which he can push back human behavior and thought. Of course within the complex framework of circumstances in which intellectual historians have to do their work, looking for such a cause may be a fool's errand. Already in the fifth century BC, Thucydides elucidated his approach to the events of the Peloponnesian War by distinguishing among such related concepts as sources, starting points, causes (actually grievances), and pretexts. Kondylis seems to have reduced this Thucydidean theory of causation to two motivational factors, an underlying source of action, which is human contentiousness, and a pretext, understood as theories or doctrines serving as vehicles for the will to power.

Kondylis also wedges into his decisionist framework predicates that do not necessarily follow from the operation of will in the forming of thoughts. Volition in his view entails "power claims" and "the instinct of self-preservation," neither of which must accompany "decision-making." Making the argument that reflective judgments include among other things expressions of sentiments and will is different from treating "conceptual contents" as intrinsically irrational. Again Kondylis is guilt of mistaking the part for the whole.

Equally relevant, he never exposes the antinomies in the worldviews that he identifies as weapons in his clashes of wills. The Christian attempt to make allowances for man's divine origin as well as his sinfulness does not engender a contradiction but offers a view that acknowledges two different sides of human nature. Almost all traditional ethical and theological systems do the same and not necessarily because they are trying to prevail against other systems. They are

simply taking into account the gulf between what humans might be or might have been and the condition in which they now find themselves. Kondylis's supposed antinomy is as characteristic of the Enlightenment as of the Christian worldview that the rationalists tried to replace.

Kondylis must also deal in the end with the charge that his "value-free observations" are not what he ascribes to others, i.e., tools in a contest of wills in which his ideas as well as those of others are of secondary importance. Why shouldn't we treat his interpretation, despite its "value-free" label, as just another demonstration of his theory? A careful reading of his final essay "Value-Freedom and the Question of the Ought," does not indicate to me that Kondylis has broken lose from the limits of his model. He too may exemplify the inherent contradiction of all forms of determinism which try to advance their own truth-claims.

Despite these conceptual difficulties, I would nonetheless note that much of what Kondylis depicts as the power-driven formulation of thought fits the present age. His general theory of knowledge seems specifically made for our own late modernity, and especially for its opinion-making and academic class. One finds confirmation for this conclusion in Kondylis's earlier work, and particularly in his sprawling volume on "the bourgeois form of thought," which explores the correlation between bourgeois modes of thinking and cultural and social habits. What Kondylis treats as "bourgeois liberal" fact-gathering and reflection becomes in his posthumous essays the "normativist" and "rationalist" masks for power-seekers.

But surely the author would have to recognize a qualitative distinction, and one that bears on the credibility of what is asserted, between saying something in order to advance one's political cause and making documentable statements, the truth of which the speaker fully accepts. Arguably even those who crave political control occasionally play by bourgeois rules of discourse. But what we are now seeing is a cultural revolution, one linked to a radical but often self-contradictory egalitarian ideology that has declared older rules of discourse and truth-demonstration to be obsolete and even oppressive.

One perspective that is omitted from Kondylis's account, but which his other books supply, is how we arrived at our current situation. Certainly it was possible up until the last few decades to have relatively detached discussions about scientific and conceptual matters without one side calling the other "fascist" or "sexist." In the bourgeois age, and even as far back as Plato's dialogues, name-calling does not seem to have been a preferred mode of discourse. Should we then base our inferences about the communication and evaluation of knowledge by looking at what are deviant standards from the perspective of an earlier period?

How much about dialogues and scholarship in general, for example, could one derive from Amy Gutmann's essay in *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, which structures conversation around the ranking of victim groups? A University of Pennsylvania president, Gutmann is quite explicit about who is

to be given the right to say what and to whom in her projected "multicultural society." Those who would have to be muzzled include those who are guilty of "misogyny, racial and ethnic hatred, or rationalization of self-interest and group interest parading as historical or scientific knowledge." Note Gutmann, like European "antifascist" politicians and journalists, does not yield to factual refutations. She would be delighted to shut people up who cite inconvenient facts. It is not that Kondylis is speaking specifically about these extreme cases when he sets up his premises. But they are the ones to which his premises would apply, namely the struggle for recognition by rival claimants for victim status, understood as contenders for power. Not surprisingly, Gutmann presents herself as the bearer of preferential rights in discourse because of her Jewish ancestors and female gender. In short she is a telling example, albeit far from the only one, of someone who presents ideas expressing her will to power.

Common to the posthumous publications of my two friends are signs of belonging to a thankless persuasion. Both were equally representative of the kind of historicism that is no longer in favor. Instead of relating gender, race, and class to a narrative featuring white, male oppression, they approached the task of contextualizing the modern age from the standpoint of plotting the rise and fall of the Western bourgeoisie and its worldview and political habits. Neither viewed the declension of this once dominant group as the waning of an oppressive era. Rather, they saw it as an occasion for the ascent of what Piccone, like James Burnham, designated as a managerial new class; and what Kondylis viewed as the prelude to a Hobbesian situation featuring a war of all against all.

Both men also doubted that "liberal democratic" administration could neutralize this conflict. But unlike Paul, who believed that the centralized state would give way to reestablished communities, Kondylis evoked a "coming age of global strife." Contrary to his "value-free" perspective as a social historian, Kondylis showed genuine cultural and existential concern about the future of Europe, as a frequent contributor to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and as a columnist for newspapers in Athens. The global economy into which Europe had been swept, the "antifascist" intolerance in European universities, and the rising Islamic Fundamentalist presence in Western and Central Europe were all developments that Kondylis noted with alarm. Perhaps far more than his vivacious friend Paul Piccone, this Greek aristocrat personified what Swiss conservative political theorist, Armin Mohler, once described as the "Anti-Fukuyama." His purpose was to underline not the end of history as conflict but something grimmer, the inescapability of friend-enemy distinctions as a permanent aspect of the human condition.

Of All Things: On Michael Marder's Reading of Derrida

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Michael Marder, *The Event of the Thing: Derrida's Post-Deconstructive Realism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. Pp. xx + 186.

The Event of the Thing by Michael Marder is probably one of the most comprehensive and integrative readings of Derrida's oeuvre to date. A virtue of the book is that, despite the comprehensiveness of its subject matter, it does not assume the removed posture of an introduction, an exposition, or an explication. Its relation to the Derridian text is much more internal and intimate, and it should be noted that it presupposes a rather thorough knowledge of Derrida's oeuvre as well as of Derrida's philosophical "reading list" (primarily Husserl, Heidegger, Freud, Marx, and Kant).

Marder's confident and elegant prose reveals an original style, distinctly different than Derrida's and yet just as carefully performative and rhythmic. While the text is virtually replete with citation and paraphrases—drawn as if effortlessly in a criss-cross fashion from as many as fifty different texts by Derrida—these are, for the most part, seamlessly woven into it like dialogues in a Saramago novel, rarely interrupting its flow. On occasion, however, Marder pauses on a passage from Derrida that he finds particularly pregnant and embarks upon a word-for-word study that can be truly illuminating. The text follows, to some extent, the pattern of a fugue (a term which serves as a leitmotif in Marder's work, etymologically referring to the act of fleeing [*fugere*] and, by implication, to the fugitive, the elusive, the haunting). That is to say, there is a single motif—the event of the thing—that repeatedly makes its entrance (or escape) in differing voices, contexts, and variations, starting from the deconstruction of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, going through a deconstruction of Freudian and Marxist reflections on fetishism, and ending in what I consider the most powerful and rewarding segment of the work, the deconstruction of aesthetics. In this review I will not attempt to offer a synopsis of each of these entrees, but remain, by way of an overview, along the text's contours, surveying what I perceive to be some of its overarching motivations and concerns.

On the face of it, Marder's text follows rather persistently, even obsessively (as befits its subject matter), after the thematic of "the thing" in Derrida's work.

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Insofar as it does that, the text manages to show rather persuasively that, however inconspicuous to readings not attuned to it, "the thing" is virtually omnipresent, if always elusively, in Derrida's writing. However, Marder's line of reading has still greater ambitions than to underscore a particular thematic in Derrida. What we have here is a thorough reconstruction (reweaving or re-texting) of Derrida's oeuvre as a whole that (re)traces "the event of the thing"—the thing, for Marder, being always eventful and the event always "thingly" (xi)—as the hollow ground—the ground, as "event," being always an abyss, a preoccupation or obsession—of deconstruction. And so, although *The Event of the Thing* focuses almost exclusively on Derrida's texts and philosophical readings, what it is ultimately preoccupied with is not Jacques Derrida per se but, shall we say, "the thing in itself." We may therefore reverse the initial impression without disqualifying it altogether: "the thing" is not just a theme in Derrida's writing, but Derrida's writing is shown to participate, in a unique and uniquely suggestive way, in the event of the thing. "Derrida's brand of realism," Marder argues, "inherited the indeterminacy, non-identity and fugal character from the thing 'itself'" (136).

To display "the event of *the thing*" as the guiding thread, or obsession, of deconstruction is already a provocation; especially if we consider that one of the inaugurating gestures of Derrida's work (and, following it, of Marder's book too) is the deconstruction of Husserlian phenomenology, with its famous guiding motto: "to the things themselves!" No superficial reading of Derrida can fail to remark on the hyper-textuality of his readings, his seeming resistance to any appeal (the more sophisticated, the more deconstructable) to a "thing in itself," to a transcendental ego or, for that matter, to any supra-textual existence and metaphysical ground. Yet Marder's claim seems to be that this resistance is already the working of the thing itself. It is the thing, not "deconstruction," that eludes and resists contact, while at the same time keeps haunting in unfathomable proximity. The problem, therefore, does not lie in the phenomenological concern for the things themselves (at that, we might say, deconstruction is "quasi-phenomenological"), but rather with the thing's conceptualization and figuration as aim or telos, in a word, as *object* of/for our intentional pursuits.

In a sense, deconstruction is portrayed here as a process analogous to phenomenological *epoché* (reduction), where the thing is that which stubbornly remains or relentlessly returns after every step, every deconstruction, as "the irreducible" or non-deconstructable. However, in distinction from phenomenological reduction, in this process, which is therefore more erratic and rhythmic, less methodic or architectonic, the thing does not answer to the logic of *subiectum* (self-identity/transcendental ground), nor to that of an ideal object or pure meaning, but, instead, to the logic of remains, trace, and supplementation, which cuts against the grain of the phenomenological quest after the pure and the proper. "Post deconstructive realism," Marder explains, "is a realism of the remains, which is to say, of

resistance to idealization on the 'inner front' of idealism" (137). The thing is what remains, surviving or resisting (at the same time *urging*) all our efforts at ideation, synthesizing (or analyzing), bracketing, as well as their inbuilt deconstructions. Not posited or repeated, the thing obsesses and returns; "always-already" pre-occupying, it yet never shows up or arrives.

In italics, Marder sums up the crux of this ecstatic movement:

> *For Derrida, the thing is what remains after the deconstruction of the human, the animal, and the metaphysical belief in the thing itself, in its oneness and self-identity. The thing understood as the remains stands on the side of what has been called "the undeconstructable" within deconstruction itself, of what both animates and outlives the deconstructive goings-through, experiences, or sufferings.* (138)

The core gesture of Marder's text is to suggest that "the thing" is non-identical. While it seems simple and straightforward enough, this gesture proves incessantly fruitful. To begin with, it soon shows itself to be (always) a double gesture. Insofar as "the thing" is "the thing in itself" (not "for us," not posited or given by or to consciousness) it ought to be autonomous, self-standing, independent, absolutely exterior, and non-relational. But insofar as it is non-identical it can be none of the above. Hence, "'The' thing is not the thing itself; it, itself, is a non-thing" (20). Here then is the double gesture around which Marder's text spins and swirls: *it*, itself, *is not itself*. At the core of Derrida's "post-deconstructive realism," Marder writes, "is found the split thing, the indwelling of *différance*, the concrete figure without figure undermining and invalidating the logical principle of identity. The thing is not the same thing as who or what it is" (135).

As can be sensed in the disjunction "who or what," frequently recurrent in *The Event of the Thing*, much of what is at stake is the traditional opposition between "the thing" (the impersonal, indifferent, anonymous "it"), answering to the question "what?" and "us" (the habitants and proprietors of the relational, synthesized, human world), answering to the question "who?" Perhaps a classical case in point (not addressed by Marder, for never taken seriously by Derrida) is that of Jean-Paul Sartre, who famously argued, picking up from Kojève's Hegel, that "I am what I am not and I am not who I am." In other words, the principle of non-contradiction does not apply to human subjectivity or consciousness (the "for-itself"), and hence not to the properly human world. However, the defiance of the principle of non-contradiction is only understood in Sartre against the backdrop of its opposition to "the (mere) thing," or the "in-itself" (paradigmatically prefigured as a solid, inanimate item such as a piece of furniture), which, by contrast, is perfectly governed by the principle of identity: "it is what it is and it is not what it is not." What is unsatisfying in this scheme is that, in its opposition to the mere thing (or to anything else for that matter), "the human" proves to be

self-identical after all—it is what it is (not a thing) and it is not what it is not (a thing).

Applying to "the thing" what Sartre and others have applied to the human in direct opposition to it, Marder's Derrida destabilizes all conceptualizations of the human, be it as consciousness, transcendental ego, even as Dasein (whose "ecstatic relationality . . . is denied to the worldless, breathless, inanimate thing determined in its mute 'whatness'" [100]). The thing in itself is ever an other to itself, such that "the one who attempts to absolve or separate oneself from it, uttering, for instance, 'I am *not* a thing' [or, one might add: 'I am *not* an animal'], is immediately incorporated into the thing, which is interchangeable with its other" (21). Thus, "the event of the thing participates in the deconstruction of humanism" (109).

In its indeterminacy, non-identity and anonymity "the thing" resists localization on either side of the classical oppositions between the "who" and the "what," the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead, or between that which has interiority, intentionality, or freedom and that which has nothing but extension, hardness, and surface. Asserting that life "as a process of othering is no longer other to the ostensibly inanimate thing" (7), Marder's text continuously "animates" or "inspires" the thing—"it" intends us, "it" breathes for itself, "it" marks and remarks itself, etc.—while never foregoing its strange(r)ness and muteness. "It" haunts. The goal, finally, is to de-objectify the thing, to decouple "thing" from "object," without thereby falling back upon the diametrical opposite of objectivity (always presupposed in positing it)—the self-conscious, intentional subject; the self-referring, self-pronoun(c)ing "I."

At the same time, the thing, while always other (to itself), is also decoupled from the Levinasian absolutely Other, although clearly the Levinasian influence here is at least as strong as it is in Derrida. The thing is at once less other than the Other and less the same than "I." It is less other because it is never "absolutely" exterior, because in its non-identity it is interchangeable with its other. And it is less the same because non-identical "in and of itself" (always already split), and because, to put it quite simply, it may well be void of a properly human visage.

As can be expected, one of the central threads in *The Event of the Thing* is the deconstruction of the thing-sign opposition. The common assumption (often summoning together the seemingly opposing camps of "realism" and "idealism") is that language, in particular the "conventional" language of signs, falls short of the thing in itself, which is therefore conceived after the model of presence and immediacy. But, to Marder, "The thing impregnated with *différance* will contain, without delimiting it, the principle of signification. . . . '*The thing itself is a sign*' [cited from *Of Grammatology*]" (18). This conclusion is in fact begged once we begin to address the thing's non-identity: whatever it is in the sign that necessarily "falls short" is already in the thing itself. Yet this, Marder would argue, is

not a matter of dialectical reconciliation, or of a "textual hyper-idealism." The non-oppositional, non-negative thing is to remain marginal and "indigestible," "vomited out" or wasted by the system of conception and signification. Still, Marder suggests, it "would be more productive to locate the margin right *in* the text, that is to say, to pursue the material residue of exteriority (the thing) within language itself." Here perhaps—in the notions of waste and residue—the tension between philosophy and poetry is called to mind, invoking the material surfaces, tonalities, frictions, and resistances of purportedly "dead" signs—invoking, indeed, the "thingly" nature of signs, which, before and beyond our meaning-bestowing activity, leaves its (counter)signature and imprint on the text.

Thus, remarking on Derrida's discomfort with employing the metaphysically charged terms "real" and "realism" (135–37), Marder makes the case that, although Derrida's conception of "the real" (as "non-negative im-possible") deviates from traditionally realist schemes, one can nevertheless speak of a "post-deconstructive realism" (a phrase coined by Derrida in *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, and serves as subtitle to Marder's book). In the words of Derrida: "In my view, language has an outside. . . . Something really exists beyond the confines of language . . . [namely,] the matter of traces derived from various texts'" (from "Jacques Derrida in Moscow," cited on 29).

Eventually, what distinguishes the "real," or the "thing" for that matter, as the "matter of traces," from the "real" prefigured as presence, or the "thing" conceived of as identical (indifferent), is the attunement to ecstatic temporality or the "temporal fold" of *différance* within the text:

> The reason for the divergence between the "realist" disguises of political history or philosophy and the thing they miss is that they bet on the unproblematic crossing of the textual threshold and, therefore, refuse to operate within the temporal fold of the "always already" (. . . the immemorial event of thingly ex-propriation) and the "not yet" (temporalizing delay in the thing itself, the coming of the horizon-less event, in which the thing's self-remark would agree with the systems of signification "founded" on it). This refusal causes realism to lose sight of the remains and to lapse into a pure repetition . . . that puts it on the side of hyper-idealism. (140)

In line with this non-linear temporality, "*post*-deconstructive realism" is invoked as an anachronistic term, a term of anachrony (e.g., 138). If one expects of Marder's text (and I suspect Marder's choice of subtitle expects such expectation from the reader) to propose a venue that would follow *after* deconstruction, bringing its textual roller coaster to a halt, and satisfy once and for all the desire to retrieve the "lost object" or to touch ground, one is in for a good disappointment. Not for a moment does Marder's text leave the premises of deconstruction. Nevertheless—and this is the contribution of his reconstruction—tracing the fugal trails of "the

event of the thing" in Derrida, Marder insists that a post-deconstructive realism is to be found, always already, *within* deconstruction, perhaps as that which, in its escape, in the "not-yet" sense of urgency, *immanently* drives and animates it.

One cannot fail to observe the Heideggerian resonances in Marder's text, in particular in its emphasis on ecstatic temporality. These resonances should not, of course, come as any surprise. It can be suggested that, to begin with, Derrida's *différance* is but a radicalization of one of the most constitutive and persistent elements in Heidegger's thought, namely, the "ontico-ontological difference": the difference between Being and beings. Heidegger eventually came to place the word "Being" under erasure in his texts in an attempt to emphasize that Being, which is no being, is not a word either. Being is difference/transcendence "pure and simple." Derrida's radicalization, if we follow this line of thought, is a radicalization of the *erasure* (or rather its undoing), for it dispenses with the somewhat hyperbolic *reference to* "Being" in Heidegger, a reference which is only fortified when placed *under* erasure, necessarily preceding and surviving it. *Différance*, by contrast, has no referent; it is a sign, and even purely a sign (that is, helplessly impure), since all that marks it out is something as banal as an (inaudible) "spelling mistake." But only as such does *différance* mark pure difference, different even from (difference) "itself."

With this in mind, one is tempted to raise a Heideggerian objection to Marder. Marder's emphasis on "the thing" as the "indwelling of *différance*" may well seem not only to undo the Derridian radicalization just noted, but even to take a step back behind Heidegger. After all, is not "the thing," looked at from a grammatical point of view, a *noun* (even the noun of all nouns)? And is not Heidegger's deployment of the grammatically flexible, inherently ambiguous term "Being" (with or without erasure) precisely an attempt to belie the long list of nouns paraded by the history of philosophy, each one of which standing for *the* ultimate determination of the being of beings (Idea, Reason, Nature, Spirit, etc.)? Should we now add "Thing" to this list?

Some passages in Marder make it difficult for this impression, and objection, not to be invoked. After all, "the thing" for Marder's Derrida is not only a "hauntological entity" (quasi-empirical if you will) but also an "im-possible condition of possibility" (quasi-transcendental); it is what makes possible or "eventuates" the worldhood of the phenomenological world (135). And consider for example such passages as: "The thing's radical and absolute exteriority interiorizes everything, including itself, ad infinitum, even as it disappears with every unique apparition of the phenomena effectively born from its abyssal repetitions…" (126). Or, for example, "the escape of the thing itself…leaves the world in its trail" (140). Is not the "Thing," which "*pre*-occupies subjects and objects" (118), birthing every unique apparition, yet another (over)determination of the being of beings? And why not just call it "Being"?

Certainly, Marder is only too aware of the Heideggerian and Derridian avoidance of the temptation to "thingify" or determine difference. Not a page goes by in Marder's text without taking precautions against this very temptation. There is a sense, in fact, that the entire text shuttles its way by means of such precautions, relentlessly "de-thingifying," or in-de-termining the thing on all its fronts and from all its angles: To begin with, the noun is redoubled—it is not "the thing" but "the *event* of the thing." We also know that the thing is split and non-identical, and that, not only phonetically, *la Chose* is interchangeable with *l'Achose* (the Athing) (e.g., 21). Marder's text also deliberately wavers, from the get-go, between *the* thing and thing*s*, and between the generality and the singularity of "the thing." We know, further, that the "thing" is not a ground but an abyss, a bottomless bottom. We know that it can only be grappled with in accordance with ecstatic temporality—the not-yet and the always-already, the immemorial and the anachronistic—such that it can never be comfortably settled within the confines of a metaphysics of presence (to recall, the whole point is to decouple "thing" from "object"). In fact, this listing, which can go on, is hardly necessary after everything that has been said so far, since it was made clear (I hope) that establishing these indeterminacies at the (beating) heart of the thing is, in one sense, the very course and dynamic of the book. Still, the question remains and presents itself all the more fiercely: *why "the thing"*? Why the privileging of this noun? What is its unique significance?

Were we to recoil back to the face-level impression that Marder's text ought to be read as a scholarly exploration of the thematic of "the thing" in Derrida's oeuvre—and to be sure, it is outstanding at that—we would probably experience no trouble at all in answering these questions, for the only justification needed in this case would be the acknowledgment that "The Thing" is indeed a pervasive thematic in Derrida and that it has not yet been thoroughly studied as such. But, as suggested, Marder's text seems more ambitious; "the thing" is not a theme among themes, but the word somehow becomes a magnet that draws inside of it (without grabbing hold) all the bits and pieces, all the remains, traces, and supplements, of Derridean deconstruction. And still more.

Why, then, the event of "the thing"? Why this obsession with the thing, of all things? My own provisional response is that, as Marder himself notes in the introduction to the book, the appeal to "the Thing" is a *provocation* (xi). It is a provocation (as already mentioned) in view of Derrida's purported break with phenomenology and its appeal "to the things themselves!" And it is a provocation by way of the stubborn attempt to "animate" "the thing"—to break asunder each and every one of its traditional connotations, while using these very connotations to do so. And finally, it is a provocation *precisely* because of that dumb and still "noun-ness" by which "the Thing" announces itself, which makes it seem to be the very epitome of indifference (identity), and of the metaphysics of presence,

at once demanding, and limiting deconstruction, both preceding and surviving it. "To the extent that its giving withdrawal is interminable," Marder writes, "and to the extent that our intentionality still directs itself toward the elusive thing, the concern it evokes rises to the boiling point of an obsession that relentlessly keeps us on the edge because, in the absence of a recognizable figure, the definite-indefinite outlets for channelling it are infinite…" (46).

With the phrase "infinite outlets" in mind, a final remark, or concern, of a broader scale, might be in place before concluding. It touches on the relation between content and form, perhaps not only in Marder's text but in Derrida's as well. It obviously matters to Marder, as it does to Derrida, to guard things from entrapment in a state of closure and mere repetition. Yet in the obsessive and concernful effort to keep things open (to secure their openness if you will), to hold on to duplicities and undecidables, to keep up with traces and remains—as it were, to "take care" of every-thing—it sometimes comes to seem as if the text, paradoxically, closes itself off or impresses a sense of closure, finally producing or presenting us with a work, or a thing, which is, indeed and undeniably, *undeconstructable* or perfectly auto-deconstructing. Or, should we perhaps say that the thing, under the treatment of Marder's Derrida, escapes so virtuously, and infinitely, that it finally becomes *invulnerable*?

Whether this is the case, and whether, if so, it is a merit or a flaw; whether the book's provocation is successful in "keeping us on the edge," and successful in what way (provoking what sentiment, what attunement, and what response)—I will leave these questions for the reader of this remarkable book to decide on.