Contents

Foucault: Madness/Sexuality/Biopolitics

Varia

Reviews

Pli 13 (2002), 1-10.

First Preface to *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961)[1]

MICHEL FOUCAULT

Pascal: "Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness." And this other text, by Dostoyevsky, from his *Diary of a Writer*: "It is not by confining one's neighbour that one is convinced of one's good sense."

We have yet to write the history of that other turn of madness, whereby men, in the gesture of sovereign reason that confines their neighbour, communicate and recognise each other through the merciless language of non-madness; to recover the moment of this conjuration, before madness was definitively established in the realm of truth, before it was revived by the lyricism of protest. We must try to return, within history, to that zero degree of the history of madness, in which it is undifferentiated experience, a yet to be shared and divided experience of division itself. To describe, from the origin of its parabola, this "other turn" which lets Reason and Madness fall on either side of its gesture, as things henceforth external, deaf to all exchange, and as though dead to one another.

This is doubtless an uncomfortable region. To explore it we must renounce the comfort of terminal truths, and never allow ourselves to be guided by what we may know of madness. None of the concepts of psychopathology, even and especially in the implicit play of retrospections, must be allowed to exert an organising role. What is

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[1] This preface was published in its entirety only in the first French edition of what has come to be known in English as *Madness and Civilization* [M. Foucault, *Folie et Déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961), p. i-xi]. From 1972 on it disappeared from further editions. Though portions of it are contained in the English translation, they have been modified here for the sake of consistency. – Trans.

constitutive is the gesture that divides madness, and not the science that establishes itself once this division is made and calm restored. What is originary is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; as for the hold exerted by reason upon non-reason in order to wrest from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, it derives by far from this caesura. We must therefore speak of that initial dispute without assuming a victory, or a right to victory; we must speak of those gestures as they are repeated in history, leaving in abeyance everything that could figure as a conclusion, as a refuge in truth; we must speak of this cutting gesture, of this distance set, of this void instituted between reason and what is not reason, without ever relying on the plenitude of what it claims to be.

Then, and then only, will the realm appear in which the man of madness and the man of reason, in the movement of their separation, are not yet separate; and in which, in a very originary and very crude language, antedating by far that of science, they begin the dialogue of their rupture, testifying in a fugitive way that they still speak to one another. Here madness and non-madness, reason and non-reason are inextricably involved: inseparable since they do not yet exist, and nevertheless existing for each other, the one in relation to the other, in the exchange that separates them.

In the midst of the serene world of mental illness, modern man no longer communicates with the madman: on the one hand, there is the man of reason who delegates the physician in the direction of madness, thereby only authorising a relationship through the abstract universality of illness; on the other, the man of madness who communicates with the other only by the intermediary of an equally abstract reason embodied in order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, and the requirements of conformity. As for a common language, there is none; or rather, there is no longer; the constitution of madness as mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, posits the separation as already acquired, and thrusts into oblivion all those imperfect words, without a fixed syntax, and a little stammered, through which the exchange of madness and reason took place. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason *on* madness, was able to establish itself only on the basis of such a silence.

I have not tried to write the history of that language, but rather the archaeology of that silence.

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The Greeks had a relation to something that they called ubris. This relation was not merely one of condemnation; the existence of Thrasymachus or of Callicles suffices to prove it, even if their discourse was transmitted to us already enveloped in the reassuring dialectic of Socrates. But the Greek Logos had no contrary.

European man, since the beginning of the Middle Ages, has had a relation to something he refers to confusedly as: Madness, Dementia, Unreason. Perhaps it is to this obscure presence that Western reason owes something of its depth, as the swjrosunh of the Socratic chatterboxes owes something to the threat of urbis. In any case, the Reason-Unreason nexus constitutes one of the dimensions of the originality of Western culture; it already accompanied it long before Hieronymus Bosch, and will follow it long after Nietzsche and Artaud.

What, then, is this confrontation beneath the language of reason? Towards what could we be led by an interrogation that would not follow reason in its horizontal becoming, but would instead seek to retrace within time this constant verticality which, all throughout European culture, confronts it with what it is not, measuring it up to its own dismeasure? Towards what realm would we be directed, which is neither the history of knowledge nor history as such; which is commanded neither by the teleology of truth nor by the rational concatenation of causes, causes whose only value and sense lie beyond division? A realm, no doubt, were it would be a question of the limits rather than of the identity of a culture.

One could produce a history of *limits* – of these obscure gestures, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are made, whereby a culture rejects something that it will then consider as its Exterior; and all throughout its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space with which it isolates itself will designate it just as much as its values. For it receives these values, and maintains them in the continuity of history; but in this region of which we wish to speak, it exercises its essential choices, it effects the division that provides it with the face of its positivity; here is to be found the originary density wherein it is formed. To interrogate a culture with regard to its limit-experiences is to question it, at the borders of history, about a rending that constitutes something like the very birth of its history. Thus, there arises the confrontation, in a tension always about to be undone, between the temporal continuity of a dialectical analysis and the updating, at the doors of time, of a tragic structure.

At the centre of the limit-experiences of the West is – of course – the explosive presence of the tragic itself. Nietzsche showed that the tragic structure on the basis of which the history of the Western world came to be constituted was nothing other than the refusal, the forgetting, and the silent collapse of tragedy. Around this collapse, which is central because it links the tragic to the dialectic of history in the very refusal of tragedy by history, many others gravitate. Each one of them, at the borders of our culture, traces a limit that designates, at the same time, an originary division.

In the universality of Western *ratio*, there is this division called the Orient: the Orient, thought as origin, dreamed of as the vertiginous point whence are born the nostalgias and promises of return, the Orient offered up to the colonising reason of the West but nevertheless indefinitely inaccessible, since it forever remains as the limit: night of the beginning, in which the West was formed, but in which it traced a dividing line, for the West the Orient is everything that it itself is not, whilst it is nonetheless bound to look within it for its own primitive truth. It will be necessary to produce a history of this great division, persisting throughout the becoming of the West, we must follow it in its continuity and its exchanges, but also allow it to appear in its tragic hieratism.

It will also be necessary to tell of other divisions: within the luminous unity of appearance, the absolute division of the dream, which man cannot stop himself from interrogating about his own truth – whether the truth of his fate or of his heart –, but which he can only question having passed beyond the essential refusal that constitutes the dream and rejects it through the derision of oneirism. It will also be necessary to produce the history of sexual prohibitions, and not only in terms of ethnology: to speak, in our own culture, of the continually moving and obstinate forms of repression, not in order to chronicle morality or tolerance, but to bring to light, both as the limit of the Western world and as the origin of its morals, the tragic division of the happy world of desire. Last but not least, it is necessary to begin to speak about the experience of madness.

The study you are about to read is but the first, and without doubt the easiest, in this long inquiry which, under the sun of the great Nietzschean project, would like to confront the dialectics of history with the immobile structures of the tragic.

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What is madness then, in its most general but most concrete form, for one who refuses from the start any of the attempts of knowledge to grasp it? Nothing other, without doubt, than *the absence of work*.

What place can the existence of madness have within becoming? What is its trace? Doubtless, a very thin one; some wrinkles that cause little disquiet, and do not alter the great, reasonable calm of history. In the face of some few decisive words out of which the becoming of Western reason was woven, what weight can we give to all of these vain utterances, all of these dossiers of undecipherable delirium that the random fortune of prisons and libraries have juxtaposed to them? Is there a place in our universe of discourse for the thousands of pages in which Thorin, an almost illiterate footman and a "furious madman"[2], transcribed, at the end of the seventeenth century, his fleeting visions and the loud barks of his fear? All of this is but wasted time, the poor presumption of a passage that the future denies, something within becoming that is irreparably less than history.

It is this "less" that must be interrogated, first of all by freeing it from every pejorative connotation. From the moment of its originary formulation on, historical time imposes silence upon some thing that we can then only apprehend in the guise of the void, the vain, the nothing. History is only possible against the background of an absence of history, in the midst of this vast space of murmurs, that silence stalks as its proper vocation and its truth: "I will call this castle you once were desert, this voice night, your face absence." Here lies the ambiguity of this obscure region: pure origin, since it is from it that the language of history will be born, conquering, little by little and against this background of great confusion, the forms of its syntax and the consistency of its vocabulary; last residue, sterile shore of words, sand crossed and at once forgotten, only retaining, in its passivity, the empty imprint of the withdrawn figures.

The great work of the history of the world is indelibly accompanied by an absence of work, which renews itself at each instant, but which runs unaltered in its inevitable emptiness all throughout history: and even before history, since it is already there in the primitive decision, and after it as well, since it will triumph in history's last words. The fullness of history is only possible in the space, at once empty and inhabited, of all these words without language that let him who lends his ear to them hear a deaf noise from beneath history, the obstinate murmur of a language that would speak *by itself* – without a speaking subject and without an

[2] Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; mss. # 12023 and 12024.

interlocutor, crushed unto itself, with knotted throat, sinking before having attained any formulation and returning almost unnoticed to this silence which it has never broken with. The charred root of sense.

This is not yet madness, but the first caesura on the basis of which the division of madness becomes possible. This division is its reprise, its re-doubling, its organisation in the tight unity of a present; the perception that Western man has of his time and his space lets a structure of refusal transpire, on the basis of which a word is denounced for not being a language, a gesture for not being a work, a figure for not having the right to take its place within history. This structure is constitutive of what is sense and nonsense, or rather of this receiprocity whereby the two are linked; it alone can account for this general fact that in our culture there can be no reason without madness, even when the rational knowledge that one extracts from madness reduces and disarms it by conferring upon it the frail status of a pathological accident. The *necessity of madness* all throughout the history of the West is linked to this decisive gesture that wrests from the background noise and its continuous monotony a signifying language that is transmitted and completed in time; in short, it is linked to *the possibility of history*.

This structure of the experience of madness, which belongs entirely to history but dwells on its borders, and there where it comes to be decided on, is the object of this study.

This is to say that it is not at all a question of a history of knowledge, but rather of the rudimentary movements of an experience. A history not of psychiatry, but of madness itself, in its vivacity, before any capture by knowledge. It would thus be necessary to strain our hearing, to lean towards this mumbling of the world, to try to perceive so many images that have never become poetry, so many phantasms that have never attained the colours of the eve. But this is without doubt an impossible task: because it would demand that we reconstitute the dust of these concrete sufferings, of this senseless words that nothing anchors to time; above all, because these sufferings and words only exist and are only given to themselves and to others in the gesture of division that already denounces and masters them. It is in the act of separation and on its basis alone that they can be thought as not yet separate dust. The perception that seeks to seize these sufferings and words in their wild state necessarily belongs to a world that has already captured them. The freedom of madness can only be heard from the height of the fortress that holds it prisoner. Now, it “only disposes here of the morose civil state of

its prisons, of its mute experience of persecution, and we only possess the signals of its evasion."

To produce the history of madness will therefore mean: to produce a structural study of the historical totality – notions, institutions, juridical and police measures, scientific concepts – which holds captive a madness whose wild state can never be restored as such; but in the absence of this inaccessible primitive purity, the structural study must go back to the decision that, at the same time, links and separates reason and madness; it must tend towards the discovery of the perpetual exchange, the obscure common root, the originary confrontation which gives meaning to the unity as well as to the opposition of sense and the senseless. It will thus allow to appear once again the dazzling decision, heterogenous to the time of history, but intangible outside of it, that separates this murmur of dark insects from the language of reason and of the promises of time.

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Must we be astonished that this structure is visible above all in the hundred and fifty years that preceded and prepared the formation of a psychiatry that we consider as positive? The classical age – from Willis to Pinel, from the frenzies of Racine's *Oreste* to Goya's *Quinta del Sordo* and Sade's *Juliette* – covers precisely this period in which the exchange between madness and reason modifies its language, and does so in a radical manner. In the history of madness, two events indicate this change with a singular clarity: 1657, the creation of the Hôpital Général and the "great confinement" of the poor; 1794, the liberation of the shackled inmates of Bicêtre. Between these two singular and symmetrical events, something happens whose ambiguity has left the historians of medicine at a loss: blind repression in an absolutist regime, according to some; but according to others, the gradual discovery by science and philanthropy of madness in its positive truth. In fact, beneath these reversible meanings, a structure is forming which does not resolve the ambiguity but determines it. It is this structure which accounts for the transition from the medieval and humanist experience of madness to our own experience, which confines insanity within mental illness. In the Middle Ages and until the Renaissance, man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he was confronted with the voiceless powers of the world; then, the experience of madness was obscured by images of the Fall and the End of Times, the Beast and the Metamorphosis, and of all the marvellous secrets of Knowledge. In our era, the experience of madness is carried out

in the composure of a knowledge which, knowing too much about madness, forgets it. But from one of these experiences to the other, the shift has been made in a world without images, without positive character, in a kind of silent transparency which reveals – as a mute institution, gesture without commentary, immediate knowledge – a great motionless structure; this structure is one of neither drama nor knowledge; it is the point where history is immobilised in the tragic, which both establishes and refutes it.

At the centre of this attempt to let the classical experience of madness stand, in its rights and in its becoming, one will therefore find a figure without movement: the simple partition of darkness and day, of shadow and light, of dreaming and waking, of the truth of the sun and the powers of the night. This is an elementary figure, that only harbours time as the indefinite return of the limit.

And it also belongs to this figure to lead man into a powerful forgetting; he will learn to dominate this great division, to reduce it to his own level; to make night and day *within himself*; to submit the sun of *truth* to the frail light of *his own* truth. Having mastered his madness, having captured – thereby freeing – it in the gaols of his gaze and his morals, having disarmed it by pushing it back into a corner of himself; all of this authorised man to finally establish, from himself to himself, that sort of relationship that is called "psychology". It was necessary for Madness to cease being the Night, and to become a fugitive shadow within consciousness, so that man could claim to possess *his own* truth and to unravel it within knowledge.

In the reconstruction of this experience of madness, a history of the conditions of possibility of psychology pretty much wrote itself.

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Throughout this work, I have occasionally made use of materials collected by certain authors. However, this has been done as little as possible, and only in cases in which I have not been able to have access to the document itself. This is because outside of any reference to a psychiatric "truth" it was necessary to let speak, by themselves, these words and these texts that come from beneath language and that were not made to attain speech. In my eyes, perhaps the most important part of this work is the place that I have left to the very text of the archives.

For the rest, it was necessary to remain within a sort of relativity without resort, not to seek a way out in any forced psychological

manoeuvre, which would have turned the cards over and announced a hitherto unknown truth. It was necessary to speak of madness only in relation to that "other turn" that allows men not to be madmen, and this other turn could itself only be described in the primitive vivacity that engages it in an indefinite debate with regard to madness. A language without support was therefore necessary: a language that entered into the game, but that could authorise exchange; a language that, ceaselessly coming back upon itself, had to go, in a continuous movement, all the way to the bottom. It was a matter of safeguarding at any price the *relative*, and to be *absolutely* understood.

Here, in this simple problem of elocution, the main difficulty of the enterprise both hid and expressed itself: it was necessary to bring to the surface of the language of reason a partition and a dispute that necessarily had to remain on this side of it, because this language only gains meaning far beyond them. A neutral enough language (free enough from scientific terminology and from social or moral options) was necessary, so that it get as close as possible to these primitively entangled words, and so that the distance may be abolished whereby modern man guarantees himself against madness; but a language open enough so that there may be inscribed within it, without betrayal, the decisive words whereby the truth of madness and reason has constituted itself for us. Of rule and method I have only kept one, which is contained in a text by René Char, in which we can also read the most urgent and concise definition of truth: "I removed from things the illusion that they produce in order to preserve themselves from us and left them the part that they concede to us."[3]

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In this task that could not fail to be somewhat solitary, all those who have helped me deserve my recognition. First of all, Georges Dumézil, without whom this work would not have been undertaken – neither undertaken in the midst of the Swedish night nor completed under the great stubborn sun of Polish freedom. I must thank Jean Hyppolite, and, above all, Georges Canguilhem, who read this work when it was still formless, gave me advice when all was not simple, saved me from many errors, and showed me the price that sometimes needs to be paid in order to be heard. My friend Robert Mauzi shared with me much knowledge that I lacked about this 18th century that is his own.

[3] René Char, *Suzerain*, in *Poèmes et Prose,* p.87.

Other names should be mentioned here that apparently do not matter. Nevertheless they know, these Swedish and Polish friends, that something of their presence is in these pages. May they forgive me for having tested them, them and their happiness, so close to a work where it was a question only of distant sufferings, and of the somewhat dusty archives of pain.

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"Barely murmuring, pathetic companions, go with a darkened lamp and leave your jewels behind. A new mystery sings in your bones. Develop your legitimate strangeness."

Hamburg, the 5th of February, 1960.

Translated by Alberto Toscano

Pli 13 (2002), 11-12.

Preface to the Italian edition of *La volonté de savoir*[4]

MICHEL FOUCAULT

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1. This volume opens a series of studies which do not expect to be continuous or exhaustive; it will be a matter of some surveys in a complex territory. Subsequent volumes are indicated only provisionally. My dream would be a far-reaching work, capable of correcting itself while it develops, open to the reactions it brings about, to the circumstances it will encounter, and perhaps to new hypotheses. I would like it to be a scattered and changeable work.

2. The readers who would expect to learn how people have made love throughout the centuries, or in which ways they were forbidden to do it – obviously this is a serious, important and difficult problem – risk to be disappointed. I did not want to tell the story of sexual behaviors in Western societies, but to deal with a much more sober and localized problem: in which way have these behaviors become the object of a knowledge? How, that is to say, in which ways and for which reasons, has this field of knowledge, which with a recent word we call "sexuality", been organized? What readers will find here is the genesis of a knowledge; a knowledge which I would like to seize again at its roots, where it constituted itself – in religious institutions, in pedagogical forms, in medical practices, in family structures, but also in the effects of coercion that it might have had on individuals, once it persuaded them about the task of discovering in themselves the secret and dangerous power of a "sexuality".

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[4] *La volonté de savoir* is the original French title of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. The preface to the Italian edition was originally published in *La volontà di sapere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), pp. 7-8 – Trans.

3. I am well aware of the fact that it is imprudent to send on a journey of exploration a book which incessantly alludes to studies that are yet to come. It is highly probable that it will appear to be arbitrary and dogmatic. Hypotheses risk looking like incontrovertible assertions, and the proposed analytical schemes can assume the appearance of a new doctrine. I had an example of this happening in France: some critics, suddenly converted to the benefits of anti-repressive struggle, for which they had not formerly manifested great eagerness, reproached me for denying that sexuality is repressed. Evidently enough, this is something I have never claimed. I just asked myself if, in order to decipher the relationships between power, knowledge and sex, one should really focus the entire analysis on the notion of repression; or if things would not be better accounted for by inscribing bans, prohibitions, refusals, concealments in a more complex, more global strategy which is not oriented towards repression as its greatest and main aim.

4. The terms "sex" and "sexuality" are intensely overloaded and heated. They easily foreshadow those which accompany them. For this reason, I would like to emphasize that sexuality is only an example for a general problem which I have been chasing – or which has been chasing me – for more than fifteen years, and which anyway guides most of my books: in which way, in modern Western societies, is the production of discourses, to which (at least for a certain period of time) a value of truth has been attributed, linked to the various mechanisms and institutions of power?

M.F.
Paris, September 1977.

Translated by Lorenzo Chiesa

Pli 13 (2002), 13-25.

Astride a Low Wall: Notes on Philosophy and Madness[5]

PIER ALDO ROVATTI

Having been invited to a refresher course for mental health professionals in Trieste (the convenors had heard that I was giving some lectures at the university on philosophy and madness), I asked that, prior to the meeting, a sharp and provoking question should be passed around: "what is madness?". Everybody was requested to give a written answer, in a few sentences. All the answers I collected were somehow symptomatic, but one in particular struck me. I reproduce it here: "I am not able to say what madness is in such a short time. Only two answers come to my mind. The first one is: I do not know. The second one is: madness is difference, or being afraid of difference".

There are actually three answers here which get stuck into one another in a curious way. Alternatively, we could also read in this a single answer: this something that I do not know, which is madness, is one thing with difference, but difference always has two opposite sides. There is something double in madness, something which splits into two, something which perhaps splits us into two: it is difference and "fear" of difference. One cannot decide for one side against the other and perhaps it is best not to, or at least it is good not to take up the (possibly professional) attitude of doing so. Thus the answer is "I do not know": which therefore does not just sound as a sceptical caution but also as a constructive position. I do not know what madness is, but I do know that it is best not to know it, if knowing it means deciding upon a definition (for example: madness is difference).

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[5] This article was originally published in *aut aut*, 285-286, May-August 1998. It was later republished with some alterations as the first chapter of P.A. Rovatti, *La follia in poche parole* (Milano: Bompiani, 2000). – Trans.

This answer, which I leave anonymous, and which is *de facto* anonymous, in its very simplicity touches upon a crucial point: madness as a question, if we pose it, makes us *oscillate*. It seems that, in order not to betray it, we must force ourselves to maintain a strange position. As if there were an obstacle in the way, or a low wall, and we were to sit with a leg on either side of it. Perhaps we would like to withdraw our impetus, every time, and this is what we usually do (all of us, not only mental health professionals, even when we think ourselves to be very far away from the world of madness); but perhaps, almost every time, we would also like to back up that same impetus and go beyond the low wall. Thus, we claim to erase the wall that separates normality and difference: placing our trust in normal logics, we say that madness is diversity. We cancel the "fear" of difference.

In place of the withdrawal or of the bound, we should be able to find an imbalance, i.e. the risk and the discomfort of an unstable position, which, to all appearances, remains undecided between withdrawal and impetus. This seems to be the condition which is necessary so as not to make madness disappear. Perhaps it is an impossible one, but perhaps it is precisely this impossibility which allows us to "see" and to "make". In any case, it is not lacking in words.

It has certainly not passed unnoticed that, whilst it may be not surprising to associate madness with fear, it is nevertheless absolutely surprising for someone to tell us that madness is also a fear, and more precisely the "fear" of difference.

The lectures in which I ventured concerned an episode which I consider to be emblematic of how one can still philosophise in an age (ours) in which philosophy seems to have cooled down: I am referring to the (sometimes harsh) dispute which took place between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida after the publication of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* in 1961.[6]

[6] Foucault publishes *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* in 1961 (English translation, *Madness and Civilization – A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London: Routledge, 1989). Derrida intervenes in 1963 with "Cogito et histoire de la folie" (English translation, "Cogito and the History of Madness", in *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge, 1978). Foucault replies in 1972 with "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu" (English translation, "My body, this paper, this fire", in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault 1954,1984 – Volume Two*, London: Penguin, 1998) as an appendix to the second edition of *Histoire de la folie*. Derrida returns to Foucault in 1991 with " 'Être juste avec Freud' – L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse", in *Penser la folie* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1992).

Foucault produces a book-event that unsettles the academic establishment, since it introduces an unusual topic from an equally odd stance. Foucault says that in making the history of madness we reconstruct the gesture of *exclusion* that characterizes modernity. Psychiatry, which transforms the great internment of the excluded into the small internment of the mentally insane, would only be the medical fold of an exclusion-internment regime which actually perpetuates and disseminates itself until it confirms itself as our present social regime. This regime is characterized by surveillance and self-surveillance. Madness thus becomes like the card that allows us to trace back the entire game. Later on, Foucault will in fact also talk about prisons and about that (only apparently) individual prison which is the technique or technology of the self. It is remarkable that this card is not simply a card which at first sight seems to be out of the pack, a sort of *wild card*, as we will see. It is even stranger: it slips out, it erases itself, and almost nothing is left of it.

The history of something that does not have any history is paradoxical. Something like madness is paradoxical in as much as it makes history (a history of something else) possible thanks to its own erasure. Strictly speaking, Foucault does not write any history of madness, even though he maintains he wants to produce the history of a "silence". But what is the history of a silence? As a matter of fact, the history that Foucault writes is another one. It is the almost bicentennial history of the "great internment" that took place in France starting from the beginning of the XVII century. At best, it is the history of reason, narrated via the description of a group of social practices (with their respective ideological fly-wheels) which designate a technology of exclusion.

In the heat of the moment, Derrida dedicates to *Histoire de la folie* an enormous review. He recognises the exceptionality of the event, having clearly in mind that from this moment on one cannot turn back. Nevertheless, one can go forward. How? Precisely by isolating philosophically the question of madness: apparently going against what Foucault wanted (having done with ideas and making the most out of practices). On these bases, according to Foucault, Derrida was withdrawing into academia, into the worst one, that of professional philosophers. In any case, Derrida was aware of Foucault's paradox: one cannot be able to put oneself outside of the order of discourse, under pain of delivering oneself to metaphysics. The otherness of madness cannot be

made to appear and disappear at will: one cannot say that it is a bit more than a whispering and then lend it an entire language, a stream of words.

Derrida's attack is not a tender one: it is harsh, very harsh. Foucault does not know what he is talking about when he says "madness", and he does not even raise the problem of knowing it. The whole quarrel, which is focused on a few lines from Descartes and in which Derrida seems to be rapping Foucault over the knuckles (Foucault will later reply in an analogous style), concerns precisely this point. Derrida concludes by saying that if Foucault had risen to the problem he would not have discredited philosophy so hastily. According to him, as a matter of fact, questions regarding the nature and the treatment of the line which separates sense from nonsense have always inhabited the gesture of thought: in Descartes himself, the imprisonment sanctioned by the cogito is accompanied by the abyssal opening on which the cogito is inevitably exposed. If madness is an improper word which indicates the place of nonsense, then every philosophical gesture, every gesture of thought, has to do with madness, including the gesture which Foucault makes by writing his *Histoire de la folie*. There is no "other" place, there is just the field of thought with its folds and its paradoxes which we should practise treating in the best way.

In short, Derrida throws back to Foucault his own question. Madness is an historical name, but madness is also something which irrupts into the act of thinking every time philosophy reconsiders its own gesture and attempts a shift, a new path. It is a matter of running the risk to come near to the black light, the threshold of nonsense as much as possible, but knowing that every philosophical gesture is a rushed *repatriation*: the ability needed for such a return seems then to measure itself on the ability of exposition to the "mad audacity" of thinking, in a game of, so to speak, round-trip, which Derrida will compare to the Freudian game of *fort!/da!*. This "madness" is not erased, on the contrary, it is precisely the indispensable field for any thought which ventures to its own limits, i.e. for any thought which does not simply repeat another thought or the thought of an other (person). Foucault would take this field away from us, a field which Derrida considers to be the most important stake.

About ten years later, Foucault replies. Some other twenty years will go by (meanwhile Foucault dies, not without exposing himself to the extreme risk) before Derrida starts to speak again, with a certain embarrassment, during a conference on the topical interest of his friend/enemy's great book. In both the cutting answer given by Foucault and Derrida's restrained, distressed posthumous consideration, the

protagonist is the "bad genius". Once again, this expression mainly refers to Descartes, but also to Freud: Derrida relates it to the latter by tracking down and isolating, among the flood of pages of *Histoire de la folie*, an apparently marginal fragment in which Foucault says that we must "be just with Freud". Is there then a bad genius beside the good genius who looks after our thought? No, Foucault decidedly writes: Derrida invents a world of phantoms behind Descartes' text; the latter literally stages the bad genius without ever losing his self-control, without exposing himself to madness, without being overtaken by it, in short as a simple subjective exercise. Yes, there is always a bad genius, Derrida says, even if we always hasten to exorcise it: even in the pages of *Histoire de la folie*, it returns before Descartes stages it in his theatre, and also several times after he has staged it, it returns in the delicate connecting passages of the great Foucauldian analysis, for example with Diderot and with Hegel (!), before getting to Freud. So it is not true that Foucault manages to watch over the "bad genius", by exorcising it, and therefore by neutralizing it, in Descartes' mental experiment.

What then is the point? Foucault is not denying his involvement in madness and perhaps he would not even deny that, without this investment, he could not have written *Histoire de la folie*. His enterprise is not carried out within just one book: Foucault will never abandon it, he will continue to collect material, even when his interest will focus on the microphysics of powers, leaving symptomatic traces (for example the dossier on Pierre Rivière, but not only that). On the other hand, what he seems to be negating is that madness could become the explicit theme of a reflection. On the contrary, Derrida maintains that a discourse on madness is possible and even necessary in order to start thinking out of the metaphysical funnel. It is a "discourse" about/around impossibility. It is a "mad logics" which we must risk. It is a matter of constructing a thought of the "phantom".[7] If we need the idea of "genius", exorcising his bad part means not having any idea of a genius and perhaps it also means not having any idea at all.

Let us adopt Foucault's position. If madness is thematised, then we have already neutralised it, domesticated it, and it will not be able to "burst into" the powers-knowledges: it will then correspond only to a medical category, that of "mental illness". But this is a contradictory

[7] The Italian term "fantasma" (which corresponds to the French "fantasme") literally means "phantom/phantasm": it should be rendered in English as "fantasy" when used in a psychoanalytical sense. Both meanings seem to be evoked here by Rovatti. – Trans.

position. What happens to madness? Which role do the great "madmen" play, from Hölderlin to Nerval, from Nietzsche to Freud himself? And what is the role that Foucault reserves to himself? What is the family likeness which unites the lyrical protrusion, the anachronistic work of these great madmen, with the analytical moderation of a thinker like Foucault? Are we so sure that this question cannot be answered?

We should then also adopt Derrida's position. If there is a paradox of madness, we should try to give words to it, rather than to madness itself. We should not stop in front of the paralysis of the "theme" but we should attempt to follow the difficult route for which thinking does not necessarily equate to being stuck in thematisation (if I am not mistaken, this is precisely the question on which Derrida has recently worked with regards to hospitality and Lévinas). The fact that this route is a difficult one is shown precisely by Derrida, who, after his first answer to Foucault, has not ever ceased (thirty-five years of work in progress) to articulate his hypothesis of an oscillation of thought between the normality of repatriation and the mad audacity of finding itself "out of position".

What does the polemical exchange on madness between Foucault and Derrida teach us? Even though they are travelling in very different discursive dimensions, the message of the one reinforces that of the other. Madness has to do with truth. It *still* has to do with it, one might better say. This observation becomes decisive for us if we reverse the terms: *truth has to do with madness*. Foucault: if we abandon the great narration of truth with its generalising myths and start to work on practices, we discover the *quadrillage*[8] of powers-knowledges which traverse our bodies and give rise to a docile subjectivity and to (plural) games of truth in which we are agreeable players. Derrida: can we think what a game is, and, if the way is not blocked, can we think of a game without the *wild card* of madness? Even more simply we could state the following: Derrida is inviting us to consider what Foucault's "truth" is when he writes *Histoire de la folie*. Which gaze, which words, which "position", which contradictions, which "paradoxicality" does he write it with?

These could never be the words and the gaze of normal science or those of an observer who neutralises the effects of his object of research by taking a safe distance. But they cannot even be their opposite, if such an opposite is imaginable at all. It is true that Foucault, by looking at the whole and at the details of the practices of internment considered as the genealogy of modern psychiatry, keeps madness at a distance and adopts

[8] "Quadrillage" (an originally French term which can also be used in Italian) literally means "quartering". – Trans.

the eye of normality towards it: this eye is *in some ways* that of a reason which has already excluded difference by exorcising its dreadful phantom. On the other hand Foucault is not just a scholar who has supplied us with an instrument for a politics of mental illness.

There is then something else, something more to be understood, and it does not have to be taken for granted that Foucault was, or wanted to be, aware of it. Perhaps Derrida can help us go a bit further in opening the question which is Foucault's but which is also in the end that of madness. As a matter of fact, we are not able to locate Foucault in one of the places he rendered visible and by now practicable thanks to his analysis: he cannot be located in that "fortress" of rationality which he made us discover, given that his gaze coincides neither with that of the psychiatrist, nor with that of the philosopher, and not even with that of the politician.

Foucault gave visibility to a line which on the one hand excludes (madness, difference) while on the other it includes (subjects and all the practices which compose the society of normalisation in which we live): rather than a line, this is a wall, a limit, a border. But where does he locate himself? Is he on this side of the wall, in the security and normality zone? If this has to be his place (since it seems that there are no other places), how can he then describe the wall and talk to us about an historical condition in which the wall was not there? How can he invite us, so it feels like, to knock down a wall which cannot be knocked down? With which sort of ventriloquial magic can he urge us, as it seems, to listen to madness?

Perhaps the wall is not just a wall and the line is not just a line materially inscribed into practices. Perhaps the (Cartesian?) gesture of exclusion is not the only gesture of thought which is possible for us, and at any rate Foucault does not seem to correspond to it. Perhaps, even though this might appear paradoxical, Foucault stands astride the line.

"I do not know". You will remember that this was the first answer. We can now look at it in a non- ingenuous way, by connecting it to Foucault's uncertainties, and above all to a singular act of cancellation that he carried out.

This episode is well known and it has been variously explained by biographers.[9] Foucault removes the initial pages (the preface) of *Histoire*

[9] See Foucault's preface to the first edition of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961). See also D. Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), and J. Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

de la folie, in which madness, with an exceptional literary pathos, took the shape of the barred but desperately visible protagonist of the whole work. These are the pages that Foucault eliminates from the second edition of 1972 and which he will never want to publish again.[10] There Foucault asked himself "what is madness?" and gave the following answer: "some wrinkles that cause little disquiet, and do not alter the great, reasonable calm of history". Madness is nothing but the absence of *oeuvre*: writing its history equates to writing the history of a silence, the archaeology of a silence which creates the history of an absence, the history of something else which is made possible by absence itself. Fullness is only possible thanks to a void, but this void actually is a "vast space of murmurs, that silence stalks". From within the fortress in which we are ourselves locked up we can only perceive the features of madness *qua* fugitive. But this "murmur of dark insects" is not a nothingness, on the contrary it is the trace which allows a whole design. My research, Foucault says: "must go back to the decision that, at the same time, links and separates reason and madness; must tend towards the discovery of the perpetual exchange, the obscure common root, the originary confrontation which gives meaning to the unity as well as to the

[10] The singularity of the episode Rovatti is referring to is far less evident in the English speaking world than it is in France or in Italy. Quite strangely, the English translation of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* – which is based on a French abridged edition – preserves (some parts of) the original preface to the first French edition (1961) that Foucault removed from the second edition (1972). It is true that the first and only English edition dates back to 1967 and is therefore prior to the second French edition; nevertheless, this does not seem fully to justify the successive reprinting of a book that was edited in a completely different fashion by Foucault himself. Moreover, the English edition does not report the new preface (1972) which, quite symptomatically, presents itself as an anti-preface (Foucault starts it by stating: "I should write a new preface to this book which is already old. I admit this idea disgusts me", and concludes it with the following (Nietzschean) remark: " – But you ended up writing a preface. – At least it is a short one"). (The second edition of *Histoire de la folie* – in the original French as well as in the Italian translation – also contains, as appendixes, Foucault's reply to Derrida, entitled "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu", and another fundamental short essay entitled "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre". The latter has been translated into English as "Madness, the Absence of Work" in *Critical Inquiry*, 21, Winter 1995.) Moreover, it should also be specified that some of the quotations from the original preface which Rovatti uses in his article come from passages which do not appear in the shorter preface that appears in *Madness and Civilization*. Since a translation of the entire 1961 preface is included in this issue of *Pli*, for the sake of consistency, I will refer to it for all of Rovatti's quotations, even those that have been already translated. – Trans.

opposition of sense and the senseless".[11] The deleted introduction ends with another decisive question: which sort of language shall we use? "A language without support was therefore necessary: a language that entered into the game, but that could authorise exchange".

One can grasp the interest and the importance of the pages which framed *Histoire de la folie* even on the basis of these brief extracts alone. It is not hasty to state that Derrida starts a dialogue especially with them: Foucault recalls with insistence something "primitive", and Derrida recognises here a metaphysical move. Why did Foucault remove these pages? Perhaps in order to listen to Derrida? For other opportunist reasons? In any case he "takes something away" from his work: he needs to subtract something from it, he needs to soften its impact. Perhaps he senses he has rashly said, in those pages, what madness is for him, he senses something slipped out of his hands. Perhaps he has to modify the inflexion of his *incipit*, he has to take precautions by passing from a reckless "this is what madness is for me" to the delay of a "I do not know", "we cannot know it". It is a redoubled gesture, given that this curious deletion duplicates what the deleted pages said in talking about a deletion. After having deleted madness, its silence, its void and its whispering stand out even more evidently than an ordered, reasonable, full discourse. Every episode of history is the re-proposal of that which has been excluded and made absent, and this happens especially when the whispering has become barely audible. Thus, the removed pages also become more visible. The distance of deletion gives them even more readability. In the same way, the "I do not know" gives evidence to the diversity of madness.

According to Foucault, in order to enter into the game, before even finding the words which allow us to effect the interchange between inside and outside in an oscillating and unstable order of language, it seems that we should learn how there is no approaching without departing, thus discovering the proximity (of madness) in a gesture of distancing. Saying, as Foucault concludes, that we then need "a rather neutral language" in order to abolish the distance with which today's man assures himself against madness, leaves us unsatisfied; on the contrary, the most useful indication arrives to us precisely from the game of deletions which is repeated a second time, and which we should probably continue to repeat if we want to keep ourselves "close" to madness. Madness is difference, but madness is fear of difference, but madness…

[11] *Pli* 13, p. 9.

In short, the repatriation theorised by Derrida is acted by the same Foucault as a risky exercise, which has irruptions and points of recklessness, chiasmatic places (even when the peace of reasonableness, see Descartes, seems to assure a calm navigation).[12] It is not a controlled methodology of doubting that comes on stage with the inflexion of the "I do not know", but the uncertain and dangerous pathos of an experience of madness. The exercise can and must be repeated, the result is not at all assured.

Foucault's exercise starts soon and in the most vertiginous way. The paradox of madness is already entirely condensed in the incipit of the deleted (and thus overexposed) incipit. Let us read it:

> "Pascal: "Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness." And this other text, by Dostoyevsky, from his *Diary of a Writer*: "It is not by confining one's neighbour that one is convinced of one's good sense."
>
> We have yet to write the history of that other turn of madness, whereby men, in the gesture of sovereign reason that confines their neighbour, communicate and recognise each other through the merciless language of non-madness".[13]

Let us pause here. Let us read once again this beginning, let us attempt to orientate ourselves. These are not "rather neutral" words, but a whirlpool of sense which astonishes us. It is the word madness which starts to spin around in a semantic oscillation: it does not stop, it changes its place in every sentence, it appears everywhere like a *wild card* then, at any move, another card comes to substitute it. Pascal: "We are all mad". Pascal: "Those who do not recognize it are mad". Dostoievsky: "We do not stop doubting of being mad by imprisoning madmen". Foucault: "Reason is another kind of madness". Foucault: "This other madness speaks the merciless language of non-madness". There are, in these few sentences, at least five levels or inflexions of madness, which are different from one another, even very different, contradictory, paradoxical. Derrida's conclusion is the following one: Foucault is not able to handle this word, and perhaps it is the word "madness", being too compromised with common language, which does not lend itself to any philosophical manoeuvre, therefore it would be better to abandon it (but Derrida himself will not do it!).

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[12] On this issue see M. Foucault, "My body, this paper, this fire", in op. cit.
[13] *Pli* 13, p. 3.

Madness does not lend itself to philosophical gestures, it is not a philosophical word. But, precisely for this same reason, it lends itself to Foucault's exercise. In the end, even Derrida recognises that there is no thought which can start a new discourse without a risky and tangential relation to madness. Nevertheless, in recognising this fact Derrida wants to fix madness on something determined: nonsense, black light, hyperbolicity, abyssality. But this framing of the "non" may result, and indeed does result, restrictive with respect to Foucault's uncertainty. In fact, the latter does not define anything but exercises a substitutive circularity; the *wild card* changes place, and moves to the other side: there is a madness of non-reason, and a madness of reason which becomes an "other madness"; a madness of those who think themselves to be normal subjects; there is an evidence and necessity of madness, which is so necessary and evident that we would be mad if we were to deny it; there is a madness of the thought of non-madness, a madness of the "merciless" language of non-madness. How can we exit from this obsessive game of mirrors?

And if, in order to exit from the deforming effects of this game, we would not have any choice but to enter into it? If the right way would precisely be that of entering into the pendulum between difference and fear of difference, trying to remain on the risky edge of an "I do not know"? If Foucault had already *proved*[14] that which Derrida will plan to *think* thirty years later? In order not to exorcise the phantom/fantasy (of madness) one has to traverse it, and traversing the phantom/fantasy equates to giving up one's own pretension of mastery.[15]

This *wild card* which whirls with its specular faces, which belongs to the pack and even corresponds to every card in the pack, but which is not a card among others in the pack and in a certain way is not inside the pack itself, this *wild card* does not seem to be fixable in a discourse. Every time we fix one of its faces in a discourse, every time we lock up madness, madness has already moved and it shows another face. According to Derrida, every time we imprison the "mad of the day" (in a clear thought, in a place of containment), it is not madness that we have actually imprisoned. On the contrary, this imprisonment is the biggest

[14] Rovatti uses the term "provato": as used in this sentence, it means both "proved", "experienced" and "tried". – Trans.

[15] As I have already noticed, the Italian term "fantasma", which literally means "phantom", can also be rendered in English, in a more strictly psychoanalytical sense, as "fantasy". In this context, the latter is probably more appropriate given the implicit reference that Rovatti makes to the Lacanian "traversé du fantasme". – Trans.

madness: according to Foucault, there is no madder madness than that of expecting to imprison madness by imprisoning the mad of the day.

Every time we improve a non-excessive language, a rather neutral one, a clear language which knows how to preserve a certain distance from madness, a depersonalised language which attempts to exorcise the phantom of our own madness and thus makes us feel *rather secure* and almost safe; every time we *really* feel *safe* in our neutral, or rather neutral, words, our words end up *scaring* us, sooner or later we do discover in the normality of our reassuring, or quite reassuring, discourses, the madness of this normality. Then we should perhaps impart a circular movement to words and discourses, backing up their absence, we should mime or pretend to mime the *wild card*'s oddness.

We should be at a loss, like Foucault. Indeed he finds different words from those he is looking for and finally he is not able to give words to his whirling exercise. On the contrary, he soon cancels the projection of the exercise, perhaps because words here are not neutral enough.

It then appears that the road bifurcates when it is a matter of giving one's attention and words to the *wild card* of madness. We could follow the way of a chasing language, which would press on the whirling of transformations and which would correspond to the vicious circle of an always lacking place. Many literary examples should cross one's mind, for instance that of Thomas Bernhard's obsessive language. Otherwise we could follow the way of a restrained language, a delayed one, a language which, in its voids, would be able to give hospitality to the silence which accompanies the "I do not know". Perhaps when Foucault hazards the hypothesis of a "rather neutral" language, he privileges the second way: he believes that impersonality could be the gesture of writing which could give hospitality to the silence of madness. It seems that Foucault invites us to safeguard silence with sufficiently anonymous words. But is this really the case? Pierre Rivière speaks and writes. The "infamous men", whose clots of existence fascinate Foucault (he gathers them together for years, like a collector),[16] live only for the instant of a thunder through words, words which are contracted by bureaucracy, but which nevertheless let submerged worlds transpire.

The supervised language with which we usually identify Foucault's style is not the answer we are looking for, nor it is the one he looked for. This language is rather the result of a deletion without traces, a way to be silent by stepping back. Is the bifurcation therefore illusory? Yes and no.

[16] M. Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men", in *Power, Essential Works of Foucault 1954, 1984 – Volume Three* (London: Penguin, 2001).

Yes, since silence (which can translate itself into distance, which every time tends to repatriate into neutrality) actually opens some gaps and renders language porous: it produces openings in which the vortexes of madness, the being out of position caused by the *wild card*, break out, as Foucault knows very well. No, if we observe how this listening in/of language splits into two, into a paradoxical game between what is internal and what is external. Paradoxically, introducing a silence into words means at the same time both shutting up, taking a step back, and letting oneself be caught in the obsessive circularity of madness. It is a switching off which produces thunders. It is a slowing down which gives hospitality to a falling. It is a deletion which does not delete but creates a space for a movement which would otherwise remain unperceivable.

Foucault writes that one thing will survive all scientific progresses which delete madness: the relationship of humankind to its phantoms. "To its impossible, to its bodiless pain, to its carcass during the night".[17] We are asking ourselves what the words of this survival are. It is a matter of phantoms, as Derrida says. But these phantoms inhabit discourse by deleting themselves and by repeating themselves in a whirling game, which could well be the game between difference and fear of difference. It is Foucault himself who urges us to look for the double language of the "I do not know".

Translated by Lorenzo Chiesa

[17] M. Foucault, "Madness, the Absence of Work", in op. cit., p. 291 [translation slightly modified]. – Trans.

Pli 13 (2002), 26-65.

Lucid Unreason: Artaud and Foucault[18]

LORENZO CHIESA

1. A Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums

Gentlemen,

Law and Custom allow you the right to measure states of mind [*esprit*]. You are supposed to exercise this sovereign, dreadful jurisdiction with your understanding. You won't mind if we laugh. The credulity of civilised peoples, scholars and administrators, endows psychiatry with undefined, limitless supernatural wisdom. Your profession's case is awarded the verdict in advance. We have no intention of discussing the validity of your science here, nor the doubtful existence of mental illness. But for a hundred pretentious pathogenic diagnoses, in which confusion between mind [*esprit*] and matter runs wild, for a hundred classifications of which still only the vaguest are of any use, how many noble attempts have been made to approach the world of the mind, in which so many of your prisoners live? For instance, for how many of you are the dreams of somebody affected by dementia praecox and the images which haunt him anything more than a jumble of words?

We are not surprised to find you unequal to a task for which few are predestined. But we vigorously protest against the right attributed to certain men, narrow minded or not, to sanction their investigations into the domain of the mind [*esprit*] with sentences of life imprisonment.

And what imprisonment! We all know – no, it is not widely enough known – that asylums, far from being *asylums*, are fearful

[18] This article was originally published in *aut aut*, 285-286, May-August 1998. It is here reproposed with some major alterations.

> jails, where the inmates provide a source of free and useful manpower and where brutality is the rule, all of which you tolerate. A mental asylum, under cover of science and justice, is comparable to a barracks, a prison or a slave colony.
>
> We will not raise here the question of arbitrary confinement. This will save you the trouble of making hasty denials. But we categorically state that a great number of your inmates, perfectly mad by official definition, are also arbitrarily confined. We protest against any interference with the free development of delirium. It is as legitimate, as logical as any other sequence of human ideas or acts. The repression of anti-social reactions is as chimerical as it is unacceptable in principle. All individuals acts are anti-social. Madmen are individual victims of social dictatorship *par excellence*. In the name of individuality which specifically belongs to man, we demand the liberation of these people convicted of sensibility. For we tell you no laws are powerful enough to lock up all men who think and act.
>
> Without stressing the perfectly inspired nature of the manifestations of certain madmen, in so far as we are capable of appreciating them, we simply affirm that their concept of reality is absolutely legitimate, as are all the acts resulting from it.
>
> Try and remember *that* tomorrow morning during your rounds, when, without knowing their language, you attempt to converse with these people over whom, you must admit, you have only one advantage, namely force.[19]

This letter is one of the texts by Artaud (the other being *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*)[20] that I intend to interrogate in order to bring out the relationship which, in my opinion, exists between his

[19] A. Artaud, *Collected Works – Volume One* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), pp. 182-184 [translation slightly modified]. The actual authorship of this letter has been much debated. Quite likely it was co-written by different authors of the *la Révolution Surréaliste* journal (Artaud, Desnos, Frænkel); for a more detailed discussion on this issue see A. Artaud, *Œuvres complètes, tome I* ** (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 297-298. In spite of these reservations (the editor agues that the letter "does not owe anything to Artaud but the initial idea" – see op. cit., p. 236), this letter still figures in the second, revised and augmented French edition of Artaud's *Œuvres complètes, tome I***.

[20] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in *Selected Writings*, edited and with an introduction by Susan Sontag (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

considerations on madness and the – more academically systematic – treatment that Foucault reserves for it. I will try to suggest how one can find in Artaud various embryos, not only lyrical ones, of the researches which gave life to *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (*Madness and Civilization*) by Michael Foucault.

I should start with a brief chronological orientation. The *Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums* was written in 1925, when Artaud was at the head of the "Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes". It appeared together with four other open letters (addressed respectively to the Pope, to the Dalai Lama, to Buddhist schools, and to the chancellors of European universities) on the third issue of the journal *la Révolution Surréaliste*. Their tone is intentionally injurious and provocative. The *Letter to the Medical Directors* should be taken into particular consideration among the writings in which Artaud deals with madness, inasmuch as it is the only one which was written *before* his internment. Artaud was locked up in different asylums from October 1937 to March 1946. Thus this text is significantly prior to his internment. The other texts by Artaud which are dedicated (not exclusively) to madness were all composed during or after his stay in these institutions. The *Letters from Rodez*[21] were written during the last three years of his forced internment; *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society* is one of Artaud's last books: it was written and published in 1947. To this list, we also have to add "Alienation et magie noire" (and above all its "dossier"), which is one of the chapters of *Artaud le Mômo* (also written in 1947): by writing it, Artaud had originally planned to revise the *Letter to the Medical Directors* from 1925, but he ended up drafting a completely new text.[22]

I return to the *Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums*. What does Artaud say here about madness? Did Foucault know this text? And if he did, what did he absorb and re-elaborate from what Artaud had to say?

Before any comparison, I would like to start by recalling how Artaud plays a fundamental role in *Madness and Civilization*:[23] this preliminary specification should contribute to sustaining the pertinence of my questions. In his first major book, Foucault does often make reference to Artaud. Well beyond this text, which is anyway crucial to what we are

[21] A. Artaud, "Letters from Rodez", in *Selected Writings*, op. cit.

[22] A. Artaud, "Artaud le Mômo", in *Œuvres complètes, tome XII*, op. cit.: on the gestation of "Aliénation et magie noire" see the "Notes" to this volume of the *Œuvres complètes* on pp. 286-287.

[23] Later in this article I will attempt to show more precisely in what it consists.

dealing with, Artaud constituted a constant reference point in the cultural formation of the French philosopher: this is similar to that embodied by Roussel and it is probably second in importance only to that represented by Nietzsche.[24] If, on the one hand, a generic and implicit recognition of the influence that Artaud exerted is therefore possible, on the other, it never corresponds, in Foucault's texts and interviews, to a specific acknowledgement aimed at revealing explicit thematic continuities between the two authors. Artaud is not entitled to the "respect", at least not to all the respect, which is instead reserved – without reservations – for Nietzsche. The copyright for the genealogical method is punctually recognised: "If I were pretentious I would generally entitle what I am doing: genealogy of morals",[25] Foucault once declared. The same cannot be said towards Artaud: his hints of concepts seem to be simply *assimilated* by Foucault. These can be as fundamental as the *déraison lucide* (lucid unreason) – a sort of general metonymy of the (also Foucauldian) inextricable superimposition of reason and madness – of which Artaud already talks about in *Bilboquet* (1923).[26] There can be no doubt that revealing explicit thematic continuities with Artaud would not have helped the credibility of the rising Foucauldian star (in another

[24] On this see J. Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

[25] M. Foucault, "Prison Talk: an Interview with Michel Foucault", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 53. In 1961, Foucault had already declared that he intended to operate "under the sun of the great Nietzschean inquiry" – see the "preface" to the first French edition of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961). This original preface was then removed from later editions by Foucault himself. On the possible meanings of such a deletion see P. A. Rovatti, *Astride a Low Wall: Notes on Philosophy and Madness*, in this issue of *Pli*. More generally, I take here the opportunity to remark how difficult, if not impossible, it is to appropriately follow many of my comments to *Histoire de la folie* on the exclusive bases of its English translation which is, to the best of my knowledge, available only in an abridged edition – see M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1999). An unabridged English translation of the first preface to *Histoire de la folie* is provided in this issue of *Pli*. All my quotations from the 1961 preface will refer to the *Pli* translation.

[26] A. Artaud, "Bilboquet", in *Œuvres complètes, tome I*, op. cit., p. 239. "Bilboquet" was originally the title of a journal of which Artaud was the sole editor/author (two issues were published): the term designates a group of insects (for example grasshoppers) but it can also be referred to a mischievous child. In this latter sense "bilboquet" should be related to "môMo" (fool, imp), a (self-defining) term which becomes fundamental for the last Artaud. On the possible meanings of "môMo", see J. Derrida, *Artaud le Moma* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002) especially pp. 34-37, 44-46.

place, it should be thoroughly examined why…); it is certain that the Nietzschean descent implied a better compromise between transgression and academic acceptability (how could one talk, for example, about "general spells" or about "erotomania *qua* bourgeois ideology" in a doctoral thesis?). In any case, if Artaud lacked, and still lacks, a right of philosophic citizenship, it is not certainly the usage which Foucault makes of his texts that could eventually facilitate him obtaining it. This is probably Foucault's least expressible wish in Artaud's regard: he wants to prevent him from entering into the philosophical territory, a territory whose sovereignty Foucault has never stopped mistreating, even when he continued to dwell and work in it; in spite of what can be said, in spite of what Foucault himself might say – Derrida's "epochal" authority can assist me at least on this point – he is, all things considered, a philosopher. The attitude he adopts towards Artaud thus leaves me disconcerted. At first, Foucault's sort of silent, reverential respect – worthy of a disciple who is loyal to the testament of a master by now deceased – seems to be aimed at sparing Artaud from the "metaphysical obscurantism" of an entrance into philosophy: the latter does not give him any right of citizenship, as a matter of fact it does not even issue him a residence permit. In spite of that, this silence ends up arousing a suspicion: Foucault (and not only him), willingly or unwillingly, maybe more unwillingly that willingly, maybe only unwillingly, makes Artaud enter into philosophy as a *clandestine*. Artaud would thus be a *sans papier* within philosophy, a *sans papier* of philosophy. He would be a clandestine immigrant into philosophical grounds, to be inevitably *exploited*. By whom? Even by Foucault. Artaud is made to work "illegally", his labour is requested by the construction of modern structures of thought – maybe by the most complex construction: the one deconstructing thought; his name, his generalities are always concealed. Is it perhaps for this reason that (initially) one cannot succeed in "discovering" him? It is *also* for this reason… Who is Artaud? Artaud hides himself, causing intentional perturbations:[27] by trying to prevent any further questioning on his account he repeatedly seems to wish a collapse into anonymity.[28] This is all true. Nevertheless, it is not only him

[27] For instance with the uncanny terseness of his self-introductions: "I, Antonin Artaud, am my son, my father, my mother and myself".

[28] "It is the last favour I want to ask of you: you have to eliminate everything which would recall my name" (undated letter: the editor of the complete works dates it to the beginning of June 1937). In another letter (end of May '37) Artaud writes: "I have decided not to sign *Voyage to the Land of Tarahumara*. My name has to disappear". See also letter to Paulhan (end of June '37): "I won't sign anymore, at any price"

who wants to deny any "definition" (especially if referred to his persona). *If Artaud does not have any papers this is not only because he does not want to have them*. He is a *sans papier* of philosophy *also* against his will. Maybe one day, which is not that far away, as Foucault *himself* teaches us (irony of his fate? This is the place of a "chiasmus", Derrida would tell us…),[29] "Artaud will belong to the foundation of our language, not to its rupture" but this "sudden, irruptive inclusion in our language of the speech of the excluded [authors]" is going to happen without any understanding of the exclusion, without ever "discovering" the excluded authors *qua* excluded. Foucault adds: "What was the point of collecting the words of Nerval or Artaud? Why discover oneself in their utterances and not in them?".[30] This is always already the day when the lifeless body of a nameless clandestine is being found, identified (for the first and last time), lamented, forgotten. It is with regret that we are obliged to recognise in Foucault the unusual role of the *passeur*: certainly this was not the task he set for himself when he first referred to Artaud, but afterwards he imprudently left him alone. This might be the price to pay for one whom, like Foucault, improperly claims, almost with insolence, to philosophise outside philosophy; this is the same as claiming to reason by denying thought. In order to succeed in letting oneself fall into the abyss that this extreme programme implies, one should be Artaud and not Foucault. One should not be a philosopher. Artaud in fact was not a philosopher *for himself*, in the depths of the cruel vertigo of his "total adventure";[31] he is instead a philosopher *for us*, for those who read him: I think it is in this direction that Deleuze and Guattari's ambivalent statement according to which "even if Artaud did not succeed for himself,

(*Œuvres complètes, tome VII*, op. cit., p. 223, 226, 230). The issue of anonymity becomes absolutely central for Artaud during his trip to Ireland of 1937: this trip immediately precedes his internment. This desperate call for anonymity should therefore be related to Artaud's practical intention of "becoming one authentically alienated" (i.e. a sort of paradoxically premeditated desire to collapse into the psychosis of the Real: "madness" will effectively occur soon after).

[29] On the notion of "chiasmus" applied to Foucault, see J. Derrida, "'Être juste avec Freud' – L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse", in *Penser la folie* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1992).

[30] Michel Foucault, "Madness, the Absence of Work", in *Critical Inquiry*, 21, Winter 1995, pp. 290-291[translation slightly modified]. This text figures as an appendix to the second French edition of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

[31] See J. Derrida, "La Parole Soufflée", in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 171. This "adventure" consists in the (necessarily unattainable) utopia of a Life-Work with no gap separating the two (life/work), without Difference.

it is certain that through him something has succeeded for us all"[32] should be interpreted. Artaud is also a philosopher for Foucault, who refuses to grant him this status: Artaud should necessarily be treated as a philosopher, since he undermines the possibilities of philosophy as such.[33] Alternatively, if one prefers not to "desecrate" him, he should be left in peace.

I will later return to these general considerations concerning the relationship between Artaud and philosophy. I now go back to the *Letter to the Medical Directors of Lunatic Asylums*. What does Artaud say in this short text which is of interest with respect to what Foucault will say in *Madness and Civilization*? In its two pages it is possible to track down a large number of common thematic nuclei (which, of course, I will only outline here):

1. First of all, Artaud implicitly informs us that one should distinguish between *madness* and *mental illness*, whose existence is moreover dubious. The object of psychiatric science, which it "measures" and catalogues, is mental illness – supposing that it exists – and not madness. Artaud does not intend to "discuss here the doubtful existence of mental illness". He is thus going to talk about madness: "a great number" of those who are interned are not subject to mental illness and should therefore be freed. Madmen, who are not simply mentally ill people, should be freed. Who are these madmen? What is madness? Artaud (like Foucault) prefers at first not to formulate any specific definition; by giving a definition one would only end up providing another classification to a science, psychiatry, that seems to be exclusively based on the empty guarantee of endless labelling. This science is decked out with an unmotivated halo so that the blinding glare of its light can qualify it as a science when it is not a science at all; in our culture its "case is awarded a verdict in advance", i.e., it is positively judged in advance, in order to justify *a priori* the importance of the social role it has assumed in case it should meet any obstacle/criticism. Psychiatry is so paradoxically empty that it ingenuously reveals its own bad conscience by itself anticipating the classifications of illnesses which are yet to come. The diagnosis and the (alleged) cure precede the illness.

[32] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone, 1988), p. 164.

[33] See J. Derrida, "La parole soufflée" in op. cit., especially pp. 193-195. It is nevertheless true that Derrida ambiguously prefers to deny Artaud the appellation of "philosopher" in spite of recognising that he undermines the possibility of philosophy as such – on this specific issue, see L. Chiesa, *Antonin Artaud – Verso un corpo senza organi* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2001), pp. 9-14, 62-65.

There are hundreds of pathogenic diagnoses "of which still only the vaguest are of any use" precisely because it is they that *create* the different forms of mental illness. Artaud's doubt will become a historic certainty for Foucault: psychiatry is not the remedy to mental illness, it is its inventor. *Maladie mentale* and *folie* are not the same thing; the former is an invention of psychiatry, the latter is something different, in any way indefinable: it should only be approached in an oblique way in order to avoid the mistake of continuing to "measure the mind". However, the problem is that Artaud's *Letter* itself does not seem to comply with this discretion, it does not put it in practice. For the same reason, after all, it paradoxically ends up being – like *Madness and Civilization* – an *ambiguous* piece of writing which regards the imprisoned forms of madness more than "madness itself" (precisely because it starts from the presupposition, here present in an even more utopian way – metaphysically present, one could correctly add – than in Foucault, of a primitive madness resisting the contaminations of psychiatry, that should be *freed and therefore spoken*). In Foucault this writing is even more ambiguous since, on one hand, it is based on the presumptuous assumption of being able to describe what has by now become a silence, or, which is the same, the purity that preceded a contamination, while on the other, it admits that the freedom of madness can be perceived only from *within* reason, i.e. after a (psychiatric) contamination took place: "The freedom of madness can only be heard from the height of the fortress that holds it prisoner".[34] We could thus claim that Foucault sensed the contradiction but decided to go on. Artaud did not even sense it (here) and, because of that, he could not have agreed with Foucault's last statement. In spite of many necessary concealments and an inevitable, continuous slippage towards the (simpler) treatment of mental illness, Artaud, more impudently than Foucault, does instead *intend to* (but eventually fails to) talk to us about *pure* madness. He still believes in the purity of madness, which has to be released from asylums.

2. Who are then actually these inmates that must be freed, who are not mentally ill but who are at the same time "perfectly mad by official definition"? (They are not mentally ill since, as I have just shown,

[34] See the English translation of the "preface" to the first French edition of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, in this issue of *Pli* (pp. 8-9). This Foucauldian approach to the relationship between madness and freedom is very close to that adopted by J. Lacan in "Propos sur la causalité psychique" contained in *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), especially pp. 175-177. Foucault's equation asylum-prison/fortress, as I will examine more closely later on, also provides one of the leitmotifs of Artaud's letter. Madmen are there described as "the convicts of sensibility".

according to Artaud – Foucault would not agree – they still escape the cataloguing that mental illness implies; an example of this resistance is given by "the images which hunt the dream of someone who is affected by dementia praecox"). They are *people who are (considered to be) antisocial*: *madness is a* social *question*. *"Madmen are individual victims of social dictatorship* par excellence*" as far as "all individual acts"*, *which properly belong to the human condition*, Artaud adds, *"are* [considered to be] *antisocial"*. One could say that Foucault wrote a book of more than five hundred pages exactly around this simple enunciation; as he himself declared in 1961 to a journalist of *Le Monde*: "Madness exists only in society".[35] Foucault tracked down stacks of documents, individuated forgotten dates, drew unsuspected lines, (re)constructed a whole history in order to show how society, even though in diverse forms, has never renounced its (compulsory) wish to "imprison the madman of the day", as Derrida would later specify. Mental illness and psychiatry represent only one stage, certainly not the last one, of an "excluding" (but not simply "repressive") itinerary that will never end.[36] The madman of the day is identified in the one who is different, antisocial, more generally "other" with respect to a *norm* that, nowadays, does not correspond to the law of nature nor – as Foucault warns us somewhere else – to any human law (as one often mistakenly thinks); the norm is not guaranteed by the legislative-juridical institution: on the contrary, the former "guarantees" the latter, by patrolling, by "quartering" (things and bodies), by exercising a "surveillance" (internal and external), more generally by becoming a "normalising sanction" which is fundamental in sustaining an entire social order: the norm founds a disciplinary and disciplined society which wants to be *the* order.[37] Artaud is an example of the *other* to this norm, especially when he comes back from Mexico and, even more evidently, when he returns from Ireland: he is the different one, the "mad of the day" *qua* antisocial. Quite symptomatically, in his *Letter*, he keeps on talking about "*anti-sociality*": he never defines it as "*a-sociality*", almost as if he were implicitly proposing (as he will later explicitly do) the constitution of a different

[35] Interview given to *Le Monde*, 22 July 1961, p. 9.

[36] Foucault teaches us that the figures of the "antisocial" are epochal. At the time of the *grand-renfermement* of the "classic age", madmen, libertines, cursers, wanderers were all (considered to be) antisocial. We might ask ourselves: which are the most evident figures of anti-sociality in the contemporary world?

[37] The Foucauldian distinction (and continuity) between Law and Norm presents some similarities with the Lacanian distinction (and continuity) between Law and Ideological Enjoyment.

society with respect to the present one and not, more dramatically, a non-society in which any communion of individuals would be excluded. Anti-sociality does not necessarily mean "without" society, but "*against*" a given society. Against the establishment. What is the anti-society made of anti-social individuals that Artaud thinks of (not just in here)?[38] Which sort of "madness" would this society of "madmen" formulate?[39] Could there ever be a society *of* "madmen" in which, *according to* which, any kind of social exclusion ("madness") would disappear? The answer is quite possibly going to be a negative one (certainly for Foucault). At this stage, one could only (nostalgically) refer to the (vanished) absolute utopia of Domenico, the "madman" of *Nostalghia*, by Andrej Tarkovskij…[40]

3. "The repression of anti-social reactions is […] chimerical", Artaud writes. In one sense, it certainly is chimerical inasmuch as it is, after all, inefficacious; in spite of its contamination, madness does not die, it transforms itself. According to Foucault, there will always be a form of transgression since "there is not a single culture in the world where everything is permitted".[41] The most paradoxical otherness against which repression could anyway be applied, would coincide, as I have just tried to suggest, with that of the so called "sane" ones: in this borderline-case those who are "insane" would be the repressors… Artaud seems to be generally aware of all this. It seems that the same cannot be said for what concerns the second possible meaning of the "chimerical" character of such a repression: the one for which "repression" has to be considered, in the end, chimerical in so far as it is *not* repressive, or at least not entirely repressive. The spirals of power-knowledge-*pleasure* which Foucault

[38] On the "political" in Artaud, on his cruel politics, see J. Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", in *Writing and Difference*, op. cit, p. 245, and "La Parole Soufflée" in op. cit., p. 189 (and note 37 in particular).

[39] From now on, inverted commas for the word "madness" become compulsory and are always implied, unless otherwise specified …

[40] This utopia in fact vanishes once Domenico commits suicide, precisely in front of his impossible (impossibly "tolerant") society of "madmen". At the same time does not his very suicide also suggest (in Tarkovskij's intentions) a preservation of this impossible utopia? Does not Domenico *sacrifice* himself in order to maintain the illusion of such an utopia? Is not this eminently *conciliatory* utopia the utopia of *reason* par excellence (i.e., in Lacanian terms, the belief in the existence of a non-barred "big Other", of a self-contained, over-comprehensive Sense), is it not the epitome of what reason (and man *qua parlêtre*) is not but "wants-to-be"? These questions could also provide us with a key to interpret why Lacan describes Hegel as "the most sublime of hysterics"…

[41] M. Foucault, "Madness, the Absence of Work", in cit., p. 293.

primarily defines in function of a discourse on sexuality are not limited to this specific domain. They can retroactively be applied to his exploration of madness. As he himself admits, the investigation on sexuality is only a paradigmatic example of a wider research: "I would like to emphasise that sexuality is only an example of a general problem which I have been chasing – or which has been chasing me – for more than fifteen years, and which anyway guides most of my books".[42] The spirals of power-knowledge-*pleasure* do not only exist in the family which catalyses sex, but also in the prison which promotes crime and in the asylum which *re-creates* madness (in the form of mental illness). Before the complexity of a horizon that Foucault only managed to sketch – it is up to others to give it brighter colours – Artaud's naïve tone is childish. Here it is evident that Artaud, who has in many other ways "anticipated" Foucault, still firmly believes in the "purity" of madness and in the "evil" of a localisable repressive power.[43] According to him, this purity has not yet been lost – on the contrary, at times Foucault seems to be precisely mourning this loss (even these hints will cost him the Derridean accusation of being metaphysical) –; madness has not mixed up with what opposes it, madness (*qua* anti-sociality) is still alive and it is waiting to be freed from the – simply physical – chains that still keep it imprisoned.[44]

4. "As for a common language, there is none; or rather, there is no longer".[45] If, on the one hand, madness will never completely disappear – either by continuing to transform itself, as Foucault suggests, or by preserving its somehow intact purity, as Artaud more ambitiously believes – on the other, that which by now it inexorably lacks is, for both authors, its *communication*, its linguistic relationship with reason.

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[42] See Foucault's "preface" to the Italian edition of *La volonté de savoir* – originally published in *La volontà di sapere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978). For an English translation of this preface, see this issue of *Pli* (pp. 1-2).

[43] Artaud's position becomes more complex in his other text on madness which I will take into consideration. As we will later see in more detail, the dichotomy oppressors/oppressed is not that clear-cut in *Van Gogh*: other superimpositions with Foucault's last researches will become evident there. In spite of *Van Gogh* being a text on madness, it is the spiral power-pleasure which will openly emerge (as in the last Foucault).

[44] In spite of this disavowal, Artaud senses that justice, as much as science, is only a "cover" under which "a mental asylum is comparable to a barracks, a prison or a slave colony". It would be interesting to compare this last statement (only apparently innocuous – at first it seems to have just a rhetorical function –) with some crucial passages of *Discipline and Punish* (for example, those explaining the "norms" of "normalising" architecture).

[45] *Pli* 13, p. 4.

According to Artaud there is no conversation between psychiatrists and "the perfectly inspired nature of the manifestations of certain madmen"; from the standpoint of 1920's psychiatry, their "inspiration" means nothing but "a jumble of words". Psychiatrists, even in the case of intelligent psychiatrists – "narrow minded or not" Artaud says –, could never understand madmen's inspiration. It has to be noted that "open minded" psychiatrists are those who will electrify him, those who will compel him to undergo electroshock "therapy" (so called); in this way, by also attacking the alleged "openings" of psychiatry, Artaud seems to be filling the eighty years gap which separates his *Letter* from our contemporary debate on mental illness.[46]

Why then is there such a basic impossibility of communication? Because the fundamental (anti-communicative) tool of psychiatry is the "understanding" (*entendement*): it is this aspiring tyrant of the mind (*esprit*) which allows psychiatrists to exercise what Artaud defines as "a sovereign and dreadful jurisdiction". The main activity of the understanding consists in classifying and "measuring" (too much). What seems to be implicitly emerging from Artaud's *Letter* is a distinction between mind (*esprit*), *qua* general, indeterminate place of thought, and understanding, *qua* specific, derivative involution of the mind which is attempting to hegemonise it. Towards the end of the letter, Artaud will in fact claim that "no laws are powerful enough to lock up all men who

[46] It has to be recalled that Artaud is "cured" with new methods by an "innovative" psychiatrist. For a disconcerting "self-defence" of doctor Ferdière see his preface (written long after Artaud's death) to *Nouveaux Écrits de Rodez*. "One does not have to imagine that I am trying to justify myself nor that I am looking for extenuating circumstances […] Many times I have regretted the fact of having released Artaud too soon". And then…: "it's my fault, it's my terrible fault if Artaud died when he was still relatively young and he could not give us a greater number of masterpieces like the admirable *Van Gogh*" – see A. Artaud, *Nouveaux Écrits de Rodez* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp. 7-9. Incidentally, I wish to note that Artaud was visited by Lacan in 1938, shortly after his hospitalisation. On that occasion *Doctor* Lacan declared to R. Blin (a friend of Artaud and also a close associate of Beckett): "He is obsessed, he will live for eighty years without writing a single sentence, he is obsessed" (see *Liberation*, 14 June 1977). On this encounter between Artaud and Lacan (who will later always refuse to say anything on Artaud, apart from dissuade his followers from reading his works), A. and O. Virmaux observe that: " the entire psychiatric institution had been severely dishonoured by the Artaud-case. Lacan himself had not been spared: someone reminded (by R. Blin) that he had examined Artaud at Sainte-Anne in 1938-39, and that he had given a definitive diagnosis […]. It is then clear how this mistake caused psychiatrists of the following generation to be more prudent on Artaud, or even to abstain from any comment" – see A. and O. Virmaux, *Antonin Artaud – Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1996), p. 60.

think and act". Thus, according to him, (many of) those who are imprisoned, i.e. (antisocial) madmen, do *think*. Consequently Artaud seems to suggest that his conviction about the understanding (*entendement*) of psychiatrists does not equate to a universal conviction concerning thought. On the contrary, given that laws now aim at "locking up *all* men who think (and act)", it is probably only them, those whom society wants to imprison, who really think. *Madmen would be those who* really *think*. Here Artaud is sketching an opposition between the "real" thought of madmen and the "false" thought – named "understanding" – of psychiatrists… What can this mean? At this point, it has to be underlined how, according to Artaud, in spite of madmen's thought being the "real" one, it nevertheless continues to be a "delirium" (see *Letter*). This *delirious-real-thought* is *not* said to be *more* logical, it is instead "*as* legitimate, *as* logical as any other sequence of human ideas" (i.e. *as* legitimate *as* the "false" thought – "understanding" – of psychiatrists); in other words, it is (at least) as logical as the "logics" of a "false thought" which is therefore equally delirious. The two kinds of thought are *at least* on the same level, since they are both delirious; I say "at least" because "false thought" displays an additional form of madness: it does not admit its delirium. Thought, *all* thought, is delirious for Artaud: this is why those who really think, those who are really delirious, get imprisoned. Theirs is a (logically and socially) unbearable "truth", a truth of truth which can only be half-said.[47] One further point: more specifically, what is then this delirium of thought (of a thought that cannot exist but *qua* delirium)? The answer is: *thought cannot think*. This is what Artaud defines, with a neologism, as the "*impouvoir*" (powerlessness) of thought itself and of which he speaks ever since his early, misunderstood, correspondence with Jacques Rivière.[48]

[47] On the ultimate truth as lack of truth (as "A" barred), and especially on the impossibility of wholly saying it, i.e. of reducing it to *the* truth, see J. Lacan, *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan – Livre XVII. L'envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), particularly the 4th session.

[48] Artaud's letters are misunderstood by Rivière, since the latter seems to equate *impouvoir* to a mere artistic impotence, a sort of lack of inspiration. See "Correspondence with Jacques Rivière", in *Selected Writings*, op. cit. On this same issue, M. Blanchot writes that Artaud discovered "the impossibility of thinking which is thought" – see M. Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), especially pp. 55-58. According to Foucault's conclusion to *Histoire de la folie*, all this corresponds to Artaud's own madness: "its central void experienced and measured in all its endless dimensions" (M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, op. cit., p. 287): in other words Foucault is here attributing to Artaud the same operation that he was attributing to the "delirious measurements" of psychiatrists; from another perspective,

From which position does Artaud speak then? Is he not (here more then elsewhere) talking with the language of the "understanding"? Yes and no; the answer must necessarily be double. In the *Letter*, Artaud states that, in order to enter into communication with the inspired manifestations of madmen, one does not only have to be "capable of appreciating them", but also needs to be "predestined". Artaud certainly considers himself to be a predestined being (ten years later he will sign *Les Nouvelles Révélations de l'Être* as "the Revealed").[49] Those who are predestined *also* talk the language of reason: but at times they stammer and make clamorous gaffes, like one speaking a foreign language. Then nobody seems to understand them anymore: if they become troublesome, they get imprisoned. These stammerers act as the last intermediaries between reason and madness: no other communicative bridge is possible apart from theirs.

The issue of a "circulation of language" that is coming to an end is widely developed by Foucault himself. More specifically, he traces the genealogy of a progressive "silencing" of madness, marked by two fundamental dates. The first is 1657, the year in which the first great internment of homeless people occurred in France (France is just a

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Foucault seems then to confirm Artaud's own conclusions (here as elsewhere) on the inclusion of both "madness" and "understanding" in an omni-comprehensive delirium. This is one of the most significant knots of signification in Artaud's entire oeuvre: here I will limit myself to some other brief hints. In *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault maintains that delirium is usually considered to be "the dream of those who are awake": this straight-forward consideration can help to suggest how for Artaud a general equation exists between thought, delirium (as we have just seen) and dream. This is how Deleuze recognises that in his intention of "restoring the pure work of thought" – which is the ambitious programmatic apex of Artaudian cinema, see A. Artaud, "The Shell and the Clergyman", in *Collected Works: Volume Three*, op. cit., p. 63 –, Artaud actually "*makes dream pass through a diurnal treatment*" – see G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Athlone, 1989), p. 167 (Deleuze's underlining) – or, complementarily, he confers thought a nocturnal character. Thinking is as illogical as dreaming.

[49] Somebody else before Artaud adopted similar nicknames; somebody else decided to sign his works as "Dionysus" or "The Crucified", somebody whose "Christian" name was Friedrich Nietzsche. Somebody who, after a necessary period of "untimeliness", has become (one of) the twentieth-century philosopher(s) *par excellence*. By now, Nietzsche seems to "belong to the foundations of our language" (to put it in Foucauldian terms). In spite of his current "timeliness" – anyway "untimely", anyway "delayed" with regards to Nietzsche himself and the time in which he formulated his philosophy – have we really succeeded in "discovering" him? For Artaud, this might be a significant kinship. On the relationship Artaud-Nietzsche, see C. Dumoulié, *Nietzsche et Artaud. Pour une éthique de la cruauté* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

privileged case: Foucault's investigation aims at being valid on a European scale). According to Foucault this event causes the tracing of a dividing line between reason and unreason. Such a separation did not exist in the Middle Ages, nor during the Renaissance. Nevertheless, in spite of the *grand renfermement*, madness is still able to dispute the fragile supremacy achieved by reason: according to Foucault, at this stage, reason and unreason are still dialectically communicating (in their mutual dependence) whilst they fight each other. The second date is 1794: in this year the so called "liberation" of madmen was carried out by Pinel in France. For Foucault it is a false liberation which only corresponds to a "physical" improvement of the living conditions of inmates but which, at the same time, by moving the co-ordinates of imprisonment towards a moral region, by associating mental illness with morality, ends up definitely silencing madness. The birth of psychiatry is, according to Foucault, a direct consequence of this "philanthropy", on the basis of which reason wins its battle against madness. The latter, forced to the most complete silence, becomes mute, with the exception of a few "lyrical" cases. "In the midst of the serene world of mental illness, modern man no longer communicates with the madman".[50]

If, on the one hand, Artaud portrays contemporary asylums as horrifying prisons, as places where torture and the exploitation of free manpower regularly take place, Foucault, on the other, prefers to delineate a complex historical process for which the most properly physical coercion has to symbolise, in a specific way, the age of the "classic" internment. According to him, the equation asylum-prison can no longer exhaust the extreme complexity of the present situation.

5. Finally, it is important to dwell upon the possible meanings of this "predestination", on the exclusive basis of which, as we have seen, one can still "speak the language" of madness while not (entirely) departing from reason. In greater detail, it should be recalled how this bizarre idea represents a fundamental connection between what Artaud says about madness and what Foucault says about it, precisely by also referring to Artaud *himself*. It is true that the esoteric echoes of this term, uttered by Artaud in messianic tones – which are still moderate in the *Letter* with respect to other places of his oeuvre –, could make us smile and indicate some premonitory signs of his future misfortunes. However, one should not forget that, in *Histoire de la folie*, there is a key concept that Foucault once defined, right in the first page of its preface, as "the lyricism of

[50] *Pli* 13, p. 4.

protest".[51] This lyrical protest counts among its representatives famous artists, writers and philosophers, among whom Artaud figures (he is, according to Foucault, one of the most prominent representatives, and, quite importantly, the *last* in chronological order – after Nietzsche and Roussel);[52] their function, in our reasonable psychiatric society, which has led madness to a "definitive" silence, is to express the residual echoes of unreason. The lyrical protest is: "a deaf tragic conscience which has never stopped keeping watch".[53] In other words, it is a last communicative bridge between madness and reason: knocking it down (when Artaud, without being understood, will be made to "belong to the basis of our language", Foucault marks in the margin) means deleting all surviving remains of the previous richness of circulation (between reason and madness but also between reason and unreason). All this shows us that Foucault himself somehow believes that there still exists somebody who, one way or another, without utterly avoiding a collapse into tragedy (Artaud could not in fact avoid it, neither did Nietzsche), is still able to act as an intermediary between the (imposed) silence of madness and its (dubiously) contradictory enunciation. It therefore seems that this *permeability* of the "lyrical protest" does not differ that much from the "task for which few are predestined", about which Artaud talks in the *Letter*. On the other hand, it is certain that, as I will try to demonstrate by analysing *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*, the predestined task that Artaud feels has been personally entrusted to him by Destiny – and which is going to make him travel to Ireland, where he will be imprisoned, in order to "pay for others so that something is changed" and "to realise a prophecy" –[54] is undertaken in his case without that kind of "theoretical filter" which instead Foucault constantly interposes between his person and the famous names he calls to "assist" madness, almost as if he would intend to protect himself against any sudden, unexpected, though attractive, slip into that convulsive community.

2. The Man Suicided by Society

[51] *Pli* 13, p. 3.
[52] Sade, Hölderlin, Nerval, van Gogh and *Le Neveu de Rameau* (a fictional character created by Diderot) all belong to the "lyrical protest".
[53] M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, op. cit., p. 35.
[54] A. Artaud, *Œuvres complètes, tome VII*, op. cit., pp. 247, 255.

Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society is a text about the suicide of the famous Dutch painter: according to Artaud, this is a suicide *sui generis*, since it was the "psychiatric society", of which van Gogh had become a victim, that "suicided" him.[55] This might be Artaud's most eloquent text on madness. The book was written in few weeks and almost immediately published (September 1947). Thus it came out more than twenty years after the *Letter*, one year after Artaud's release from the asylum of Rodez and less than a year before his death (March 1948).

I start by quoting in full the *post-scriptum* to the introduction:

> Van Gogh did not die of a state of delirium properly speaking,/ but of having been bodily the battlefield of a problem around which the evil spirit of this humanity has been struggling from the beginning./ the problem of the predominance of flesh over spirit, or of body over flesh, or of spirit over both./ And where in this delirium is the place of the human self?/ Van Gogh searched for his throughout his life, with a strange energy and determination,/ and he did not commit suicide in a fit of madness, in dread of not succeeding,/ on the contrary, he had just succeeded, and discovered what he was and who he was, when the collective consciousness of society, to punish him for escaping from its control,/ suicided him./ And this happened to van Gogh the way this always generally happens, during an orgy, a mass, an absolution, or some other rite of consecration, possession, succubation or incubation./ Thus it wormed its way into his body,/ this society/ absolved,/ consecrated,/ sanctified/ and possessed,/ erased in him the supernatural consciousness he had just *achieved*, and, like an inundation of black crows in the fibers of his internal tree,/ overwhelmed him with one final surge,/ and, taking his place,/ killed him./ For it is precisely the anatomical logic of modern man

[55] Artaud would probably argue that almost every "sui-cide" is *sui-generis*: we might say, inasmuch as it cannot be considered *causa sui*. According to Artaud, suicides, in the great majority of cases, are only masks for actual homicides (almost every suicide is therefore *sui-generis* precisely because it is not *sui*-generis). On the distinction between "imposed suicides" (like the one of van Gogh) and "*suicide antérieur*" (i.e. "authentic", actively "antisocial" suicide which "does not belong to the realm of death") see Artaud's early texts on suicide ("Enquête. – Le suicide est-il une solution?" and "Sur le suicide" in *Œuvres complètes, tome I*). This second kind of suicide should be compared to (the ethical and political function of) what Lacan defines as the "symbolic death".

> that he has never been able to live, has never thought of living, except as one possessed.[56]

The poetic style of this text is striking in its originality, especially for those who are not "used" to Artaud. It seems to be permanently suspended between a writing in verses and a falling back into prose. I take here the opportunity to sketch out a brief stylistic consideration. Even in Foucault's *Histoire de la folie* there are plenty of indubitably poetic passages (so different from the programmatic ascetic "dryness" of his last books); nevertheless, the almost baroque concessions that he allows himself in "philosophical" sections of this text are always easily circumscribable; they can comfortably be divided from truly historical and descriptive parts, and are relegated – with meticulous care – to the beginning or to the end of every chapter. Foucault uses poetry which he seems to be able to *control* at will; Foucault can afford the luxury – rare for a philosopher – of committing himself – in one book – to different exercises of writing, while keeping them well delimited from one another.[57] I say this in spite of what Foucault himself affirms, in the first "preface" to *Histoire de la folie*, that: "A *neutral* enough *language* […] was necessary, so that it get as close as possible to these primitively entangled words, and so that the distance may be abolished whereby modern man guarantees himself against madness".[58] Foucault's baroque in *Histoire de la folie* is the opposite of a "neutral language" which he will later find and adopt.[59] Apart from that, on another level, it is clear that such an "abolition" could never be entirely accomplished. Foucault forgets here what he nonetheless seems to know very well: it is always already from *within* the boundaries of reason that we talk about madness.

All this is *and* is not valid in the case of Artaud. His writing stands out as a "*prose in verses*" (most prominently in the texts which follow his

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[56] A. Artaud, *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*, op. cit., p. 487 [translation slightly modified].

[57] The "lyrical" influence that Artaud exercised on Foucault would deserve a specific treatment which cannot be undertaken here. I have already noted the possible Artaudian descent of the term "unreason" (*déraison*), which is fundamental in the Foucauldian research on madness. Just to quote one out of many expressions that probably owe something to Artaud, on p. 156 of *Histoire de la folie* Foucault speaks of "the internment as a successful exorcism".

[58] *Pli* 13, p. 11 [my underlining].

[59] Quite interestingly, the "lyrical" sections of *Histoire de la folie* do generally correspond to those which do not figure in the abridged edition which has been translated into English.

release, but not exclusively); it is a mix of two conventional modes of writing that, by superimposing and eliminating each other, end up creating a unique and bewildering style. Artaud's writing is strange because it makes any kind of comparison and, consequently, any labelling difficult. His prose-poetry seems to fuse into a magmatic language that in any way preserves, and even continuously reinforces, a monolithic compactness. By reading Artaud, by acquiring some familiarity with the homogeneity of his way of expressing himself, one gradually moves from an initial astonishment, which would like to reassure itself in the recognition of a delirious writing, to the awareness of witnessing an extreme experiment. The latter is not just a mere avant-garde exercise but a *necessary trial*.[60] Here lies the "abolition of the distance" (between reason and madness) that Foucault evokes: this distance seems to be *temporarily* abolished in Artaud's language, in his style. More specifically, Artaud is the one who deplores any kind of writing as "garbage"[61] and who, precisely in order to successfully carry out this condemnation, feels constrained to *continuously fight between the awareness of the uselessness of writing/language and the will to write about it*.[62] Artaud's practice of writing is a continuous battle; its echoes reverberate in his style. In aphorism 92 of the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes that: "only under the eyes of poetry can one write good prose! This one is in fact an uninterrupted, well-mannered war with poetry".[63] The dialectic process of this constructive alchemy seems to find an adequate exemplification in Artaud. But *behind the* "*politeness*" *of the stylistic war between prose and poetry there is*, *hidden in Artaud's oeuvre*, *a less respectful confrontation*; *the one between the muteness of madness, which truly is mad*, *and the (impossible) writing of this silence*, *which on*

[60] "Trial" in the sense of "experiment", but also in the sense of "putting somebody (God) on trial".

[61] See for example, A. Artaud, "The Nerve Meter", in *Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 85.

[62] This "writing the impossibility of writing/language" has to be considered as one of the most evident leitmotifs of Artaud's entire oeuvre. It already appears in "Correspondence with Jacques Rivière" (in op. cit), Artaud's first important publication, of which it is also, literally, the "motive": "writing the impossibility of writing/language" is here both the cause *and* the end of a work (the "Correspondence") which is born out of the refusal of works (besides, these letters were not meant to be published). This is more generally true for every thing that Artaud writes.

[63] F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 90.

the contrary could never be so. It is only through the latter that Artaud becomes, *for us*, Artaud.

I conclude the "stylistic" interlude and return to *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*. Artaud's considerations on madness, expounded in this late text, repeat many of the concepts which were already present in the *Letter*; however, there are also significant new additions. First of all, the *autobiographical* importance of this book should be mentioned; in fact it does not want to be an accurate report of van Gogh's last days, on the contrary, it implies a completely subjective self-identification with him. According to Artaud, what took place in van Gogh's suicide does not differ much from what he himself had personally undergone during his internment: he believes that, like van Gogh, "he had just succeeded, and discovered what he was and who he was, when the collective consciousness of society, to punish him for escaping from its control", *interned* him. Society interned him because, in "finding himself", in "being an individual", he automatically became anti-social, i.e. a madman (see *Letter*). This is basically what Artaud keeps on repeating in *Letters from Rodez*.[64] Internment and suicide (*qua* homicide) are perfect synonyms. Van Gogh's name, as we will soon see, is only the first (and most representative) on a long list of "*Enlightened*" names whose destiny was similar to his. If the content of the *Letter* kept a façade of objectivity in formulating its denunciation – after all, at that point, Artaud represented the entire surrealist group, he was not just talking for himself –, in *Van Gogh*, on the contrary, any comment, any reference to the Dutch painter, any attack against society, is not merely influenced by, but is completely referable to Artaud's life experience (to his nine year long internment). (The consequence of this is that any analogy with *Histoire de la folie* contained in this second text can no longer be considered as a mere "conceptual anticipation" – as in the case of the *Letter* – but, by being based on a lyric description of autobiographic events – masked only by the *alter ego* 'van Gogh' –, it actually becomes, so to speak, a *life that anticipates concepts*. Let me try to make my point clearer: with *Van Gogh*, Artaud does not simply seem to *say* things that Foucault will "repeat", but he also seems to *live* events that Foucault will describe. This is what Derrida defines as "the total adventure of Antonin Artaud". Artaud lives and writes, lives-writes; Foucault instead, being a philosopher, "criticises".)

[64] A. Artaud, "Letters from Rodez", in op. cit.: see for example pp. 443-446, letter to Henri Parisot of September 17, 1945.

What then are the points of continuity with the *Letter*? What does the *Van Gogh* elaborate?

1. Madness is still clearly understood as *anti-sociality*. At this point, it is taken for granted by Artaud: he does not seem to have any need to argue for it. Madmen are only different; mental illness is an invention of psychiatry.[65] These are for the last Artaud – the one who preserves *his* lucidity during eight years of internment and dozens of electroshocks, the one who describes the devastating effects of these electroshocks, the one who re-conquered his freedom and right to utter his lucid delirium precisely by writing letters, the one who continues, more than ever, to *write*, to produce "work" –[66] obvious truths whose non-admission only hides the bad conscience of medicine (and of society in general). The existence of mental illness is not any longer considered to be "dubious" (as it was in the 1925 *Letter*); *after* his asylum experience Artaud is convinced that it simply does not exist. He writes in *Van Gogh*: "things are going badly *because ill consciousness has a vested interest in this epoch in not recovering from its illness*./ This is why a tainted society has *invented* psychiatry to defend itself against the investigations of certain *lucid* superior minds whose *faculties of divination* annoyed it".[67] Artaud is not satisfied with just denouncing an unsuspected state of things as he did twenty years before; now he also counter-attacks. It is society which is "tainted", whose consciousness is ill. There is a (mental) illness which society does not even want to "recover from": for this reason it *invents* psychiatry. Is this an accusation of social nihilism? "In comparison with the lucidity of van Gogh while working, psychiatry is no better than a den of apes who are themselves obsessed and persecuted and who possess nothing to mitigate the most appalling states of anguish and human suffocation but a ridiculous terminology,/ worthy product of their damaged brains".[68] This social illness could be named (ideological) *conformism*,[69] or more simply, "normality", "sanity"… The alleged

[65] "If there had been no doctors/ there would never have been any ill people,/ […] for it was with doctors and not with ill people that society began" (A. Artaud, "Artaud le Mômo", in *Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 529).

[66] In the 22 months which separate Artaud's release from his death one can witness a feverish literary activity.

[67] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 483. [my underlining, translation slightly modified]

[68] "Van Gogh,…", p. 484.

[69] Artaud also writes: "No, van Gogh was not mad, but his paintings were bursts of Greek fire, atomic bombs, whose angle of vision, unlike all other paintings popular at the time, would have been able of seriously upsetting the spectral conformism of the

"sane" ones are actually insane… Artaud makes a counter-attack, by playing the (social) game of "who's sane? Who's not?" – the game which excludes the "insane" from the "sane" – and *ironically* attempts to "transvaluate" it…

2. There is an important specification that emerges in the above quoted passage: the "lucid superior minds", madmen, van Gogh, van Gogh/Artaud – madmen are lucid – possess "faculties of divination" which "annoy society". Madmen are here seen as *bearers of truth*: the ambiguous conjunction *truth-madness* is also very much appreciated by Foucault who will elaborate relevant historic differentiations around statements which do not really differ from Artaud's. "For a madman is also a man whom society did not want to hear and whom it wanted to prevent from uttering certain *unbearable truths*".[70] Thus madmen find themselves in a difficult position: they are nothing less than the bearers of the unbearable; it is in the proximity of such an oxymoron that we should interpret Lacan's famous motto according to which "truth can only be half-said": if truth is madness (since truths are just "stupid" fictions of a necessarily idiotic "big Other"), if truth equates to the lack of truth, how can one utter this "truth"? More specifically, in Artaud's text (the "authentically alienated" Artaud), an example of the unbearable character of truth (an example which actually works as a metonymy of all examples on/of truth and thus can only be "half-said")[71] is, as he seems to show in

Second Empire bourgeoisie and of the myrmidons of Thiers, Gambetta, and Félix Faure, as well as those of Napoleon III. / *For it is not a certain conformity of manners that the painting of van Gogh attacks, but rather institutional conformism itself*" (pp. 483-484) [my underlining, translation slightly modified]. Foucault also talks of "conformity" in his first preface to *Histoire de la folie*: "[…] abstract reason embodied in […] the pressure of the group, and the requirements of conformity" (see this issue of *Pli*, p. 4).

[70] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", op. cit., p. 485.

[71] Does Artaud realise that truth can only be "half-said"? It is difficult to give here a definitive answer… His position oscillates… However, it should be recalled that, according to Lacan, the hysteric (not to be understood as a specific pathology but as a much more general way of inhabiting the intersubjective, symbolic network) is precisely the one who discovers the truth (of the master, of society, of truth, i.e. its being castrated, not whole, utterly stupid) while not recognizing/accepting that this discovery cannot be considered as an ultimate "truth". If the hysteric does not accept this lack of truth it is because his very mode of "enjoyment" is precisely given by enjoying the "truth" (about the master/society) he has discovered. He is then an active part of society, he then participates in social "erotomania", Artaud would argue. Artaud's position *qua* antisocial (which is not his only position) is probably closer to what Lacan identifies as the position of the tragic (see his reading of *Antigone*), i.e. the one which truly assumes castration… Nevertheless Artaud goes beyond Antigone

both the *Letter* and *Van Gogh*, the one which indicates the possibility of a continuous reversibility of the relationship sanity-insanity. In other words, what Artaud shows us is the "perspectivism" of reality (of realit*ies*) to which those who are "insane" would simply testify with their presence *qua* insane: those who are "sane" *cannot* take it into account precisely in order to be "sane".[72] "It is always in the name of truth that we intern somebody";[73] we lock up "(the lack of) Truth" in order to safeguard "truths".

3. A few paragraphs after those we have so far taken into consideration, another element of comparison with *Histoire de la folie* emerges: according to Artaud madmen are *made to feel guilty*, i.e. *madness is moralised*. "The body of van Gogh, untouched by any sin, was also untouched by madness which, indeed, sin alone can bring".[74] Madness (*qua* mental illness) is a social event produced by sin: it only exists with regards to guilt. Foucault extensively demonstrated how the process of interiorisation of madness which dominates the psychiatric age, the one following the "philanthropic" reforms of Tuke and Pinel (which constitute its direct cause), is characterised by making the madman feel guilty (in a very specific way) after he has been made responsible for his acts. Psychiatry becomes the pedagogical science *par excellence*: the madman regresses to a child-like state and has to be educated with rewards and punishments; his mental health is supposedly to be restored by undergoing a cure, whereas he is actually subjected to a human-all-too-human relationship of power-knowledge-pleasure with his alleged healer (and with society *tout court*).[75] The genealogy of psychiatry operated by Foucault thus becomes a proper genealogy of

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inasmuch as he "negotiates" his assumption of castration which in fact does *not* lead him to permanent symbolic death (as in the case of the Greek heroine, who also commits "real" suicide)…

[72] "What is left? One is left with a black market world which orders to kill 13 million people in order to *stay in good health*, and I, who did not accept it, could not live but being ill (I don't give a damn)" (A. Artaud, "Histoire entre la groume et dieu", in *Œuvres complètes, tome XIV**, op. cit., pp. 42-45).

[73] Graffiti in the former asylum of San Giovanni, Trieste, Italy. It is from this psychiatric hospital that F. Basaglia – of whom Foucault once declared being "jealous" of, on this issue see P. A. Di Vittorio, *Foucault e Basaglia. L'incontro tra genealogie e movimenti di base* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 1999) – launched in the 70's his revolutionary anti-confining project which found an official legitimisation in 1978 with the governmental approval of "law 180": for the first time in the Western world, asylums had to be closed. The present Italian government led by Mr. Berlusconi is trying to amend this law, if not abolish it altogether.

[74] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", op. cit., p. 485.

morals worthy of being proposed as a continuation of the Nietzschean one; at its roots, Foucault, like Nietzsche, seems to encounter the concept of guilt. It is also from a ramification of these same roots that he will later develop the genealogy of the prison and the concept of "disciplinary society" that sustains it.

4. Artaud repeatedly talks about a "collective/social spell" and about "exorcisms" which would be needed (by now almost in vain, given its force) in order to avoid it. What Artaud calls "erotomania" is strictly connected to all this. Even if we presuppose that there is some sort of continuity between Artaud's and Foucault's writings on madness, it is nevertheless difficult to believe that these last "pseudo-concepts" ("pseudo" since they were never *explicitly* conceptualised by Artaud, even though they "invite" us to conceptualise them) could be taken into serious consideration in *Histoire de la folie*. At first "spells" and "erotomania"[76] seem to supply us with the identity card of Artaud's madness: it seems we have finally recovered a document that identifies him. Foucault, the advocate of transgression and perversion, Foucault who in any case is "officially sane" – unless demonstrated otherwise: Foucault was never interned, Artaud was; Foucault the philosopher – exactly when he was about to become "officially more philosophical", i.e. while writing his doctoral thesis – could not make much use of these "pseudo-concepts". There is no concession to any "pseudo", nor to any "implicitness" within university discourse: as Lacan teaches us, the latter is determined by (the quasi psychosis of) a striving for "absolute knowledge". This does not necessarily mean that Foucault did not pay any attention to them. It does not imply that he did not accept their (implicit) invitation to be developed, to be rendered explicit (is not this initially "emancipating" acceptance rapidly falling back on the university fantasy of absolute knowledge? Is it not very difficult, if not impossible, not to fall back on it? Does not the "sudden, irruptive inclusion in our language of the speech of excluded authors", of which Foucault himself

[75] "The madman […] must feel morally responsible for everything within him that may disturb morality and society, and must hold no one but himself responsible for the punishment he receives. The assignation of guilt […] becomes both the concrete form of coexistence of each madman with his keeper, and the form of awareness that the madman must have of his own madness"; "Madness is childhood" (M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, op. cit., pp. 246-247, 252).

[76] The term "erotomania" is used by Artaud with a different meaning from the one it has for psychiatry. One does not have to exclude the possibility that Artaud himself was diagnosed as "erotomaniac" and later decided to (ironically) reformulate this notion.

talks about referring also to Artaud, precisely evidence the – present – all-encompassing tendency of university discourse?). Quite on the contrary: Foucault seems to discard them at first, but I believe only in order to appropriate and re-elaborate them afterwards. These "pseudo-concepts" do not play any evident role in his genealogy of madness, but they will become central to his later, and no less important, investigation on sexuality. Unfortunately I cannot here examine this more closely, although it is certainly one of the most significant junctions between Artaud and Foucault – together with the one regarding madness in respect to which it has been even less explored. I shall limit myself, instead, to remarking upon how the term "erotomania" can be easily conjugated into the more Foucauldian one of *pansexualism*. The latter also obligatorily calls into question Freud and, as a consequence, Lacan and his notion of "ideological enjoyment". It is in the multiple connections, all referring to these three vertices – Artaud, Foucault, Freud/Lacan –, that it would be appropriate to undertake a research which promises to be as difficult as it is exciting, given its novelty.[77] In the next section of this paper I shall confine my analysis to the general meaning of "spells" and "erotomania" in the economy of *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*.

According to Artaud, a "social/collective spell" causes "possession". In other words, it is the means through which an entire society conforms and by doing so forms an alliance to persecute those who oppose it (those who do not make compromises about their individual/anti-social acts, or – to put it in Lacan's terms – those who "do not give up on their desire"). Against them society unleashes "a formidable tentacular oppression of a kind of civic magic which will soon be seen appearing openly in social behaviour".[78] This conspiracy has to be related to the opposition between those who are "sane" and those who are "insane": madmen are persecuted, van Gogh was persecuted, all other "Enlightened" were persecuted: "Thus there were collective magic spells in connection with Baudelaire, Poe, Gérard de Nerval, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Hölderlin,

[77] It is nevertheless true that Derrida does not only discuss the relationship between Foucault and Freud (in "'Être juste avec Freud' – L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse", op. cit.) but even *starts* a fascinating deconstruction of the multiple – and conflicting – links between Artaud and Freud (see "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", in *Writing and Difference*, op. cit., pp. 240-243). However, he does not take into account the (cinematographic) critique that Artaud carries out against the "oneirism" of Dulac (and of surrealists in general) which implicitly concern also (some kind of) psychoanalysis.

[78] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 486.

Coleridge,/ and also in connection with van Gogh".[79] While at the asylum of Rodez, and even after his release, Artaud is convinced that a spell has also been cast upon him: "I want the minds of the last friends whom I can still have on this earth, and who are my last readers, to be enlightened and I want them to understand that I have never been either mad or ill, and that my confinement is the result of a horrible secret plot".[80] He feels like he has been persecuted since the times of his youth when he "was knifed in the back in Marseilles":[81] in order to prove the reality of facts which instead represent only an alleged reality, Artaud thinks he is able to demonstrate how all the events that characterised his tumultuous life can be inscribed in the logic of an obscure, incessant battle. Artaud believes himself to be chased: he manages to justify his continuous escape (from society) by mixing real elements of a life he actually lived with others which are more probably fantastic. The old Artaud gives an *a posteriori* sense to his existence.[82]

Who is at the head of the conspiracy plotted against the "Enlightened"? Who has the magic capacities of provoking an epidemic of "collective possession"? Who are those who first contaminate and then expect to cure without realising that they also contaminated themselves, that they are as ill, as possessed as others, or even more than others? Who are those who wrongly think themselves to be at the head of something one can make head or tail of?[83] According to Artaud, the answer is

[79] Ibidem.

[80] A. Artaud, "Letters from Rodez", in op. cit., p. 463.

[81] A. Artaud, "Letters from Rodez", p. 457, 463.

[82] It is in any way difficult to fully distinguish real facts from fantastic ones in Artaud's life: this is due to the incredible nature of some *real* events of his life (above all the trips to Mexico and Ireland). This is why Artaud's *a posteriori* rewriting of his existence, which excludes any clear distinction between "reality" and "fantasy", does not merely represent an index of paranoia: when real life becomes too difficult to be explained, borne and enclosed within one overall view, creating oneself a "likely" explanation is probably an operation of "good sense", one which is "useful" to life (a sort of variant to Nietzschean forgetting or, better, a basic mimicry of psychoanalysis in which, as Lacan reminds us, "the interpretation [of the analyst] is not the knowledge he discovers in the subject but that which one adds to it in order to give it a sense"). Artaud invents a "conspiracy" against himself in order to survive a life which had seen him passing, in just 10 years, from the Surrealist avant-garde and an almost Hollywood-like celebrity in cinema, to the voyage to the Land of Tarahumara, to the electroshocks in asylums. From the (partially) delirious character of his invented biography, from its unequivocal falsity with respect to the canons of "sane" logic, one cannot simply derive a denigration of his entire *social critique*.

[83] It should be recalled here how, for Lacan, enjoyment-*jouissance* is, by definition, acephalous.

simple: doctors. "It is almost impossible to be a doctor and an honest man, but it is obscenely impossible to be a psychiatrist without at the same time bearing the stamp of the most incontestable madness: that of being unable to resist the old atavistic reflex of the mob, which makes any man of science who is absorbed by this mob, a kind of natural and inborn enemy of all genius".[84] Doctors, therefore, and especially psychiatrists, were at the head of a "social spell", a syndrome of conformism – in the widest sense of the word, since it also regards a conformism of the body, i.e., the present organic anatomy –; now they are no longer able to manage it or to contain it. They themselves suffer from the "norm" they imposed on society; this conformism is, according to Artaud's own words, "the stamp of the most incontestable madness": this "sane" madness situates itself in symmetric opposition in respect to the (false) madness of "madmen".[85]

Religions and priests anticipated doctors in their task: Artaud refers to all big religions, from Christianity to Buddhism (the latter cannot be – Nietzscheanly and Dionisyacally – intended as a "way out"). Thus he attacks all religions which present a god, or gods, that "conform" and consequently do not help man – on the contrary they forbid him – to give birth to a meta-social Divine, to the cruelty of the Sacred.[86] No more dancing stars. In the end, the main objective of religions is not different, in the eyes of Artaud, from that of medicine and science in general: they all have to repress difference in order to guarantee a norm. The mass is

[84] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 492.

[85] The equation psychiatrist/magician represent a constant in *Van Gogh*. I think it has to be considered beyond the effectiveness of the simile it creates. I think one should relate it to the recurrent use that Foucault makes of the adjective "thaumaturgic" in relation to psychiatry and psychoanalysis. According to him, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, that, in *this* specific case, proceed hand in hand, are able to carry out "real miracles" (M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, op. cit., pp. 269-278) (on the ambiguous role of psychoanalysis in *Histoire de la folie*, see J. Derrida, "'Être juste avec Freud' – L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse", in op. cit.)

[86] According to Artaud, the "theatre of cruelty" should function as a hieratic catalyst. We should have done with god in order to return to the Divine. By inventing god, "advanced" societies have killed the Divine. The death of god should therefore bring with it the rebirth of the Divine. As Derrida remarks: "regression toward the unconscious fails if it does not reawaken the sacred" ("The theatre of cruelty", in op. cit., p. 243). This is precisely the point at which Artaudian theatre and psychoanalysis are both extremely close and distant: psychoanalysis could be positive for Artaud only if it did not operate a rational colonisation of the unconscious. The dimension of the dream is seen as constructive by Artaud only inasmuch as it becomes "affirmative", i.e. only if it does not work as a sterile palliative of repressed desires.

nothing but a "psychic rite":[87] brotherhood exists only on the bases of segregation.

The lyrical denunciation of this medicine, of these psychiatrists who, according to Artaud, are themselves ill and mad, could be said to go abundantly beyond Foucault's notion of "repressive hypothesis". In fact, all psychiatrists are affected by "erotomania". The latter does not only define our age as an age which is pervaded by ideological lust (while it has forgotten love). Erotomania is indeed not only the most explicit *symptom* of a generic spell cast upon society (by doctors/priests at first and then by society itself), it does not reduce itself to representing the most tangible sign of a successful operation of "collective black magic"; its peculiarity, its being "beyond" the "repressive hypothesis" is given by the fact that, according to Artaud, it ends up achieving its most excessive expression in psychiatrists themselves, that is, in those who are (initially) identifiable as "repressors". Erotomania designates our society and strikes it as an illness, as a form of (collective) madness, without sparing the "healers" who evoked it: on the contrary, it violently turns precisely on them. *Van Gogh* does not present the clear and utterly pacifying dualism between "repressors" and "repressed" which we verified in the *Letter*. Here psychiatrists become victims of their own spell: they are "erotomaniacs" *par excellence*. "Indeed, all psychiatrists are well-known erotomaniacs./ And I do not believe that the rule of the confirmed erotomania of psychiatrists admits of a single exception".[88] Erotomania is an illness from which an entire society suffers; it is a form of madness that segregates the specific madness of "madmen": as a consequence, according to Artaud, all "authentic alienated" are found to be pure, virginal.[89] "Poor van Gogh was chaste,/ chaste as a seraph or a maiden cannot be"; "an authentic madman is a man who preferred to become mad, in the socially accepted sense of the word, rather than forfeit a

[87] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society, in op. cit., p. 486 [translation slightly modified]

[88] "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 484.

[89] This is a fundamental point for Artaud. Sexual "purity", asceticism, also has in his case a biographical relevance. Among many texts devoted to this topic, see for example "Lettres de Ménage", in *Œuvres complètes, tome I**, op. cit.; see also Artaud's correspondence with his Platonic lovers; the one with his "filles-à-venir"; his early texts on Abelard and Paolo Uccello (see for example *Œuvres complètes, tome I**, op. cit., pp. 133-143) and A. Nïn's diaries. On erotomania *qua* "false thinking" see L. Chiesa, *Antonin Artaud – Verso un corpo senza organi*, op. cit., p. 36. Quite interestingly, Artaud seems to overturn here the psychiatric definition of erotomania, according to which this is a sort of "obsession for chaste love".

certain superior idea of human honour".[90] Erotomania has to be considered as an illness-madness which clearly causes (ideological) enjoyment: I do not think it would be too daring to propose here a link with Foucault's spirals of power-pleasure-knowledge.[91] Artaud's "collective/social spell" could be comparatively approached, via its mode of compulsory enjoyment, to the contorted designs of a microphysical power which, lacking its centre, extends itself through scattered, twisted patterns.

"*Lyrical protest*": it is with this expression that it seems appropriate to define a fundamental concept of *Histoire de la folie* (Foucault also talks of a "lyric aura of madness"). In parallel, we have already analysed the importance in Artaud's *Letter* of what he names "predestination"; in *Van Gogh* this same notion is developed into that of the "Enlightened". Derrida, in one of the texts he dedicates to Artaud ("La parole soufflée"), calls it "the martyrological tree of the vast family of madmen of genius".[92]

What is it all about? As we have seen, according to Foucault the lyrical protest conveys the surviving echoes of unreason; these echoes are essentially relegated to the sphere of literature and art. For Artaud all this means being part of a restricted "enlightened" group, "perfectly mad by official definition", which resists against an entirely "tainted" and "possessed" society. It is therefore precisely this *direct self-identification* of Artaud that makes a difference. He does not limit himself to describing a battle: first of all he believes he is living it. The "lyrical protest" has a stronger meaning for Artaud; he is (paradoxically) aware of being "one of them". Foucault on the contrary draws up a list of the artistic-literary-philosophical subversion and prefers to obtain a *safe distance* from it. Artaud speaks for Artaud, even when he masks himself as van Gogh (or as Heliogabalus): Foucault renounces any direct identification and speaks for others. He thinks he is also speaking for Artaud and for van Gogh. He (paradoxically) thinks he is speaking for those who have tragically burnt themselves by trying to speak for those who cannot speak.[93]

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[90] A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 485.

[91] And also towards Lacan's "enjoyment of the Other/master".

[92] J. Derrida, "La Parole soufflée", in op. cit., p. 326. Derrida invites us to recognise that Artaud was the first to define this "concept"… This remark seems to amount to another implicit, and badly concealed, polemic with Foucault.

[93] In the preamble to his complete works (*Œuvres complètes, tome I**, op. cit., p. 11) Artaud declares: "it is for the illiterates that I write". The same motto was later appropriated by G. Deleuze (to the best of my knowledge, without ever recognising its Artaudian descent).

Artaud is van Gogh; Artaud fully identifies himself with all the other "Enlightened". These are not only those who are named in the long lists contained in *Van Gogh*; (van Gogh, Gérard de Nerval, Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Lautréamont, Nietzsche).[94] All the historical characters about whom Artaud writes from the 20's onwards should be considered as "Enlightened"; with all of them there is some sort of self-identification (Abelard, Paolo Uccello, Heliogabalus). Their "antagonists" are also historical: Brunelleschi who opposes himself to Paolo Uccello (in a sexual rather than artistic confrontation), Lewis Carroll as a vile double of a "good" Poe, Lautréamont against "the funnel for everybody's thought" (Hugo, Pascal, Chateaubriand) who wanted his death.[95] These historical characters become para-historical as soon as the deliberate arbitrariness with which they are sketched out is ascertained, i.e. as soon as one notices that their features all unequivocally coincide with those that Artaud ascribes to himself. The same sort of reduction can be applied to the "antagonists": in the end, they are always portrayed with the same negative traits – hypocrisy, misunderstanding of the function of art, false transgression which is utterly functional to conformism – that characterised the surrealists in Artaud's polemics against them.[96]

Artaud is van Gogh; his self-identification is so clear that Artaud barely manages to wear the mask of van Gogh.[97] I think it is here that one

[94] Other "lists" can be found in "Letters from Rodez", in op. cit., pp. 449, 452, and in "Letter about Lautréamont", in *Selected Writings*, op. cit., pp. 469-473.

[95] A. Artaud, "Letters from Rodez", in op. cit., pp. 448-449, "Letter about Lautréamont", in op. cit., p. 473 [translation slightly modified].

[96] Sur-realism is, for Artaud, the "true" reality since it discovers, and puts into practice, the fact that reality "normally" lies above (*sur*) itself (as well as above "trueness"). Reality (the symbolic & the imaginary) continuously exceeds itself into the Real, Lacan would possibly argue at this point: there is always a gap in the symbolic, or, more importantly, there would be no symbolic without a Real gap. Trying to distance himself from the betraying "museumification" of his former companions, Artaud will claim that "surrealism is the order in which I have always lived"; according to him *the (Lacanian) real is the sur-real, the "above" reality which is already present in reality itself, immanent to it, against a transcendent, hyperuranic, "above reality" which claims to be the only reality*, which claims *to be* alone, by itself, lacking nothing. This "lying above" of the sur-real consequently has to be seen as the antithesis of any hyperuranic transcendence: "transcendence lies above reality" (Platonic, transcendent vision, Artaud would call it *organic*), against "reality lies above itself as its overturning" (sur-realistic vision, according to Artaud, "real", according to Lacan).

[97] At times, Artaud himself tears the mask off: "I shall no longer tolerate someone telling me, as has so often happened, 'Mr. Artaud, you're raving', without committing a crime./ And this is what they told van Gogh./ And this is what gave the final twist to

has to track down Foucault's main "debt" towards him; it is here that the "alienated", so to speak, "anticipates" the philosopher's conceptualisation of the "lyrical protest" with the self-identifications on which he lives and which also make him write. Here lies the different perspective from which two different writings, Artaud's and Foucault's, both try to focus that which cannot be fully focussed: the narrative of madness. Artaud's writing benefits from a better angle, a wider breach: it is more directly and thus more dangerously exposed to the impossible. This unusually radical exposure has the power, as Foucault himself remarks referring to Artaud, to "proclaim that our culture lost its tragic hearth the day in which it rejected from itself the great solar madness of the world".[98] The tragic outcome of the life-work adventures of the last tragic figures (of our literature) coincides with the disappearance of the "tragic hearth" of our society. The passage from the vehemence of *Van Gogh* to these logical conclusions, which Foucault precisely derives from the analysis of Artaud's oeuvre, is equivalent to the difference which separates the *concept* of the "lyrical protest" from the *lived reality* of the "Illumination". It is doubtless that Foucault feels a great fascination for the representatives of the lyrical protest – maybe even a sort of ambiguous admiration, similar to the one he once fugaciously mentions in regards to the "parricide with the red eyes" –[99] nevertheless he inevitably distances himself from them while conceptualising them, in wanting to insert – in having to insert, given his role of philosopher – a genealogy of literary subversion between his own voice and "the savagely free force" of Artaud, Nietzsche, and the others.[100] Such an explicit genealogy could not be tracked down by Artaud when he was writing the *Van Gogh*, since it represents the opposite of a self-identification (nevertheless, we can constitute it while *critically* reading his text).

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the knot of blood in his throat that strangled him" (A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 512).

[98] M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, op. cit., p. 40.

[99] "We fell under the spell of the parricide with the reddish-brown eyes", see M. Foucault, foreword to *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother… - A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. xiii. Forbidden question: is Pierre Rivière, with his "delirious" memoirs, perhaps not more "lyrical" than all other members of the "lyrical protest"? Is not Foucault well aware of this? Artaud, on the other hand, was fascinated by Nietzsche's "look that undresses the soul", the only one, according to him, to be up to van Gogh's (as captured in his self-portrait) (A. Artaud, "Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society", in op. cit., p. 509).

[100] M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, op. cit., p. 550

In spite of all this, the concept of "lyrical protest" that Foucault formulates stands out as a concept *sui generis*. It is true that, as I have just remarked, it presents itself as a fully legitimate concept in so far as it seems to "objectivise" a list of names ("lyrical protest") thus detaching it from the speaking I (Foucault). Moreover, this list has a central function in a "serious" academic research (*Histoire de la folie*), which claims to be historiographically justified by a great number of documents and texts. Nevertheless, the "scientific nature" of the concept of "lyrical protest", the objectivity of its epistemological value, is dubious: Foucault does not seem to be concerned about proving it. It is actually easy to realise that, throughout the entire book, the "lyrical protest" is repeatedly introduced, from beginning to end, in a quasi-theatrical manner without ever being explained. I do not think it is merely a matter of an oblivion; Foucault decides not to analyse the "lyrical protest" (*qua* concept), instead he decides *to take it for granted* (*qua* fact).[101] Consequently, if the (concept of) "lyrical protest" is needed in order to explain and justify other (apparently more objective) historical/epistemological processes, then the scientific credibility of Foucault's text is in danger. Would those historians who saw in *Histoire de la folie* a baroque, only *internally* coherent house of cards without any solid foundation be right? (Interestingly enough, what Foucault is accused of coincides with what he accuses "reason" of…). One further question has then to be asked: if this were the case, would not this discrediting, impartial "subjectivism" of *Histoire de la folie* bring it nearer – for what has just been said – to Artaudian "self-identifications"? In the end, it seems necessary to conclude by suggesting another inevitable overlapping between these two authors, another (embarrassing) similarity, maybe a definitive link between Foucault, the philosopher, and Artaud, the "madman".

[101] The longest descriptions of a "member" of the lyrical protest are those referring to *Rameau's Nephew*: it is very important to notice how Foucault never specifies that this is a literary creation and not an historical character, like all other members of the lyrical protest (Foucault says "Rameau's Nephew", he does not say "Diderot"). The lack of such a distinction seems to indicate again how "real lyrical protesters" are never recognised, as Foucault himself remarked, "beyond their texts": there is no attempt in Foucault to "objectivise" their (extra-literary) "savagely free force", the latter is just a fact. (In the overall economy of *Histoire de la folie*, Rameau's Nephew is fundamental in so far as he represents the "shortened paradigm of history […] he designates the great broken line which goes from the Ship of Fools to Nieztsche's last words and perhaps even to Artaud's vociferations", *Histoire de la folie*, op. cit., p. 364).

3. Artaud and the fear of philosophers

At times, Derrida seems to have been the only philosopher wanting to initiate a direct discussion about the importance of Artaud. Even though this was carried out in a limited and occasional manner, Derrida has wished to talk about Artaud's relation to *philosophy*.[102] Unfortunately his attempt remained isolated: Blanchot's references to Artaud are too fleeting to form a comprehensive study; Deleuze and Guattari's echoes of Artaudian motifs have to be considered more as arbitrarily inspired re-inventions rather than as re-elaborations which follow an accurate analysis; Foucault's lyrical hints are, as we have just seen, *deliberately* suspended and inconclusive.[103] *All* these thinkers have admitted some sort of belonging to the Artaudian lineage; *none* of them has ever endeavoured to explain where and how they have discovered this ancestor, and especially why his teaching was relevant to their philosophies: they have always preferred to reject Artaud while appropriating (usurping) his name. This rejection is extremely inconsistent: it acclaims, it praises what it refuses. Derrida's sporadic voice has only partially interrupted this silent, contradictory eulogy (however, Derrida himself has always recognised the contradictions of discussing Artaud: in a way he has thus paradoxically both excused and complicated his companions', and his own, paradoxical attitude). This silent eulogy resembles too much the condescension, both attentive and "buffering", of giving candy to a child who is too lively and inquisitive (for instance the one who writes *Bilboquet*),[104] of a slap on the shoulder of a madman who smokes a cigarette the wrong way around. This constant evocation of Artaud is probably needed in order to ward off his disturbing presence. Elsewhere, it would be interesting to examine more thoroughly

[102] See J. Derrida, "La Parole Soufflée" and "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", in op. cit.; see also "To Unsense the Subjectile", in *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud* (Cambridge and London: MIT press, 1998), *Artaud le Moma*, op. cit., and "Artaud, oui… - Entretien avec Jacques Derrida", in *Europe*, January-February, 2002, 873-874, pp. 23-38.

[103] See G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, op. cit., especially pp. 149-166, G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London: Athlone, 1990), especially pp. 82-93, *Difference & Repetition* (London: Athlone, 1994), especially pp. 146-148, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), especially pp. 126-135. See also M. Blanchot, *Le livre à venir*, op. cit., pp. 45-53, and *The Infinite Conversation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 293-297.

[104] Which, as I have already noted, also means "mischievous child".

why this (discontinuous) interest of Derrida regarding Artaud has never caused any specific response in other philosophers; I am not referring here to all those who have, if all went well, rejected him to the margins of literature, but at least, as it would be right to expect, to those who have solemnly evoked his name. Foucault is one of them. Here, in conclusion, we should instead limit our task and ask ourselves: what does Artaud do *to* philosophy (and to philosophers)? Is Artaud doing it well or badly? Is Artaud perhaps *scaring* philosophy?

What does Artaud *do* of philosophy? It has been said that Artaud's (hypothetical) philosophy could only be a "philosophy of shouting" (as if it were easy to know how to write *while* shouting, to keep on writing without collapsing into the vortex of the shout…). And yet, I think this is not enough to "exhaust" Artaud. His philosophy could be considered as a "philosophy of shouting" only inasmuch as Nietzsche's could be defined as a "philosophy of quotation marks". Precisely now when, after a long period of "untimeliness", Nietzsche's philosophy is no longer regarded as a philosophy in quotation marks (in order to be justly recognised as "actual" philosophy), it seems to me that the general label "philosophy of shouting" is nothing but a convenient way to categorise Artaud, to reduce him to falsely subversive formulas without having even started to seriously read his oeuvre. It is beyond doubt that there are expressions in Artaud – repeated but never theorised, omnipresent but always with slightly different words – which seem to be "quasi philosophical" and call for a categorisation: for example, "essential *impouvoir* of thought", "scandal of the separation between thought and life", "lack of being", "sinking of the spirit", etc… Other expressions are nonetheless more difficult to promote to the philosophical domain: for example, "general spell", "knot of central asphyxia", "erotomania". Yet we should not avoid them. The "philosophy of shouting" should not become a way to filter what is more "philosophically tolerable" in Artaud from what usually makes philosophers smile. The full philosophical value of Artaud has to be found in his least digestible (least conventionally, conformistically philosophical) "pseudo-concepts": there where writing and shouting merge beyond categorisation. It is these expressions that one should risk questioning. What if these pathetic, indigestible expressions – the last men who complaisantly wink at each other are always laying in ambush, even in us, especially when we seem to "defend" Artaud… – would even be able to dialogue not only with Nietzsche (madmen understand each

other, someone could object) but even with Marx, as Derrida hints at in one of his essays,[105] or even with Husserl, beyond any suspicion…[106]

What does Artaud *say* of philosophy? He speaks ill of it. For instance, in one of the few places where philosophy is dealt with in a specific way, he says: "We are not short of philosophical systems; their number and contradictions are a characteristic of our ancient French and European culture. But where do we see that life, our lives have been affected by these systems? I would not go so far as to say that philosophical systems ought to be directly or immediately applied, but we ought to choose between the following: either these systems are a part of us and we are so steeped in them we live them, therefore, what use are the books? Or we are not steeped in them and they are not worth living. In that case what difference would their disappearance make?".[107] We could summarise Artaud's point in one sentence: philosophy *books* are as useless as those who write them. A mirage of a philosophy *sans oeuvre*, which contradicts Artaud himself *qua* author of his works, seems to emerge: Artaud even wrote a preface to his *œuvres complètes*…[108] Should we consequently qualify as doubly useless those writers who intend to write philosophical books *on* those specific writers (like Artaud) who said that philosophical books are useless?

It is on the basis of these irresolute, uncanny contradictions, that we could make a further step in trying to sketch Artaud's relationship with philosophy: I dare to propose that *philosophers fear Artaud*. Their fear is also charmed by that which causes it. Philosophers *want* to fear children who are too curious, or madmen who turn everything the wrong way around (not only cigarettes). It is for this reason that they talk about them only in a *certain* way; certain words veil fear without eliminating it.

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[105] J. Derrida, "La Parole Soufflée", in op. cit., p. 325.

[106] Derrida speaks of the unsuspected "impetus and madness of the Husserlian reduction", of the Husserlian Cogito's own exposure to (and momentary coincidence with) madness (J. Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness", in *Writing and Difference*, op. cit., p. 60).

[107] A. Artaud, *Collected Works – Volume Four*, op. cit., pp. 1-2 [translation slightly modified].

[108] Artaud continuously tries to deny he is the author of a work: obviously enough, the more he denies it the more he indirectly affirms it. This should be considered as the Artaudian paradox *par excellence*. "Dear Friends, what you mistook for my works were merely the waste products of myself, those scrapings of the soul that the normal man does not welcome" (A. Artaud, "The Nerve Meter", in op. cit., p. 83). "[…] a man can also be a philosopher if he does not publish any of his philosophising, that is also if he does not write down or publish anything" – T. Bernhard, *Wittgenstein's Nephew* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), p. 74.

Certain philosophers (Foucault, Blanchot and some others) *fear and want to fear* Artaud. Probably, Foucault, Blanchot and few others, write so little and so superficially about Artaud, although they are not able to entirely ignore the influence that he exercised on them, precisely because they know his words, his useless warnings *against the uselessness of saying/writing*. His own warnings are paradoxical since they are *uttered*: his words are *border-words*. In the end, these philosophers' attitude towards Artaud does not only lead to an exploitation: it can also be interpreted as a respectful compromise. How should we then interpret Derrida's "profanation" (i.e. his philosophical reading of Artaud), the redoubling of the (Artaudian) paradox (of writing) that it necessarily implies? Is it not maybe a symptom of an at least partial overcoming of fear? Talking more extensively about something also means fearing it less. From this perspective, Derrida's operation seems to lose the contours of a sacrilege while, on the contrary, assuming the halo of a rescue.[109] It is certain that, with and after Derrida, Artaud has effectively become less "frightening", but at what cost? Does fearing him less not actually equate to *wanting less* the fear he was arousing together with its unspeakable charm? Does not philosophy always need to fear something/somebody as its outer limit? Is not Derrida perhaps carrying out that which Foucault defined as the "inclusion in our language of the speech of the excluded authors"?[110] Derrida is imprisoning Artaud, but, with the same act, he is also the only one who wants to grant him philosophical citizenship. This seems to correspond to a necessary *either/or*. The contradiction is here only apparent: Derrida imprisons Artaud in order not to exploit him; yet simultaneously, and this is the inevitable other side of the coin, he *transforms* him. With Derrida, Artaud's words are (at least partially) "recovered" and, for the first time, considered as philosophically valuable. On the other hand, Artaud's

[109] Derrida's procedure of *salvaging*, directed towards Artaud, almost obliges us to compare it with that which Heidegger had operated thirty years earlier in favour (or in detriment) of Nietzsche. In a certain sense, according to Derrida, Artaud "fulfills the most profound and permanent ambition of Western metaphysics" ("La Parole Soufflée", in op. cit., p. 194) (would not this be enough to take him more seriously?). On the other hand, it is well known that Heidegger defined Nietzsche as the "*last metaphysician*" of the Western world. Reading Derrida's text on Artaud, the similarity with Heidegger's work on Nietzsche is striking (if not embarrassing), even alone at a terminological level.

[110] Michel Foucault, "Madness, the Absence of Work", in op. cit., p. 291.

"savage force", being incompatible with (current) philosophy, has to die.[111]

What is then the name of the fear that Artaud awakens in philosophers – Foucault in the first place – and in relation to which they seem to be engaged in an ambiguous game? Is it maybe called madness? Artaud's philosophy is a "philosophy-madness". Philosophers' philosophy is also a "philosophy-madness"; on the verge of the scream they hold it back, thus "losing their madness", recovering their wits. *Self*-control returns. Against all appearances *this recovery of reason implies the prolongation of a mad trajectory*. Philosophers (Artaud included, *qua* – in this instance – philosopher *par excellence*) possess a *surplus* of madness with respect to "madmen".[112]

Philosophy *and* madness: this is a disturbing conjunction that would possibly imply an active exchange between them. Or at least an intersection. Madness would be of use to philosophy. All philosophical acts, that of any philosopher, the Cartesian gesture, the imprisonment which follows the mad hyperbole of which Derrida talks about in *Cogito and the History of Madness*, would coincide with a movement of *expatriation-repatriation* (expatriation in madness, repatriation in reason, *of* reason). That which would really matter in this kind of Freudian *fort!-da!* game would not only be the *speed* of the movement – which is all about delaying the repatriation as long as possible, being careful not to preclude oneself the possibility of repatriation, i.e. avoiding "going mad" – but also its *frequency*. In order to set Artaud against the background of this image, I would say that the frequency of his movement is much higher than that of any other (philosopher); Artaud's frequency is that of someone who continuously expatriates-repatriates. *This is the frequency of those who expose reason to the most severe tests, but at the same time, use it the most*. At times, the continuous repetition of this passage from expatriation to repatriation (and vice versa) can make one lose track of the borderline; Artaud, even though not being "mad", even though not

[111] Is Derrida aware of this? I think he is. It is probably for this reason that, thirty years after *Writing and Difference*, he admits he is again talking about Artaud "in spite of the fact I had decided to do everything not to return in any way and for any reason on what I wrote in the past on Artaud" (J. Derrida, *Artaud le Moma*, op. cit., p. 50). Does this strange *declaration* perhaps coincide with the regret for a missed silence (which Derrida knows cannot be regretted without reiterating it)?

[112] "I have all my life utilised, controlled, my madness; while Paul never was in control of his madness, I have always been in control of mine and for this reason maybe my own madness has been a much madder madness than Paul's" (T. Bernhard, *Wittgenstein's Nephew*, op. cit., p. 22).

emigrating, settles down in the extreme *periphery* of reason, far away from its capital (named conformism): some give him up for lost.[113] Whereas philosophers usually follow outpost tactics (their base camps are always in reasonable lands and their incursions into madness are occasional – relegated to the most properly philosophical act – and always finalised to conquest and violence – to the *imprisonment of madness*, if they manage to repatriate), Artaud seems to discover a Dantesque *limbo,* a no-man's-land equally mad and reasonable, where he freely circulates.[114] He does not talk a language which is different from that of reason, but he assumes in his way of speaking some foreign terms, due to his peripheral residence. Artaud never assumes the muteness of madness (not even while interned), but because of his mutterings, because of the distortions that he regularly introduces into the standard language (maybe even because sometimes he feels so far away from the capital of reason that he allows himself the – impermissible – luxury of inventing words), his way of talking, vaguely comprehensible to the philosopher who sometimes expatriates, becomes ambiguous and misunderstood. The Artaudian limbo is anyway destined to be re-conquered; it surrenders to the continuous territorial claims of both reason and madness.[115] It seems to me irrelevant to attempt to establish (provided that it were possible to do it) who the conqueror is. *The "alternative sovereignty" of this limbo is to be appreciated in its short period of independence*. "Here, madness and non-madness, reason and non-reason are inextricably linked: inseparable since they do not yet exist, and nevertheless existing for each other, the one in relation to the other, in the exchange that separates them".[116]

One can witness in Artaud the continuous, painful attempt to overcome subjectivity through the exasperation of thought (and thus of subjectivity itself). According to him, cruelty is in fact equal to radical

[113] As it actually happened when he went to the land of Tarahumaras…

[114] One of Artaud's early books was entitled *L'Ombelic des Limbes* (The Umbilicus of Limbo). This interest for the centrality of what is most external (and the externality of what is most internal) characterises his entire oeuvre. It would be interesting to relate it to Lacan's fundamental notion of *extimité*, as developed by Jacques-Alain Miller – see for example J.A. Miller, "Extimité", in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, edited by M. Bracher [et al.] (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 74-87.

[115] Katrin, the "schizophrenic" protagonist of *Through a Glass Darkly* by Ingmar Bergman, states the following: "One cannot live in two worlds at the same time. One has to choose. I do not have any longer the strength which is necessary to continuously move from one into the other".

[116] *Pli* 13, p. 4.

consciousness: it is the opposite of bloodthirsty unconsciousness. It is merciless Will to Knowledge. The overcoming of subjectivity could be defined as "madness" if, within the same process that would like to attain it, a simultaneous exaltation of subjectivity, that is nothing but an exaltation of reason, would not take place. In this way, the necessarily ambiguous and infinitely reversible closeness between madness and reason reappears in the man Artaud.

Translated by Danka Stefan and Lorenzo Chiesa

Pli 13 (2002), 65-78.

Logics Of Delirium

REMO BODEI

1.

Delirium represents an exceptional test case for the principal categories of common sense and philosophical thought, like *reason*, *truth* and *reality*. Via an engagement with the legacy of Freud and the most considered results of twentieth century psychiatry, my aim will be to analyse its paradoxical forms and to shed light on the logics that underlie and orient its specific modalities of temporalisation, conceptualisation and argumentation.

Although in English one may also use not only the term *delirium*, but also *delirium* to indicate what in the romance languages we call *delirio* or *délire*, the etymology of this term is significant. Its origin lies in a peasant metaphor, in the act of de-lirare, of overstepping the lira, the portion of ground bounded by two furrows. The idea of moving beyond the area of sown ground also has connotations of sterility and excess. Like Odysseus, who feigned madness by ploughing the sand, the one who is deluded struggles vainly to cultivate soil that will not bear fruit, turning his back on the fertile fields of reason.

Delirium, then, has traditionally been presented as synonomous with irrationality (absurdity, groundlessness, error, chaos), whereas by contrast its mirror image, reason, has been defined in terms of evidence, demonstrability, truth and order. Over time, the two concepts have become complementary.

Aside from any play on words, why should one evoke the *logics of delirium*? The first step towards convincing oneself that it is not a matter of a baroque paradox, consists in not allowing onself be unduly influenced by the seriousness that terms such as *logos* and *logic* have acquired, since *legein* refers back to the work of gathering, sifting and

ordering. If that is so, there is nothing to prevent us speaking of one or more logics of delirium, by which we mean specific modes – however anomolous – of articulating perceptions, images, thoughts, beliefs, affects and moods according to principles of their own that do not conform to the criteria of argumentation and expression shared by a determinate society.

One might object that such logics are not within the scope of our reason, precisely because it rejects them; or else that one should resist the temptation – as Roger Caillois has said in relation to dreams – of regarding delirium as any more significant than the designs found on the wings of butterflies or or what appear to be the outlines of cities and of clouds on stones such as agates.

Yet to me the simple alternative between delirium and logic, on the pretext of their incompatability, only makes sense from the point of view of a restricted, defensive and self-referential rationality. Without annulling the difference in level between the two terms, or in any way renouncing our critical faculties, I will show how an hospitable and expansive reason – more humble, but no less rigorous – may be capable of recognizing the nuclei of truth, the typicality and the rich variety of delirium. Its welcoming approach is not based on conceit, on mere "logical charity" (on the desire to align oneself with psychical suffering in order to alleviate it) or on the intent of exorcising what one does not understand with a superstitious *Be gone!* Rationality of this kind tends to take on the contradictions and paradoxes of delirium, without allowing itself to be fascinated, caught and held by it. In fact, such rationality is aware of an asymmetry that works to its advantage: it can comprehend delirium, while delirium cannot comprehend it. It is thereby able to account simultaneously for its own truth and its apparent negation (like the theory of heliocentrism, which explains how it is that we continue inevitably to see the sun move around the earth).

With the adoption of this perspective, the utter irreconcilability of logic and delirium becomes less plausible and diffidence in the face of what is unknown or hard to recognise evaporates. But the hardest task is still ahead of us: to identify and describe the forms in which delirium is organised, according to intentionality and horizons of meaning that are irreducible to the natural character of the marks on the wings of butterflies. Without idealising delirium, we can see that it constrains lazy or timid reason to look into its own folds, to recognise itself not as monolithic, but as a family of procedures that refer to a common origin and that, in order to evolve, must accept continual challenges.

The question that I have tacitly posed – approaching the issue against the grain, from the opposite direction to that generally taken – is not so much why delirium occurs, as why for the most part we continue to reason normally. With this inquiry I am continuing a programme of research that began with a study of the passions and of those phenomena – such as political ideologies – in which rationality does not appear to enjoy the right of citizenship. Such a project is justified in my eyes because I am convinced that perhaps the most noted trend of modern philosophy, the introduction of so-called *rationalism* into common sense, in seeking to imitate the successes of the mathematical and physical sciences, has adopted a model that is strictly inappropriate to the human world. Unable to find anything corresponding with this model within its own boundaries, it has abandoned large and crucial areas of individual and social existence to the thorns and thickets of ignorance. It has thereby handed the task of establishing order here to political and religious power, to history, traditions, habits and fate. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss (who speaks of *pensée sauvage*, meaning thought that is untamed, spontaneous, uncultivated), I would call the *vie sauvage* that whole area of human experience – including our passions, phantasies, beliefs and delirium – that is left to the mercy of the *irrational*.

It therefore seems indispensible today that we begin a long and exhaustive process aiming at the collective recognition of these terrains, their reintegration into the intellect and cultivated life, and their conversion into the seed beds for the production and reproduction of meaning.

2.

I shall begin with the hypothesis, mentioned in passing by Freud in a letter to Fleiss dated December 6th 1896 (and then later abandoned), according to which our psychic mechanisms are not given once and for all and do not develop in a continuous and cumulative manner. Rather, they are constructed from overlapping layers, whose congruence is normally ensured by the periodic rearrangement of and repositioning of ideas and memories. Each reordering of the past produces differing versions of the history of an individual, whose existence never unfolds in a straight line, by successive and constant additions, but rather proceeds by way of leaps and discontinuities. One's existence is split into different *epochs of life*, homogeneous spaces of psychic time separated by cesurae.

After each break in the development of individual existence, there is a "return to base", a retranslation, a regiving of meaning to the *psychic material*, and in particular to the mnemonic traces, of the preceding phase within the cognitive and emotive horizon of the most recent epoch of life that has been lived through.

As the body "transliterates" its earlier breaks, absorbing them in new forms that conserve traces of the world even as they annul them, so the psychic apparatus reintegrates its material in more or less coherent forms. In all ages of life, suffering that exceeds a certain threshold produces – *almost always* – disturbances of thought that prohibit the processes of translation. This is particularly true of the earliest epoch, in which the procedures of symbolisation are not yet established. But there are traumatic experiences that by virtue of the suffering they produce resist every translation into the language of successive ages of life. The past thereby manifests itself in two ways: either as dissolved in its recodification within a new system of signs, or as encapsulated in the space carved out by the traumatic event. In the first case, it undergoes a metamorphosis into a present that advances and that is able to look on the past as already behind it. In the second, a blank in memory takes the form of a mould, of a receptacle subsequently filled by actions, dreams, phantasies or delirium. The past and the present are then inseparable, since the past refuses to give way to a present on which it continues to bear (in the sense both that it "presses" and that it is of "concern").

Each individual is thereby *divided* – a *dividual* – traversed by faultlines and cracks. To pursue the metaphor of writing, the individual is like as palimpsest continually scraped clean and recovered in new layers of signs, until – as long as he remains alive – there is no longer an *editio princeps*. Everyone's biography is in this way studded by areas of dark, covered with secret wounds that have never completely closed, its temporal structure a complex curve, broken at various points, full of revisions and second thoughts.

When the work of transcription fails adequately to connect the different epochs of life, a part of the subject is excluded and made incompatible with the rest. The focal point of suffering is isolated, at the price, however, of establishing an enclave within a psychic province subject to laws that are suppressed elsewhere and where pyschic materials follow procedures judged a posteriori as archaic.

Delirium begins to take the form of an attempt, generally failed, to translate itself into the present. Grafting itself onto a past that has not been worked through, a real trauma serves to detonate deeper psychic

charges that bring incomprehensible remains of what has already been crashing to the surface. These turn out to be just as incomprehensible when combined with new fragments of lived experience. In delirium one is in the middle of a tangle of logics that have each structured the experience open to them at different times and that cannot now account for the con-fusion of all the material before them. Caught in this vice-like grip, the deluded individual must shape for himself a personality and a reality that is synchronised intermittently with the shifting equilibrium reached in the struggle between these logics. His mind then becomes the matrix of further translations that are inappropriate, absurd and bizarre, yet in conformity with the new world in which he wraps them.

3.

When different levels of *epochs of life* intersect and impede one another, one's awareness of the logical, perceptual and affective present is dulled. The old wounds bleed and in delirium one seeks areas of compensation that are *extraterritorial* with respect to the interests and preoccupations of the present. The usual temporal parameters are altered. The future, as a simple prolongation of an unacceptable present, is negated and blocked. A kind of sickness of hope occurs, a weakening of the vital force, a loss of interest in oneself and the world. From this moment the life of the deluded individual is closed: each of his projections into the future and into the world of the sane is denied him. The future comes down like a shutter and he is trapped in a time that closes in upon him until in the end he is flattened by it. Many of us may, in moments of extreme unease, have had the impression that the future is barred, that life is finished before the inexorable approach of death. For most people, this is no more than a momentary occlusion of the future, of the effort of somehow giving order to the chaos in which an existence thought to have no way out may fall. Delirium arises when it becomes permanent and unavoidable. As Eugène Minkowski said: "The specific form of the deliriumal idea is nothing but the attempt of thought, which remains untouched by madness, to establish a logical connection between the different stones of the building in ruins".

In delirium, the past too is modified insofar as it merges with and modifies the present. Moreover, as we see in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, from 1915, psychic time has a particular constitution for Freud. Against common sense and the whole philosophical tradition,

Freud states that coexistence and succession are interlaced. The thesis is not as banal as it might at first seem. To bring out its originality, one need only think of Leibniz (as a point of contrast), for whom time represents the order of succession, while space configures the order of coexistence. In Freud, by contrast, time takes on simultaneously the twofold nature of Leibnizian time and space, insofar as *succession implies also coexistence*. This initially obscure formula indicates that the past lives on with the present and the immobile (or that which moves more slowly) stands alongside what flows, such that psychic time ends up as precisely the coexistence of coexistence and succession.

From the point of view of the perception of physical space, the co-presence of past and present is just as unimaginable as ancient and modern buildings in Rome standing together, whole, in the same place. In our psychic apparatus, however, this kind of miraculous co-penetration of stages is real – all the more so since Freud trusts (in accordance with the physiology of his time) that *in psychic life nothing can perish once it has been formed and everything is in some way conserved*, such that in the right circumstances *everything can come back to light*. In this way, disturbances in thought and affectivity derive from an inability to distinguish and order the various stages of succession within coexistence; that is, from the disarticulation of time as coexistence and as succession.

4.

What happens to someone who cannot translate the suffering encapsulated in the past (reawoken and redoubled by traumas in the present) into an acceptance of their state or an effective will to change it?

I wish to put forward the hypothesis that psychoses arise when the suffering caused by what has been repressed provokes psychic tensions so unbearable that they cannot be made manifest as localised symptoms of compromise; when, that is, their translation into the language of the present fails completely. Delirium is therefore the result of a rupture between different stages of existence that is very difficult to overcome. It is the result of an earthquake that wrecks the layers of personality that had been carefully laid one upon the other. A trauma, stress or a life event (or any quite ordinary, perhaps even joyous, matter that intimately involves the existence of the individual: marriage, divorce, the birth or death of family members, moving house or a change of profession, unexpected financial gains or losses) may reopen wounds that had never

completely healed, reactivate unsatisfied desires, renew old fears, feelings of guilt or misunderstandings, uncovering and aggravating latent cracks and old failings in the logico-affective delimitation of the internal and external worlds.

In the delirious individual, the old world not only vacillates, it is set aside and replaced by another one. However, its loss is counterbalanced and made good by the *creation of a new and different reality*, that does not present "the same impediments" to the satisfaction of desires. This is not a partial privation of reality: the whole universe as previously perceived, imagined, thought, as wrapped all around in passions and desires, seems suddenly give way and that must therefore be rebuilt as soon as possible. This is how the contents of delirium appear: like shreds or rags found – however and wherever – to plug the cracks in the relation between the world and I. The fear of seeing one's own life sink increases with the recognition that the tears are concentrated where the dividing wall between the subject and the object is thinnest and most fragile.

In other words, the deluded individual breaks the agreement (by no means tacit, in fact annoyingly repeated and disseminated in innumerable localised versions) that demands of everyone that they conform to reality. In all these cases the concept of *reality* must be understood in a sense that is more prescriptive than descriptive. In fact, it indicates an obligation to be faithful to reality as the guarantor of the survival both of the species of the individual. It indicates the discipline that has been and still is necessary in order to maintain a shared world and to bring each human being into tune with it, limiting the range of conceptual, perceptual and affective variation allowed.

Psychoses take the place of reality, reshaping and remodelling the world via hallucinations and delirium, which thereby appear as modalities of a forced *adaequatio*: it is *external* reality that has at all costs to conform to *internal* reality. Hence the endless attempts to reformulate the perceptual, ideational and affective present in such a way as to nurture and strengthen the mind's newborn reality. This is – in its way – a demiurgic work of remodelling the universe, analogous to artistic creation or to *the work of dreams* or to a meticulous activity that is closer to the capillary character of the Roman colonization than it is to devastations produced by barbarian invasions. Delirium is paradoxically a project of the foundation of the unfoundable, an attempt on the part of one who is lost to make himself at home in a strange world, the search for an elsewhere to make one's own.

5.

Delirium, in its reconstructive form, is not simply falsity, absence of reason or error of judgement. Rather, it is, paradoxically, over-compensated truth, which – having been repressed, fought and denied for so long – bursts out like a coiled spring, expanding so powerfully and excessively as to break into areas of sense regarded subjectively as contiguous. One errs, or precisely one becomes "extra-vagrant" (moving outside of the lira, the sown ground), because there has not been due recognition given to a truth that, in its way, just keeps on going: the truth enclosed in the nucleus of experience from preceding epochs of life so terrible that it could not become conscious. The recognition of this truth of delirium cannot occur without there initially being a pain more horrendous than the delirium itself. For it to be overcome, truth must prove preferable to the *compensations* of irreality: it must lead not just to the resigned acceptance of what one has always tried to ignore, but to its positive welcome.

In delirium, it is not that logic proves defective or that the reality test has failed: it is the content gathered there that obeys a different logic. What logics can we be speaking of here? Already in 1956 Gregory Bateson and a group of his colleagues attributed schizophrenia (and delirium) to the effect of *double binds*, that is, to messages that cancel each other out or to orders that cannot be followed. When a mother claims to love her child, but does not want to let him grow up as an independent person, in reality *she desires the child for herself, and does not love him for what he is: he must satisfy her profound need for wholeness, purity and affection (being loved). He is not allowed to reject the function imposed on him; above all, he must not grow too much, he must not become autonomous*. The child is in this way sent conflicting messages of the type: *I (don't) love you /I (don't) love me*. The paradoxical character of messages such as this can be summed up in the command: *Be who you are not!* – the exact opposite of the classic precept (formulated by Pindar and by Aristotle and then again by Nietzsche) *Become who you are!* The "sender" of this message, in this instance the mother, is in the grip of narcissism, but a torn and unhappy narcissism (in which love and hate are turned towards the self and others all at the same time). It thereby transmits to the *recipient* ambiguous signals of manipulation (connivance) and conflict. Clearly hypocritical, it gives to the other a promise of love and freedom, yet also means by this passivity and dependence. And so there arise *relational traps*, unilateral demands that ultimately become reciprocal and close both parties in a cage with no

way out. The demand made on the weakest thereby takes the form of a game of power in which the one who submits effectively says: *I'll become what you want me to become as long as you take care of me*.

In technical terms, Bateson and his group develop, at the level of distorted communication, the idea of a deviance with respect to Russell's theory of logical types: *The central thesis of this theory is that there exists a discontinuity between a class and its elements. The class cannot be an element of itself, since the term used for the class is of a different level of abstraction (of a different logical type) to the terms used for the elements*. The schizophrenic transgresses this rule of discontinuity and, for this reason, cannot discriminate between different modes of communicating with himself or with others: "We advance the hypothesis that whenever an individual finds himself in a situation of a double-bind, his ability to discriminate between logical types suffers a collapse" (Bateson et al).

6.

In delirium, what changes is the way that the logical mechanisms shared by a determinate community function, in the sense either of conceptual formation or of discursive development.

The theses of the psychiatrist Goldstein on the *concreteness* of schizophrenic thought, or its inability to generalise, have for the most part been refuted today. If anything, the opposing thesis prevails, emphasising marked tendency towards abstraction in schizophrenia, as though in more comprehensive concepts it sought a guarantee against the dissipation, confusion and the flight of ideas. The idea of over-inclusion, proposed for the first time by Cameron in 1944, is thus especially worthy of attention, even if it stands in need of partial correction. The over-inclusive idea, common in acute schizophrenia, consists in the inability to choose the elements belonging to a concept, eliminating those less relevant or completely unrelated. To give a simple example, it constitutes an over-inclusion to place *Saint Joseph* in the category *furniture* because he is a carpenter. Its complementary opposite is under-inclusive thought, which can be found in cases of chronic schizophrenia, and where by contrast the conceptual range is restricted, such that the category *furniture* is applied to tables, but not to wardrobes or to chests of drawers. The apparent concreteness of schizophrenic thought, as observed by Goldstein, and the prevalence in it of Cameron's over-inclusive model, indicate phenomena

that may not be incompatible with one another. I believe that these positions – reformulated and placed in relation with another thesis, that of Frith – may combine to form a new theory capable of connecting and explaining a greater number of phenomena.

According to Frith, over-inclusion derives, paradoxically, from the hyperawareness of the delirious individual. He is not able to filter and thereby work through the enormous flux of information reaching him from the external and internal world, nor, above all, the surplus lying beneath the threshold of consciousness in the clinically sane that, if it breaks through, is immediately eliminated and ruled out. Such a position is diametrically opposed to the hypothesis – which Jung took over from Pierre Janet, transforming it in the process – according to which in schizophrenia there is an *abaissement du niveau mental* to a *fatal level*, at the moment in which the individual enters into contact with the archetypes or the symbols of the collective unconscious, whose *tide* washes over him.

7.

In Frith's view, delirium is not the products of a troubled consciousness, but the outcome of a failed attempt to interpret coherently the incoming harvest of data. I would amend this hypothesis by adding that the flux is not completely without filters. The filter changes: consciousness is awake and ready to gather much of what is normally considered insignificant, but this surplus of data is nearly always assimilated according to other criteria, which may be loose/vague but are nonetheless significant. One could even say that the logics of delirium are modelled on these filters that select lived and thought meanings and let them pass through the bottleneck of consciousness.

In this respect, the *concrete* nature of schizophrenic thought may – I suggest – be nothing but the emphasis given to inappropriate elements within over-inclusion, to that which has flooded into the field of consciousness, placing itself "illegitimately" under the umbrella of a given concept without having been sifted or ruled out in advance. This explains why the patient finds significance in what others would not even have given any consideration: such as the colour of all the ties worn by those attending a party. The abnormal heightening of awareness in mental processes produces a redundancy of information that the deluded individual is unable to catalogue or categorise adequately according to

normal standards. This prevents him from ascertaining that the fluxes of conscious become capillary and from working through complex information. The streamlining filter postulated by Frith involves a blockage, a turbulence of thoughts and images that form combinations that are bizarre, yet not without meaning.

Over-inclusion implies that the concept takes on a broader extension than that commonly accepted, yet also that, within the concept, supplementary or inappropriate connotations are treated as relevant. The two processes are complementary. If we hold the key to the specificity of the deluded individual's lived experience and to the relevant features of his culture, we are also well placed to understand how the elementary associative chain that generated over-inclusion was formed: furniture / carpenter / Saint Joseph. In this case he employs – literally – a metaphor, or rather a *displacement* of meanings, that leads, in our Christian-based civilisation, from furniture to Joseph. In normal reasoning this association, were it ever to come to mind, would be ignored as without influence or as misleading with respect to the ends of normal communication (though it may conceivably be of use in some witty remark). The deluded individual is in this respect highly metaphorical, for by means of analogical and subjective intentions he cross pollinates and hybridises ideas and images that are remote from one another, sometimes inadvertently producing poetic effects, but more often producing associations that are strange and absurd.

8.

Let us now try to extend the validity of this modified notion of over-inclusion from the sphere of conceptualisation to other fields, and in particular to that of discursive or syllogistic reasoning, which involves the intersection between categories and the corresponding contamination between regions of experience normally thought to be distant and unrelated to one another.

For Von Domarus, the most striking anomaly of schizophrenic thought lies in the presence within it of a logic founded on the identity of the predicates of propositions – rather than the subjects. Dogs and tables are placed together by virtue of the fact that they share the property of having four legs. A logic of this kind, traced back to the *modus operandi* of *primitive thought*, assumes that delirium is a form of regression to phases philogenetically and culturally surpassed, to *paleologic* thought.

Arieti, who shares this view, illustrates it by way of the following example: *A patient believed that she was the Virgin Mary. The process of her reasoning was this: "The Virgin Mary was a virgin: I am a virgin: I am the Virgin Mary"*.

Von Domarus's theses have been subject to justified criticism for comparing delirious thought to primitive thought, and it has been shown how in delirium one is dealing not with a simple turning back of the mind, but rather with the break up of an already developed structure. The views of Von Domarus and Arieti can still be seen in what Matte Blanco has called the *symmetrization* of a restricted class in a wider class: *a patient who stated that a man was very rich, when asked why he stated this replied: "Because he's very tall"*. Both were subsets of the wider set of those who have something to a high degree. The symmetrization leads to: *very tall = very rich*. Like dreams and other unconscious phenomena, delirium is for Matte Blanco attributable to such *symmetric* logic, which is moreover present in all of us alongside *normal* (*asymmetric* or *heterorganic*) logic. In the latter it is correct to say that *all cats are feline*, but not that *all felines are cats*, that *A is the father of B*, but not that *B is the father of A*. In *symmetric* logic, by contrast, such equivalences are the rule (precisely because what is said is reversible, the subject turning into a predicate and vice versa, thereby cancelling the asymmetry of relations). Human thinking and feeling are thereby antinomic by nature. Both logics coexist there, incompatible with each other yet each in competition to assert its own truth. A cohabitation of this kind does not imply their being founded in a higher order structure: *They are like nitrogen and oxygen in the air: together, yet nonetheless separate, never combining to form nitrogen dioxide*.

9.

I won't dwell any longer on the solution I have offered to the question of the deluded reasoning as based on the conflict between different logics and temporal orders (to say nothing of the conflict between affects). I would like to end with a few remarks of an existential nature and with an ancient appeal to wisdom.

In its banality and strangeness, delirium reveals the latent fragility of everyone's experience, its reliance on assumptions that are uncorroborated, unanalysed or simply forgotten. One trusts in these invisible linchpins around which we have automatically made our thought

and our life turn for so long: at least until they crack, dragging down the trust that we had in ourselves and in others as they give way. The desert like polar solitude in which the deluded individual closes himself in the company only of his phantasies of persecution, jealousy and greatness; the visions and the voices; the anomalies in conceptualisation and reasoning; the feelings of guilt, of shame or of emptiness; the suspicion or the garrulous rush; the ruin, the loss, the separation or the release from what one loves; all this cannot but drive him further from the path of common experience. Delirium is disturbing and feared precisely because it threatens and puts shockingly into question the world of each and every one of us in all its supposed obviousness.

Should we therefore ignore it, consigning it to pure absurdity in an uninhabited land? The frequency with which madness strikes precisely those individuals whose minds are alert, sharp and agile did not escape Montaigne. Hence his provocative and disturbing proposal, launched against those who wished to immunise themselves completely against delirium in order to live within the horizons of a lazy and bureaucratic rationality: “Do you want a healthy man, do you want him well ordered and in a stable and safe condition? Wrap him in darkness, sloth and torpor. We must render ourselves stupid in order to become wise, and dazzle ourselves in order that we may know how to find our way” (Montaigne, II, XII).

Pli 13 (2002), 78-99.

Words, Desires and Ideas
Freud, Foucault and the Hermaphroditic Roots of Bisexuality

SHARON COWAN & STUART ELDEN

In his celebrated essay on Nietzsche and genealogy, Foucault criticises the work of Paul Rée, suggesting that he acted as if "words had kept their meaning, desires their direction, and ideas their logic; as if the world of speech and desires had not known invasions, struggles, pillage [*rapines*], disguises and ploys" (DE II, 136; FR 76).[117] It is well known that genealogy often concerns itself with the etymology of words and the shifts in meaning that can show so much. This paper examines the shift in the sense of a word that has come to be associated almost exclusively with the idea of desire. This word is 'bisexual'. However, this word was originally understood in a much more literal sense – *being* two sexes – than it is today – *desiring* two sexes. It has moved from being a physical, corporal description to being a behavioural, social description. This potential for ambiguity is evident in Freud's work on bisexuality: a fact not always noted in critical descriptions of his work. Because the word was originally used as an alternative to 'hermaphrodite', the paper moves to discuss Foucault's work: not just the relatively well-known introduction to the Herculine Barbin memoir; but also a recently published lecture course. The paper therefore has two main sections. First, through a reading of Freud, we trace the development of a word which is today often used unproblematically. Second, we suggest that the existence of hermaphrodites problematises not just sex – as Foucault

[117] Abbreviations are given at the end of the paper. References will be given to English translations of works by Freud and Foucault (where available), but all quotations have been referenced to, and often retranslated from the original. This is essential given the argument made in this paper. There are a number of issues obscured by the existing translations – gendered pronouns being a particular issue.

suggests – but also gender and sexuality. We therefore show that the modern term 'bisexual' is linked to the notion of 'hermaphroditism' not just etymologically, but also politically, precisely because the 'problem' of hermaphrodites is one of sexuality. In conclusion, we make some broader suggestions about the situation of modern bisexuals.

Freud and the Shift in Meaning

Dictionaries as late as the mid 1970s have the word 'bisexual' solely defined as having both sexes in the same individual, or as having characteristics of both sexes. Although the word came to mean sexually attracted to both men and women sometime around the turn of the last century, the sense of being two sexes, rather than *desiring* two sexes, is much older. In the 'desire' sense the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a reference to 'bisexual' from 1914, and a reference to 'bisexuality' from 1892. The other use of 'bisexual' comes from much earlier in the 19th century; the older 'bisexed' dates from at least as early as the seventeenth century. In this older sense, bisexual is a cognate word to 'hermaphrodite'. According to the legend, Hermaphrodite, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, was joined by the gods to the nymph Salmacis, and therefore combined both male and female characteristics. Thus a hermaphrodite, is a human having parts belonging to both sexes combined in the same individual.[118] We can therefore see that at some point a shift in meaning occurred – bisexuals were originally considered to be as *physiologically* plural, in the sense of having more than one sex; at some point in time they came to be considered as desiring more than one sex, as *psychologically* plural.

It is important to attend to these shifts in meaning when reading texts that purport to talk simply of bisexuality. A striking example is that of Freud. There are a number of German words we would translate as the adjective 'bisexual', including *zwittrig*; *doppelgeschlechtig*, *zweigeschlechtig*, and *bisexuell*, and yet Freud only uses the last of these. *Zwittrig* (and the noun *Zwitter*) is a biological term, covering both animal and human hermaphrodites: its pejorative sense is that of mongrel, hybrid, or bastard. *Doppelgeschlechtig* or *zweigeschlechtig* – literally double or two 'sexed' – both trade on the ambiguity implicit in the word *Geschlecht*, which has a range of meanings – sex, gender, race, family,

[118] Freud refers to these stories in his discussion of Leonardo da Vinci (S X, 120; PFL 14, 185-6).

lineage, generation.[119] But though Freud uses *Geschlecht*, he never uses its compounds but instead the Latinate *sexuell* and *Sexualität*. When Freud talks of bisexuality then there is the same ambiguity as in the English. What does he mean? Is he referring to psychological or physiological aspects? How does this matter? Freud examines bisexuality in a number of places, but discussions tend to look principally at the first of the *Three Essays on Sexual Theory*. Rather than make this our focus, we have decided to provide a detailed reading of one of Freud's case studies, and use it as the primary centre of analysis. This case study has been read before in terms of bisexuality, but these readings suffer from confusion over the different senses of the terms used.[120] Being carefully attentive to Freud's language we seek to avoid these problems, and through this reading we will have cause to reference most of the other discussions of bisexuality in his work.

The case study "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" is worthy of close study for a number of reasons; not least because Freud relates some of the more general issues to a specific instance. The woman in question (aged 18) has been referred to Freud by her parents, who are concerned about her desire for an older woman, who seems to be what we would now call bisexual (S VII, 257; PFL 371). Freud notes that the girl (as he calls her) is not ill, and that the "task to be carried out did not consist in resolving a neurotic conflict but in converting one variety of the genital sexual organisation into the other". This is, he suggests, never an easy task, and has only shown itself to be possible in rare cases. Even in these cases,

> the success essentially consisted in making access to the opposite sex (which had hitherto been barred) possible to a restricted homosexual person, thus restoring their full bisexual [*bisexuelle*]

[119] See the sustained discussion by Jacques Derrida of this word in relation to Heidegger in the four *Geschlecht* papers. The first two can be found in *Heidegger et la question: De l'esprit et autres essais* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987); the fourth is in John Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). The third is not published, but along with the others is discussed by David Farrell Krell in *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 252-65.

[120] See, for example, Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp. 195-8; and Phoebe Davidson, "'Her Libido had Flowed in Two Currents': Representations of Bisexuality in Psychoanalytic Case Studies", in Bi-Academic Intervention (ed.), *The Bisexual Imaginary: Representation, Identity and Desire* (London: Cassell, 1997).

> functions. After that it lay with them to choose whether they wished to abandon the path that is banned by society, and in some cases they have done so. One must remember that normal sexuality too depends upon a restriction in the choice of object [*auf einer Einschränkung der Objektwahl beruht*]. In general, to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual does not offer much more prospect of success than the reverse, except for good practical reasons the latter is never attempted (S VII, 260-1; PFL 9, 375-6).

Now this passage is important for a number of reasons. Homosexuality is seen in a negative way – in the sense that access to the opposite sex has been barred, and treatment can only hope to restore that lack, rather than alone prevent the "path banned by society". Homosexuality is not conceived as desiring the same sex, but as *not* desiring the opposite sex.[121] Sexuality is clearly seen as being concerned with object choice. And the natural state would seem to be bisexual, in the sense of a potentiality, an openness to both sexes, because this would be the place the treated homosexual would return to, and because 'normal' sexuality too restricts object choice. This sense of bisexuality as an openness is important, because it assumes both homosexuality and heterosexuality as equally restrictive. Therefore to pass from being a homosexual to being a heterosexual is to pass through the middle; it is to exchange one restriction of desire for another.[122]

Freud continues this analysis of the situation of homosexuality generally before returning to the case in question. He admits again that the success rate of psychoanalysis is not very striking. Within this we want to focus on two interesting passages:

> As a rule the homosexual is not able to give up the object that provides them with pleasure [*Lustobjekt*], and one cannot convince them that if they made the change they would rediscover in the other object the pleasure they have renounced.

[121] As Judith Butler notes, this negative definition can sometimes be constitutive of heterosexuality too. See her *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 135ff.

[122] In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess in 1899, Freud thinks of this bisexual state as being such that he was becoming accustomed "to the idea of regarding every sexual act as a process in which four persons are involved". Quoted in Richard Wollheim, *Freud* (London: Fontana, Second Edition), p. 120. Freud suggests this innate bisexuality comes to the fore more in women than in men (S V, 277; PFL 7, 374).

> It is only where the fixation to a same-sex object [*gleichgeschlechtliche Objekt*] has not yet become strong enough, or where there are considerable rudiments and vestiges of a heterosexual choice of object, i.e. in a still fluctuating or in a definitely bisexual organisation, that one may make a more favourable prognosis for psychoanalytic therapy (S VII, 261; PFL 9, 376).

It is worth noting that Freud equates homosexuality with having a particular object of pleasure or lust, not (exclusively) with a direction of desire.[123] And second, there is the suggestion that a 'bisexual organisation' means a *potential* bi-directionality of object choice. When object choice is strongly restricted (i.e. homosexuality) Freud holds out little hope for the worth of therapy, but he does believe bisexuality can be treated, in the sense that the homosexual element can be curtailed. That is, even the natural state needs to be treated when it moves from bisexual organisation to bisexual object choice. Why would a natural state need to be treated? There is clearly a moral positioning here – what is normal biologically is seen as abnormal morally. When the move from potentiality to actuality is made, psychoanalysis must step in.

When Freud eventually returns to the case of the girl, he suggests that readers unversed in psychoanalysis may be asking two questions: whether physical characteristics of the other sex were present in the girl; and whether this case of homosexuality was congenital or acquired. The answer to the first is particularly important.[124] Freud notes that "sporadic secondary characteristics of the opposite sex are very often present in normal individuals". Indeed, "well-marked physical characteristics of the opposite sex may be found in persons whose choice of object has undergone no change in the direction of inversion". We can note that here Freud labels heterosexuality as 'normal' even though much of his work allows us to recognise that it too is a restriction. Indeed, the second citation here – "no change in the direction of inversion" – again shows that heterosexuality too is an inversion from basic bisexuality. The change is merely the direction of that inversion (S VII, 263; PFL 9, 379).

[123] See S V, 47n. 2; PFL 7, 45n. 2 for Freud's discussion of the ambiguity of *Lust*, which means "the experience both of a need and of a gratification". The English translator adds "unlike the English 'lust' it can mean either 'desire or pleasure'". See also S V, 117n. 1; PFL 7, 133n. 1 where Freud remarks on this ambiguity again.

[124] Freud suggests that the study of the case will show how the second question is largely a "fruitless and inapposite one" (S VII, 264; PFL 9, 380).

This is contrary to the impression given by the discussion of inversion in the *Three Essays*. Here Freud labels anyone having a same-sex – rather than a single-sex – object as an invert, differentiating *absolute* inverts from *amphigenic* and *contingent* ones. Absolute inverts are exclusive in their choice of sexual object; contingent ones depend on "certain external conditions". Freud describes the other cases as

> *amphigenic* inverts (psychosexual hermaphrodites), that is their sexual objects may equally well be of the same or the other sex. This kind of inversion thus lacks the characteristic of exclusiveness (S V, 48; PFL 7, 46-7).

Returning to the case study, the following line, emphasised by Freud himself, is of key importance: "in other words, that in both sexes *the degree of physical hermaphroditism is to a great extent independent of psychical hermaphroditism*" (S VII, 263; PFL 9, 379; see S V, 52ff.; PFL 7, 52ff.). There are several interesting results from reading these two passages together. Bisexuality and hermaphroditism are seen as equivalent in the sense that that the words are interchangeable. There are now *three* senses attached to being bisexual or a hermaphrodite – a physical, a psychical and a psychosexual. Freud does not seem clearly to differentiate between the last two, except in what we are calling his moral distinction.[125] These senses are independent, but he seems to think that similar models of analysis can be used to ascertain the direction of the stress in each case. Indeed these models can be seen at work in this case study.

Freud is unable to answer the first of the questions of the imagined lay-person, but he does note that throughout the girl had assumed the masculine part in her behaviour toward the love-object, and so therefore had "not only chosen a feminine love-object, but had also developed a masculine attitude toward it" (S VII, 264; PFL 9, 380).[126] This is somewhat peculiar: although Freud stresses that there is an independence

[125] The use of the term psychosexual is limited to the *Three Essays*, and derives from Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis' work. As Dreger notes, "The psychosexual hermaphrodite earned his/her title precisely from the idea that s/he had not a unique sort of desire, but a *doubly* natured desire, part 'masculine' and part 'feminine'". See Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 135.

[126] This trades on the distinction introduced early in the *Three Essays on Sexual Theory* between the *sexual object* and the *sexual aim* (S V, 47; PFL 7, 45-6). See Wollheim, *Freud*, p. 110.

between the physical and the psychical, he still seems to be looking for signs of some linkage.[127] In his analysis of the details of the case, Freud suggests that the woman (the object choice) reminds the girl (the patient) both of her mother and of her brother, both her masculine and her feminine ideal, thereby combining satisfaction "of the homosexual tendency with that of the heterosexual tendency". Analysis of male homosexuality has revealed the same combination, says Freud, and we are reminded of "the universal bisexuality of human beings" (S VII, 266; PFL 9, 382). However, again sliding from statement of fact to moral positioning, Freud considers the homosexual desire to be both less important than the heterosexual and an aberration (see S VII, 278; PFL 9, 396). For Freud, the girl "changed into a man and took her mother in place of her father as the object of her love" (S VII, 268; PFL 9, 384). As Irigaray has noted, this occludes the possibility and specificity of women's desire for the feminine.[128] Elsewhere Freud discusses the bisexual nature of masturbatory phantasies and hysterical symptoms. In the case of masturbation Freud suggests a conscious attempt to identify with both the man and the woman in the pictured situation, while in the example of hysteria he describes a patient pressing her dress against her body with one hand (as the woman) and trying to tear it off with the other (as the man) (S VI, 194-5; PFL 10, 94).[129] Were this true in a general sense, we might expect that heterosexuals (being restricted in their object choice too) would seek objects of desire that satisfied the same dual tendencies. Freud does not mention this, and at least here seems to occlude the possibility of bisexuality leading to the desire being focused in more than one way.

Towards the end of the piece Freud suggests that the literature on homosexuality fails to recognise the various issues at stake in the choice of object, the sexual characteristics of the subject and their sexual

[127] See, for example, the suggestion that she has masculine features – "her father's tall figure… her facial features were sharp rather than soft and girlish" and her "intellectual attributes also could be connected with masculinity" (S VII, 264; PFL 9, 379).

[128] See for example Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974).

[129] There is also a brief reference to the occasional bisexual nature of jealousy (S VII, 219; PFL 10, 197-8), and its relation to the Oedipus complex (S III, 299-301; PFL 11, 371-3). We might note, however, that while Freud recognises that many dreams can be interpreted bisexually, he rejects Stekel and Adler's thesis that all dreams can be so seen. Indeed he rejects the idea that all dreams can be seen sexually at all (see S II, 387-8; PFL 4, 520-1).

attitude. He cautions against the simplistic view that the characteristics and attitude of the subject lead directly to the choice of object. He therefore sets up a list of three characteristics:

Somatic [*Somatische*] sexual characteristics	Psychological sexual characteristics
(physical hermaphroditism)	(masculine/feminine attitude)

– Kind of object choice

Up to a certain point, he suggests, these "vary independently of one another, and are met with in different individuals in manifold permutations". This has been obscured by the common view that the third is most important, and should be directly related to the first. Freud continues to suggest that it obscures "two fundamental facts which have been revealed by psychoanalytic investigation". First, that homosexual men have an especially strong fixation on their mothers, and second that in all normal people, as well as their manifest heterosexuality, there is "a very considerable measure of latent or unconscious homosexuality" (S VII, 279-80; PFL 9, 398-9).[130]

To close, Freud suggests a demarcation between psychoanalysis and biology. Biology can help to elucidate how the first of the characteristics can affect the second and third; psychoanalysis simply utilises the biological presupposition of original bisexuality. Psychoanalysis assumes the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine' and makes them the foundation of its work – it does not seek to describe their intrinsic nature. Attempts to do so have reduced masculinity to activity and femininity to passivity, which is not sufficient (S VII, 280; PFL 9, 399-400).[131] This relatively late paper (1920) is the last of Freud's case studies, and so shows his almost final view on this topic. It illustrates the key parts of his understanding of bisexuality, and the hermaphroditic roots of the term. However, it is worth noting here that some ten years later, in the

[130] See the discussion of Dostoevsky, where Freud suggests latent homosexuality is the explanation of his close male friendships, and "remarkable understanding of situations which are explicable only by repressed homosexuality". He attributes this to a "specially strong innate bisexual disposition" (S X, 278-9; PFL 14, 449-50).

[131] One of the most sustained discussions of this point is found in the lecture on 'Femininity' in the 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (see especially S I, 546-7; PFL 2, 147-9). See also the long footnote added to the *Three Essays* in 1915 (S V, 123-4n.1; PFL 7, 141-2n. 1).

magisterial *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Freud makes a brief reference to this issue again. He begins by suggesting the basic bisexual disposition of the human animal. The human is comprised of two halves – possibly male/female, but equally possibly both hermaphrodite. Sex is a biological fact that has an extraordinary impact on mental life, but it is very difficult to grasp it psychologically. When psychology tries to contrast the sexes it falls into thinking of them as activity and passivity, associating them too simplistically with masculinity and femininity respectively, which is not universally confirmed in the animal kingdom. Now this much parallels what has been discussed so far. But then there is a remarkable sentence:

> If we assume it as a fact that each individual in their sexual life seeks to satisfy both male and female wishes, we are prepared for the possibility that these [plural] demands are not fulfilled by the same object, and that they interfere with each other unless they can be kept apart and each impulse guided into a particular channel that is suited to it (S IX, 235n. 2; PFL 12, 295-6n. 3).

Unlike the girl who finds male and female elements in the *Lustobjekt* of the older woman, or the neurotic holding and tearing her dress at the same time, here we have an acknowledgment that bisexual desire might be satisfied by a plurality of *Lustobjekte*, or at least that these plural impulses might be guided or led [*leiten*] into a suitable channel [*Bahn*]. The ambiguity of this final phrase is further emphasised as Freud moves onto a discussion of how anal eroticism is affected by the human walking on two feet.[132]

Foucault on Hermaphrodites

Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* series has proved to be an important resource for those who wish to rethink many of the terms used in describing sex and sexuality. The original plan for the series was for the introduction to be followed by a number of themed volumes, on subjects such as confession, race and populations, children, women, and the perverse, which would have included a discussion of

[132] See also the earlier note in this piece (S IX, 229-30n. 1; PFL 12, 288-9n. 1). Apart from comments in the *Three Essays*, Freud's most detailed treatment of this issue is the paper "Character and Anal Eroticism" (S VII, 25-30; PFL 7, 209-215).

hermaphrodites.[133] As Foucault delved deeper into the subject he realised that some of his original claims were misleading, so he embarked on a more historical study, tracing the subject backwards, initially through Christianity and then back to antiquity.[134] But in his lecture courses and other work of the mid to late 1970s Foucault was still thinking of his original plan for the series, and so treated the subject more thematically. One of the pieces on hermaphrodites – originally a conference paper from May 1979, with a revised version found as the introduction to English translation of the memoir of Herculine Barbin – has been available for years and is well known, but the publication of a 1975 lecture course on *Les Anormaux* provides much new and interesting material.

The introduction to Barbin's memoir makes some important claims.[135] Its principal suggestion is that modern Western societies have decided that each individual needs a single *true* sex. This notion is in conflict, Foucault suggests, with "an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of pleasures" (DE IV, 116; HB vii). Indeed, says Foucault, research into medicine and law shows that this singularity was not always the case, and that such a demand has not always been made. In an Italian interview published around the same time, Foucault suggests that there now exists a "rigorous correspondence between anatomical sex, juridical sex, and social sex". These sexes must coincide and fall into one of two categories. Foucault suggests that before the eighteenth-century, there was a "fairly large margin of movement" between these categories (DE III, 624). Foucault is not suggesting that the situation in the past was perfect, and he mentions the executions that took place, but there appears to have been

[133] The rationale for these is shown by the discussions in the first volume. Foucault sees confession under Christianity as central to understanding the birth of psychoanalysis and the discourse of sexuality. Sexuality's four constituent subjects were the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult (VS 139; WK 105). The five planned volumes treat each of these subjects. See David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p. 354; Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* translated by Betsy Wing (London: Faber, 1991), pp. 273-4, for a full list of the original volumes planned.

[134] For formulations of how the project changed, see the various attempts at writing the preface to the second volume – which is effectively the new introduction to the second, third, and fourth volumes. See DE IV, 578-84; FR 339; DE IV, 539-61 and *Histoire de la sexualité II: L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 9-45; translated by Robert Hurley as *The History of Sexuality Volume II: The Use of Pleasure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 3-32.

[135] For a detailed critique, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 93-106.

more of an element of choice in the role hermaphrodites would take in society. Initially the choice of sex would be made by the father or godfather, but this choice could be retaken by the person themselves at the time of marriage. This choice determined the person's civil status. The limit to this was the imperative that such a choice could not be unmade. To do so risked being labelled a sodomite. The shift from this to the modern position of one 'true' sex came, Foucault suggests, because of "biological theories of sexuality, juridical conceptions of the individual [and] forms of administrative control in modern states" (DE IV, 116; HB viii).

In the original version of the piece, according to a report by Paul Veyne, Foucault:

> approaches the problem of sexual identity through the study of the marginal case of hermaphroditism, a phenomenon which the church, medicine and parliament used to pose the question of the true sex. From anatomy one comes to consider sensibility [*sensibilité*] and the nature of desire. And the notion of homosexuality, defined, by the projection of the old form of hermaphroditism, as a disruption of the 'law of identity' of an individual to their sex, permits placing legal deviants outside society… Pleasure is something which passes from one individual to another, it is not a secretion of identity. Pleasure has no passport, no identity card.[136]

This is a startling formulation for a number of reasons. Foucault never again makes the linkage between his analysis of hermaphroditism and his concern with homosexuality so explicit. Religious, medical and legal/political concerns with the true sex move to a concern with moral or emotional disposition and the issue of desire. As Foucault will suggest in a number of other places, pleasure is able to resist this call for identity papers. As we will go on to argue in the final section of this article, this linkage between understandings of sex, gender and sexuality is precisely that which relates hermaphrodites and bisexuality.

There are a number of problems with the Barbin introduction, not least the use of gendered pronouns throughout, although these are in part due

[136] Paul Veyne, "Témoignage heterosexual d'un historien sur l'homosexualité", in *Le Regard des autres. Actes du congrès international, du 24-27 mai 1979* (Paris: Arcadie, 1979), p. 25, cited in Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault et ses contemporains* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), p. 271.

to the structure of French grammar and rather literal translation. For example the use of the masculine pronoun in "it was no longer up to the individual to decide which sex he wished to be [*il veut être*]" is due to the fact that it is '*un individu*' and, later, "the possibility for an individual to adopt a sex that is not biologically his own [*le sien*]" is due to the gendered nature of the French '*un sexe*' (DE IV, 117; HB ix-x). This lack of linguistic ambiguity is unfortunate in a piece that purports to problematise the notion of a true sex.[137] It is also worth noting that the sole reference to the term 'bisexual' is as a description of the world outside the monosexuality of closed religious and scholastic institutions (DE IV, 121; HB xiv). Here clearly Foucault is implying the presence of 'both' men and women, rather than a plural desire: although Herculine's desire for Sara in the memoir can, of course, be read in a variety of ways.

But the principal sense of this piece is that though these claims are far from being substantiated here, Foucault will do so in the volume "that will be devoted to hermaphrodites" still thought of as forthcoming (HB 119).[138] Indeed, we know that Foucault had much of the material for such a volume already written, or at least drafted, by the mid 1970s. There is a dossier of material on these subjects in his literary remains.[139] The résumé of the 1974-75 Collège de France course *Les Anormaux* also refers to the treatment of the subject.[140] It is therefore of considerable interest that this course has now been published because in it, as with one of the other courses currently available (that of 1975-76 which includes much material that would presumably have been included in the volume *Race and Populations*)[141] we can better understand much of the nature of the series as originally planned. There is much that could be discussed: the exegesis and analysis here will focus on a passage from the third lecture of the year, that of 22nd January 1975.[142]

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[137] There is a note in the English version by the translator, Richard McDougall, on precisely this point but there still seems to be some confusion (HB, xiii-xiv n. 1).

[138] The French version was published in 1978, but Foucault revised the text for English language publication in 1980. See *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.*, présenté par Michel Foucault (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 131.

[139] See Valerio Marchetti & Antonella Salmoni, "Situation des cours", A 324-5.

[140] Michel Foucault, *Résumé de cours* (Paris: Julliard, 1989), p. 74.

[141] Michel Foucault, *«Il faut défendre la société»: Cours au Collège de France (1975-1976)* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1997). For discussions, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); and Stuart Elden, "The War of Races and the Constitution of the State: Foucault's *Il faut défendre la société* and the Politics of Calculation", *boundary 2*, Vol 29 No 1, Spring 2002.

Foucault begins the course by discussing the role of psychiatric expertise in criminal matters (A 3ff.),[143] and its role in the relation of 'the grotesque' to the psychologico-ethical (or psychologico-moral) doublet of 'offence' [*délit*]. By 'grotesque' Foucault does not mean "simply a category of insults… nor an insulting epithet… but a precise category of historical-political analysis" (A 11ff.). The second lecture discusses the relationship between madness and crime, in relation to Article 64 of the 1810 Penal Code, and examines the concept of the 'dangerous individual' (see DE III, 443-64). Just as in *Discipline and Punish* and the Rio lectures on medicine, Foucault then compares the treatment of lepers and plague victims in order to illuminate how strategies of exclusion became those of discipline. These strategies are part of what Foucault calls the frame or apparatus [*dispositif*] of 'normalisation', which he outlines in terms taken from Georges Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological* (A 29-48). The realm on which this *dispositif* is brought to bear is that of anomaly or abnormality [*anomalie*], which has three elements: the 'human monster', the 'incorrigible' or the 'individual to correct', and the masturbating child. The category of 'human monster' is formed in relation to the law – 'monster' is a juridical notion – but by its very existence it is a violation of the laws of nature as well as those of society (A 51). Foucault suggests that each age tended to have its form of 'privileged monster'. For the middle ages it was the bestial man; for the Renaissance, Siamese twins (A 61). But in the Classical age a third type of monster was emphasised: hermaphrodites (A 62).

As Foucault notes in *The Will to Knowledge*, "for a long time hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's outcasts, since their anatomical disposition, their very being, confused the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their conjunction" (VS 53; WK 38). Here Foucault suggests that hermaphrodites were: "considered as monsters and executed, burnt and their ashes thrown to the wind". He cites the case of Antide Collas from 1599. Collas was accused of being a

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[142] A more detailed reading of the course can be found in Stuart Elden, "The Constitution of the Normal: Monsters and Masturbation at the Collège de France", *boundary 2*, Vol 28 No 1, Spring 2001.

[143] This had been the topic of Foucault's previous lecture course *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*. This is not yet published, but see the summary in *Résumé de cours*, pp. 55-68; and, more generally, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1976. For a discussion of the relationship between law and medicine, and the way in which law has moved into areas of human science, including medicine and the "'psy' professions", see Carol Smart, *Feminism and the Power of Law* (London: Routledge, 1989), Chapter One.

hermaphrodite and when doctors confirmed that two sexes were present, and suggested that the second sex was a result of relations with Satan, s/he was burnt alive at Dôle. Foucault suggests this was one the last cases of such a punishment simply for *being* a hermaphrodite. As in the introduction to Barbin's memoir, Foucault then discusses the period when hermaphrodites were allowed to choose their sex, "to conduct themselves in the manner of the sex that had been so determined, and to take in particular its clothes [*les vêtements*]". Foucault then recites the limitation of the acts allowed – to make use of the secondary, rejected, sex would lead to their being condemned for sodomy. There were a number of such cases. One of the citations is that of someone who had sexual relations with a man "after having chosen the masculine sex"; another is of two hermaphrodites who lived together and, it was supposed, each used their two sexes with the other (A 62-3).

Foucault goes on to give two case studies – the affair of Marie/Marin Lemarcis (the 'hermaphrodite of Rouen') from the early seventeenth-century, and that of Anne Grandjean from 1765. The first case, from 1601, tells of a girl born Marie, who became a man, taking on male clothes [*habits*] and the name Marin, and who then married a widow who had three children. On medical examination no sign of masculinity [*virilité*] was found, but on appeal, one doctor recognised some sign, and she was acquitted, told to dress as a woman, and not live with anyone – of either sex – on pain of death (A 63). One of the reasons Foucault sees this case as important is that it suggests that the hermaphrodite was seen as a monster. Foucault suggests that one of the doctors – Riolan – thinks that "the hermaphrodite is a monster because it is against the order and rule of nature, which separates human gender [*genre*] into two: males and females. Because if someone has the two sexes together, they must be seen as and labelled a monster". But the other doctor – Duval – sees the examination as determining what clothes they should wear and if they could marry, and whom (A 66).[144] There is clearly a tension here that was not present in the case of Antide Collas. And it is not present in the case of Anne Grandjean, a case that seems superficially very similar to that of Lemarcis.

Baptised as a girl, Anne realised around the age of fourteen the "attraction that she felt for girls of the same sex as herself". Dressing as a boy she moved town and married someone called Françoise Lambert.

[144] An alternative reading of this case is found in Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 136-8.

Denounced to the authorities, she was examined by a surgeon who decided she was a woman and was therefore condemned. Foucault suggests that "she had therefore used the sex that was not dominant in herself". She was put in an iron collar, whipped and branded, but freed on appeal. Her obligation was to take the clothes of a woman and avoid both Françoise and other women. The difference, as Foucault notes, is that Lemarcis was prohibited from living with anyone, Grandjean just from women. This means Grandjean was allowed a sexuality and sexual relationship that was forbidden to Lemarcis (A 66). Foucault uses this to point out what he sees as an important evolution. Hermaphroditism is no longer seen as a "mixture of sexes", but only the simultaneous presence of two sexes in a single organism and individual. The contemporaneous *Dictionnaire de médecine* declares all stories of hermaphrodites to be fables. There are those with predominant sexual characteristics but the generative organs are badly formed, and therefore they are not able to engender (either in or out of themselves). What was called hermaphrodism was physical malformation accompanied by impotence. In the case of Grandjean then, it was not that she was a hermaphrodite, but a woman "with perverse tastes, she loved women, and it was that monstrosity, not of nature but of behaviour, which provoked the condemnation" (A 67).

Foucault points out that this history shows the disassociation of the juridico-natural complex of the monstrosity hermaphrodite. The somatic anomaly is only an imperfection, and the monstrosity is no longer juridico-natural, but juridico-moral: it is a monstrosity of *behaviour*, and not a monstrosity of *nature* (A 68). By the time of the nineteenth century, there is therefore some difficulty in terminology, as homosexuals – either men or women – were looked at as psychic hermaphrodites (see VS 134; WK 101). Foucault's oft-quoted suggestion of the birth of the homosexual in the 19th century is important in this regard: "Homosexuality appeared as one of the figures of sexuality when it was transposed [*rabattue*] from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a throwback [*un relaps*]; the homosexual was now a species" (VS 59; WK 43). And, indeed, in the lecture course, Foucault notes the emergence of a species based on behaviour and not nature (A 69). As Dreger notes, "it cannot be a coincidence that at the same time other historians find the

emergence of the homosexual, I find the virtual extinction of the hermaphrodite".[145]

Sex, Gender and Sexuality

Although Foucault does not clearly differentiate between biological sex and the sexual identity hermaphrodites would take on in society, we can attempt to tease out their interrelation. The implication of the above reading is that though the boundaries of sex might have been disrupted by hermaphrodites, a strict choice concerning what we might now call *gender* was required.[146] The hermaphrodite had to choose to live either *as a man* or *as a woman*. For example, there is the clear case of the person prosecuted for having sexual relations with a man "after having chosen the *masculine* sex" (A 63; emphasis added). The ambiguity of the sex, which was not chosen, is to an extent resolved through a choice of *gender*. The sexual choice of relations with a man is therefore deemed inappropriate. In the case of Marie Lemarcis becoming Marin, apart from the name, the main change seems to be the taking on of male clothes, and living with a woman. In this case, because initially no trace of masculinity can be found, she is condemned, but on some trace being noticed she is then told to dress as a woman, and not to live with anyone of either sex. Her sexual ambiguity is resolved through an assignation (and continued reiteration) of gender and a denial of sexuality. For Anne Grandjean, the way to come to terms with her attraction to girls is to take on the social role of a boy. When examined, she is obliged to take the clothes of a woman and avoid women. Contrary to Foucault's reading the difference between Lemarcis and Grandjean is that in the latter case *no trace* of somatic maleness can be found. Lemarcis is seen as two-sexed, and therefore *any* sexual behaviour will be seen as an aberration. Grandjean is being condemned for homosexuality. In Foucault's reading she is seen as a woman "with perverse tastes", though he seems to think she would have been labelled as a hermaphrodite in earlier times. Instead, our reading is that she was simply transgressing her proscribed (female) gender role, and engaging in acts that would lead to social condemnation.

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[145] Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, p. 153. See also her discussion of the way hermaphrodites were effectively defined out of existence, p. 29.
[146] On this generally, see Cary J. Nederman & Jacqui True, "The Third Sex: The Idea of the Hermaphrodite in Twelfth-Century Europe", in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol 6 No 4, 1996.

Importantly, the *sex* ascribed to these individuals determines their sexual role – or gender – the way they should conduct themselves, what clothes they should wear, whether they could marry, and if they could, whom. And, centrally, certain sexual *acts* were prohibited or allowed on this basis. It is worth noting Hausman's claim that the term 'gender' "as a reference for social aspects of sex identity first occurred in the context of research on intersexuality (hermaphroditism) in the 1950s".[147] The case of hermaphrodites does not, as Foucault seems to think, problematise solely the question of sex, but also crucially those of gender and sexuality.[148] As Dreger notes, this distinction between sex, gender and sexuality would not have been made at the time.[149] At this time sexual and gender behaviour equated to sexual identity. But now we raise the question of their relation. Does Grandjean become a man simply by donning men's clothes; does Lemarcis change sex when she moves in with the widow? Or are these cases of what we would now call a shift in gender? And do these juridical decisions do more than ascribe particular gender roles? What seems most problematic in Lemarcis' case is that because there is ambiguity about sex, his/her sexuality cannot be determined, and therefore the very possibility of a sexual body is denied. Where a sex *can* be determined, in a case like that of Grandjean, some kinds of sexuality can be labelled as perverse. Now these questions are all intimately linked to the question and problem of the body. As Foucault asks in *The Will to Knowledge*:

> does the analysis of sexuality as a 'political *dispositif*' necessarily imply the elision of the body, anatomy, the biological, the functional? To this question, I think we can reply in the negative… the purpose of the present study is rather to show how *dispositifs* of power are directly connected to the body … (VS 200; WK 151-2).

Here Foucault is not bracketing the question of the body, or, as Butler has suggested, assuming some kind of pre-historical or pre-discursive body.[150]

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[147] Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. viii; see p. 95.

[148] A similar argument is made by Laqueur, *Making Sex*, Chapter Four.

[149] Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex, pp. 88-9, 113.

[150] See Judith Butler, "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions", in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol LXXXVI No 11, November 1989. Butler does return to this issue, modifying her own position somewhat in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Rather, he is concerned with how all of these issues link – without assuming any causal relation. But, aside from the allusive comments of the first version of the Barbin memoir introduction, Foucault does not seem to recognise all the possible ways in which the notion of the hermaphrodite – and particularly those case studies he gives in *Les Anormaux* – problematises these issues.

Freud's tripartite division between somatic sexual characteristics, psychological sexual characteristics, and kind of object choice maps conveniently (though perhaps somewhat simplistically) onto the contemporary differentiation between sex, gender and sexuality, or in Butler's terms, the "compulsory order of sex/gender/desire".[151] According to dominant discourses of law, medicine and psychiatry gender is assumed to follow from biological sex, and from there automatically follows the correct (hetero)sexuality. The three are bound together as actors in a kind of Holy Trinity, with biological sex playing God. This sequence was certainly accepted as unproblematic until a relatively short time ago. Recent work has shown the distinction between sex (biological) and gender (social) is nothing like as clear cut as has been assumed, and that dichotomising them can be as problematic as conflating them.[152] Equally, legal and social questions about biological sex – chromosomal, gonadal, or genital – are fraught with complexity.[153]

Deciding upon an individual's sexuality necessarily rests on a strict definition of sex. If an individual's sex is uncertain, and they have a

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[151] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 6, 17.

[152] See, amongst many others, Butler, *Gender Trouble*; *Bodies that Matter*; Hausman, *Changing Sex*; Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Suzanne Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*.

[153] This point can be illustrated by contrasting two examples from the realm of English marriage law. Where an individual is of indeterminate sex (intersex), psychological and social as well as biological factors can be taken into account when deciding their sex for the purposes of marriage (see the case of *W v W* [2001] 2 WLR 674). On the other hand, while the post-operative sex of a transsexual is socially and medically recognised, for the purposes of marriage a transsexual's legal sex is determined purely by pre-operative biological characteristics (see the case of *Bellinger v Bellinger* [2001] 3 FCR 1). This difference in outcome demonstrates three things: the existence of different tests of sex in the social, the medical and the legal spheres, indicating that 'sex' is not a fixed attribute; the contradictions and inconsistencies of law's regulation in this area; and the implicit recognition within law that answers to questions about sex depend on the context in which they are asked.

relation with another person, is that a heterosexual or a homosexual relationship? It could, of course, in some sense be both. Does that mean that it is in some sense bisexual? The possibilities and complexities are endless. What is striking is that both the binary divides and the linear trinity collapse for the same reasons. People with "challenging bodies", as Dreger puts it,[154] pose problems of gender and sexuality as well. She suggests that "medical men were very disturbed by the conceptual and practical messes hermaphrodites' love lives seemed to cause, and they struggled to bring order to hermaphrodites' sexuality".[155]

Reading Foucault on hermaphrodites helps us not only to problematise the binary divisions of sex and gender, but also to conceive of the plurality of possible object choices we might make, thereby problematising sexuality. As we have seen, the modern term 'bisexual' derives from an older term that meant hermaphrodite, and such a sense is clearly evident in Freud's usage. The case studies Foucault discusses show that questions of sex are at issue, but also that the sexuality of these subjects is perceived as a problem. In other words, the modern word 'bisexual' is not simply etymologically related to the term 'hermaphrodite', but is related precisely because the same kind of issues are at stake. Both hermaphroditism and bisexuality evoke unease about the possibility of plural or shifting desires, and are often coupled with a refusal to recognise the potential for the subject to move fluidly between categories of sex/gender/sexuality. For example, in the English legal system there is significant discomfort around the categorisation of people as bisexual. Where the term bisexual does appear (in eleven English judgements from 1980 to January 2001) it is often used interchangeably with the label 'homosexual'.[156]

We might therefore conceive of bisexuality in its modern sense as a hermaphroditism of desire – finding pleasure in both Hermes *and* Aphrodite, or, more accurately, Hermaphrodite *and* Salmacis. This pushes Freud further than he allowed, but no further than he implied. Herculine and Sara, the two hermaphrodites together; Marie/Marin and the widow, and Anne and Françoise are all cases that can be read in a number of ways. *In each of these cases what is most problematic is often not sex but sexuality*. There is therefore a direct lineage between the

[154] Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, p. 29.
[155] Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, p. 12.
[156] See Sharon Cowan, *Identity, Community, Difference: Feminist and Queer Perspectives on the Regulation of Sexuality*, PhD thesis, Brunel University, 2001, p. 272.

hermaphrodite and the bisexual. To return to Foucault's critique of Rée, we can see that words have not kept their meaning, desires can change their direction, and ideas their logic. The world of speech and desires is indeed one of invasions, struggles, pillage, disguises and ploys. We would do well to bear this in mind when using words to relate the idea of desire.

Abbreviations to Works by Sigmund Freud

S *Studienausgabe*, edited by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards and James Strachey. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Eleven Volumes, 1982 (cited by volume and page).

PFL *Penguin Freud Library*, translated and edited by James Strachey and others. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973ff (cited by volume and page).

Abbreviations to Works by Michel Foucault

VS*Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976. Translated by Robert Hurley as *The History of Sexuality Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*. (WK), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

HB *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century Hermaphrodite*, translated by Richard McDougall, New York: Pantheon, 1980.

FR *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991.

DE *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, edited by Daniel Defert & François Ewald. Paris: Gallimard, Four Volumes, 1994 (cited by volume and page).

A *Les Anormaux: Cours au Collège de France (1974-1975)*. Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1999.

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From Biopower to Biopolitics

MAURIZIO LAZZARATO

1.

Michel Foucault, through the concept of biopolitics, was already pointing out in the seventies what, nowadays, is well on its way to being obvious: "life" and "living being" [*le vivant*] are at the heart of new political battles and new economic strategies. He also demonstrated that the "introduction of life into history" corresponds with the rise of capitalism. In effect, from the 18th Century onwards the *dispositifs* of *power* and *knowledge* begin to take into account the "processes of life" and the possibility of controlling and modifying them.[157] "Western man gradually learns what it means to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified..."[158] That life and living being, that the species and its productive requirements have moved to the heart of political struggle is something that is radically new in human history. "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question."[159]

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[157] Trans. Note: Foucault's term, *dispositif*, generally denotes a device or a mechanism, but it is also used to refer to the projected implementation of particular measures, to plans: technical plans, military plans, etc. The term is derived from the French verb *disposer:* to arrange, to set, to lay out. I have chosen to leave *dispositif* in French since there is no single term in English that can bear the full range of its meaning. The term will appear in italics throughout the text, the italics are mine. All the notes are by the original author unless stated otherwise.

[158] M. Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life', in P. Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 264. Trans. modified.

The patenting of the human genome and the development of artificial intelligence; biotechnology and the harnessing of life's forces for work, trace a new cartography of biopowers. These strategies put in question the forms of life itself.

The works of Michel Foucault, however, focus only indirectly upon the description of these new biopowers. If power seizes life as the object of its exercise then Foucault is interested in determining what there is in life that resists, and that, in resisting this power, creates forms of subjectification and forms of life that escape its control. It seems to me that the common theme traversing all of Foucault's thought is the attempt to specify the requirements of a new "process of political creativity that the great political institutions and parties confiscated after the 19th Century." In effect, Foucault interprets the introduction of "life into history" constructively because it presents the opportunity to propose a new ontology, one that begins with the body and its potential, that regards the "political subject as an ethical one" against the prevailing tradition of Western thought which understands it as a "subject of law."

Rather than starting from a theory of obedience and its legitimating forms, its *dispositifs* and practices, Foucault interrogates power beginning with the "freedom" and the "capacity for transformation" that every "exercise of power" implies. The new ontology sanctioned by the introduction of "life into history" enables Foucault to "defend the subject's freedom" to establish relationships with himself and with others, relationships that are, for him, the very stuff [*matière*] of ethics." Habermas and the philosophers of the Constitutional State are not wrong in taking Foucault's thought as their privileged target because it represents a radical alternative to a transcendental ethics of communication and the rights of man.

2.

Giorgio Agamben, recently, in a book inscribed explicitly within the research being undertaken on the concept of biopolitics, insisted that the theoretical and political distinction established in antiquity between *zoe* and *bios*, between natural life and political life, between man as a *living being* [*simple vivant*] whose sphere of influence is in the home and man as a *political subject* whose sphere of influence is in the polis, is "now

[159] M. Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life', op. cit., p. 265. Trans. modified.

nearly unknown to us." The introduction of the *zoe* into the sphere of the *polis* is, for both Agamben and Foucault, the decisive event of modernity; it marks a radical transformation of the political and philosophical categories of classical thought. But is this impossibility of distinguishing between *zoe* and *bios*, between man as a *living being* and man as a *political subject*, the product of the action of sovereign power or the result of the action of new forces over which power has "no control?" Agamben's response is very ambiguous and it oscillates continuously between these two alternatives. Foucault's response is entirely different: biopolitics is the form of government taken by a *new dynamic of forces* that, in conjunction, express power relations that the classical world could not have known.

Foucault described this dynamic, in keeping with the progress of his research, as the emergence of *a multiple and heterogeneous power of resistance and creation* that calls every organization that is transcendental, and every regulatory mechanism that is extraneous, to its constitution radically into question. The birth of biopower and the redefinition of the problem of sovereignty are only comprehensible to us on this basis. Foucault's entire work leads toward this conclusion even if he did not coherently explain the dynamic of this power, founded on the "freedom" of "subjects" and their capacity to act upon the "conduct of others," until the end of his life.

Foucault analyzed the introduction of "life into history" through the development of political economy. He demonstrated how the techniques of power changed at the precise moment that *economy* (strictly speaking, the government of the family) and *politics* (strictly speaking, the government of the polis) became imbricated with one another.

The new biopolitical *dispositifs* are born once we begin to ask ourselves, "What is the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper — how are we to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the State?"[160]

[160] M. Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Burchell, Gordon and Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* , (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 92. Translation modified.

Why should we look for the "arcana imperii" of modernity within political economy? Biopolitics, understood as a government-population-political economy relationship, refers to a dynamic of forces that establishes a new relationship between ontology and politics. The political economy that Foucault talks about is neither the political economy of capital and work of classical economists, nor the Marxist economic critique of "living labor." It is a political economy of forces that is very close yet very distant from either of these points of view. It is very close to Marx's viewpoint because the problem of how to coordinate and command the relationships between men, insofar as they are living beings, and those of men with "things,"[161] keeping the aim of extracting a "surplus of power" in mind, is not simply an economic problem but an ontological one. It is very distant because Foucault faulted Marx and political economy with reducing the relations between forces to relations between capital and labor, with making these binary and symmetric relations the source of all social dynamics and every power relation. The political economy that Foucault talks about, on the contrary, governs "the whole of a complex material field where not only are natural resources, the products of labor, their circulation and the scope of commerce engaged, but where the management of towns and routes, the conditions of life (habitat, diet, etc.), the number of inhabitants, their life span, their ability and fitness for work also come into play."[162]

Political economy, as a syntagm of biopolitics, encompasses power *dispositifs* that amplify the whole range of relations between the forces

[161] Trans. Note: Foucault claims that in the 17th Century there is the beginning of a shift away from juridical sovereignty towards what he calls the *art of government.* This movement away from sovereign power and into the "science of government" is characterized by the "introduction of economy into political practice," in short, by the government, the *disposition,* of things." Foucault explains; "One governs things. But what does this mean? I do not think that this is a matter of opposing things to men, but rather of showing that what government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex of things and men. The things which in this sense government is to be concerned with are in fact men, but men in their relations with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc." M. Foucault, 'Governmentality', in Burchell, Gordon and Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 93.

[162] M. Foucault, 'The Politics of Health in the 18th Century', in C. Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980).

that extend throughout the *social body* rather than, as in classical political economy and its critique, the relationship between *capital and labor* exclusively .

Foucault needs a new political theory and a new ontology to describe the new power relations expressed in the political economy of forces. In effect, biopolitics are "grafted" and "anchored" upon a multiplicity of disciplinary [*de commandemant et d'obéissance*] relations between forces, those which power "coordinates, institutionalizes, stratifies and targets," but that are not purely and simply projected upon individuals. The fundamental political problem of modernity is not that of a single source of sovereign power, but that of a multitude of forces that act and react amongst each other according to relations of command and obedience. The relations between man and woman, master and student, doctor and patient, employer and worker, that Foucault uses to illustrate the dynamics of the social body are *relations between forces that always involve a power relation*. If power, in keeping with this description, is constituted from below, then we need an ascending analysis of the constitution of power *dispositifs*, one that begins with infinitesimal mechanisms that are subsequently "invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed and institutionalized by ever more general mechanisms, and by forms of global domination."

Consequently, biopolitics is the strategic coordination of these power relations in order to extract a surplus of power from living beings. Biopolitics is a strategic relation; it is not the pure and simple capacity to legislate or legitimize sovereignty. According to Foucault the biopolitical functions of "coordination and determination" concede that biopower, from the moment it begins to operate in this particular manner, is not the true source of power. Biopower coordinates and targets a power that does not properly belong to it, that comes from the "outside." *Biopower is always born of something other than itself.*

3.

Historically, the socialization of the forces that political economy attempts to govern calls sovereign power into crisis; these forces compel the biopolitical technologies of government into an "immanence," one that grows increasingly extensive, with "society." This socialization always forces power to unfold in *dispositifs* that are both "complementary" and "incompatible," that express an "immanent

transcendence in our actuality," that is to say, an integration of biopower and sovereign power.

In effect, the emergence of the interdependent [solidaire] art of government-population-wealth series radically displaces the problem of sovereignty. Foucault does not neglect the analysis of sovereignty, he merely asserts that the grounding force will not be found on the side of power, since power is "blind and weak,"[163] but on the side of the forces that constitute the "social body" or "society." Sovereign power is blind and weak but that does not signify, by any means, that it lacks efficacy: its impotence is ontological. We do a disservice to Foucault's thought when we describe its course through the analysis of power relations as a simple succession and substitution of different *dispositifs*, because the biopolitical *dispositif* does not replace sovereignty, it displaces its function and renders the "problem of its foundation even more acute."

"Accordingly, we need to see things not in terms of the replacement a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society of by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has the population as its primary target."[164] It would be better to try to think through the articulation and distribution of the different *dispositifs* that are present simultaneously in the linkage of government, population and political economy.

Can we then understand the development of biopolitics as the necessity to assure an immanent and strategic coordination of forces, rather than as the organization of a unilateral power relation? What we need to emphasize is the difference of the principles and the dynamics that regulate the socialization of forces, sovereign power and biopower. The relations between the latter two are only comprehensible on the basis of the multiple and heterogeneous action of forces. Without the introduction of the "freedom" and the resistance of forces the *dispositifs* of modern power remain incomprehensible, and their intelligibility will be inexorably reduced to the logic of political science. Foucault explains the issue in the following manner: "So resistance comes first, and

[163] "Power is not omnipotent or omniscient--quite the contrary! If power relationships have produced forms of investigation, of analysis, of models of knowledge, etc., it is precisely not because power was omniscient, but because it was blind...If it is true that so many power relationships have been developed, so many systems of control, so many forms of surveillance, it is precisely because power was always impotent." M. Foucault, 'Clarifications on the Question of Power', in S. Lotringer ed., *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984* (New York: Semiotexte, 1996), p. 625.

[164] M. Foucault, 'Governmentality', op. cit., p. 102. Translation modified.

resistance remains superior to the other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change to change with the resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, *the keyword*, in this dynamic."[165]

4.

In the seventies Foucault essentially formulates this new conception of power by means of the models of battle and war. In this way of understanding power and social relations there really is a "freedom" (an autonomy and an independence) of the forces in play, but it is rather a freedom that is constituted as the "power to deprive others." In effect, in war there are the strong and the weak, the clever and the naive, the victorious and the vanquished, and they are all acting "subjects," they are "free" even if this freedom only consists of the appropriation, the conquest and the submission of other forces.

Foucault, who made this model of power, a "warlike clash of forces," work against the philosophico-juridical tradition of contract and sovereignty, is firmly entrenched within a paradigm where the articulation of the concepts of the *power, difference and freedom* of forces already serves to explain social relations. Yet this "philosophy" of difference risks understanding all the relationships between men, regardless of the actual nature of these relationships, as relations of domination. Foucault's thought will be forced to confront this impasse. Nonetheless, bodies are not always trapped in the *dispositifs* of power. Power is not a unilateral relation, a totalitarian domination over individuals, such as the one exercised by the *dispositif* of the Panopticon,[166] but a strategic relation. Every force in society exercises power and that power passes through the body, not because power is "omnipotent and omniscient" but because every force is a power of the body. Power comes from below; the forces that constitute it are multiple and heterogeneous. What we call power is an integration, a coordination and determination of the relations between a multiplicity of forces. How are we to liberate this new conception of power, one based upon the potential, difference and autonomy of forces, from the model of

[165] M. Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', in P. Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth , Vol. I* (New York, The New Press, 1997), p.167.

[166] Foucault, responding to "Marxist" critiques launched against him by the actual mayor of Venice, Massimo Cacciari, explained that his conception of power relations could not be "merely reduced to such a figure."

"universal domination?" How are we to call forth a "freedom" and a force that is not merely one of domination and resistance?

In response to this questioning Foucault moved from the model of war to that of "government." The thematic of government was already present in Foucault's reflection since it illustrated the biopolitical exercise of power. The displacement that Foucault enacts, sometime in the eighties, consists in considering the "art of governance" not merely as a strategy of power, even if it is biopolitical power, but as the *action of subjects upon others and upon themselves*. He searched amongst the ancients for the answer to this question: how do *subjects become active*, how is the government of the self and others open to subjectifications that are independent of the biopolitical art of government? Consequently, The "government of souls" is always at stake in political struggle and cannot be formulated, exclusively, as biopower's modality of action.

The passage into ethics is an internal necessity to the foucauldian analysis of power. Gilles Deleuze is right in pointing out that there is a single Foucault, not two; the Foucault of the analysis of power and the Foucault of the problematic of the subject. A persistent questioning ranges the whole of Foucault's work: how are we to seize these infinitesimal, diffused and heterogeneous power relations so that they do not always result in phenomena of domination or resistance?[167] How can this new ontology of forces open up to unexpected processes of political constitution and independent processes of subjectification?

5.

In the eighties, after a long detour through ethics, Foucault finally returned to his concept of "power." In his last interviews Foucault criticized himself because he thought that "like many others, he had not been clear enough and had not used the proper terms to speak of power." He saw his work retrospectively as an analysis and a history of the different modalities through which human beings are constituted as subjects in Western culture, rather than as an analysis of the transformations of the *dispositifs* of power. "Therefore it is not power, but the subject, that constitutes the general theme of my investigations."[168]

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[167] G. Deleuze, *Foucault,* trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[168] M. Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in C. Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980).

The analysis of power *dispositifs* should then begin, without any ambiguity, with the dynamic of forces and the "freedom" of subjects, and not with the dynamics of institutions, even if they are biopolitical institutions, because if one starts to pose the question of power starting from the institution one will inevitably end up with a theory of the "subject of law." In this last and definitive theory of "power" Foucault distinguishes three different concepts which are usually confused within a single category: *strategic relations*, *techniques of government* and *states of domination*.

He asserts that, above all, it is necessary to speak of power relations rather than power alone, because the emphasis should fall upon the relation itself rather than on its terms, the latter are not causes but mere effects. His characterization of strategic relations as a play of "infinitesimal, mobile, reversible and unstable" power is already in place in the seventies. The new modality that expresses the exercise of power at the interior of relationships, amorous, teacher and student relations, husband and a wife, children and parents, etc., is already found in the nietzschean concept of "forces" that was the precursor to Foucault's conception of "strategic relations." This modality, defined as an "action upon an action," spreads through the will to "control the conduct of others."

"It seems to me that we must distinguish between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties--in which some try to control the conduct of others, who in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct be controlled or try to control the conduct of others — and the states of domination that people ordinarily call power."[169] Power is defined, from this perspective, as the capacity to structure the field of action of the other, to intervene in the domain of the other's possible actions. This new conception of power shows what was implicit in the model of the battle and war, but that still had not been coherently explained, namely, that it is necessary to presuppose the virtual "freedom" of the forces engaged to understand the exercise of power. Power is a mode of action upon "acting subjects," upon "free subjects, insofar as they are free."

"A power relationship, on the other hand, can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relation; that the "other" (the one over whom power is exercised)

[169] M. Foucault, 'The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom', in P. Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, Truth , Vol. I* (New York, The New Press, 1997), p.299.

must be recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, effects and possible inventions may open up."[170] The only way that subjects can be said to be free, in keeping with he stipulations of this model, is if they "always have the possibility to change the situation, if this possibility always exists." This modality of the exercise of power allows Foucault to respond to the critiques addressed to him ever since he initiated his work on power: "So what I've said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free--well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing."[171]

"States of domination," on the contrary, are characterized by the institutional stabilization of strategic relations, by the fact that the mobility, the potential reversibility and instability of power relations, of "actions upon actions," is limited. The asymmetric relations within every social relation crystallize and lose the freedom, the "fluidity" and the "reversibility" of strategic relations. Foucault places "governmental technologies," that is to say, the set of practices that "constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other,"[172] between strategic relations and states of domination.

For Foucault, governmental technologies play a central role in power relations, because it is through these technologies that the opening and closing of strategic games is possible; through their exercise strategic relations become either crystallized and fixed in asymmetric institutionalized relations (states of domination), or they open up to the creation of subjectivities that escape biopolitical power in fluid and reversible relations.

The ethico-political struggle takes on its full meaning at the frontier between "strategic relations" and "states of domination," on the terrain of "governmental technologies." Ethical action, then, is concentrated upon the crux of the relation between strategic relations and governmental technologies, and it has two principal goals: 1. to permit, by providing rules and techniques to manage the relationships established with the self and with others, the interplay of strategic relations with the minimum

[170] M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in J.D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault: Power, Vol.III* (New York, The New Press, 2000) The relation between the master and his slave is a power relation when flight is a possibility for the latter, otherwise it is simply a matter of the exercise of physical force.

[171] M. Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', op. cit., p.167.

[172] M. Foucault, 'The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom', op. cit., p.300.

possible domination,[173] 2. to augment their freedom, their mobility and reversibility in the exercise of power because these are the prerequisites of resistance and creation.

6.

The determination of the relationship between resistance and creation is the last limit that Foucault's thought attempted to breach. The forces that resist and create are to be found in strategic relations and in the will of subjects who are virtually free to "control the conduct of others." Power, the condensation of strategic relations into relations of domination, the contraction of the spaces of freedom by the desire to control the conduct of others, always meets with resistance; this resistance should be sought out in the strategic dynamic. Consequently, life and living being become a "matter" of ethics through the dynamic that simultaneously resists power and creates new forms of life. In an interview in 1984, a year before his death, Foucault was asked about the definition of the relation between resistance and creation:

"Resistance was conceptualized only in terms of negation. Nevertheless, as you see it, resistance is not solely a negation but a creative process. To create and recreate, to transform the situation, to participate actively in the process, that is to resist."

[173] In the last part of his life Foucault constantly faced the problem of strategic relations: how is one to render them symmetrical? He only begins to tackle this thematic through the theme of "friendship." Gabriel Tarde, an author whose thought I had, previously, confronted with Foucault's, emphasizes the need, beginning from the same foucauldian "strategic relations," to base their dynamic upon sympathy and not merely on asymmetry. "A prominent sociologist recently defined social relations, in a way that is so narrow and far removed from the truth, by claiming that the principal characteristic of social acts is that they are imposed *from the outside, by obligation*. To make this claim is to recognize as social relations only those between the master and the slave, between the professor and the student or between the parents and their children, without any regard for the fact that free relations between equals exist. One has to have one's eyes shut not to see that, even in the schools, the education that the students acquire on their own, by imitating each other, by breathing in, so to speak, their examples or even those of their professors, the education that they *internalize,* has more importance than the one they receive or are forced to bear." G. Tarde, *La Logique Sociale,* (Paris: Institut Synthelabo, 1999), p. 62.

"Yes, that is the way I would put it. To say no is the minimum form of resistance. But naturally, at times that is very important. You have to say no as a decisive form of resistance."[174]

And in the same interview, destined to appear in *Body Politic*, Foucault asserts that minorities (homosexuals), to whom the relation between resistance and creation is a matter of political survival, should not only defend themselves and resist, but should also affirm themselves, create new forms of life, create a culture; "They should affirm themselves; not merely affirm themselves in their identity, but affirm themselves insofar as they are a creative force."[175]

The relationships with ourselves, the relationships that we should entertain with ourselves, which led Foucault to this new definition of power are not relationships of identity; "Rather they should be relationships of differentiation, of creation and innovation."[176]

Foucault's work ought to be continued upon this fractured line between resistance and creation. Foucault's itinerary allows us to conceive the reversal of biopower into biopolitics, the "art of governance" into the production and government of new forms of life. To establish a conceptual and political distinction between biopower and biopolitics is to move in step with Foucault's thinking.

Translated by Ivan A. Ramirez

[174] M. Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', op. cit., p.168. Trans. Modified.
[175] M. Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', op. cit., p.164. Trans. Modified.
[176] M. Foucault, 'Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity', op. cit., p.166. Trans. Modified.

Pli 13 (2002), 111-125.

Toward a Conception of Racism without Race: Foucault and Contemporary Biopolitics

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Many commentators have assigned the year 1976 an unparalleled importance in Foucault's career: it is the year during which, depending on one's point of view, Foucault experienced his most profound awakening or his gravest crisis, the year his thought accordingly reached its maturity or, in contrast, lost its bearings and reversed its steps, condemned from that time on to wander from dead end to dead end in a futile flight from its own destiny. The recent publication of *Il faut défendre la société*, the text of his course at the Collège de France from the first few months of 1976, will do little to resolve the interpretive dilemma. It is a text that begins by validating the work of the previous period, summarized in *Surveillir et punir* (even if to move in a new direction), only to end by calling it into question and with it, the entire philosophico-political problematic on which it was based. It is clearly a work of transition which strains in opposing directions simultaneously; it thus allows us to understand the opposing interpretations of the Foucault of this period not as readings or misreadings of his work, but rather as its objective effects.

What is extraordinary about this work is that it not only announces a reorientation and thus the end of the research project of the previous five years, a project that produced two of his most important texts, *Surveillir et punir* and *La volonté de savoir*, but that it offers an explanation of the project's end, an explanation that is at risk of being ignored by commentators. It is not that his project's objectives were achieved or its research completed and summarized. On the contrary: far from having finished the project, Foucault finds it to be unfinishable and declares his intention to abandon it. Of course, it might be objected that there is nothing particularly surprising about such a course of action, that perhaps he tested his hypotheses and found them inadequate or poorly formulated,

or perhaps his theoretical postulates were simply falsified. Foucault's explanation, however, is far more equivocal, even evasive, when he seeks, if briefly, to justify the abandonment of the work of the last five years (without mentioning the major texts that have issued from this body of research): "tout cela piètine, ça n'avance pas; tout ça se répète et n'est pas lié ... bref, comme on dit, ça n'aboutit pas".[177] And while Foucault in part attributes the "failure" of this phase of his work to its own lack of internal coherence (an explanation accepted by many of his commentators, together with related psychological interpretations centering on Foucault's spiritual "crisis"), he also refers to a failure to advance and an inability to move forward which may be (and this is the crucial ambiguity of Foucault's statements about this period), the consequence of factors external as well as internal to the body of work he produced in his first five years at the Collège de France.

Foucault thus raises a question that few of his commentators have addressed, the question of the conditions of possibility of his own theoretical endeavors, the environment or milieu which may either make possible and facilitate a given research project, or, on the contrary, hinder it, opposing to it a force against which it may be difficult, if not impossible, to advance. Such a question becomes all the more compelling given that the research in which Foucault was engaged could not be conducted in a controlled environment whose variables could be made to remain constant. Instead, as he never ceased to remind his readers, insofar as the environment of his investigations was a specific historical conjuncture the stability of which, always temporary, was purely a product of contingency, it would remain uncontrolled and uncontrollable. To think effectively from the perspective Foucault outlines, one must know when to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the chance play of forces and, conversely, when such opportunities cease to exist, when it is no longer possible to conduct a certain kind of research or productively consider certain problems and there exists no other recourse than retreat. It is thus significant that Foucault himself links in a very direct way the relatively abrupt suspension of the inquiry he had conducted for some years to the closing of the historical period to which it belonged. In doing so he was already practicing that "problematization of the present" that he would, in one of his last lectures at the Collège de France, define as Kant's most important contribution to modernity.

What then, according to Foucault, in this period, "tres limitée, qui est celle que nous venons de vivre, les dix ou quinze, au maximum vingt

[177] Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société* (Paris: Gallimard Seuil, 1997), p. 5.

dernières annees"[178] permitted him to pursue a line of inquiry which no longer, that is, in the present, appears possible? This ten to twenty year period (1956 or 1966-1976) was distinguished from that which preceded it (as well as by that which follows it, the period whose commencement Foucault precisely marked by this exercise in periodization) by two characteristics. First, it was a time not simply of numerous and divergent attacks or offensives against the apparatuses of social domination and control, but even more, a time in which these attacks were particularly effective, changing the balance of social forces. Such a shift in the balance of forces, in turn, would not only alter the relations of bodies and institutions, but would, from Foucault's perspective, inevitably affect discursive relations as well, the distribution of the utterable and the unutterable, the thinkable and the unthinkable. If the effects of power and knowledge are never actually separable, then the diminution of normalizing power, to use his terminology, could only be accompanied by an "immense et proliférante criticabilité des choses, des institutions, des pratiques, des discours; une sorte de friabilité generale des sols, même et surtout les plus familiers, les plus solides, les plus proches".[179] Conversely, a sustained advance in the techniques of discipline and the mechanisms of social control could only bring about the solidification or petrification of the ground of thought; as the attacks became retreats, things would no longer offer themselves in the same way or to the same degree for criticism.

From our vantage point nearly a quarter of a century later, we can say with assurance that his periodization was quite correct: the "criticabilité" of things diminished considerably in the closing years of that decade. There is perhaps no better confirmation of this historical fact than Foucault's even more rapid abandonment of the orientation he announced in his second lecture: 'Jusqu'à présent, pendant les cinq dernières années, en gros, les disciplines; dans les cinq années suivantes, la guerre, la lutte, l'armée".[180] After two or three years, Foucault turned away from the analysis of power altogether, immersing himself in the literature of classical antiquity to study "the practices of the self." It remains important to understand these moments of crisis and retreat, not only or even primarily as consequences of the projects themselves (let alone Foucault's "spiritual" condition) considered in isolation from their historical context (as Foucault himself nevertheless did in several

[178]Ibid. p. 6.

[179]Ibid.p. 7.

[180]Ibid.p.21.

interviews from the early eighties), but as impasses as much imposed on as produced by a particular line of inquiry. Armed with the knowledge that *Il faut défendre la société* offers us we can thus resist not only the negative judgements of Foucault's many critics, but even more importantly his own dismissal of the work of this period. He has provided us with the means necessary to rescue certain of his works from his own attempts to disavow them. *Il faut défendre la société* would appear then to confirm Deleuze's often ignored explanation of the theoretical difficulties that Foucault encountered during this period: "*La volonté de savoir* se termine explicitement sur une doute. Si, à l'issue de *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault trouve une impasse, ce n'est pas en raison de sa manière de penser le pouvoir, c'est parce qu'il a decouvert l'impasse où nous met le pouvoir lui-même, dans notre vie comme dans notre pensée, nous qui nous heurtons à lui dans nos plus infimes vérités".[181]

In fact, at the extreme, the rigor of Foucault's historical procedure compels us to pose the problem of the degree to which his works will be intelligible outside of certain specific conjunctures. This is an especially important question in relation to our own present, the closing years of the twentieth-century which, if we follow Foucault in refusing to separate relations of knowledge and power, can only be described as a period of diminished criticability. What effects can *Il faut défendre la société* produce in such a period? It is almost certainly the case that many readers will regard this text as so inscribed in the network of controversies that characterized the seventies (the critique of Marxist economism, of Lacanian psychoanalysis, *anti-Oedipus*, etc.) that it cannot easily be reinscribed in the philosophico-political framework of the twenty-first century. At least one essential element in *Il faut défendre la société*, however, would appear not only to retain its actuality, but in fact to become actual only in the present to which we belong, the epoch of "globalization" in which the unprecedented volume and variety of economic and demographic change has made immigration (and inevitably, racism) the focal point not only of European and North American politics, but internationally.[182] In the case of Europe, it is difficult to imagine a time when Foucault's examination of race, or rather

[181] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 103.

[182] The very notion that Foucault devoted a year's seminar to the problem of racism proved so alluring that a scholar from the US structured an entire book around an examination of what was then an unpublished manuscript. Laura Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) appeared two years before *Il faut défendre la société* was published in French.

his assertion that the concept of race and the practice of racism are central to the history of European societies, liberal and "totalitarian" alike, could be more relevant. Will this element command the interest of readers beyond the circle of Foucault scholars even at a time when Foucault's mode of thinking can appear so inexpressibly foreign, a time when the doctrines he most questioned are taken as the necessary starting points of philosophical and political discussion; a time of denial and dissociation when it is considered bad form to conceive of social and economic relations in any form other than that of free and equal individuals between whom there are none but consensual relations (except of course in a few last remaining outposts of barbarism)?

Foucault begins his argument by inverting Clausewitz's maxim that war is politics by other means: instead, politics is merely a form of war. He appropriates from the Greeks, not Plato and Aristotle to be sure, but the much maligned sophists, the notion that no social order or institution is original or final, an image or model of conduct and political relations which we need only strive to emulate or realize, but a social order is finally only relations of power. He then applies this notion to the modern discourses of constitutional foundations and original contracts to discover the extent to which they are designed precisely to mask and deny the violence and enslavement that characterize the origins of the states from which such discourses issued: "Il s'agit , au contraire, de définir et de découvrir sous les formes du juste tel qu'il est institue ... le passé oublié des luttes réelles, des victoires effectives, des défaites qui ont été peut-être masquées, mais qui restent profondément inscrites. Il s'agit de retrouver le sang qui a séché dans les codes, et par consequent non pas, sous la fugacité de l'histoire, l'absolu du droit".[183] Foucault's image is arresting indeed: one reads the declarations of liberty and the codes of justice without realizing that they are written not in ink but in dried blood, which thus becomes the medium and condition of their functioning. The defeats, the massacres, genocide: it is they that permitted the victors to write their treatises of universal right. Thus, the discourse of perpetual war which erupts into speech and writing from time to time is more usually the object of denial; indeed, Foucault maintains that the Hegelian dialectic is the appropriation and pacification of this discourse, an acknowledgment of struggle in order better finally to reduce it to an (always fictive) order in which the struggle between antagonistic camps is transmuted into a universal harmony.

[183] Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p 48.

It isn't difficult to discover the development of this discourse not in the philosophers most associated with the notion of war in connection to politics (Foucault refers here to Machiavelli and Hobbes) but in the lesser known works of those who precisely opposed the Prince or the Sovereign: dissenters and Levellers in seventeenth-century England and the aristocratic opponents of the absolutist state of Louis XIV fifty years later. It is they who recognized that beneath every social order raged a war. It was not, however, the war that theoreticians of the liberal tradition imagined, a war between originally dissociated individuals, the famous war of all against all which was, at least according to Hobbes, the necessary consequence of the freedom and equality of individuals in the state of nature. Instead, the war described by these often obscure and frequently ignored theoreticians was a war between different races. That is, those, occupying or contending over the same space, whose ethnic, linguistic, corporeal and cultural differences could be organized into a binary opposition (51). Foucault notes that the social conflicts of seventeenth-century England or eighteenth-century France were often theorized as wars between irreducibly distinct races, races incapable of genuine integration: e.g., Normans and Anglo-Saxons, Franks and Gauls.

In the nineteenth-century, according to Foucault, the theory of the war between the races would undergo two "transcriptions" or mutations. First, it would furnish the model for the notion of class war, a war between two clearly demarcated and opposing camps whose battles and confrontations, whose fundamental disequilibrium was masked by systems of law or right. This, of course, is a highly equivocal statement which perfectly expresses Foucault's ambivalence toward the historical projects of socialism and communism: while it does not necessarily reduce theories of class struggle to the model of the war between races, it nevertheless suggests the ever-present possibility that socialism and communism will regress to their primitive state either by adopting openly racist politics (e.g., anti-Semitism, attacks on immigration) or, perhaps more commonly, by characterizing the class enemy in biological or medical terms (the weak, effeminate, homosexual, neurotic bourgeois — as opposed to the robust, manly and healthy proletarian), in effect racializing the difference between classes. For Foucault, it is not just that totalizing theories of opposing camps locked in a war of position are inaccurate descriptions of the real complexity of the field of struggle, it is even more

that they tend to replicate the form, if not the content, of the older notion of race war.[184]

But perhaps even more importantly, the early modern war between races became modern racism, no longer referring to culture but to nature, no longer to law but to life; its enemies were no longer the infidel, the barbarian or the savage, but rather the unhealthy, the unnatural and the abnormal. Modern racism no longer conceived of history as the outcome of battles, determined by the strength, cunning and courage of the combatants and hence always characterized by a degree of uncertainty and risk, but rather as an evolution which produced ever more complex and "successful" species by means of the struggle for life and natural selection. Of course, such a scheme hardly eliminated the need for war or reduced its frequency. On the contrary, war would become, for the human species among others, the primary vehicle of the "natural" selection of subspecies; i.e., races, certain of which would emerge through the struggle for life as more adaptive, more fit than others, and thus all the more necessary. In this way, and the Nazi regime was the epitome of this biopolitical trend, "selective pressures" would hierarchize races according to their degree of fitness, and genocide was not so much justified as banalized when viewed as one of the many ways that unfit species are selected for extinction.

Such theories, often referred to as Social Darwinism (although, Foucault argues, they neither began with Darwin nor were in any rigorous way deducible from his theory of evolution), emerged as a variant of what Foucault called bio-power, the notion, first formulated in the eighteenth-century, that the primary objective of modern states was the government not of individuals or collections of individuals, not even of "society," but rather of life itself, the specific expression of which would henceforth be known as "population." At stake were no longer individual citizen-subjects whose rights had to be safeguarded and whose responsibilities enforced, but a complex organism that grew or declined, that might be healthy or sick and one, moreover, whose well-being must constantly be safeguarded (as if the state were the means by which the organism regulated itself) from the malignant mutations within and the pathogens without. Life now thought of as a process, as history rather than as a system in equilibrium, allowed a naturalization or vitalization of politics. As a part of nature, part of a larger process of evolution, war,

[184] For an exploration of these ideas in greater detail but one which was only indirectly, if at all, inspired by Foucault, see Étienne Balibar, "Class Racism" in *Race, Nation, Class* (London:Verso, 1991).

famine and genocide all played a normal and necessary role in eliminating the unhealthy, the unfit and the maladapted and thus tended to strengthen the species, or more commonly the subspecies, as a whole. Social and political phenomena were endowed with a higher evolutionary function or purpose. All that we were or did was selected as the fittest for life from among other possibilities, not by God, of course, but by nature itself whose providential hand was all the more reassuring in that every hint of voluntarism had been eliminated from it: local evils only made possible the greater good of the species, of life itself: "Au fond l'évolutionnisme, entendu en un sens large, c'est-à-dire non pas tellement la théorie de Darwin elle-même que l'ensemble, le pacquet de ses notions (comme: hiérarchie des espèces sur l'arbre commun de l'evolution, luttle pour la vie entre les espèces, sélection qui élimine les moins adaptés)--est devenu, tout naturellement, en quelques années au XIXe siècle, non pas simplement une manière de transcrire en termes biologiques le discours politique, non pas simplement une manière de cacher un discours politique sous un vêtement scientifique, mais vraiment une manière de penser les rapports de colonisation … etc.".[185] Such, in sum, is Foucault's characterization of the "biologisation of politics" up to the middle of the twentieth-century. But do the theses of *Il faut défendre la société* retain their validity in relation to the racisms of the twenty-first century?

For a significant group of readers, the response might well be that they do not; they will almost certainly object that biologistic racism has been largely marginalized, eclipsed by the rise of what Étienne Balibar has called neo-racism, "a racism without races ... whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences".[186] This neo-racism is not simply a cunning form of racism that turns traditional anti-racist arguments against themselves; more interestingly, as recent developments confirm, it arises within traditional anti-racism as the consequence (even if not the only consequence) of its philosophical positions. To reject the notion that differences between distinct human populations are in any but the most trivial senses determined by culture is by no means necessarily to eliminate or even merely historicize these differences. On the contrary, it may be another way, far more effective than the old appeals to biology, of "naturalizing" or making permanent and fixed the actually existing forms of diversity among groups.

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[185] Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p. 229.

[186] Étienne Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class*, p.21.

But perhaps even more importantly, the development of the life sciences themselves appears to have eluded Foucault's predictions; his judgement of the biological sciences, and more specifically their relation to the modern forms of racism may now appear fundamentally wrong. For if the foundation of a theory of inescapable and enduring human difference (with or without a hierarchical ordering of these differences) is found in an analysis of cultures (open or closed, communalist or individualistic, secular or theocratic, etc.), recent developments in biology, in contrast, would appear to render the life sciences an agent of an egalitarian universalism. Molecular biology in particular has dealt a mortal blow to the any notion that the concept of "the races of man" has any relation to the real distribution of human genetic variation. Richard Lewontin's finding, reported in his famous 1972 essay "The Apportionment of Human Diversity" that no more than 14.6% of human genetic variation was correlated with "race" (understood in the broadest possible sense: not only Negroid or Caucasoid, but even English or French).[187] Subsequent studies, including a comprehensive study just published by biologist Alan Templeton, have gone even further, showing that the level of genetic variation among humans "is well below the usual threshold used to identify subspecies among non-human animals. ... The widespread representation of human "races" as branches on an intraspecific population tree is genetically indefensible and biologically misleading, even when the ancestral node is presented as being at 100,000 years ago. ... Instead, all of the genetic evidence shows that there never was a split or separation of the "races" or between Africans and Eurasians".[188]

Thus, while racist discourse continues to flourish in the social sciences (especially psychology and political science), in the face of such findings even the attempts (in part by biologists, but increasingly by non-scientists) to find the genetic bases of human behavior, an enterprise once regarded a priori as an attempt to sanctify and render unchangeable existing inequalities, have gradually, and not without resistance, turned away from the attempt to explain differences in intelligence or "aggression" between stable races and towards behavioral traits and emotions common to the species as a whole. Biology, if anything, has become not the advocate but the bearer of the indisputable, because

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[187] Richard Lewontin, "The Apportionment of Human Diversity. *Evolutionary Biology* 6, pp. 381-398.

[188] Alan R. Templeton, "Human Races: A Genetic and Evolutionary Perspective", *American Anthropologist*, 100: 3, September 1998, pp. 632-650.

proven and demonstrated, commonality that is in our genes, inescapable, and hence more real than any merely cultural differences. In short it appears that the life sciences, and particularly molecular biology, have developed in a direction that not only undercuts the old racisms but provides an arsenal of data with which to combat even the new "racism without race". Evolutionary theory has itself changed in response; not only has the idea of race been consigned by genetic research to the realm of cultural history, but evolutionary theory affirms the adaptive character of universal human attributes (e.g., altruism) which have been selected from a range of alternatives as optimal. It would appear that biological sciences far from providing a rational for theories of racial difference are now more than ever the bearer of a universalism that is all the more powerful in that it is grounded not in law but in life, not in the progress of human history but in the pitiless process of evolution.[189] It will be said that if we are adequately to explain contemporary racism we ought to look elsewhere than biology. In fact, it might well appear that it is precisely the domain of the study of cultural rather than that of the biological sciences that offers fertile ground for racism.

Skepticism about Foucault's arguments will only be fueled by the passages in the text in which he treats science as a power-knowledge complex from which conflict is absent, necessitating the "insurrection of minor knowledges" against its totalizing effects. Such a position, to the extent it emerges in *Il faut défendre la société*, would not only contradict the theses Foucault states in detail in the section on method in *La volonté de savoir*, particularly the rule of the "tactical polyvalence of discourse," but cannot easily be reconciled with Foucault's ringing praise of the science of genetics in his review, a few years earlier of Nobel Prizewinner François Jacob's *Logique de la vie*.[190] One can already hear the clamor of the self-appointed defenders of science and the Enlightenment, especially in the US, who know to keep all French philosophers living or dead under careful surveillance lest they seduce the young and naive into supporting their project of the final destruction of reason itself.

Paradoxically, it is only when we confront Foucault's text, precisely acknowledging its hesitations and aporias, with what might appear to be its definitive critique, that its actuality becomes manifest. It is perhaps only through such a confrontation that a second reading of biology that

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[189] For an extraordinarily crude presentation of such a view, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Janet McIntosh, "The New Creationism: Biology under Attack," *The Nation* June 9, 1997, pp. 11-16.

[190] *Dits et Ecrits* (1972).

develops alongside the first, admittedly dominant, reading, but which is irreducible to it, even opposed to it, becomes visible.[191] For the text itself nowhere acknowledges the difference it produces in its analysis of biology; it is a difference which remains invisible from Foucault's point of view. In response to the question, "qu'est-ce que le racisme?" Foucault twice in a single paragraph insists that racism is that which, applied to the "biological continuum", "fragments" it, drawing distinctions within it between species, sub-species and races and then hierarchizing these groups according to their evolutionary success or failure. According to this view, just as biology perpetually divides life, including human life, so too does bio-power divide populations into sub-groups (that is, races) and into internal as well as external threats or dangers. Bio-power differentiates and divides in order to introduce a distinction that is literally "vital": the distinction between those who must live and those who must die or perhaps between those who must die in order for others to live. The world of racism thus described is a world of incompatible particularities; a world in which a genuine human universalism is as unthinkable as a universalism of life and for the same reason: separate species not only compete for the same niche or for the same resources, but the destruction and consumption of some is precisely the necessary condition of the survival of others. It is this view that contemporary biology and genetics invalidates with the finding that evolution has produced broad genetic commonality, a vital universality, with genetic variation occurring through mutation primarily at the level of the individual rather than of the group. As some proponents of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology have already pointed out, molecular biology has shown that race doesn't exist except as a social construct superimposed upon natural history; as such it would appear to do exactly the opposite of what Foucault suggested: rather than dividing and distinguishing it effaces differences, revealing racial distinctions as nothing more than noisome fictions that act to obscure a real universality. Biology has thus provided the foundation of fact for the political project of the Enlightenment with its attempt to harmonize the only two instances

[191] It is at this point that my reading of Foucault's treatment of biologistic racism diverges from that of Stoler who tends to present Foucault's argument as internally consistent, even if she finds fault with it in certain crucial respects, notably the text's neglect of the importance of colonialism in the formation of modern racism. I would also say that the racism that Foucault analyzes is perhaps best regarded as "post-colonial" racism, a racism that accompanies not movements of conquest, settlement and administration, but rather the demographic flow of the Other from the former colonies back to the "core."

of the social world: the individual and the universal. In effect, it has abolished race; can the abolition of racism be far behind?

It is precisely this question, the question necessarily posed by contemporary biology, that allows us to see the formation of a second account of modern racism in Foucault's text and confers upon it its historical interest. For if according to the first account, racism thrives on the human differences formulated by life science and derives a vitalist ethics for the Darwinian struggle for life, Foucault simultaneously posits a racism that forsakes not only any concept of the struggle between races but also any concept of human races in the plural. This latter racism is a racism which thus no longer concerns itself with race at all; its object is the species as a whole. It is no longer the champion of a particular (superior, successfully adapted) race against others; it is the guardian of the whole and the bearer of the universal: "le thème de la société binaire, partagée entre deux races, deux groupes étrangers par la langue, le droit, etc., va être remplacé par celui d'une société qui sera, au contraire, biologiquement moniste".[192]

Underlying the "monist" view of the human species is a certain conception of evolution as an optimizing process that has selected the most adaptive characteristics and behaviors from a myriad of less successful alternatives. Not only is humanity no less subject to selective pressures; it is arguably more subject than other species, an argument sustained by reference to the fact that humanity exhibits far less genetic variation than most species: evolution has eliminated all but the insignificant differences between people, producing one race, one species and humanity as it is, is the best that it could possibly be. Much contemporary evolutionary thought is so rigorously teleological that it is little more, especially in its more popular forms, than creationism without a creator. Guided by the notion that the invisible hand of natural selection has carefully chosen the universals that define human existence as the features and behaviors most conducive to reproductive success, one seeks in even the most trivial or destructive behaviors their originally adaptive function, that is, the purpose for which they have been created: nature does nothing in vain. It is at this point that Foucault's reference to the work of Georges Canguilhem takes on its full significance. For the universals supposedly selected from the diversity of life are precisely norms in the sense Canguilhem defined them: "Une norme tire son sens,

[192] Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p. 70.

sa fonction et sa valeur du fait de l'existence en dehors d'elle de ce qui ne répond pas a l'exigence qu'elle sert".[193]

Such a procedure opens two avenues for a biologically inflected racism. First, classical evolutionary theory tends to regard the nature that selects as itself constantly changing, so that a behavior optimally adaptive in one environment may be completely unsuited to changed conditions. The popular applications of evolutionary thought to the human behavior, however, tend to regard its milieu as changing so slowly that it may be regarded as stable or to use the preferred phrase "recurrent";[194] thus, to paraphrase Marx, there was evolution but there no longer is any. Once nature is deprived of its historical character, the genetic mutations that were the motor of evolution, in that they allowed species to survive in a changed environment, take on a radically new and negative meaning. Mutation of what is already optimal can only breed "errors in the organism," the behavioral equivalents of such genetically transmitted disorders as Tay-Sachs disease or Phenylketonuria. Not only individuals but whole populations may be deemed pathological or maladaptive in their failure to exhibit "universal" characteristics. It is quite likely, if not indeed inevitable, that such populations may correspond very closely to what were previously regarded as inferior races; after all is it not they who are disproportionately represented in prisons, among the mentally ill and the unemployed? Only the phenotypical reference points have changed.

The second possible avenue for a new biologistic racism without races is the inverse of the first. It is perhaps more subtle in the sense that it is both more historical and more hesitant to claim that genes "cause" behavior. It may be, the advocates of such a position argue, that we are encumbered with genes for behavior that were selected as optimal for hunting and gathering societies but which are tragically maladaptive in modern society. Culture is neither determined exclusively by biological imperatives, nor is it a "beautiful lie" concealing the unpleasant reality of our natural being which it nevertheless cannot escape. On the contrary, culture, together with the fact of consciousness, a product of evolutionary development that allows us to transcend it and to step outside of nature, permit us not only to know, and make judgements about, the "whispering

[193] Georges Canguilhem, *Le normal et la pathologique* (Paris: P.U.F., 1966), p. 176.

[194] See John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, "The Psychological Foundations of Culture," *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* ed. Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 19-136.

within" of out genetic heritage but even more to resist the siren's song. Tragically, there are those incapable of resisting the aggressive or promiscuous surges of the nature within. These tragic beings, too true to their nature, are our criminals and our rebels, those whose existence constitutes an eruption of disorderly nature in the midst of social order (one distinctly senses the presence of Hobbes here). Here too these primitives, prisoners of their genes, will undoubtedly correspond very closely to those once misjudged as a race on the basis of such insignificant phenotypes as hair, skin color etc.

In the light of all this, how then are we finally to understand the opposition between what, in his opening lecture, Foucault calls "les savoirs assujetis" and "le discours scientifique"? If we take seriously Foucault's theses on the immanence of power and knowledge, we are compelled to reject the argument, undeniably to be found in the text, that "les savoirs assujettis" exist outside and external to what would be a clearly demarcated realm called science, according to the very theory of mutually exclusive and opposing camps or blocs that he so often criticized as inadequate. Here again we must cite Foucault against himself: if "les savoirs assujettis" exist as blocs, they are blocs "qui étaient présents et masqués à l'intérieur des ensembles fonctionnels et systématiques, et que la critique peut faire réapparaître".[195] There is no question then of drawing boundaries around "science" whether to sanctify or to reject it; the task instead is to make visible the struggle between knowledges in the very heart of the sciences themselves. The extraordinary value of *Il faut défendre la société* in which Foucault persists with characteristic courage in thinking out loud, exposing to us his hesitations, doubts and uncertainties is that it communicates the turbulence of a thought that seeks not so much to represent the practices that it considers as to disturb their fixity and fracture their solidity, forcing them to reveal to us both their historical character and the fissures that traverse them.

[195] Michel Foucault, p. 8.

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A Fugitive Thread: The Production of Subjectivity in Marx

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If one has the audacity to attempt an analysis of the current conjuncture, an analysis that is not satisfied to simply circulate the watchwords of "postmodernism" and "globalization," but attempts to locate the real contradictions and tensions animating the present, then such an analysis must start from the intimate relationship between capitalism and subjectivity. Intimate, in the sense that subjectivity and the production of subjectivity are no longer (if they ever were) limited to the superstructure, to the reproduction of a capable and docile labor force, they have become directly productive for capital. This can be seen in the way in which knowledge, affects, and tastes have become incorporated into the production process. In contemporary capitalism (it is difficult today to retain the appellation "late capitalism") it is not just commodities that are produced and consumed but "lifestyles" ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting. It is this new reality that critical thinking must confront and transform. At first glance it would appear that the existing theoretical tools seem inadequate to the task. On one side, stemming from Marx, there are the tools for an examination of the transformations and development of the capitalist mode of production in which subjectivity remains an afterthought or consequence, while on another side, stemming from Foucault and poststructuralist thinkers, there is an examination of the production of subjectivity as a "relation to self" which is examined apart from the transformation of capitalist valorization (Lazzarato 115). In the current conjuncture we find ourselves stranded between these two lines of investigation unable to grasp the transformations of politics, culture, and the economy by new intersections of production and the production of subjectivity.

One response to this theoretical impasse would be to seek the possible grounds for an intersection of these two theoretical fields. There is emerging work in this area that seeks the possible point of articulation between the examination of the capitalist mode of production in Marx and the analysis of the production of subjectivity in Foucault and after. However, the search for such a relation would on some level presuppose what I would like to put into question here. It assumes that each discourse contains what the other lacks, that there may not already be an investigation of the production of subjectivity in Marx, and thus the two modes of investigation can be assembled together like pieces of a puzzle. Rather than attempt to reconcile Marx's analysis of the mode of production with the production of subjectivity as if they were necessarily two separate unified problems I would like to examine the manner in which there is already a theory of the production of subjectivity in Marx. Marx does not explicitly develop this theory, rather it exists in the interstices and the points of tension and contact of his concepts. Thus such an examination entails reading Marx "against the grain." Perhaps less against the grain of Marx, but rather of much work on Marxism which finds in the early works an appeal to a humanist conception of subjectivity (necessarily pre-existing its later alienation in an original fullness) and in the later encounters nothing but a purely economistic exposition of the laws of capitalist development.

A reading for the production of subjectivity in Marx entails an investigation of not only Marx's concept of the mode of production but the implicit ontology that underlying it, appearing intermittently as a sort of "fugitive thread" in Marx's writings. Perhaps the clearest indication of this ontology is given in the 1857 'Introduction', otherwise known as Notebook M of the *Grundrisse*. The immediate critical target of Marx's introduction is the categories of classical political economy, specifically, how bourgeois or classical political economy proceeds from a particular articulation of the relation between production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Marx writes:

> Thus [in political economy] production, distribution, exchange and consumption form a regular syllogism; production is the generality, distribution and exchange the particularity [*Besonderheit*], and consumption the singularity [*Einzelnheit*] in which the whole is joined together. This is admittedly a coherence, but a shallow one. Production is determined by general natural laws, distribution by social accident, and the latter may therefore

> promote production to a greater or lesser extent; exchange stands between the two as a formal social movement; and the concluding act, consumption, which is conceived not only as a terminal point [*Endziel*] but also as an end-in-itself [*Endzweck*], actually belongs outside of economics except in so far as it reacts in turn upon the point of departure and initiates the whole process anew. (1973 89/25)

Within this conception of political economy, production and consumption, the starting point and end point of political economy, are outside political economy, or, at least, outside the history of political economy. Consumption and production are governed by "natural laws", by the anthropological constants of need and reproduction. They thus function as the "given", the assumed ground from which political economy proceeds. Only distribution and circulation are recognized as properly historical: there are only different types of property, different forms of law, which mediate without changing the natural relation of need. The only relation is exchange. The only history is the history of different forms of exchange. Classical political economy is determined in the first and last instance by an anthropology that is wise enough to remain out of sight, directing the action from off stage.[196] As Louis Althusser has argued it is not a big step from this silent anthropological ground to an entire anthropomorphic discourse on the social in which "society" or the "economy" is figured as a closed totality with needs and demands. Classical political economy begins from an implicit conception of subjectivity, a static anthropology of need and exchange, and from this presupposition it articulates an image of society as a unified subject. Marx's opposition to this second point is well known, where classical political economy sees a unified society, a population, Marx finds the differences and antagonisms of class struggle. What is less apparent is that Marx also opposed the implicit ground of classical political economy, developing an anthropology that does not tie subjectivity to ahistorical coordinates of need and scarcity, but posits subjectivity as both produced and productive.

[196] Althusser argues that this "anthropology" remains out of sight in and through the manner in which classical economy assumes "need" as a necessarily pre-conceptual given which delineates the field of political economy, political economy is concerned with material need. Thus this anthropology is at the same time a moral ideology – what it excludes by definition is the determination of the economy by other factors such as power or domination. There is by definition only production for need. (Althusser and Balibar 162/368)

For Marx the terms of classical political economy, production, consumption, and distribution, and the relations these terms describe must be understood as historical. Or, put differently, rather than maintaining the simple and linear causality of natural needs and historical mediations, Marx develops a thought of the complex relations of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption in which all act upon and determine each other, and to a certain extent, produce each other. To translate this into another philosophical language, the interrelations of production, consumption, and distribution could be considered as the exposition of a thought of immanence, in that it is opposed to both the theoretical assertion of a transcendental scene of determination that remains exterior to that which it determines (as in most forms of economism) or the assumption of a concealed transcendental foundation (as in the anthropological ground of classical economics).[197] A thought of immanence requires that all of the relations (production, distribution, and consumption) must be thought both as effect and cause of each other. The simultaneity of a relation of cause and effect can be demonstrated with respect to production and consumption. Marx demonstrates that production and consumption seem to have an immediate identity as well as a contrariety, in the simple fact that all production involves consumption of raw materials and at the same time all consumption seems to immediately produce something, if only the energy for production. Beyond this immediate identity Marx asserts that there is a more intimate relation of co-implication that encompasses and enfolds the supposed exterior and ahistorical ground of need and subjectivity.

> Production not only supplies a material for the need, but it also supplies a need for the material. As soon as consumption emerges from its initial state of natural crudity and immediacy – and, if it

[197]Althusser argues that Marx's entire mature philosophy entails a rethinking of causality, and the development of a thought of "immanent causality", which breaks down the rigid hierarchy between cause and effect. The supposed "effects" of the capitalist mode of production, such as greed and ideologies of possession and property, must be equally thought as causes, elements of its functioning. "This implies therefore that the effects are not outside the structure, are not a pre-existing object, element or space in which the structure arrives to *imprint its mark:* on the contrary, it implies that the structure is immanent in its effects, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that *the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects,* in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects" (Althusser and Balibar 191/405).

> remained at that stage, this would be because production itself had been arrested there – it becomes itself mediated as a drive by the object. The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art – like every other product – creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object … Consumption likewise produces the producers *inclination* by beckoning to him as an aim determining need ("Grundrisse" 92/27).

Production produces consumption, producing not only its object but its particular mode and subject, and in turn consumption acts on production, in effect producing it.[198] Similarly, Marx explains: "consumption ideally posits the object of production as an internal image, as a need, as a drive and a purpose. It creates the objects of production in a still subjective form" (1973 92/27).

The mutual relations of causality between production, consumption, and distribution, are supported by another larger sense of production, which is no longer simply economic production, but is the assertion that these different practices cannot but have effects on one another, effects that exceed anything that can be measured on the level of the economy. According to Marx: "Production predominates not only over itself, in the antithetical definition of production, but over the other moments as well….A definite [*bestimmte*] production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as *definite relations between these different moments.* Admittedly, however, in its *one sided form,* production is itself determined by the other moments" (1973 99/34). This relation between a determinant production, consumption, and distribution, serves as one definition given by Marx of a "mode of production"; it does not posit subjectivity as an external element to be "fooled" or interpellated by ideology, but recognizes it as an immanent and constitutive dimension of the mode of production. For Marx it is the recognition of the implication of subjectivity in the mode of production, its historical status as something both produced and productive of the mode of production, which in part differentiates the critical materialist account of the economy from classical economics. "The production of capitalists and wage laborers is thus a chief product of capital's

[198] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari cite, albeit obliquely, Marx's introduction in developing their account of the immanent relation of subjectivity, specifically desire, to the mode of production (1983 4/10)

realization process. Ordinary economics, which looks only at the things produced, forgets this completely". (1973 512) Production is always the production of subjects as much as it is the production of objects.

If one wanted to think in terms of "breaks" then it would be possible to say that Marx breaks with what would later become the two major spectres of Marxist thought, "economism" and "humanism" with one term – production. As Marx wrote in the sixth of the *Theses on Feuerbach*: "…the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations". While this statement has been interpreted as constituting a break with humanism, replacing the assertion of an abstract essence with the historicity of social relations, it could also be interpreted as an indicator pointing towards Marx's ontological conception of production. Production is not an activity restricted to the realm of the economy, nor is it simply an anthropological necessity, it is affirmation that existence is relational, there are not abstract essences only the multiple effects, the changing ensembles, of different practices. Production is immanence. It is not only the assertion that there is no other world than this one, but the recognition that this world is constantly being made and remade from a multiplicity of different relations. An immanent conception of production cannot differentiate in advance between the production of things and the production of subjectivity, ascribing to each an *a priori* role as determining and determined, but must be open to their different historical articulations.

In the Introduction Marx seems oddly contemporary, seeming to take into account not only the philosophical problem of the production of subjectivity, but the related social and political problem of the creation of needs and desires through consumption and marketing. As with many points in the *Grundrisse,* the reader is struck by the almost prophetic nature of Marx's writing. It remains difficult, however, to relate Marx's insistence on immanence in the introduction with his other mature writings, which seem to focus on a more limited sense of production, the production of things, at the expense of the more thorough account of production that includes the production of social relations. Despite the fact that Marx did not publish the "1857 Introduction" because it seemed to anticipate his research, with respect to the problem of the production of subjectivity. The "Introduction" stands as more of a provocation for future inquiry, than a result.[199] The question then becomes a search for

[199] Marx's stated reasons for not publishing the introduction were as follows: "A general introduction, which I had drafted, is omitted, since on further consideration it

elements of this thought of immanence, or the materiality of subjectivity, in Marx's other writings.

The immanent relation between production and the production of subjectivity announces itself most forcefully at the points in Marx's writing where he deals with the problem of the transition from one mode of production to another. At these points of historical transformation, where one mode of production is destroyed and another is constituted, Marx underscores that such a transformation is impossible without a corresponding transformation of subjectivity. This can be seen in the chapters of *Capital* where Marx discusses the origin and the formation of the capitalist mode of production. The search for the origins of capitalist accumulation seems to lead to an infinite regress, always presupposing its two constitutive conditions: wealth freed from its investment in any particular endeavor, or capital, and individuals with only their labor power to sell, or workers. In order to accumulate capital it is necessary to possess capital. There must then be an original or primitive accumulation, an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but rather its precondition, and which separates the workers from the conditions of employment and stockpiles wealth. Marx's theory of primitive accumulation is an argument which is both historically and theoretically dense – dealing with both the history of capitalism in Europe and the relation between violence, law, and the economy. For our purposes we can isolate three moments of primitive accumulation: first, expropriation, the destruction of the commonly held lands, second, bloody legislation, laws which punish and control the disappropriated peasantry, and third, a period of normalization in which the previous moment of violence is eclipsed in the "naturalization" of a new mode of production.[200] At each point in the process the economic transformation is

seems to me confusing to anticipate results which still have to be substantiated, and the reader who really wishes to follow me will have to decide to advance from the particular to the general." (1970 13)

[200] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have related Marx's theory to a particular type of violence which is difficult to critique because it is always presented as pre-accomplished and carrying its justification. Deleuze and Guattari write: "Hence the very particular character of state violence: it is very difficult to pinpoint this violence because it always presents itself as pre-accomplished. It is not even adequate to say that the violence rests with the mode of production. Marx made the observation in the case of capitalism: there is a violence that necessarily operates through the state, precedes the capitalist mode of production, constitutes the "primitive accumulation" and makes possible the capitalist mode of production itself. From a standpoint within the capitalist mode of production, it is very difficult to say who is the thief and who is the victim, or even where the violence resides. That is because the worker is born

caused by and effects a transformation of social relations and subjectivity.[201] What is destroyed in primitive accumulation is not simply possessions or relations to the land but a social relation and form of cooperation. It is with respect to the final moment, normalization, that subjectivity fully comes into play. In order for the capitalist mode of production to constitute itself as a social order it must inscribe itself in the habits, desires, and fears of the newly formed working class (Albiac 13). As Marx writes: "The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education [*Erziehung*], tradition, and habit [*Gewohneit*] looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self evident natural laws" (1977 899/765).

The peasants, farmers, and small craftsmen that are cast out from their conditions of existence are not already workers, subjects of labor-power. In fact, Marx reminds us that historically they were more likely to resort to theft and vagabondage (1973 736*)*. This is why it is insufficient to simply separate the peasants and artisans from the means of production. In order for them to become workers, bearers of a force and power that is exchangeable and calculable, an entire series of apparatuses must be put to work, educating, training, and breeding a man that can be made productive. Along with the accumulation of wealth and the breakdown of feudal or guild relations there is a necessary subjective dimension of the constitution of the capitalist mode of production – it requires a subject not only trained to the rhythms of the capitalist mode of production but whose desires and needs are also attuned to its particular regime of accumulation.[202] To juxtapose Marx's chapter on primitive accumulation,

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entirely naked and the capitalist objectively "clothed" an independent owner. That which gave the worker and the capitalist this form eludes us because it operated in other modes of production. (1987, 447/558)

[201]It is important to note that we are not dealing with a process in any linear and teleogical sense, primitive accumulation is a series of events that have fundamentally different motivations and effects, they can only be pieced together in a narrative retroactively. For example: the laws that destroyed the commons did not have as their intention the creation of an urban proletariat, this was simply an unintended effect that was later seized by other agents and actors. Louis Althusser calls this process by which the effects of a particular process are seized and turned to other purpose and other ends *détournement,* or "detouring": "This "detouring" is the mark of the non-teleology of the process and the inscription of its result in a process which has rendered it possible and which was totally alien to it." (Althusser 1994 572, my transl.)

[202] Marx asserts that the condition of these new desires and necessities on the part of the worker is the money form, or a particular aspect of the money form the wage: "It is the worker himself who converts the money into whatever use-values he desires; it

which ends the first volume of *Capital*, with Marx's writing on the commodity, which opens it, we see that the former puts into question what the latter seems to presuppose: the commodification of labor.[203] Labor power does not always already exist, ready to be commodified, rather its exploitation entails the destruction and creation of a form of social cooperation and subjectivity.

Marx's notebook "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" in the *Grundrisse* offer something of a general, albeit abstract and at times vague, theoretical schema of the interrelation of the mode of production and the production of subjectivity. Marx presents the immanence of the production of subjectivity to the mode of production through a genealogy of the capitalist mode of production. Here, as with primitive accumulation, Marx is primarily concerned with the formation of the two constitutive elements of the capitalist mode of production, a flow of wealth and a flow of individuals who have only their labor power to sell, and it is the latter of these two elements which is the central concern. However, "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" crosses the same terrain as primitive accumulation with one important difference: while the latter gives only a negative definition of the bonds which make up pre-capitalist sociality by presenting the violence necessary to destroy them, the former attempts to present a positive definition of pre-capitalist sociality. It does so within a general discussion of the "mode of production," thus reading this notebook one is confronted with both a profound difference (an

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is he who buys commodities as he wishes and, as the *owner of money*, as the buyer of goods, he stands in precisely the same relationship to the seller of goods as any other buyer. Of course, the conditions his existence--and the limited amount of money he can earn--compel him to make his purchases from a fairly restricted section of goods. But some variation is possible as we can see from the fact that newspapers, for example, form part of the essential purchases of the urban English worker. He can save or hoard a little. Or else he can squander his money on drink. But even so he acts as a free agent; he must pay his own way; he is responsible to himself for the he spends his wages." (1977 1033/103)

[203]As Althusser writes: "When you read Section 1 Book 1 of *Capital,* you find a theoretical presentation of surplus value: it is an arithmetical presentation, in which surplus value is calculable, defined by a difference (in value) between the value produced by labor power on the one hand and the value of the commodities necessary for the reproduction of this labor power (wages) on the other. And in this arithmetical presentation of surplus value, labor figures purely and simply as a commodity. (1979 233) As Althusser argues in a different text this purely quantitative and abstract presentation of exploitation misses the concrete power and social relations necessary to the extraction of value, struggle proceeds from these relations. (1994 398)

epochal divide separating pre-capitalist modes of production from capitalism) and a kernel of a general theory.[204]

For Marx the specifically pre-capitalist modes of production (Asiatic, Ancient, and Feudal) are necessarily conservative in that they have as their specific goal the reproduction of a particular form of property and a particular social relation. Reproduction of a social relation is also reproduction of a particular form of subjectivity. What characterizes the different pre-capitalist modes of production is not just their intrinsically conservative nature, but the fact that subjectivity is inseparable from its collective and inorganic conditions. The subject is not exposed to whatever existence he or she can get exchange in his or her labor power but is embedded in cultural, technical and political conditions that he or she works to reproduce. In the various pre-capitalist modes of production these conditions are "naturalized": that is, they appear to be given, to be the preconditions and not the results of labor. Marx compares this relation to these conditions to the relation to the earth, as the divinely given condition of existence and labor, they constitute the "inorganic body" of labor, an intimate exteriority, outside of the subject but necessary to it.[205] Marx is not simply content, however, to wax nostalgically about some sort of "primitive communism." It is not just the earth or the tribe that appears to be the precondition of one's existence but also the Asiatic despot.[206] In the Asiatic mode of production the despot appears to be the

[204] Antonio Negri suggests that Marx's use of the term "mode of production" encompasses both a world historical sense, the passage from the Asiatic to the capitalist mode of production, developed most strongly in the notebook on pre-capitalist economic formations, and a on smaller scale, the transformation of the technological and social conditions of labor from handicrafts to large scale industry, analyzed in *Capital*. (Negri 151) In "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" we are clearly dealing with this second larger sense, which is not only "world-historical" but encompasses the relation between what is generally called "base" and "superstructure" tending towards a materialist definition of culture. (Althusser 1995 45)

[205] "These natural conditions of existence, to which he relates as to his own inorganic body, are themselves double: (1) of a subjective and (2) of an objective nature. He finds himself a member of a family, clan, tribe, etc.—which then, in a historic process of intermixture and antithesis with others, takes on a different shape; and as such a member, he relates to a specific nature (say, here, still earth, land, soil) as his own inorganic being, as a condition of his production and reproduction" (Marx 1973 490/398).

[206] As Deleuze and Guattari write: "…the forms of social production, like those of desiring production, involve an unengendered nonproductive attitude, an element of anti-production coupled with the process, a full body that functions as a *socius*. This socius may be the body of the earth, that of the tyrant, or capital. This is the body that

precondition of the community, of its works and existence. Each of the pre-capitalist modes of production is constituted by a fundamental misrecognition, what is produced by the labor of the community appears as its precondition, as an element of divine authority.

This misrecognition might seem to be a particular quality of pre-capitalist societies, or rather a particular quality of Marx's nineteenth century perspective on these societies. However, Marx also posits a fundamental misrecognition at the core of the capitalist mode of production. In capital it appears that capital produces and circulates by itself, seeming to be prior to and autonomous from the collective activities of labor. In short, money appears to beget money. This appearance, this mystification, increases with the development of the capitalist mode of production. The more capitalism puts to work the collective and social powers of labor in the form of science, knowledge, and machinery, the more capital itself appears to be productive. This then constitutes the link between capitalism and ancient despotism. "The power of Asiatic and Egyptian kings, of Etruscan theocrats, etc. has in modern society been transferred to the capitalist, whether he appears as an isolated individual or, as in the case of joint stock companies, in combination with others" (Marx 1977 452/353). Marx is not merely positing a rhetorical or polemical identity between capitalism and ancient despotism, locating ancient tyrannies at the heart of modernity. Rather, Marx is arguing that in both cases there is a social and subjective surplus of labor. It is this surplus that is mystified, appearing to be part of the despot or capital. Whereas in ancient societies this surplus is produced by slavery, in modern society it is produced by the development of the cooperative powers of labor. In each case there is a dimension of labor that exceeds any economic calculation. This excessive dimension is cooperation, collectivity itself, the simple fact that a group of individuals working together will always be capable of more than the sum of its parts. Capital pays for workers one by one but when it puts them to work it puts knowledges, observations, and even rivalries of a collectivity to work.[207]

Marx is referring to when he says that it is not the product of labor, but rather appears as its natural or divine presuppositions. In fact, it does not restrict itself merely to opposing productive forces in and of themselves. It falls back on [*il se rabat sur*] all production, constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi-cause". (1983 10/16)

[207] Whether the combined working day, in a given case, acquires this increased productivity because it heightens the mechanical force of labor, or extends its sphere

We could say that this incalculable surplus of collectivity constitutes a kind of hyper-exploitation, but that would presuppose a collectivity existing prior to exploitation. In the formation of capital the collective itself is constituted in the act of exploitation.

Marx's notebooks on "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" provide not so much a schema, but a sketch of the relationship between subjectivity and the mode of production. First, it places subjectivity as entirely immanent to the mode of production, it is as much a part of the mode of production as its technical component. Second, it demonstrates that the relationship between subjectivity and the mode of production necessarily entails a dimension of subjection. Subjection for Marx always stems from a misrecognition of power and activity. In the Asiatic and feudal mode of production (as in capital) something produced and contingent, the despot or the feudal order, appears not to be produced at all but as the necessary condition for all production. In each case it is not simply a matter of a perceptual slippage between the necessary and contingent, or the productive and no productive; first because, as with Marx's famous commodity fetishism, these are not mere appearances but illusions inscribed in the heart of things. More importantly, in each case, the misrecognition relates to the presentation of a collective changing and creative power, which is presented as an attribute of a sovereign subject (despotism) or of things (capitalism).[208] Finally, "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" lays out the fundamental tensions and contradictions that can cause the transformation from one mode of production to another. These tensions can at the root be described as either the contradiction between an unpresentable collective sociality and any figure or instance that would appropriate that power, or, following the terminology Marx uses in the

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of action over a greater space, or contracts the field of production relatively to the scale of production, or at the critical moment sets large masses of labor to work, or excited rivalry between individuals and raises their animal spirits, or impresses on the similar operations carried on by a number of men the stamp of continuity and many-sidedness, or performs different operations simultaneously, or economizes the means of production by use in common…whichever of these is the cause of the increase, the special productive power of the combined working day, is under all circumstances, the social productive power of labor, or the productive power of social labor. This power arises from cooperation itself. When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of this species [*Gattungsvermögen*]. (Marx 1977 447/349).

[208] As I have already noted Deleuze and Guattari have taken this sketch from Marx the farthest in developing a general theory of subjectivity/mode of production. For Deleuze and Guattari the name of this collective fugitive power is "desiring production" which is strictly speaking unrepresentable.

notebooks, as the contradiction between the reproduction of a mode of production and the productive excess that exceeds that reproduction. This is only a sketch as the actual dynamics and relations have to be thought from the material singularity of a given mode of production.

Despite any similarity between Asiatic despotism and the capitalist mode of production there is a fundamental difference of "the production of subjectivity". Pre-capitalist modes of production have as their goal the reproduction of a particular form of collective existence with its corresponding hierarchies, structures of belief, and practices. As such they are vulnerable to anything that would break up the codes of subjective existence, they are equally threatened by anything that challenges the subjective conditions for reproduction as the objective conditions. For example, war destabilizes both the economic and subjective conditions of the ancient mode of production redistributing property, honors, and claims for citizenship. Marx's "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations" presents a genealogy of the capitalist mode of production that is simultaneously a narrative of the generation and corruption of the different forms of subjectivity. Capitalism is fundamentally different in that production is no longer subordinated to the reproduction of systems of belief. As Marx contends, beneath the limited bourgeois form, the subordination of all productive activity to capitalist valorization, capital is nothing other than the unfettered forces of production, including certainly, the production of subjectivity.

> Thus the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to me to be lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of human needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historical development … Where [humanity] does not reproduce [her]self in one specificity, but produces her totality? Strives not to remain something [s]he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics-and in the epoch of production to which it

> corresponds-this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end (Marx 1973 488/396).

Capitalism constitutes and is constituted by a revolution at the level of subjectivity. However, it would be wrong to identify capitalism with a completely deterritorialized flow of production, it must subject this productive activity to the demands of surplus value. "Capitalism can proceed only by developing the subjective essence of abstract wealth or production for the sake of production…but…at the same time it can do so only in the framework of its own limited purpose, as a determinate mode of production…the self expansion of existing capital" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983 259/308). The capitalist mode of production has at its foundation a collective subjectivity unhinged from any determinate coding of subjectivity – it is this collective power that the capitalist mode of production must simultaneously produce and contain.

The doubled edge relationship that the capitalist mode of production has with subjectivity can be found in the genesis of Marx's conceptualization of labor. Mario Tronti has argued that Marx's development of the concept of abstract labor, or of the relation between abstract labor and concrete labor, can be understood as the convergence of problematics inherited in part from political economy, specifically Ricardo, on one side, and Hegel on the other (Tronti 156). From Ricardo, Marx receives the problem of the relationship between value and abstract subjective activity, where value is no longer linked to either a specific object or a determinant type of labor, but to abstract or generic activity.[209] While from Hegel, Marx inherits the problem of "abstract labor," in order for labor to constitute a measure, to be exchanged, it must be standardized

[209] This observation is made by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (254). Foucault's argument in this text is to deny that Marx constitutes any sort of break (epistemological or otherwise) with the problems and presuppositions of political economy. In contrast to this argument Deleuze and Guattari turn to the same problem, the connection between subjectivity and value, in order to find in Marx a recognition of the fact that the problem of capital is the problem of subjectivity. As Deleuze and Guattari write: "Marx said that Luther's merit was to have determined the essence of religion, no longer on the side of the object, but as an interior religiosity; that the merit of Adam Smith and Ricardo was to have determined the essence or nature of wealth no longer as an objective nature but as an abstract and deterritorialized subjective essence, the activity of production in general" (1983 270/322).

and rendered equivalent. Whereas for Hegel this standardization was part of the actualization of the universal, a moment of cultural Bildung, for Marx it is a necessary moment in the constitution of the capitalist mode of production. The coexistence of these two problems imposes on Marx's thought a demand which is alien to Ricardo and Hegel: the demand to consider the coexistence of an abstract subjective force (labor-power) that is extremely powerful, productive of the realm of value, and the necessary discipline and control of that force (capital). This combination of Ricardo and Hegel in Marx can be understood to entail the same political problem that for Foucault underlies disciplinary power: "Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (1977 138/139). In both cases the political problem is not simply one of exploitation or domination, but of the necessary provocation of a "counter-power".

This problem manifests itself in Marx's writing as the tension between "abstract labor" and "living labor." Of the two of these concepts only the first is directly given in Marx, the second persists as a fugitive thread (like the problem of subjectivity itself) throughout Marx's writing. At the outset "abstract labor" refers to the abstraction necessary to quantify the activity of diverse bodies. In order for commodities to be exchanged, labor must be organized so that it is indifferent to who performs it. Underlying the concept of abstract labor are practices such as surveillance and the division and simplification of tasks, all of which make this indifference a material reality. The concept of "abstract labor" is inseparable from a political and economic strategy—the reduction of all labor to simple abstract labor, and the destruction of skills. Abstract labor is a reduction of the worker, of subjectivity, to the minimum required for the reproduction of the capitalist system. This strategy, sometimes called "proletarianization," which Marx at times identified as the dominant tendency if not the destiny of capitalism, runs up against certain limits, not the least of which is "living labor" as the internal limit of abstract labor. Living labor is the inverse of abstract labor, it can be described by the same attributes – indifference to the content of activity, flexibility, even poverty – but these qualities now appear as sources of its strength.

> This living labor, existing as an abstraction from these moments of its actual reality [raw-material, instrument of labor etc.] also, not value; this complete denudation, purely subjective existence of labor, stripped of all objectivity. Labor as absolute poverty; poverty not as shortage, but as total exclusion of objective

> wealth…Labor not as an object, but as activity; not as itself value, but as the living source of value…. Thus, it is not at all contradictory, or, rather, the in-every-way mutually contradictory statements that labor is absolute poverty as object, on one side, and is, on the other side, the general possibility [allgemeine Möglichkeit] of wealth as subject and as activity, are reciprocally determined and follow from the essence of labor, such as it is presupposed by capital as its contradiction and as its contradictory being [gegensätzliches Dasein], and such as it, in turn, presupposes capital (Marx 1973 296/217).

Living labor, however, is not just the abstract and static inversion to abstract labor, it appears throughout Marx's writings at every point that capital necessarily develops and relies on the subjective capacities of labor, its ability to not only produce wealth, but to communicate and constitute new social relations. Living labor is the fact that labor power cannot be simply reduced to a functional element of the system.

The capitalist mode of production emerges when a flow of "free" labor meets a flow of "free" wealth. It is clear now that this freedom on the side of labor is the simultaneity of poverty and indeterminacy. It would not be improper to think of this indeterminacy, this abstraction, as a kind of power, the power to bring the new into the world; after all it produces not only things, commodities, but the capitalist mode of production itself. It would also be correct to identify this abstract subjective potential as something new, and thus as something which emerges with, and is the condition for, capitalist accumulation. It would be incorrect, however, to identify this with freedom in the conventional sense, since this abstract-subjective-potential cannot but sell itself as labor power. It must subject itself to whatever-capitalist enterprise, to the job and task available. Abstract labor is free to develop and consume "whatever" forces and possibilities, forces and possibilities unimaginable and impossible within the relatively narrow spheres of pre-capitalist reproduction. At the same time, it is also freely exposed to the demands and transformations of the labor market. The old guarantees that limited production, tying it to a determinate sphere of reproduction, political and social, have disappeared. In the absence of old guarantees and prior limitations, there is a new struggle, a new antagonism: it is a struggle that seeks to reduce "living labor", the flexibility and productivity of a new subject, to "abstract labor", to interchangeability, homogeneity, and an increasingly precarious position.

Returning to the current conditions of late capitalism, we recognize the simultaneity of these two processes in a world in which, on the one hand, the cooperative, intellectual, and affective capacities of labor are continually developed and presupposed, while, on the other, this flexibility is continually exposed to the precariousness of temp-work and part time labor. Viewed in light of Marx's writings on primitive accumulation and "Pre-capitalist Economic Formations," we can see how capital redeploys old strategies and practices to contain the explosive force of this contradiction—capitalism truly is "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983 34/42). We are confronted with a neo-primitive accumulation, an accumulation not simply of wealth and workers but of subjective potentials, desires, and knowledges many of which were formed outside of capitalism, in the public sector and in the interstices of commodified existence (Hardt and Negri 258). We can see a resurgence of ancient mystifications as the work of an increasingly cooperative and socialized power of living labor is presented as the completely magical power of capitalism to create wealth.[210] A reading of these texts, of the fugitive thread of the production of subjectivity in Marx, also exposes the conditions for reversing these trends: it reveals that the stakes of opposing capital are not simply economic or political, but involve the production of subjectivity. In order to oppose capital it will be necessary to engage in a counter production of subjectivity. The tools for this counter-production are already in our hands, in the affective and communicative networks that are created and maintained in our day to day labors.

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[210]Marx recognized that the development of an increasingly social labor force entailed the intensification of a mystification of capital. "This entire development of the productive forces of *socialized labor* (in contrast to the more or less isolated labor of individuals), and together with it the *uses of science* (the general product of social development), *in the immediate process of production*, takes the form [stellt sich dar] of the productive power of capital. It does not appear as the productive power of labor, or even of that part of it that is identical with capital. And least of all does it appear as the productive power either of the individual workers or of the workers joined together in the process of production" (1977 1024).

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Pli 13 (2002), 144-161.

Teleosemantics and the Genesis of Norms: Co-Opting Brandom

TIM SCHROEDER

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1. What Brandom Has To Offer

It may help to begin with a little logical geography. Brandom holds a position on intentionality that might be called 'normative social inferentialism'. Brandom is an *inferentialist* in that he holds original intentionality to be created by inference relations between his theoretical primitives. It is the fact that one thing follows from another that determines the content of the two (to put it crudely), and in general, it is the network of inferences in which something appears that determines what content it has. Brandom is a *social* inferentialist in that his theoretical primitives are highly public entities: utterances. According to Brandom, original intentionality enters the world through linguistic inferences; thought is a secondary matter, deriving its significance from language. And Brandom is a *normative* social inferentialist in that he does not hold *actual* practices of linguistic inference to create content, but rather holds it is the *rules* of linguistic inference which create content. A person does not make meaningful utterances merely in virtue of being disposed to make certain noises followed by certain other noises, on Brandom's account: the utterances must be appropriately regulated by a community to be significant.

One of Brandom's most distinctive philosophical moves, and the one of interest for the purposes of this paper, is his novel account of normativity. On Brandom's account, the norms that underlie language and thought are created by the presence of certain current social practices. The fact that people hold each other to certain standards is what (to a first approximation) makes it true that verbal sequences embody correct

inferences, and hence are intentional at all. This, I think, ought to catch the attention of teleosemanticists.

Perhaps just a little more logical geography is in order. In parallel to the characterisation of Brandom, teleosemanticists might be called 'normative private representationalists'. They are *representationalists* in that their primitives get their content from standing in correspondence relations to the world of one sort or another (information-bearing, mapping, asymmetric dependency, causal co-variation…), rather than from inference relations. They are *private* representationalists in that these primitives are found inside the skull, rather than in the social domain. And they are *normative* private representationalists in that they hold that it is not actual correspondences that fix meaning, but those correspondences which brain structures have the *function* of producing. Dretske (1988, 1995), Lycan (1987, 1988), Millikan (1984, 1993), Papineau (1987), and Sterelny (1990) are all prominent examples.

Why should teleosemanticists be interested in the details of Brandom's theory of the mind? The answer is that Brandom's work offers the hope of escaping the most pressing problem facing teleosemantics at present. Admittedly, the title 'the greatest problem facing teleosemantics at present' is hotly contested, and I suppose such infamous problems as the disjunction problem and the problem of wide vs. narrow content have their place in the pantheon. The problem I have in mind, though, is the fact that all current teleosemantic views make having a mind a matter of having a past—generally a long evolutionary history, and in any case a significant learning history. According to contemporary teleosemanticists, the norms that go into creating minds come from processes of natural selection, which may operate on evolutionary timescales (Lycan, Millikan, Sterelny), or on the timescale of neural learning (Dretske, Papineau).[211] In either case, however, one only has a mind if one has a past of the right sort. Having a mind thus entails that skepticism about the past is false, and that standard theories of divine creation are false (if we require an evolutionary timescale for the creation of a mind); likewise, teleosemantics entails that Davidson's (1987) Swampman has no mind. Many commentators have pointed out these problems, and the teleosemantic conclusions have struck more or less everyone not theoretically committed to them as terribly implausible.

[211] Though note that Dretske and Papineau both allow that, in addition to creating mental representations by selecting neural properties in learning, natural selection also creates mental representations by selecting organisms over evolutionary timescales.

Furthermore, the problem has been seen as a sort of tragic flaw, because while teleosemantics has its appeal, no one has seen a way of introducing sub-psychological norms into a theory without an appeal to evolution. This is why teleosemanticists should be interested in Brandom. At just the point at which his theoretical framework overlaps with theirs—the appeal to some sort of normativity—Brandom introduces norms that are *not* dependent upon history for their existence. Brandom's norms arise from ongoing practices of social regulation, rather than any sort of historical events, and so exist wherever current social regulation (of the right sort) exists. If there were some way for teleosemanticists to steal this idea—to develop a teleosemantic-friendly theory of norms deriving from non-historical regulatory contexts—then there would be a way for teleosemanticists to get history out of their theories of mind, which should be welcome relief indeed.

In the coming pages, I will do three things: explain Brandom's theory of the norms underlying intentionality, argue that, if Brandom's norms exist, then norms suited for the use of teleosemanticists must also exist, and say something about what these norms might be like. My aim is not to develop a completely new teleosemantic theory of the mind, but to point the way toward such an entity: one which co-opts Brandom, making him into a (perhaps unwilling) ally in the fight to save teleosemantics from its critics.

2. Brandom on Normativity

According to Brandom, current social practices give rise to norms. For a certain social practice to be obligatory, writes Brandom, is for there to be some penalty for failing to engage in it, and for a certain range of social practices to be permissible is for there to be a penalty appropriate to deviating from them (1994, 166).[212] Thus, on Brandom's account, a ticket is obligatory if one is to enter the theatre, because if one attempts to enter the theatre without a ticket one is subject to a penalty; likewise, leaving the theatre is permissible because no penalty is appropriate to such behaviour. The fact, if it is one, that having a ticket has historically been required for getting into the theatre is not of any theoretical significance.

[212] Brandom also discusses rewards, if briefly, but I will follow him in focusing on the analysis of norms principally in terms of punishment. This is not to make any theoretical commitment to the primacy of punishment, but is simply an effort at verbal economy.

Given that it is true, right now, that there are penalties applicable to a person who enters the theatre without a ticket, it is true, right now, that such behaviour is forbidden. Given that no such penalties are applicable, right now, to a person who enters the theatre with a ticket, it is true, right now, that such behaviour is permitted. History has nothing to do with what norms exist: the current state of affairs is all that matters. When norm-creating social practices surround the production of utterances, rather than theatre-going, and have an appropriate sophistication, then language comes into being, according to Brandom; this is the beginning of his account of intentionality.

I take it that Brandom's theory of normativity, at least when applied to the simplest sorts of norms Brandom has in mind, is entirely reasonable. While we might think that the norms of morality or their like do not depend for their existence upon social practices of reward and punishment, it seems quite plausible that many other normative systems are created in just the way Brandom describes. The rules of etiquette, for instance, surely derive from nothing more (nor less) than social practices of punishing those who commit certain actions (belching at the dinner table, openly insulting others, holding a fork as though it were a stabbing weapon…), thereby making it true that they are violators of a norm (they are *rude*), while praising those taking certain other actions (sending thank-you notes, removing stray mustard from their lips with the aid of a serviette, etc.), thereby making it true that they are in accord with that same norm (they are *polite*). Likewise, norms for language use seem to derive from similar social practices.[213]

The natural next question for Brandom is: What makes something a penalty (or a reward)? The question is not as trivial as it might seem. Brandom's paradigmatic penalties include such things as being beaten with sticks and being denied permission to attend a festival. Exactly what it is about being beaten with sticks that makes it such a paradigmatic penalty? Why not choose, as a paradigmatic penalty, being fed fine French chocolate, or having an obligation to keep a small porcelain knick-knack? In one sense, the answer is obvious—such "penalties" are not really penalties at all. But this just raises the more interesting question: What makes some imposition upon another person into a penalty? A very natural response would be that people want not to be beaten with sticks, while many would be merely indifferent to the required knick-knack and quite glad to have the French chocolate. However, this cannot be Brandom's answer. Since Brandom is a

[213] Norms of reasoning, of course, will be a more controversial matter.

normative social inferentialist, his project is to clarify the origins of intentionality via a story about socially constructed norms, and so he cannot appeal, in any ultimate way, to the existence of desires in explaining where the norms come from. On the contrary, it is the existence of the norms which is, in the end, to explain the existence of desires. Because Brandom's order of explanation puts social norms first, he cannot explain their existence via appeal to ontologically prior mental states. For this reason, Brandom is also foreclosed from holding that being beaten with sticks is a penalty because it is intended as a penalty, or because others view it as a penalty.

In the end, Brandom declines to answer the question of what makes something a penalty; he offers no reductive analysis. He does so, not on the grounds that the property of being a penalty (or a reward) is essentially hostile to reduction, but on the grounds that this is not his project. Some hints for the reductively-minded can still be gleaned, however, since Brandom does not abandon the reader to her pre-theoretical notion of penalties. Brandom attempts to further explicate the nature of the penalties by means of which societies create norms, and an important step in this explication is the introduction of a distinction between "internal" and "external" penalties and rewards (generically, 'sanctions') (1994, 44). This distinction is between sanctions that are purely normative in character and those which are not; the earlier example of entering the theatre will serve nicely to illustrate the distinction. One who attempts to enter a theatre without a ticket may be penalised by having a new status conferred on her by another normative system—a legal system, perhaps. This is an *internal* sanction. She will be threatened with the penalty of being awarded the status "wanted by the police," perhaps, if she does not recognise her obligation to purchase a ticket. The alternative to internal sanctions are *external* sanctions, of which Brandom's recurring example is being beaten with sticks, though being imprisoned is the external sanction suggested by our example. Such a penalty is not merely a change in one's normative balance sheet, but something else, something less social in character.

What are we to think about the norms responsible for the existence of intentionality? The most natural assumption for the reductionist willing to play along with Brandom's social inferentialism might be that some of these norms are internal (if you say that P shortly after saying that not-P, you will not be allowed to compete in the high school debate) but the ultimate norms, upon which all others rest, will be external in something like the above sense (if you infer that the leather-clad motorcycle

enthusiasts on the corner are friendly, on the grounds that they are joking with one another, then you are likely to take actions which will result in your being beaten with a stick). The idea that poor inference leads to punishment, while good inference leads to reward, is appealing (if a little simplistic). So long as we do not limit ourselves to the image of teachers caning children for misspellings, the idea can be seen to have broad applicability. People do correct one another's spelling, grammar, word choice, and so on, and such corrections serve as punishments in a reasonable sense: they tend to bring it about that the behaviour is not repeated. Likewise, people chastise one another for failing to accept inferences to which they are committed, and such chastisement tends to bring about some change in the person's commitments, so that the chastisement ends. Rational inference is widely praised, in ways which tend to encourage it, while foolish inference is condemned. And so on.

Brandom entertains the idea that all internal sanctions rest upon external sanctions, and even considers a possible reductive analysis of external sanctions:

> Treating a performance as correct is taken to be positively sanctioning it, which is to say positively reinforcing it. … Treating a performance as incorrect is taken to be negatively sanctioning it, which is to say negatively reinforcing it. *(1994, 35)*[214]

Brandom sees a problem here, however, which leads him to give up on such a reductionistic program. It cannot be the case that the norms underlying language and thought exist only when external sanctions are actually applied. If it were so, then there would be no distinction between violating a rule of language without getting caught and not violating the rule at all, and yet the distinction is important. However, it would seem difficult to hold that the existence of a social disposition to impose an external sanction is what creates the norm. Kripke's (1982) discussion of the failings of dispositional theories of intentionality seems to have convinced Brandom that they are untenable. So what is left? Brandom holds that the norms underlying intentionality exist only when sanctions are supposed to be imposed, or are appropriate, given some behaviour:

> If the normative status of being incorrect is to be understood in terms of the normative attitude of treating as incorrect by

[214] Brandom follows colloquial usage in writing 'negatively reinforcing', but he means 'positively punishing'.

> punishing, it seems that the identification required is not with the status of actually being punished but with that of deserving punishment…*" (1994, 36)*

That is, Brandom holds that the norms underlying mind and language are wholly internal. To violate a rule of language is to change one's normative status: someone else may *justly* criticise one for the violation, and that is what makes it a violation. Whether or not anyone actually *does* criticise one for a violation is irrelevant. Hence, the norms involved in bringing intentionality into the world are not ultimately supported by external norms, but are purely internal. Given that this is so, further investigation of external sanctions is beside the point, and Brandom gives up on them as theoretically insignificant.

To sum up: according to Brandom, the norms underlying intentionality are created by the existence of current, non-historically defined social practices which make it true that certain behaviours deserve to be rewarded or punished. The fact that these rewards and punishments are deserved need not be explained by appeal to some non-normative fact; the rewards and punishments are deserved because they exist within a system of "internal" sanctions.

3. A Hint for Teleosemantics

Brandom puts teleosemanticists in an interesting position. One the one hand, he has defended the existence of norms underpinning intentionality that are not historical in character. For Brandom's norms to exist at some time *t*, there need only be certain sorts of facts obtaining at *t*. This is exactly the sort of norm teleosemanticists need for their own theories, in order to escape the absurd position in which they find themselves when confronted with Swampman and the other arguments against essentially "historical" intentionality. On the other hand, Brandom's norms are created by systems of social interaction, and he has declined to give a reductive analysis of their basis. The teleosemanticist is left wanting both to accept what Brandom has to say and to reshape it radically. The teleosemanticist should not be deterred. If Brandom's norms exist, a non-historical, reductive account of normativity entirely suited to teleosemantic purposes exists as well.

Brandom has defended the idea that norms of a sort appropriate to the creation of intentionality arise in sophisticated systems of social

interaction — in systems of internal sanctions. Brandom has also declined to hold that the property of being a system of internal sanctions is a basic ontological property, which is surely a wise choice — social practice can hardly *create* norms when normativity is ontologically basic.[215] So Brandom has identified a non-basic property, that of being a system of internal sanctions, and a sufficient subvenience base for it: being the sort of physical system found where a group of people engage in complex interactions of the sort found in everyday language use. If Brandom is right, then there must be some coherent, non-normative set of properties in virtue of which systems of internal sanctions exist.[216] Furthermore, since Brandom is committed to explaining the propositional attitudes in terms of his interactively-constructed systems of internal norms, the analysis cannot appeal to what people intend, want, believe, or the like. Brandom thus is committed to there being an analysis which identifies his norms with some complex of other, non-normative, non-psychological, natural properties.

Brandom's commitments are obviously ones of some interest to the teleosemanticist, for they would appear to be just the sorts of commitments that could, with luck, lead to a theory of normativity which the teleosemanticist could use—so long as Brandom's norms are real. For the purposes of argument, I am assuming that they are, but even this assumption is potentially problematic, for in order to be real, Brandom's systems of internal sanctions must be genuinely coherent, and one might well doubt that they are. The first question for the teleosemanticist to answer, then, is whether a system of purely internal sanctions is genuinely coherent. Recall that Brandom requires a system of internal sanctions to be one such that, for each norm that exists, some other norm applies to those who would enforce it, making such enforcement deserved, required, or the like. That is, for every norm, there is a further norm that determines whether an agent attempting to enforce it is doing so appropriately.

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[215] Normativity would be a rather suspect companion to mass, spin number, quark colour and other putative fundamental properties of the universe in any case—rules for what sound sequences should follow others is as unlikely to be ontologically basic as the property of being true, or of being a good film.

[216] At least, this is an inference permitted to anyone who believes any higher-order property in the world, such as intentionality, can be explained entirely in non-intentional terms. Since my project is, as I have said, to defend a teleosemantic view of the mind against one of its problems—its theoretical reliance on history—and since teleosemanticists do believe in explaining higher-order properties in lower-order terms, I take it that the inference is dialectically permitted.

If we conceive of a system of internal sanctions as a hierarchy, in which a first norm exists, a second exists establishing the legitimacy of sanctioning people for not meeting it, a third exists to establish the legitimacy of sanctioning people for not meeting the second, and so on to infinity, we will be led to conclude that no finite physical system could be an instance of such an infinite structure, and that Brandom's idea of finite groups of people creating such norms is incoherent. However, this is not the only way to conceive of a system of internal sanctions. If we think of a system of internal sanctions on the model of a pair of playing cards, leaning against one another for support, progress can be made. The playing cards have a property, being supported, which they get by supporting one another (while standing on some further solid surface). The fact that the first card supports the second holds only in virtue of the fact that the second card supports the first, but this is a non-vicious circle: the cards can support *one another*, so long as they have certain (non-supportive) properties as well. In like fashion, a finite system of internal sanctions can exist if the norms establishing the propriety of enforcing other norms are themselves legitimated by the norms with which they are concerned; normative legitimacy can exist through a circle of social practices, rather than a hierarchy, since circles require only finite resources. Thus, there is nothing necessarily incoherent in a system of purely internal sanctions, any more than there is something incoherent in the notion of playing cards which support others only if the others support them.

A system of internal sanctions is coherent so long as one envisages a system of *mutual* reward and punishment, appropriately organised: even Brandom ought to be happy accepting this much. So now it is time to attempt to discover the ontological basis for the existence of Brandom's norms. These norms are created by practices of reward and punishment, and so this should be our starting point as well. Once we understand what in the world creates reward and punishment, we need merely imagine this feature organised into a suitably mutual network, and we will have a system of internal sanctions. Brandom dodges the issue in his work, but leaves it clear that there must be an answer, and an answer that is non-psychological and non-normative in nature, on pain of vicious circularity. The answer I suggest is this: 'reward' and 'punishment' should be construed in terms of operant conditioning. A reward is something that serves as a reinforcer, while a punishment is something that serves to extinguish behaviour. Left just at this, Brandom is still threatened with vicious circularity. If 'reinforcing behaviour' and 'extinguishing

behaviour' are interpreted to mean changing dispositions to *intentional action*, then intentionality re-appears in the ontology of normativity, which is supposed to be the ontological basis for intentionality itself, and Brandom cannot allow this. Hence, 'behaviour' need not be thought of as encompassing intentional actions alone. They may be included, but other behaviours — reflexes, perhaps, or hair growth, or even stones rolling downhill — must also be counted.

Thus, the natural reductive way to extend Brandom's theorising about systems of internal sanctions is to hold that a (finite) system of internal sanctions arises when (1) there exists a collection of organisms susceptible to reinforcement and extinction of behaviour (construing this quite broadly), and (2) whenever one of the organisms reinforces or extinguishes behaviour, it is always the case that there is some fact as to whether or not the organism *ought* to be reinforcing or extinguishing behaviour in this fashion, that fact being supplied by some other system(s) of reinforcement or extinction (and the norms which hold for it), that other system in turn being subject to requirements produced by other organisms and the ways they are required to reinforce or extinguish behaviour, and so on, (3) with this collection of requirements being organised circularly rather than hierarchically.

Is there any way Brandom could get out of interpreting 'reward' and 'punishment' in behaviourist terms? The answer seems to me to be 'no'. Brandom holds that sanctions come from the existence of reward and punishment, and that it is possible to construct systems of internal sanctions through finite social interaction. As a result, he must hold that suitable arrangements of mutual reward and punishment create norms. It is not just that he must hold that things named by the words 'reward' and 'punishment', understood in just any old way, create norms. We cannot understand these words as naming just anything, or else the plausibility of Brandom's claim that rewards and punishments can, under appropriate circumstances, create rules, completely falls apart. The words 'reward' and 'punishment' must be understood in a fashion as close to that we naturally understand when thinking about etiquette etc. as possible. On the other hand, they cannot be understood in normative or intentional terms, on pain of ontological circularity. This puts Brandom in a very tight bind. Normal uses of 'reward' and 'punishment' are either straightforwardly intentional—if I desire your praise, you can reward me by praising me—or convolutedly intentional—if it is the custom to reward people by publicly praising them, you can reward me by publicly

praising me, whether I want such praise or not. The only sense left which seems to require not intentionality is the behaviourist's.

So long as Brandom's internal norms are real, then, their existence consists in the existence of appropriately structured systems of behavioural disposition modification. Once this is seen, it turns out that *wherever* there are mechanisms of reinforcement and extinction that act on each other in a suitably reciprocal fashion, we are going to find norms. One might think that Brandomesque norms are unlikely to be created outside the context of human interaction, but this would be hasty. Obviously, many animals are as subject to operant conditioning as people are, and their interactions can be very reciprocal and interdependent. According to Brandom, non-human animals lack the sophisticated structure to their interactions that would suffice for the creation of systems of meaning. Though the teleosemanticist may dispute that claim, such disputation would be beside the point here. Even if it is granted that animals do not create the sophisticated norms that underlie intentionality, it may still be the case that their interactions create less sophisticated but nonetheless real Brandomesque norms. Threat displays and non-lethal fighting may establish normative dominance hierarchies in dogs, say, so long as these are found within a framework of interaction of the right sort — a sort constituting such displays and fighting as legitimate. But among dogs, such interactions are likely to exist: dogs, by their responses, implicitly recognise some threat displays as legitimate but not others, some uses of force as calling for retribution, while others are merely to be accepted, and so on.[217] Hence dogs' interactions have the right abstract structure to produce norms of the sort Brandom relies on in his theorising.

We need not even remain in the animal kingdom to see Brandom's norms. The language of reinforcement and extinction might be most natural in the animal kingdom, but since Brandom cannot characterise reinforcement and extinction in psychological terms there is nothing to prevent us from identifying structural analogues to reinforcement and extinction in sub-organismal physical systems. Most significantly, some of the mechanisms of neural change appear to operate on reinforcement and extinction principles—those making operant conditioning possible being the most obvious example. If neurons can reinforce or extinguish the behaviour of other neurons, Brandom will be left with the conclusion

[217] Such norms cannot be norms for canine actions on Brandom's account, since, according to Brandom, dogs lack the cognitive sophistication required to engage in literal actions. However, the norms still exist, and presumably prescribe dog movement (not action) in some complex fashion.

that they can, if arranged with sufficient complexity, create systems of internal norms. This is just what the teleosemanticist has been waiting for. The conclusion has been reached that reciprocally interacting systems of sub-intentional neural structures may create sanctions of a sort held to suffice for normativity. Such systems, by creating norms in a way not dependent upon history, by having nothing essentially social about them, and by having nothing essentially inferentialist about them, could be adopted by the teleosemanticist as a theoretical replacement for histories of natural selection. If the neo-Wittgensteinian, Sellarsian tradition Brandom represents is on to something, then its insights can be co-opted by teleosemanticists to allow them to escape a pressing theoretical problem.

It is time to consider an objection. Suppose Brandom were to argue that his norm-creating systems are not to be found outside of interpersonal interactions. He could not simply stipulate this, as such a stipulation would bring intentional predicates into a characterisation of norm-creation, and norm-creation is just what is to explain intentionality on Brandom's account. He could, however, note that the structures giving rise to external norms in the interpersonal case are of a very high order of physical complexity. Seeing this, Brandom could challenge the analysis of systems of internal sanctions that I have been using, holding it to be oversimplified. A system of internal sanctions arises, he might hold, not simply from a system of mutually interdependent propensity-changing reinforcing and extinguishing systems, but from something exhibiting much greater physical complexity, of an order found only in interpersonal interactions. Note that Brandom's objection would not be to the simplemindedness of the reductive analysis *per se*. The teleosemanticist can certainly allow that the reduction base for Brandomesque norms is complex, in ways not yet fully explored. The objection would rather be that the complexity of the reduction base is such that one could not expect to find such norms outside the context of interpersonal interaction.

However, were he to thus argue, Brandom would be caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it could be the case that the specified complexity did not metaphysically necessitate that intentional agents exist in order for Brandomesque norms to be created. This alternative would give up the game at the outset, for if intentional agents need not exist in order for the norms to be instantiated, then non-intentional systems will suffice to create these norms, and that is just what we are imagining Brandom wishes to avoid saying. On the other hand, it could be the case that the specified complexity did

metaphysically necessitate that intentional agents exist, and that their actions (described as physical movements) give rise to norms. This alternative would block the possibility of Brandom's theory being used to find norms outside of communities of social interaction, but in winning the battle it would lose the war. Under this revision, Brandom's theory of norm creation would avoid psychological predicates only by terminological slight-of-hand. According to the theory, psychological properties (physically described in the theory, but psychological properties nonetheless) would be metaphysically entailed by the existence of Brandom's norms, and would be invoked (in physical guise) to explain the origin of rewards and penalties, and so of norms. But since norms were to explain the existence of psychological properties, this second strategy would also be unacceptable.

4. The Nature of Brandom's Norms

Social practices of reward and punishment are sensible candidates for creators of norms. Are the actions of mutually regulating neural reinforcement and/or extinction systems also sensible candidates for creators of norms? Dialectically, Brandom is under considerable pressure to say 'yes' at this point, for no account of what creates Brandomesque norms can ontologically require antecedent intentionality, on pain of circularity, and so some non-intentionally described system of interactions (reinforcement and extinction interactions being the candidates, given Brandom's focus on reward and punishment) must suffice for the creation of norms. The reader, however, is likely to be interested in the more general question. Is there any independent reason for believing that mutually regulating behaviour reinforcing and/or extinguishing systems create norms?

Not any sort of dispositional change in one system by another can count as behaviour reinforcing or extinguishing, if there is to be something normative in such reinforcement and extinction. Glasses which change their dispositions to pass light when in sunlight or in darkness are not thereby regulated or governed by the sun in any normative sense, as was mentioned a moment ago. But then, such glasses are also not having their behaviour reinforced or extinguished, either. For one system to reinforce another's behaviour, it needs to do more than merely change its properties. It needs to drive the other toward a specific sort of change in properties; it must *aim* its own actions so as to bring about a specific end-

state in the other system, if it is to be reinforcing the behaviour of the other system, and likewise for extinguishing behaviour. That is, if one system is to reinforce or extinguish another's behaviour, the system must *regulate* or *govern* the other's behaviour in a teleological fashion, not merely causally influence it. If one system genuinely does work on another which is teleologically directed at getting the other to produce some sort of behaviour, though, then we may legitimately say that the former system is reinforcing or extinguishing the behaviour of the other.

Teleological governance systems are thus systems that can reinforce or extinguish the behaviour of other systems. Such systems, also known as cybernetic systems, control systems,[218] negative-feedback-driven systems, and the like, are the best candidates available to the teleosemanticist for analysing Brandom's norms reductively. Whether or not a physical system is a feedback-driven governance system is a fact which involves no mental properties, and so is a fact that can feature in a reductive analysis of mentality. Governance systems have the power to reinforce and extinguish the behaviour of other physical systems, including other governance systems. And governance systems can be arranged in circular networks of mutual regulation. They are thus fit theoretical entities for the teleosemanticist who wishes to follow Brandom's lead in retaining normativity while abandoning history.

At least, governance systems are fit theoretical entities so long as we can be convinced that the reinforcing and extinguishing of behaviour driven by such systems actually amounts to something normative, the way the reinforcing and extinguishing of behaviour in social settings amounts to reward and punishment, and hence something normative. If we remind ourselves that these norms need only be as robust as those created by evolution (however robust these may be), then the answer should be in the affirmative. The fact that these systems are called 'regulatory systems' ('governance systems', 'control systems') points us in the direction of the explanation. These systems carry out physical processes closely analogous to processes of intentional governance. Intentional governance, practices of social control of people, creates norms. Likewise, sub-intentional governance, practices of physical control of objects, creates natural norms. The parallel is just what we find in the case of evolutionary norms. In that case, intentional design creates norms for the objects designed, and natural design (natural selection) creates norms for the objects it designs (selects). If we have any reason to think hearts have natural functions, we have equal reason to think that

[218] Of certain sorts.

objects regulated by appropriately sophisticated governance systems also have things they are supposed to do.

A further difficulty lurks here. If norms arising from the physical, teleological governance of one system by another exist, there must be teleological governance systems giving rise to them. Notoriously, though, philosophers (see especially Nagel, 1961; Braithwaite, 1968) have failed to make sense of the notion. This gives us some reason to suspect that there is no such thing as teleological governance systems at all—at least, there are none that do not involve people acting intentionally on the basis of their beliefs about the world. In reply, I would say that once we put a five-decade limit on the amount of time permitted to analyse a difficult concept before declaring the task hopeless, we will soon find that philosophy is made entirely of hopeless tasks. The fact is that being a feedback-driven system is a property many physical systems appear to have, and one which is readily given an elegant mathematical treatment. If philosophers have had trouble giving the property a simple analysis, that is not much of a reason to cease believing in the property. (For an analysis of what it is to be a feedback-driven governance system that improves upon earlier efforts, see Adams (1979).[219]) Admittedly, there is work to be done here, but there seems no reason at this point to despair of there being some non-intentional analysis of what it is to be a feedback-driven governance system.

Other objections are possible, but they would take us into the details of various proposals about what sorts of physical, non-psychological systems of natural governance (or natural design, for that matter) can create natural norms (or functions), if any, and these details are not entirely to the point in this paper, whose concern is purely to rescue teleosemantics from history. Teleosemanticists are already committed to natural norms of one sort or another, and if natural design is a likely candidate for their production, then so is natural regulation; the details, though important and controversial, should not particularly worry the teleosemanticist herself, but only her critics. And she has reached this conclusion with Brandom's help. If Brandom is right, and certain social practices create norms in virtue of their non-psychological properties, then there are certain non-social systems of interaction, parallel to these social practices, which also create norms in virtue of these same non-psychological properties. The details of Brandom's account suggest that Brandom's norms are created wherever there are reciprocal interacting

[219] Though note, the analysis Adams gives of how such systems contribute to natural norms is not compatible with the account developed here.

regulatory systems (understanding 'regulatory' here in its physical, control-theoretic sense) which mutually regulate, amongst other things, what sort of mutual regulation they are to provide. Such norms are entirely naturalistic, and can be adopted by the teleosemanticist looking for a source of normativity that is not historical in character.

Teleosemantics had a problem: it made having a mind a matter of having a past of the right sort, and this seemed a mistake. If the work of this paper has been a success, though, this problem can be solved. Teleosemanticists can get on with developing a normative, private, representationalist theory of mind without worrying about a flaw in their theoretical foundations. This may be limited progress, but in a field struggling to make any progress at all, it is progress enough.

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When Latour meets Nietzsche Around the Concept of Individuation[220]

JONATHAN PHILIPPE

In this paper, I wish to speak about the relationships that exist between some important notions in the writings of Nietzsche and the French philosopher Bruno Latour. Actually, striking parallelisms can be observed between some concepts or features of their thinking. I have in mind notably the kinship between the Nietzsche an *hierarchy* and Latour's *stratification* — or *layering* — *of forces*, or between the *infra-individual society* and the *network*. However, rather than merely list the parallels between these two authors and throw bridges between them, I'd like to define a problem common to these two thoughts. Or more exactly: to explore these two thoughts, making them meet around a problem that brings out their affinities. The problem I have in mind is that of the *individual*: what is an individual? does something like an individual exist? and if so, at what cost? What I mean by individual at this stage is still very indeterminate. Yet I would like to make this notion my starting-point; for, as I said, it is on this basis that one can best grasp the connections between Latour and Nietzsche.

I'll start with Latour's work in order to see how it leads up to Nietzsche and perspectivism. I'll restrict myself to three texts, two books entitled: *Science in Action* and *Irréductions*, and one article: *Cogito ergo sumus!* (I think therefore *we* are!).[221] Though it is true that Latour also

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[220] An earlier version of this paper was presented in Cambridge, at the Friedrich Nietzsche Society conference on Nietzsche and Science (September 2001). I would like to thank Alberto Toscano for his useful comments and Philippe De Brabanter for helping me with my English.

[221] *Science in Action, How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), hereafter *SIA*; *Irreductions* in Latour's *The Pasteurization of France,* trans. A. Sheridan et J. Law (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); *Cogito ergo sumus! Or psychology swept*

developed his thinking in domains having to do with politics or anthropology, I'll try as much as possible to concentrate on his writings on scientific practices.

In *Science in Action*, Latour first makes clear that his focus is going to be not the *ready-made science,* the *fruits* of laboratory work, but science as it is done, *science in the making,* "science in action," the *life* of laboratories. Actually, starting from ready-made science or from scientific theories doesn't allow for thinking any differently than with the tools of epistemology. Latour, though, is rebelling precisely against epistemology. Epistemology not only precludes thinking about what kind of an activity scientific research is, but it also obscures and discredits the whole process that brings scientific research into existence. Yet, it is precisely the study of this process that will bring to light the following paradox: ready-made science, which is the result of the process just mentioned, actually presents itself as its root, thereby inverting the actual order of things.[222]

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inside out by the fresh air of the upper deck…, A review of Ed Hutchins's "Cognition in the wild" (in *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, vol.3, n°1, 1996, pp. 54-63.)

[222] The Latourian critique of the epistemological frame of mind can be found, under many forms, almost everywhere in his work. In *We have Never been Modern,* [*We have Never been Modern,* trans. By Catherine Porter (Harvard University Press, 1993), hereafter *WNM*] Latour shows that what epistemology does is to separate science radically from the "social context". As a consequence, scientific results can only be explained by the fact that science gets closer and closer to the reality of nature, and therefore to the truth. Though such progress is made possible or favoured by the social context (technological advances, fund raising), this context is never allowed to mix with the "purely scientific" sphere in the understanding of what science is. There is a clear-cut epistemological break between science and all the rest. (*WNM*, chapter 4: *Relativism.*) It is this asymmetrical aspect of epistemology which made Latour describe his book, especially in the two first subsections of this chapter, as an essay of symmetrical anthropology. In the epistemological approach, a history of Science can be nothing but the history of its mistakes, and if the social context is considered at all, it is as a source of such scientific mistakes. In *Politiques de la nature* (Paris: la Découverte, 1999), Latour shows what is at stake in the separation between science and society: the role played by epistemology in concealing the many connections between Science and Society, at a time when political problems increasingly interweave these two dimensions (mad cow disease, asbestos). In *Socrates' and Callicles' Settlement; or the Invention of the Impossible Body Politic* (in *Configurations*, n°2, spring 1997, Johns Hopkins University Press and the Society for Literature and Science, pp. 189-240), Latour points at the Socratic (Platonist) gesture which, no differently from Callicles, shuts the people's mouths and "kills" politics, so that only Science, which has made truth its prerogative, can talk. Latour also points out the fact that it is that type of gesture which turns Socrates into what Nietzsche calls a man of resentment (p. 220). As we will see, the Latourian use of

In his book, Latour envisages a multitude of aspects of the scientist's work: publishing, laboratory experiments, fund-raising and the politics that goes with it, development of technical instrumentation necessary for laboratory work, and so on. Through all these aspects, there emerges a slow and tedious *stacking* of results and data. The results of local and circumscribed actions are turned into more general results, so as to always get *n+1* results: the results of local experiments are generalized; those generalizations are in turn abstracted from their context to be compared with others in order to produce even more general results, and so on. We can trace successive layers until we finally come to a single condensed formula, behind which are lined up a whole series of elements of which the formula is the final *translation*. Latour uses the terms of *representative* or the metaphors *spokesman or spokesperson* for that.[223] At the end of this long occult process, something is constructed that is very strong because it condenses an impressive multitude of elements; something that *holds* so well that it can stand on its own, something universal and ready – should it be called into question – to call up all the elements that support it as if they were an army.[224]

Latour introduces the case of a researcher working on endorphine, an organic substance with similar effects to morphine. The existence of this substance is, at the moment Latour starts his account, still subject to controversy.[225] In order to establish the existence of endorphine, the researcher must be involved in a network of heterogeneous things without which nothing is possible; he will have to connect together a multitude of things that will, little by little, lead to a mouthpiece capable of ending the controversy around the existence of this substance. Latour mentions the different entities the researcher has to negotiate with. There is an army of mass-reared guinea pigs from which one has to cut out slices of intestine with care and accuracy. These pieces of flesh have to be put in a purified

Nietzsche's thinking places the problem of the production of knowledge out of the debates regarding (anti) foundationalism. It shifts it from the question of the presence or absence of foundations of truth (the question of epistemological relativism) to move towards an interrogation of the consistency of nodes within networks of knowledge. To Say it with Stengers: to move from *la relativité du vrai* to *la verité du relatif*.

[223] Or even *mouthpiece*. See p. 71.

[224] I call this process "occult" because it is cut off from the results of scientific enquiry. It is not strictly speaking hidden from the public, but it is reduced to a mere preoccupation with the technological means, controversies, etc. that exist on the margins of science, but must still be kept neatly apart from Science proper: if something is true, it is not because of all that, it is because it describes nature.

[225] *SIA,* pp. 153-162.

liquid medium that keeps them alive. This inevitably requires a complex apparatus. Then an intricate device uses sensors to measure the pulsations of the living flesh in order to plot a graph on graduated paper. These are the things required to make the observation that substance X, when injected into the medium, provokes a variation in the curve that is similar to the one produced by injection of morphine. Substance X (since neither its reality nor its identity have been established yet) is extracted from the organism and purified according to a very complex procedure, which itself rests on other *layers* of knowledge*,* on other earlier discoveries linked to a great many *alliances.* When endorphine eventually comes into existence after a large-scale slaughter in the hamster population, it does as the emerging tip of multitudinous converging elements. These we might call *forces*, inasmuch as they are all a sort of *retranslation* and enlisting of diverse entities forced into a new direction: the rearing of guinea pigs; the funds the researcher has raised by convincing people (hospital managers, policymakers, etc.) that their interests would sooner or later lie with his own; well-established scientific facts; the instruments and substances used in the laboratory… and the experiments which capitalize on all of the preceding conditions to make endorphine exist. But once endorphine has become just another substance in just another bottle on the shelf of the perfect lab assistant, nothing of what made it exist will be visible any longer. It will be said to have been "discovered" by Mr. X at some date — full stop! On the other hand, its reality will become more and more firmly established as its use as an indisputable *something* allows other "discoveries" to be made. This situation will be accentuated the more the substance comes into the construction of something else that will hold too, the more it is made solidary with an increasing number of things downstream. Likewise upstream: endorphine is attested by the convergence of a great many different things, all of which are well-established. Of course, endorphine may "perish" if the appropriateness of the measuring instruments is put into question, or the purification process or the purity of the medium in which the intestine slices are plunged. All those elements can in principle come under fire. But attacking any piece of apparatus in this particular experiment would mean questioning all the results of the many studies based on this apparatus, results upon which other generations of discoveries were built.

Latour talks of a *black box* when something has been sufficiently established to be beyond question. A black box can always, in principle,

be reopened. But one black box would lead to another, domino-like, and that makes any reappraisal extremely difficult.[226]

In this case, the purification process has stood the test of time; it has been used in so many other experiments whose results are unquestionable that challenging it would mean challenging a huge portion of biology. The measuring device has been instrumental in plenty of attested discoveries, and these discoveries are at the basis of other studies, notably by the very person who rejects the endorphine theory. The purification process, and the measuring instrument are black boxes too.

And that's not where it stops: many other things would have to be challenged: the factories that manufacture the apparatus, the purification procedures; all in all, too many things for the challenge to be successful. The conclusion is clear: it resists, it holds. Soon, endorphine will become another black box, ready for use in feeding new controversies (or putting an end to them).

There is a method at work in Latour's thinking that Nietzsche would certainly have called a Genealogy. A genealogy that is very similar to the one he himself set up: a genealogy of essences, or of real beings, which is undertaken in order to diagnose their reality as an outcome of the (more or less long and complex) process leading to a situation in which various forces are stabilized in *knots of power*, in centers of power composed of heterogeneous forces.

Those knots of power are defined by Nietzsche as wills. Forces only act on other forces. And if this impetus to subjugate other forces is a blind one, the progressive association and stabilization of forces as a *hierarchic collectivity* (*Herrshaftsgebild*) goes through a series of mutual translations of one force by another. A force is never wiped out. It is used, it is diverted by the one that gets the upper hand; *retranslated* by the one that is in a position to assert its own version of things, even though it is true that the dominated force also has its own viewpoint, and a vested interest in the matter. Even though it may be my interest to translate the action of one or another of my cells, or the action of a bacterium which lives in me, and even though its force may play a role in what makes me exist as a will, there is no evidence that, for itself, the bacterium contributes to making me live and that it is not busy translating

[226] That is exactly what I meant by "occult": a black box is closed so tightly that you really have to struggle to break it open. Once again, epistemology only addresses Science once black boxes are closed. This way, the whole process of their construction is lost to view.

other forces whose existence I don't even suspect, in order to fulfill its own requirements.

The point of view of the dominant force, *i.e.* the force made up of the ones it will have succeeded in *translating* and *enlisting* to affirm itself, this point of view presents itself as a will with respect to what it encounters, be they allies or enemies.

So, powers are beings. As a matter of fact, they are the only beings, since they are the only entities which *"hold"* and act as arrangements of forces within Becoming. In scientific experiments, a being is defined by what resistance it offers to trials. (In a given medium, a slice of intestine responds to substance X just as it does to morphine. A somatostatine injection in the medium cancels its effects, just as with morphine… In the end, this substance is given a name: endorphine).[227]

But powers are fundamentally pharmacological beings — just like medicines that can be poisons as well, and vice-versa: without them, there is simply nothing; they are the only possible means of turning forces into a state of things. But they are intrinsically prone to reaction, prone to denying the process of their advent. That's why, with both Latour and Nietzsche, criticism and affirmation are indissociable from each other. Not the affirmation of chaos — or the affirmation of relativism, according to which "anything goes," and nothing is more real than anything else. No, what Latour and Nietzsche affirm is the genetic emergence of essences, which stabilizes them, according to different degrees of robustness.

If I make this point about unbridled relativism ("no point of view is ever superior to any other") it is because Latour explicitly distinguishes himself from it.[228] Though it is true that nothing is given *a priori* that people didn't put together through the sweat and toil that *alliances* demand, there may come a time when one conception turns out to be less tenable than another. Aristotle's explanation of gravity is not in itself archaic or irrational, but Galileo set up a test that was able to break open this black box. It didn't withstand the test Galileo made it undergo, it didn't withstand the new forces Galileo had enlisted on his side. Galileo arranged his allies in such a way that his *translation* of them could not be put into question. If challenged by an Aristotelian, Galileo only has to show his spheres rolling down his inclined plane, which he meticulously built in his laboratory. And they will testify, as they should, to the fact

[227] Nietzsche, in the *Will to Power* (6.3.5), defines forces in regard to their effect and their resistance.

[228] *SIA*, from chapter 3 to the end; *WNM*, chapter 4: *relativism*.

that what Galileo says is really what they, the spheres, make him say. Anything goes … no longer. As Latour says: "As a result of the actants' work, certain things do not return to their original state. A shape is set, like a crease. It can be called a trap, a ratchet, an irreversibility, a Maxwell's demon, a reification. The exact word does not matter as long as it designates an asymmetry. Then you cannot act as you wish. There are winners and losers, there are directions, and some are made stronger than others".[229]

In that way, and so similarly to Nietzsche, Latour reflects upon the balance of forces, and affirms them, even as he defuses – offering its genealogical critique – the process which inscribes in *Being* or in *Nature* the stabilized outcomes of these forces.[230] Between the Aristotelian and Galileo, where is one to locate Nature? The point is not to deny the stabilized outcomes an existence of their own, even a very robust one, but only a status as eternal and rational essences. Like any other existing thing, a scientific reality issues from a trial of forces, from a *stacking* of elements, a layering of black boxes. However, in Science, those elements are so numerous, and the networks of which they are part are so far-reaching, that the robustness of facts is increased manifold.

This brings us back to my choice of the term *individual*. One may actually wonder what individuality has to do with all of this, what room is left for it. Latour's black box or the Nietzschean person are reconnected by genealogy and "irreductive" analysis to the forces, which brought them into existence. They are constantly reminded that they would be nothing without the conditions of existence *which they transformed, as they came about, into their own requirements*. Nietzsche and Latour present us with protean and multiform, human and non-human, always made up of heterogeneous materials, distributed over the relationships which establish them, and which they establish at the same time.

When, as a free and autonomous being, I draw money from the cash dispenser, where is the action located? Could this operation be reduced to my person; or shouldn't it rather be attributed to the whole network of telephone lines, bankers, divergent and multiple interests that are remote

[229] *Irreductions,* 1.1.10, p.160.

[230] In *Politiques de la nature*, Latour, who is trying to bring to light the complex network of links between Science and politics, purely and simply suggests abandoning *nature* as a means to understand what science is. Of course, we are free to use the word *nature* to refer to the stabilized results of scientific practices as a whole, but only after its elimination as an epistemological category useful in understanding what Science does.

in time and space.[231] However, "things" emerge out of this distribution of alliances, things which *hold* and may act as unified and autonomous entities. In *Cogito ergo sumus*,[232] Latour takes up again Hutchins's study of the cognitive skills of an aircraft-carrier's crew. In a nutshell, this study tends to demonstrate that the cognitive activities of the crew: skipper on the deck, navigator down in the cabin who's looking over the chart and leafing through the Nautical Instructions, plotters, engineers, radars, charts, topologic landmarks (lighthouses, buoys, the harbour's design), all are linked and make each other possible and efficient. Any activity takes place in the links, in the translation of one into the other. The cognitive operations of this or that crew member are reattributed to a collective construction. They are distributed over a myriad of operations which extend far beyond the pilot's brain. Here's a passage from the article: "the groups of navigators, the artefacts, the work site, the requirements of the Navy, are not influencing or constraining the individual mind – as if we had to choose between the individual mind thinking freely beneath its skin, and a social entity which would be endowed, somewhat mysteriously, with emergent cognitive abilities. Hutchins's point is to turn cognitive science inside out, but not to turn it into sociology. It is the very boundary between what goes inside and what goes outside which is at stake in the book. The individual mind endowed with internal states is certainly gone, but so is the 'context' in which thinking was supposed to take place".[233]

[231] Here again, we are in the main claim of Latour's *Irreductions*: "nothing can be reduced to anything". Any form, any entity (whatever it may be — scientific, social, cultural — the approach here is symmetrical) is the expression of a stage in a trial of forces. This form is constructed, informed and transformed, actually *performed* by those forces. Once it is stabilized, this form doesn't look like a trial anymore. (*Irreductions* 1.1.6.) But it cannot be reduced to itself as an essence, neither reduced to the mere appearance of the forces understood as the only true reality. An entity exists because there are forces that insist to make it exist; and, within it, there exist all the forces to which it bestows consistency. Latour here follows the Nietzschean thought which refuses any ground (*e.g.* an atomism of forces) to which anything could be reduced. Any reality, for Nietzsche, is a trial between interpretations. This is not simply the relativist affirmation that reality is "nothing but interpretation", but the affirmation of the encounter of different forces that struggle amongst each other to construct a reality that is always related to them. It is only once that reality stabilized (*e.g.* through the stacking of black boxes), that we could believe in something like the "disinterested *nature*" of epistemology.

[232] *Op. cit.* On the complex relationship between the existing individual and what makes it exist, see Latour's little book *Petite réflexion sur le culte moderne des dieux Faitiches* (Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, 1996.)

[233] *Cogito Ergo Sumus, Op. cit.*

Nevertheless, the pilot exists who can say *I* can pilot.

As in the case of the black box, powers can act as *spokespersons* or *delegates* of assemblies of forces. A spokesperson does not possess these forces as its own, only as a potential, but it has sufficiently secured them so as to be able to mobilize them for its cause, to translate them in its own cosmos into something that *makes sense*. Nietzsche talks of *falsification* by the subject who interprets: each point of view interprets, but only interprets for itself, always reinterpreting things in local and private terms. Likewise, Latour repeats the translation/treason motif. In the eyes of the power enlisting the forces, the viewpoint of the forces is devoid of any interest or even meaning (except that the power must meet their interests in order that they don't desert it … but their interpretation is their own problem). We can put it like this: in the power's world, the forces' viewpoint simply does not exist.

In that sense, the question par excellence that the individual asks is: who is in command? The single most distinctive feature of individuality — in its most reactive sense — is to understand itself as being in command of a body. This body is a complex assembly of heterogeneous forces. But the one in command affirms itself through this strange gesture, which consists in transforming into its *own requirements* what could be understood as its conditions of existence. It is the one in command which, in order to *be*, requires all these elements to be under its heel.

In his *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Pierre Klossowski has neatly captured this idea and added the interesting insight that singular forces come to be interpreted as accidents ("propensities", "tendencies" or "inclinations", Klossowski says) of what is now a substantial subject, a substantial subject which is so *unawares* of the forces that make it up. In a way, these forces unwittingly "nourish" the subject. The subject, however, takes this nourishment as being *necessary* to its preservation.[234]

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[234] Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith, pp. 48, 27.

There is some slippage, as it were, from the individual to the subject. This slippage is one of the central points of Klossowski's book, and maybe one of the central aspects of Nietzsche's thinking. In short, we could say that the individual is affirmed inasmuch as it is an outcome of relationships between complex forces and — being an outcome — it is the (only possible) affirmation and expression of those relationships. The subject would be this individual, inasmuch as it forgets and dismisses all that brings it into existence: a subject that thinks of itself as an essence, as a reality in itself.

Since they talk — and think — from different vantage points (such as scientific research for Latour, and, for instance, the links between psychology, physiology and

Once again, the individual is criticised for disqualifying all that contributes to bringing it into existence, disqualifying all of which it is the accidental upshot, but of which it claims to be the necessary outcome. On the other hand, it is also an object that is affirmed, since it is the only possible embodiment of Becoming. Trials, or battles of forces, or even a balance of forces don't exist in and of themselves, if they are not embodied by something. Forces only test and confront each other in the complex bodies, or powers, they compose. Nothing exists but these powers. Being is nothing else than powers inasmuch as they affirm themselves.

Forces without power, or forces without the individuals which embody power, that would be the borderline affirmation, an affirmation that is non-viable but necessary if one is to be able to reflect upon Becoming**.** That affirmation – the extreme intensity of the Nietzsche an "vitalism" reached in the "highest thought" which is the eternal return – is, at every stage of Nietzsche's evolution, paradoxically thought of as something non viable. A borderline-moment in which life exceeds any possibility for a living (body) to maintain itself in this moment.[235] For Nietzsche, this moment is necessary to shatter the Platonist reign of essences which *are* in a state of permanence, and which only subsist by "epistemologically" denying the reality of the process of life. Nietzsche's and Latour's genealogies consist precisely in that: a deconstruction of essences and of individuals stabilized as essences, designed to trace the processes of stabilization or individuation.

However, something happened in the transition from Nietzsche to Latour. Whereas Nietzsche is concerned with the paradoxical coexistence of the dissolution of all identities with the affirmation of an individual that lives at the edge of its own individuation – Nietzsche is constantly grappling with chaos – Latour deals with a more pacified constructivism that doesn't need to confront chaos in order to dynamite something that is not, for him, a general problem anymore. There is a change in philosophical *ethos* toward a thinking which is from the outset rooted in

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individuation for Nietzsche) Latour and Nietzsche are led to develop concepts that answer to their respective needs. Nietzsche's 'subject' refers to the human being and his self-consciousness *as the starting-point* of all his thoughts, actions, desires. Nevertheless, the Nietzschean critique of the subject is present in the Latourian critique of the scientific *artifact*, which presents itself as nature, and therefore, as a starting-point.

[235] See Dionysus' dramatic appearance in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the demon's proposal in *The Gay Science* (§341), and the multiple writings upon the break-up of the individual in *The Will to Power*.

the polyvocity of relationships, and which doesn't have to struggle to affirm a form of Becoming devoid of the fallacies of reified truths, of the reign of Nature, or of *a priori* assumptions of all kinds. The Latourian critique of ready-made science is linked straightaway with his genealogical affirmation of science in the making. It is on the basis of such a constructivism that it is possible to build a political thinking, *i.e.* a thinking capable of selecting the individuations that will be able to affirm themselves as part of Becoming, and to avoid the dangers of epistemology or subjectivity. Through a survey of singular practices such as scientific research or the relationships between science and politics, Latour further explores forms of individuation – *i.e.* how powers are embodied – which have this strength to affirm themselves.

By following up on Nietzsche and bringing him into his *own* problems, Latour did something that doesn't leave Nietzsche intact. This reappropriation throws some new light on a more pacified Nietzsche an thought and shows that criticism – by means of the eternal return, the hammer-philosophy – is always to be linked with a constructivism of essences – via the concepts of perspectivism, art, and so forth.

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Alain Badiou's Theory of the Subject: The Recommencement of Dialectical Materialism? (Part II)[236]

BRUNO BOSTEELS

The Real Not Only As Cause But Also As Consistency

> "We ask materialism to include that which is needed today and of which Marxism has always made its guiding thread, even without knowing it: a theory of the subject."[237]

The sharp tone of Badiou's polemic against Althusser and Lacan no doubt comes as a response to the incapacity of both thinkers to find any significant truth in the events of May '68, while to draw further consequences from these events remains the aim of Badiou's work in the seventies and early eighties. His *Theory of the Subject*, presented in the form of a seminar from 1975 until 1979, with a preface written in 1981 at the time of Mitterrand's arrival to power, is the first massive summary of this ongoing effort.

In the case of Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" is perhaps his only theoretical attempt to register the effects of the revolt, including examples from the world of education as well as the obligatory scene of a police officer hailing a passerby in the street. After his much publicized *Elements of Self-Criticism*, most of Althusser's subsequent work can then be read as a double effort—not unlike the two parts in Badiou's later *Can Politics Be Thought?*—of destruction and recomposition of Marxism, respectively, in "Marx Within His Limits" and "The Subterranean Current of the Materialism of the Encounter."[238] These final notes change the terrain once more, this time from dialectical

[236] The first part of this paper was published in *Pli* 12, "What is Materialism?"
[237] Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 198.

to aleatory materialism, in order to grasp the essence of political events in their purely contingent occurrence, regardless of the so-called laws of historical necessity. One might therefore expect this extremely lyrical inquiry into the materialism of chance encounters, deviating atoms, and aleatory conjunctures to have attuned its author in retrospect to explosive events such as those of 1968 in France. At the end of a long list of examples, however, the greatest manifestation of this watershed year still appears as a non-event: "May 13th, when workers and students, who should have 'joined' (what a result that would have given!), pass by one another in their long parallel processions but *without joining*, avoiding at all cost to join, to rejoin, to unite in a unity that no doubt would have been without precedent until this day."[239] Missed encounter of students and workers, or paradoxical failure on the philosopher's part to come to grips with the event of their reciprocal transformation?

If Badiou's Maoist pamphlets are unforgiving in their attack against Althusser, the point is above all to counter those among the latter's theses on structure and ideology which after the events facilitate the betrayal of students, workers, and intellectuals alike. His *Theory of Contradiction* thus opens on a statement of principle: "I admit without reticence that May '68 has been for me, in the order of philosophy as well as in all the rest, an authentic road to Damascus," and the impact of this experience is further investigated in *On Ideology*: "The issue of ideology is the most striking example of a theoretical question put to the test and divided by the real movement."[240] The first booklet then seeks to redefine the fundamental principles of dialectical materialism in a return to Mao's "On Contradiction" which already served Althusser in *For Marx*, while the second takes aim not only at the latter's one-sided views of ideology and the subject in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" but also at their alleged rectification in *Elements of Self-Criticism*: "We have to put an end to the 'theory' of ideology 'in general' as the imaginary

[238] These texts are taken up posthumously, under the apt subheadings of "Textes de crise" and "Louis Althusser après Althusser," in *Ecrits philosophiques et politiques*, ed. François Matheron (Paris: Stock/IMEC, 1994), vol. I, pp. 367-537 and pp. 553-594. For the importance of these texts, see among others Gregory Elliott, "Ghostlier Demarcations: On the Posthumous Edition of Althusser's Writings," *Radical Philosophy* 90 (1998): 20-32.

[239] Althusser, "Le courant souterrain du matérialisme de la rencontre," *Ecrits philosophiques et politiques*, p. 584. For a short, slightly bitter criticism of this unfinished text, see Pierre Ramond, "Le matérialisme d'Althusser," in *Althusser philosophe*, ed. Pierre Ramond (Paris: PUF, 1997), pp. 167-179.

[240] Badiou, *Théorie de la contradiction* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975), p. 9; and Badiou with François Balmès *De l'idéologie* (Paris: François Maspero, 1976), p. 7.

representation and interpellation of individuals into subjects."[241] Historicity cannot be reduced to the objective inspection of a structure of dominant or subordinate instances, even if incompleted by an empty place of which the subject is invariably the inert and imaginary placeholder. The transformative impact of an event can be grasped only if the combinatory of places and their ideological mirroring play is anchored, supplemented, and divided by a dialectic of forces in their active processing. Such is, philosophically speaking, the experience of Badiou's road to Damascus that would forever distance him from Althusser.

While Althusser's failed encounter remains foreign to the events themselves, Lacan's open indictment of May '68 by contrast is far more inherently damaging. Before tackling the university discourse as a whole, Lacan clearly hits a central nerve in the student-popular movement insofar as his accusation of its being an hysterical outburst in search of a new master anticipates in a painful irony the subsequent arguments and apostasies of so many an ex-Maoist turned New Philosopher. At an improvised meeting in 1969 at the newly established campus of Vincennes, in a speech reproduced in *The Obverse of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan thus mockingly provokes his students: "If you had a little bit of patience, and if you wanted my impromptus to continue, I would tell you that the only chance of the revolutionary aspiration is always to lead to the discourse of the master."[242] This criticism, which restages much of the battle between anarchists and party hardliners, if not the ancient struggle between sceptics and dogmatists in their fitting co-dependence, is clearly the unspoken impetus for Badiou's systematic reply to Lacan in *Theory of the Subject*. To understand this situation is all the more urgent today because Žižek in *The Ticklish Subject* will throw the same Lacanian criticism—of deriving a dogmatic masterly philosophy from a politics of short-lived hysterical outbursts—back at the feet of ex-Althusserians such as Badiou.

After the insights from *Theory of Contradiction* and *On Ideology*, what is then the principal lesson to be drawn, according to Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*, from the political sequence initiated by the events

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[241] Badiou and Balmès, *De l'idéologie*, p. 19. For a more detailed discussion of Badiou's two early works in the context of a concrete case in literature, namely Borges, see my article "La ideología borgeana," *Acontecimiento: Revista para pensar la política* 14 (1997): 51-92. Ernesto Laclau discusses and reuses the theses of Badiou and Balmès in his own *Política e ideología en la teoría marxista: capitalismo, fascismo, populismo* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1978), especially pp. 197-200.

[242] See the appendix in Jacques Lacan, *L'envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 239.

of May ’68?

The full effect of these events is first of all registered in philosophy as a humbling lesson in dialectics. Even the double articulation of places and forces, or the negation of one by the other, is not quite enough. The dialectic is first and foremost a process, not of negation and the negation of negation, but of internal division. Every force must thus be split into itself and that part of it that is placed, or determined by the structure of assigned places. “There is A, and there is Ap (read: ‘A as such’ and ‘A in an other place,’ the place distributed by the space of placement, or P),” as Badiou writes: “We thus have to posit a constitutive scission: A = (AAp).”[243] Every force stands in a relation of internal exclusion to its determining place. The famous contradiction of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, or labour and capital, for example, is only an abstract structural scheme, A vs. P, that is never given in actual fact. Althusser’s argument for overdetermination, of course, already rejected the purity of these contradictions, but his solution was only to move from a simple origin to a complex structure that is always already given; Badiou’s dialectic, by contrast, aims at the actual division of this complex whole. As the history of the twentieth century shows in excruciating detail, what happens actually is the constant struggle of the working class against its determination by the bourgeois capitalist order, an order that divides the proletariat from within. There are notorious contradictions in the midst of the people. “In concrete, militant philosophy, it is thus indispensable to announce that there is only one law of the dialectic: One divides into two,” Badiou summarizes: “Dialectics states that there is a Two and proposes itself to infer the One as moving division. Metaphysics poses the One, and forever gets tangled up in drawing from it the Two.”[244]

If determination describes the dialectical placement of a force and its resulting division, then the whole purpose of the theory of the subject is to affirm the rare possibility that a force comes to determine the determination by reapplying itself onto the very place that marks its split identity. From the slightly static point of departure A=(AAp), in which p is the index of the determination by P within A so that Ap controls the divided essence of A, or Ap(AAp), we thus get the actual process that both limits and exceeds the effects of determination: Ap(AAp) →

[243] Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 24.

[244] Ibid., pp. 32 and 40. A whole chapter in Badiou’s *Le Siècle* will be devoted to the particularly violent episode of this struggle in the ideological history of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, between the defendants of the idea that “Two fuse into One” and the adherents of “One divides into Two.”

A(AAp), or A(Ap). This is without a doubt the single most important moment in all of Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*: a symptomatic twist, or torsion, of the subject upon the impasses of its own structural placement —a process that we will find again, but in a more succinct and potentially misleading formulation, in *Being and Event*. "It is a process of torsion, by which a force reapplies itself to that from which it conflictingly emerges," Badiou explains: "Everything that belongs to a place returns to that part of itself which is determined by it in order to displace the place, to determine the determination, to cross the limit."[245] Only by thus turning upon itself in an ongoing scission can a rare new truth emerge out of the old established order of things—a truth process of which the subject is neither the origin nor the empty bearer so much as a material fragment, or finite configuration.

Badiou finally suggests that the dialectical process in a typical backlash risks to provoke two extreme types of fallout, or *Rückfall* in Hegel's terms: the first, drawn to the "right" of the political spectrum, remits us to the established order, and thus obscures the torsion in which something new actually took place: Ap(AAp) → Ap(Ap) = P; the second, pulling to the "left" instead, vindicates the untouched purity of the original force, and thus denies the persistence of the old in the new: A(AAp) → A(A) = A. What is thus blocked or denied is either the power of determination or the process of its torsion in which there occurs a conjunctural change: "But the true terms of all historicity are rather Ap(A), the determination, and A(Ap), the limit, terms by which the whole affirms itself without closure, and the element is included without abolishing itself."[246] These distinctions then allow the author to propose

[245] Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, pp. 29-30. One of Althusser's most breathtaking texts, "Le 'Piccolo,' Bertolazzi et Brecht," in *Pour Marx*, is the closest he comes to Badiou's philosophy and theory of the subject, including the false dialectic of melodrama, which opposes the Hegelian beautiful soul to the corrupt outside world, and this extremely condensed version of dialectical time in the process of torsion: "A time moved from within by an irresistible force, and producing its own content. It is a dialectical time par excellence. A time that abolishes the other one," the empty time without history, "together with the structures of its spatial figuration" (p. 137).

[246] Badiou, ibid., p. 30. Badiou illustrates this dialectic with a lengthy excursion into the ancient history of the Christian Church with its twin heresies: "rightist" Arianism, for whom Christ is wholly mortal, pure P; and "leftist" Gnosticism, for whom God is inhumanely divine, pure A. Given this crucial rereading of Hegel's dialectic and the history of Christianity, it is quite surprising to see that Badiou's *Théorie du sujet* is not even mentioned in Judith Butler's recently reissued *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

an extraordinary rereading of Hegel's dialectic—itself in need of a division and not just the resented victim of a wholesale rejection as in the case of Althusser.

The complete deployment of this dialectic also provides us with a key to understand the perceptions of failure and success that put such a heavy stamp on the aftermath of May '68. In fact, both the provocative accusations by outside observers such as Lacan and the contrite turnabouts by ex-Maoists such as Glucksmann remain caught as if spellbound in the inert duel between the established order of places and the radical force of untainted adventurism. The world-famous picture of Daniel Cohn-Bendit during one of the manifestations of May '68, with the student leader smiling defiantly in the face of an anonymous member of the riot police who remains hidden behind his helmet—a picture that eventually will decorate the cover of Lacan's seminar *The Obverse of Psychoanalysis* from the following year—might serve to illustrate this point. Indeed, the contagious appeal and extreme mobilizing force of this image depends entirely on a limited structural scheme in which there appears no scission in the camp of the ironic and free-spirited students nor any torsion of the existing order of things beyond a necessary yet one-sided protest against the repressive State. Althusser's example of the police officer interpellating a passerby in the street remains bound to this dual structure, as might likewise be the case of the definition of politics in opposition to the police in the later work of Rancière. For Badiou, however, this view hardly captures any specific political sequence in its actual process. "There is not only the law of Capital, or only the cops. To miss this point means not to see the unity of the order of assigned places, its consistency. It means falling back into objectivism, the inverted ransom of which consists by the way in making the State into the only subject, hence the anti-repressive logorrhoea," the author warns: "It is the idea that the world knows only the necessary rightist backlash and the powerless suicidal leftism. It is Ap(Ap) or A(A) in intermittence, that is to say P and A in their inoperative exteriority."[247] Lacan's accusation thus merely reproduces a face-off between the two extreme outcomes of the dialectical process, without acknowledging the true torsion of what takes place in between.

[247] Ibid., pp. 60 and 30. In *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory after May '68* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), Peter Starr devotes much of his argument to the paralyzing effects of this dilemma and the search for "third way" solutions among members or fellow travelers of Tel Quel. Unfortunately, though, he does not deal with a single text by Badiou.

In view of this acute diagnosis and the elaboration of an alternative materialist dialectic in the remainder of *Theory of the Subject*, there is something more than just awkward in the criticism according to which Badiou's *Being and Event* would later get trapped in a naive undialectical, or even pre-critical separation of these two spheres—being and event, knowledge and truth, the finite animal and the immortal subject. Not only does this criticism systematically miss the point even of Badiou's later philosophy but the whole polemical thrust of his earlier work consists very much in debunking the presuppositions of such critical postures as they emerge after May '68. The almost cynical irony is that Badiou's theory of the subject arrives at this turning point in a rigorous dialogue and confrontation with Lacanian psychoanalysis, which will then become the authoritative point of reference for the criticisms raised against Badiou's later philosophy by someone like Žižek.

With the need to divide the subject in relation to the order in which it receives its place, we still may seem to find ourselves on the familiar grounds of the logic of structural causality, which for Badiou can be summed up in a single statement from Lacan's *Ecrits*: "The subject is, as it were, in external inclusion to its object."[248] This object can then be read as either the symbolic order itself, following the earlier Lacanian view, or else as the uncanny element that has to be foreclosed if such an order is to gain any coherence at all, according to the later teachings of Lacan. In the first instance, the subject's decentred cause would be the unconscious which is structured as a language; in the second, the subject is the strict correlate of the gap in this structure, the place of which is then held by the piece of the real that is included out and as such embodies the impossible object-cause of desire. Regardless of which reading applies to the object, however, Badiou's theory of the subject hinges on how exactly we understand their dialectical relation of external inclusion—whether as a structural given or as a divided process.

For Badiou, most of Lacan's work stays within the bounds of a structural dialectic which is strikingly similar, as far as its basic operations are concerned, to Mallarmé's poetry. These operations consist, first, in setting up a scene marked by the traces of a disappearance, say a sunken ship or a drowned siren, whose vanishing sustains the whole scene itself. This is the operation of the absent or evanescent cause, which determines the established order of things: "Nowhere placed, the vanished force supports the consistency of all places."[249] This vanishing

[248] Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 861.
[249] Badiou, ibid., p. 81.

cause then produces a chain effect by leaving behind a series of metonymical terms, a white hair or the foam on the surface of the sea, the division of which is the mark of the lack that caused them: "Thus the absent cause is always reinjected into the whole of its effect. This is a great theorem of the structural dialectic: in order for the causality of lack to exert itself, every term must be split."[250] Prescribed by the lack of its object, finally, a subject appears only as the unspeakable vacillation eclipsed in the flickering intermittence between two markings. "The subject follows throughout the fate of the evanescent term, having the status of an interval between the two signifiers, S_1 and S_2, which represent the subject one to the other," Badiou concludes: "Whoever wants to declare its substance is a swindler."[251]

Mallarmé's poetry thus offers an illuminating exposition of the doctrine of structural causality as developed in the Lacanian school. However, the problem with this doctrine is precisely that, while never ceasing to be dialectical in pinpointing the absent cause and its divisive effects on the whole, it nevertheless remains tied to this whole itself and is thus unable to account for the latter's possible transformation. "A consistent thought of the vanishing term is the realist peak of the structural dialectic," which means that there is no temporal advent of novelty: "The logic of places, even when handled by an absolute virtuoso, would be hard put to deliver anything else than the regular, virtually infinite iteration of that which vanishes and annuls itself."[252] For Mallarmé, in the end, "nothing will have taken place but the place itself," just as Lacan indicates the unsurpassable law that forbids the emergence of the new out of a division of the old: "When one makes two, there is never any return. It does not amount to making a new *one*, not even a *new* one."[253] Mallarmé's and Lacan's structural dialectic in this sense ends up

[250] Ibid., p. 89.

[251] Ibid., pp. 151-152. Badiou will adopt and rephrase this Lacanian definition of the subject, as that which one signifier S_1 represents to another signifier S_2, in *Being and Event*: a subject is then that which an event E_1 represents to another event E_2. This goes to show the potentially misleading structural-ontological orientation of this later work, the inevitable one-sidedness of which should be supplemented with the topological orientation of a theory of the subject.

[252] Ibid., pp. 115 and 52.

[253] Ibid., p. 126 and Lacan, *Le Séminaire XX*, *Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 79. Following Badiou's own reading, I have added a double emphasis in my version of this sentence, which is nearly untranslateable: "Quand un fait deux, il n'y a jamais de retour. Ça ne revient pas à faire de nouveau un, même un nouveau." Cf. Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, pp. 131-

being profoundly idealist according to Badiou. It should be noted that this is not the usual objection against the idealism of the signifier or discourse in the name of some hard referent or concrete human practice. Badiou's argument is rather that idealism consists in denying the divisibility of the existing law of things, regardless of whether these things are ideal or material: "The indivisibility of the law of the place excepts it from the real. To link this exception means in theory to posit the radical anteriority of the rule," he writes: "The position of this antecedence is elaborated in philosophy as idealism."[254]

After the lesson in dialectics, there thus appears to be an even more urgent need to return to the definition of materialism. The latter, as we saw, is always marked from within by its opponent: "Materialism stands in internal division to its targets. It is not wrong to see in it a pile of polemical scorn," which is why "materialism most often disgusts the subtle mind."[255] The first historical target of materialist scorn, in its enlightened form, is the idealism of religion, followed by a second onslaught, starting at the end of the nineteenth century, against the very humanism of Man with which the first materialists had tried to displace God. Nowadays, this antihumanist materialism, which delegates the constituent power to the symbolic structure, or to the big Other, risks in turn to become idealist, insofar as it blocks the production of a new truth of the subject. This is then the idealism to be targeted by a third, contemporary form of materialism: "Linguistic idealism is today the cause of the materialist assault. Which is exactly why the essence of an activist materialism requires, by a Copernican reversal, the production of a theory of the subject, which it once had the task of foreclosing."[256]

If, for Badiou, Mallarmé and Lacan are two of the four great French dialecticians together with Pascal and Rousseau, then it is also true that their legacy must be divided into its idealist and its materialist tendencies, as happened before with Hegel. In Lacan's case, the dividing line may seem to fall between his earlier and his later work. The determining role of the symbolic order then tends to be idealist, while the persistence of the real guarantees a materialist outlook. "Just as Hegel for Marx, Lacan is for us essential and divisible," Badiou observes: "The primacy of the structure, which makes of the symbolic the general algebra of the subject,

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[254] Ibid., p. 200.

[255] Ibid., p. 202. An entire segment of this work is thus devoted to a "Retournement matérialiste du matérialisme" (pp. 193-255).

[256] Ibid., p. 204.

its transcendental horizon, is increasingly counteracted in Lacan by a topological obsession, in which all movement and progress depend on the primacy of the real."[257] Lacan's inquiries into the real would thus have the greatest political resonance for a materialist philosophy. Several years before Laclau and Mouffe consolidate this reading in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the real is in fact already understood in a political key in Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* so that "if the real of psychoanalysis is the impossibility of the sexual as relationship, the real of Marxism states: 'There is no class relationship.' What does this mean? It can be said otherwise: antagonism."[258] Lacan's materialism, from a politico-philosophical perspective, would thus lie in an undaunted insistence on some traumatic kernel of antagonism that fissures every social order.

Upon closer inspection, however, the shift from the symbolic to the real turns out to be a necessary but insufficient condition for a materialist theory of the subject. To recognize in antagonism the real that is the constitutive outside of any society, while a fundamental strategy of the structural dialectic, at best gives us only half of the process by which a political subject is produced, and at worst can actually keep this process from ever acquiring the coherence of a new truth. From the point of the real as absent cause, indeed, any ordered consistency must necessarily appear to be imaginary insofar as it conceals this fundamental lack itself. For a materialist understanding of the dialectic, however, the decisive question is rather whether the real cannot also on rare occasions become the site for a newly consistent truth. In addition to the real as an evanescent cause, we ought therefore to conceive of the real as a novel consistency. Badiou calls the first conception algebraic, insofar as the real is considered in terms of its relations of belonging and foreclosure, while the second is topological, in terms of adherence and proximity. "We thus have to advance that there are two concepts of the real in Lacan, as is adequate to the division of the One: the real of evanescence, which is in a position of cause for the algebra of the subject, and the real of the nodal point, which is in a position of consistency for its topology," with both being required for a materialist theory of the subject: "From the real as cause to the real as consistency we can read an integral trajectory of materialism."[259] Lacan's obscure topological investigations, however, are limited by the fact that they remain bound to the constraints of the structural dialectic. For this reason, even his uncompromising insistence

[257] Ibid., pp. 150-151.
[258] Ibid., p. 145.
[259] Ibid., pp. 243-244.

on the real threatens to become contemplative and idealist—as though the end of analysis were the mere recognition of a structural impasse, maybe accompanied by an identification with the remaining symptom of enjoyment, but without the actual process of a subject conditioned by truth.

The line of demarcation between idealism and materialism in Lacan's thought must therefore be drawn through the very concept of the real, splitting its core in order to mark off those aspects that remain tied to a structural lack and those that point toward a torsion, or destruction, of the structure itself. "Our entire dispute with Lacan lies in the division, which he restricts, of the process of lack from that of destruction," Badiou concludes: "Destruction means torsion. Internal to the place, it ravages its spaces, in a laborious duration."[260] This violent language in fact only restates the rare possibility, discussed above, of overdetermining the determination, and displacing the existing space of assigned places, while the price to be paid if one seeks to avoid such violence, whether it is called symbolic or metaphysical, is the droning perpetuation of the status quo. True change, or a change in what counts as true, however, comes about not merely by occupying but by exceeding the empty place of the existing structure—including the empty place of power under democracy that seems to be all the rage among so many political philosophers today. Can we actually register any political sequence, though, in the wearying reiterations that democracy is the only regime capable of acknowledging the inherent impossibility that is its absent centre? Or, consider the condition of love: Can any new truth actually emerge in a couple from the sole recognition of the real that is their constitutive impasse? For Badiou, the truth of love or of politics is neither this impasse itself nor its symptomatic outbreaks in a situation of crisis. The formal impossibility of the sexual or social bond, which certainly reveals itself in such a crisis, is at best the site of a possible event, but the truth of a love encounter or a political manifestation consists only in whatever a dual or collective subject makes happen afterwards, on the basis of this event, as being generically applicable to the entire situation. For a truth to take place, therefore, something has to pass through the impasse. "If, as Lacan says, the real is the impasse of formalization," then Badiou suggests, "we will have to venture that formalization is the im-passe of the real," which breaches the existing state of things and its immanent deadlocks: "We need a theory of the pass of the real, in a breach through the formalization. Here the real is not only that which can lack at its place,

[260] Ibid., p. 149.

but that which passes *with force*."[261] Surely anchored in the real as a lack of being, a truth procedure is that which gives being to this very lack. Pinpointing the absent cause or constitutive outside of a situation, in other words, remains a dialectical yet idealist tactic, unless this evanescent point of the real is forced, distorted, and extended, in order to give consistency to the real as a new generic truth.

For Badiou, consequently, there are two parts to the theory of the subject in the long aftermath of May '68. The first, dialectical or algebraic half holds that every force is divided by the law of its structural placement: "Every *it* that is stands to itself in a relation of distance that is due to the place where it is," while the second, materialist or topological half accounts for the emergence of a subject out of the forced torsion of its determining law: "It happens, let us say, that '*it* turns *I*.'"[262] This double articulation is, finally, Badiou's way of explicating the old Freudian maxim, *Wo es war, soll ich werden*, in such a way that the subject cannot be reduced purely and simply to the impasse of the structure itself, as seems to have become the idealist trend after Lacan.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, though, there are two subjective figures that point toward an excess of the real beyond its placement in the existing law of things: anxiety and the superego. The first signals a radical breakdown, due to the irruption of an overwhelming part of the real, in the whole symbolic apparatus. In this sense, anxiety is an infallible guide for a possible new truth, the site of which is indicated precisely by such failure. "Anxiety is that form of interruption which, under the invasion of the real as too-much, lets the existing order be as dead order," Badiou summarizes: "We might say that anxiety designates the moment when the real *kills*, rather than divides, the symbolic."[263] In this way, anxiety is only the revealing counterpart of a violent superego injunction, which constitutes the obscene and unlawful underside of the

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[261] Ibid., p. 41. In the Lacanian school, the *passe* describes the end of an analysis when the position of the analysand gives way to that of the analyst. Badiou's use of the concept in *Théorie du sujet* and *L'Être et l'événement* is clearly inspired by this definition but it is not restricted to the therapeutic situation. Among the numerous references on the topic, I want to mention the remarkable testimonies in the collective volume *La passe et le réel: Témoignages imprévus sur la fin de l'analyse* (Paris: Agalma, 1998).

[262] Badiou, ibid., pp. 27 and 59. The two sentences are nearly untranslatable: "Tout ça qui est se rapporte à ça dans une distance de ça qui tient au lieu où ça est" and "Il arrive, disons, que '*ça* fasse '*je*,'" whereby the emphasis falls on the making, or *faire*, of a process, which is not just a *werden* or becoming as in Freud's original.

[263] Ibid., pp. 172 and 307.

public law. "The superego is related to the law, and at the same time it is a senseless law," Lacan writes: "The superego is simultaneously the law and its destruction. In this regard, it is the word itself, the commandment of the law, inasmuch as only its root is left."[264] The figure of the superego gives access to that part of non-law that is the destructive foundation of the law itself, but only in order more forcefully to recompose the structural space of assigned places. In conjunction with the barbaric ferocity that serves as its native soil, the superego is a terrorizing call to order that seems almost automatically to fill out the void revealed by anxiety. Between anxiety and the superego, a subject only oscillates in painful alternation, without the event of true novelty, just as the insufferable experience of formlessness without a law provokes in turn the reinforcement of the law's excessive form. At best, these two subjective figures thus indicate the point where the existing order of things becomes open to a fatal division, but without allowing a new order to come into being.

As early as in his first seminar, however, Lacan himself raises the question whether this analysis should not be extended to include two other figures of the subject: "Should we not push the analytical intervention all the way to the fundamental dialogues on justice and courage, in the great dialectical tradition?"[265] For Badiou, who from this point on elaborates what is only a suggestion in Lacan, courage and justice indeed are outmoded names for the process whereby an existing order not only breaks down, gets blocked or is reinforced in its old ways, but actually expands, changes, and lends coherence to a new truth. Like anxiety, courage stands under the dissolving pressure of the real, but this time it is in order to twist the structure at the point of its impasse. "Courage positively carries out the disorder of the symbolic, the rupture of communication, whereas anxiety calls for its death," Badiou writes: "All courage amounts to passing through there where previously it was not visible that anyone could find a passage."[266] The part of destruction in the figure of courage then no longer provokes the restoration of a senseless law of terror, but instead puts the old order to the test so as to produce an unforeseeable alternative. "Anxiety is lack of place, and courage, the assumption of the real by which the place is divided," so that now the old non-law of the law gives way to a new law, one which no

[264] Lacan, *Le Séminaire I*, *Les écrits techniques de Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 164-165.
[265] Ibid., p. 309.
[266] Badiou, ibid., pp. 176-177 and 310.

longer recomposes the archaic fierceness of the superego injunction but rather produces a figure of unheard-of justice. "Justice is that by which the subject's nodal link to the place, to the law, takes on the divisible figure of its transformation," Badiou concludes: "More radically, justice names the possibility—from the point of view of what it brings into being as subject-effect—that what is non-law may serve as law."[267]

Badiou's theory of the subject, in sum, ties four subjective figures into a single knot. The first two figures—anxiety and courage—divide the act of subjectivation that marks a flickering moment of destruction, while the other two—superego and justice—split the moment of recomposition that is the enduring work of a subjective process. Any subject thus combines a destruction with a recomposition, following two possible trajectories, or strands, which an integral theory needs to combine. The first strand—from anxiety to the superego—is subordinate to the law of the existing order of places and its founding lack; the second—from courage to justice—actively divides the consistency of the existing order so as to produce a new truth. According to the first strand, which can be called algebraic, a subject fundamentally occupies a position of internal exclusion with regard to the objective structure in which it finds its empty place; according to the second, a subject stands in a topological excess over and above its assigned placement, the law of which is then transformed. In short, a subject insists on being caused by that which lacks at its place, but it consists in the coherence of a forced lack. As Badiou concludes: "The theory of the subject is complete when it manages to think of the structural law of the empty place as the anchoring point of the excess over its place."[268] Lacan's psychoanalysis only gives us half of this theory, that is, the structural and algebraic strand that remains caught in an endless vacillation between the twin figures of anxiety and the superego, or between the vanishing object-cause of desire and the violent restoration of the archaic law.

A last way to fix the irreducible distance that separates Lacan and Badiou involves a return to ancient tragedy as an ethical source of inspiration behind psychoanalysis. In Freud and Lacan, this source has always been Sophocles, whereas Aeschylus should rather serve as our model of tragedy according to Badiou: "The whole purpose of critical

[267] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

[268] Ibid., p. 277. For a further discussion of this alternative for the sinister future of the Left in the aftermath of 1968, not only in France but also and especially in Mexico, see my "Travesías del fantasma: Pequeña metapolítica del 68 en México," *Metapolítica* 12 (1999): 733-768.

delimitation with regard to psychoanalysis, as far as its contribution to the theory of the subject is concerned, can be summed up in this question: Why, through Oedipus, has it been so profoundly Sophoclean?"[269] If, in the world of Sophocles, Antigone and Creon name the twin figures of anxiety and the superego, i.e., the formlessness of what persists without legal place and the surfeit of form that restores the law as terror, then Badiou's aim in turning to the alternative model of Aeschylus is to find examples of courage and justice in the twin figures of Orestes and Athena, i.e., the interruption of the vengeful law of things and the recomposition of a new legal order. "There exist indeed two Greek tragic modes," Badiou suggests: "The Aeschylean one, the sense of which is the contradictory advent of justice by the courage of the new; and the Sophoclean one, the anguished sense of which is the search in return of the superego as origin."[270] Lacan firmly establishes himself in the world of Sophocles while pointing toward its extension by Aeschylus, which is precisely where the theory of the subject must come according to Badiou.

In retrospect Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* can still be said to suffer the effects of several shortcomings, or possible misgivings:

1. Philosophy, in *Theory of the Subject*, still appears to be sutured onto the sole condition of politics. The procedures of art, science, and love—as well as the eternal shadow condition of religion—are already present throughout the book, but they may seem to be mere illustrations rather than conditions in the strict sense, since the subject of truth is defined exclusively in terms of politics: "Every subject is political. Which is why there are few subjects, and little politics."[271] Later, in *Conditions*, which builds on the new foundations of *Being and Event*, Badiou would correct this statement: "Today, I would no longer say 'every subject is political,' which is still a maxim of suturing. I would rather say: 'Every subject is induced by a generic procedure, and thus depends on an event. Which is why the subject is rare,'" while in *Manifesto for Philosophy* the author concludes: "Every subject is either artistic, scientific, political, or amorous. This is something everyone knows from experience, because besides these registers, there is only existence, or individuality, but no subject."[272] If Badiou is soon to write a new theory of the subject as part

[269] Ibid., p. 178. In the final theses of his *Rhapsodie pour le théâtre* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1990), Badiou raises an even more wide-ranging question: Why tragedy? Why not comedy? This brief treatise, moreover, is in many ways the closest relative of *Théorie du sujet* among Badiou's later works.
[270] Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 182.
[271] Ibid., p. 46.

of *Logics of Worlds*, the various figures that open up a subjective space will thus have to be accounted for in each and every condition of truth.

2. Within the condition of politics, *Theory of the Subject* still considers the party as the only effective organizational structure. Badiou has since then abandoned this strict identification of the political subject with the party, which in all its incarnations over the past century has remained bound to the State. In practice, this has led Badiou to participate in a small alternative militant group, simply called Political Organization, which states in a recent issue of its newsletter *Political Distance*: "The balance of the nineteenth century is the withering away of the category of class as the sole bearer of politics, and the balance of the twentieth century is the withering away of the party-form, which knows only the form of the party-State."[273] Philosophically, moreover, this search for a new figure of militantism without a party brings Badiou back to an old acquaintance, in *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, as though almost thirty years had to pass before Badiou could finally come to terms with his personal road to Damascus: "For me, Paul is the poet-thinker of the event, and at the same time the one who practices and voices the invariant features of what we might call the militant figure."[274]

3. Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* seems to presuppose from the start that there is such a thing as subjectivity, without giving this thought much ontological support. Although the book at the end already introduces the whole question of Cantorian set theory, and in fact pinpoints the location of the subject in the immeasurable excess of inclusion over belonging, only *Being and Event* will systematically elaborate the underpinnings of this thesis from an ontological, that is to say mathematical, point of view. In the preface to this second major work, the author writes in retrospect:

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[272] Badiou, *Conditions*, p. 234 n. 41 and *Manifeste pour la philosophie*, p. 91. The political suturing of Badiou's early philosophy has left a trace in his later work: the wordplay on the state of the situation and the modern political State. How this play would work for the three other conditions is not always equally clear.

[273] "Sur le XXe siècle et la politique," in *La Distance Politique* 35 (2001): 3-4. All articles in this newsletter are anonymous, but for similar arguments about the fate of the party-form, see Badiou's *Le Siècle*. L'Organisation Politique, founded in 1985, gathers members of the Maoist Union des communistes de France marxiste-léniniste (UCFML), which in turn emerged in 1970 amidst the worldwide revolutionary sequence of 1965-1975. For more information, see the recently published theses or guidelines of the group, in *Qu'est ce que l'Organisation politique?* (Paris: Le Perroquet, 2001). Badiou discusses some of the recent activities of this group in his interview with Peter Hallward, reprinted as an "Appendix: Politics and Philosophy," in *Ethics*, pp. 95-144.

[274] Badiou, *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1997), p. 2.

"The (philosophical) statement according to which mathematics *is* ontology—the science of being-as-being—is the stroke of light that illuminated the speculative scene which, in my *Theory of the Subject*, I had limited by purely and simply presupposing that 'there was' subjectivation."[275] The new task in *Being and Event* will then consist in articulating a coherent ontology together with the theory of the subject—a task which dialectical materialism in the old orthodox days accomplished by means of an homology between the dialectics of nature and the dialectics of spirit, but which today requires a careful reformulation—this time above all in a polemic with Heidegger and not only with Lacan, whose ontology was already questioned by Miller.

4. Much ink finally has been spilled, including on the part of Badiou himself, to correct the violent language of destruction with which *Theory of the Subject* seeks to displace the structural dialectic of lack in Mallarmé or Lacan. The tone of this language at times reaches chilling heights indeed while affirming the part of loss that inheres in any new truth. "Every truth is essentially destruction," Badiou already writes in one of his early Maoist pamphlets: "History has worked all the better when its dustbins were better filled."[276] Toward the end of *Being and Event*, the author admits: "I went a bit astray, I must say, in *Theory of the Subject* with the theme of destruction. I still supported the idea of an essential link between destruction and novelty."[277] In a strict ontological view, the part of loss in novelty must be rephrased in terms not of destruction but of subtraction and disqualification. A new truth cannot suppress any existence, but by extending a given situation from the point of its supplementation that is an event, an inquiry into the truthfulness of this event can disqualify, or subtract, certain terms or multiples—namely, those inegalitarian ones which are incompatible with the generic nature of all truth. Destruction is then only a reactive name for that part of knowledge that no longer will have qualified as truthful in the extended situation. The distinction between these two paths, destruction and subtraction, is moreover a key topic of the author's ongoing inquiries. Much of Badiou's *Ethics*, for instance, deals with the specific restraints

[275] Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement*, p. 10.

[276] Badiou, *Théorie de la contradiction*, pp. 27 and 86. For a ferocious attack upon these and other comparable statements from Badiou's early Maoist work, see Jean-Marie Brohm, "La réception d'Althusser: histoire politique d'une imposture," in Denise Avenas, et al., *Contre Althusser. Pour Marx* (Paris: Editions de la Passion, 1999), pp. 278-287. Just to give the reader an idea of the fierceness of this attack: Brohm describes Badiou as a "Maoist pittbull" (p. 279 n. 25).

[277] Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement*, p. 446.

that must apply to any process of truth in order to avoid the catastrophe of forcing an entire situation. There is thus a limit, or halting point, which cannot be forced from the point of the situation's extension by a new truth. "Let us say that this term is not susceptible of being made eternal," Badiou writes: "In this sense, it is the symbol of the pure real of the situation, of its life without truth."[278] To force this limit, which is the unnameable or neutral that is specific to each generic procedure, is a major cause of what Badiou then defines as Evil. An example of this would be the disastrous suppression of all self-interest, in the guise of total re-education, as proclaimed by certain Red Guards at the height of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Badiou himself, finally, tends to read his earlier doctrine of lack and destruction as such a disastrous forcing of the unnameable. Everything thus seems to point at the notion of destruction as the principal misgiving in Badiou's early thought, which was very much sutured onto politics under the influence of Maoism.

In view of this last crucial objection, I only want to recall how Marx himself defines the scandalous nature of dialectical thinking, in the famous Postface to the second edition of *Capital*: "In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational figure, it is a scandal and an object of horror to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its understanding of what exists at the same time that of its negation and its necessary destruction."[279] What is happening today, however, is a new transfiguration of the given which may well cast itself as radical but which, precisely by trying to ward off the horrifying scandal of thinking in terms of negation or rather scission and destruction, merely ends up confirming the status quo in the name of a respectful ethical principle devoid of truth. The mandatory limit of the unnameable, then, far from restraining an ongoing process of truth from within, actually blocks such process in advance and thus keeps a truth from ever taking hold to begin with. Even transfigured by an acknowledgement of the real as its inevitable kernel of idiotic non-knowledge, a mortal life without truth is the radically mystified figure of today's structural dialectic. By criticizing the ferocity of destruction, Badiou perhaps unwittingly allows his thought to participate in this trend which, guided

[278] Badiou, *L'Ethique*, p. 76. Much of Badiou's *Le Siècle* is also devoted to this alternative between destruction and subtraction, especially in art, as answers to the question of the end and the beginning that haunts the entire century—or rather Badiou's "brief" twentieth century, from the Revolution of 1917 until the period of what he calls the Restoration in the 1980s.

[279] Quoted and commented by Althusser, *Pour Marx*, pp. 87-88.

by the undeniable authority of Lacan or Levinas and their doctrinaire spokesmen, is all too quick to abandon the idea that in addition to respect for the other or recognition of the real, a truth implies a symptomatic torsion of the existing order of things. Destruction, in Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*, only means such a torsion whereby a subject is neither chained onto the automatism of repetition nor fascinated by the haphazard breaking in two of history, as in Nietzsche's figure of the overman, or by the sudden death of the whole symbolic order as such, as in the figures of anxiety and the superego in Lacan or Žižek. For Badiou, destruction was not to be confused with death or with a total wipe-out of the existing law of things. Since *Being and Event*, however, Badiou himself seems to have forgotten that destruction—even as an exaggerated figure of resentment for which the past always remains the heaviest weight—names part of the process of torsion by which a new subject comes into being and as a result of which something drops out of the old picture. In this sense, to use the most accessible generic procedure as an example, can we not all say that the dustbin of our romantic history is filled with old loves?

The Ontological Impasse

> "What a marvel of dialectical materialism is Cantor's famous diagonal reasoning, in which what is left over founds what stands in excess!"[280]

The change between Badiou's two major works thus far may seem proof of a definitive shift from dialectics to mathematics—with the former dominating his *Theory of the Subject* together with the slender volume *Can Politics Be Thought?* which in fact already anticipates the doctrine of the event, and the latter appearing systematically in *Being and Event* for which the accompanying *Manifesto for Philosophy* then provides an easily accessible situated context. Does this trajectory, however, really imply an irredeemable break, or is there some underlying continuity? Are the earlier misgivings merely abandoned after the so-called mathematical turn, or do we face a more systematic version of previous insights that in essence remain unchanged or perhaps even become obscured? In what direction, moreover, is this trajectory currently heading?

Badiou's *Being and Event* should be considered the first half of a larger project, the second volume of which is currently announced under

[280] Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 234.

the title *Logics of Worlds*. The ambitious overall aim of this project is to affirm that philosophy, despite the prophetic declarations of its imminent end, is once more possible. The present times, in other words, are capable of articulating the key philosophical categories of being, truth, and subject in a way that requires neither an inaugural return nor the melancholic traversing of an end, but rather a decisive step beyond: "One step in the modern configuration which since Descartes links the conditions of philosophy to the three nodal concepts of being, truth, and subject."[281] For Badiou, what is needed at present to link these basic concepts is a philosophy of the event which, despite an irreducible polemical distance, would be compatible both with the critique of metaphysics, as brought to a close by Heidegger, and with the intervening doctrines of the subject, mostly tied to political and clinical experiences, after Marx and Freud.

In *Being and Event*, mathematics then provides the master key to articulate—both to join and by way of an impasse to split off—the science of being with the theory of the subject. The book's guiding thesis is deceptively simple: ontology exists, insofar as ever since the Greek origins of philosophy, and as one of its conditions, the science of being has always been mathematics: "This is not a thesis about the world but about discourse. It states that mathematics, throughout their historical unfolding, pronounce whatever can be said about being-as-being."[282] For Badiou, the place where the ontological discourse is developed today, at least if philosophy accepts to take on this decision, is in axiomatic set theory, from Cantor to Cohen. The basic result of his meta-ontological investigation into set theory then holds that everything that presents itself, in any situation whatsoever, is a multiple of multiples, or pure multiple, without One. The One "is" not, but "there is" One. The latter is only the result of an operation, the count-for-one, as applied to the pure multiple which retroactively must be supposed to be inconsistent. To exist means to belong to a multiple, to be counted as one of its elements. A given multiple, or set α, acquires consistency only through the basic operation which counts whatever this multiple presents as so many ones that belong to this multiple. Prior to this count, though, we must presume that all being paradoxically inconsists, without any God-like principle or pregiven origin: "There is no God. This will also be said as follows: the One is not. The multiple 'without One'—every multiple in its turn being nothing but a multiple of multiples—is the law of being. The only halting

[281] Badiou, *Manifeste pour la philosophie*, p. 12.
[282] Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement*, p. 14.

point is the void."[283] Badiou's ontology of pure multiplicity in this sense agrees with the critique of the metaphysics of presence, so that his deconstruction of the One is another way of declaring the death of God. Choosing a strict alternative to Heidegger's hermeneutic path, however, his inquiry does not submit itself to the language of the poets who alone would be capable of rescuing the clearing of being. Instead of upending philosophy in the name of poetry, or art, the critique of metaphysics in this case is conditioned by the deductive fidelity of pure mathematics. Badiou seeks thus to avoid the dominant suture of contemporary philosophy in its pious delegation onto poetry; philosophy today must rather draw the required consequences from the closure of the age of the poets, which has run its complete gamut from Hölderlin to Celan. The axiom, and not the poem, holds the key to a science of being compatible with the theory of the subject, access to which is then provided by way of subtraction, and not by interpretive approximation.

All the ontological ideas, axiomatically established in set theory, proceed from the void or empty set, named by the letter ∅, which must be postulated as the only possible proper name of being. The empty set indeed is universally included in every other set while itself having no elements that belong to it, and as such founds all mathematical sets. In a normal situation, however, the void not only remains invisible or indiscernible, but the operation of the count moreover reduplicates itself in an attempt to establish the meta-structure, or the state of the situation, in the guise of an uninterrupted totality. This second operation consists in counting, or representing, as subsets whatever the first count presents as terms of a given set. The count of the count would then hold for parts just as the count-for-one holds for elements, with the latter doing for belonging what the former does for inclusion. What Badiou calls the state of a situation, in other words, operates by way of the power-set $p(\alpha)$, which is the set of all the subsets of a given set α. This explains not coincidentally why an operation such as a recurrent census is a characteristic feature of the modern State. What does a census produce if not a count of the count—the real question being not only how many citizens belong to a given nation but also how their numbers are distributed into parts according to variously defined subsets or groups? The real threat of course would be that in some place, say at the borders of the void, there be something that escapes this counting operation—singular elements belonging to the situation without being documented as part of its state or, the other way around, inexistent parts that are included

[283] Badiou, *L'Ethique*, p. 25.

in the state without having any elements that are thought to belong to their mass. As Badiou writes: "An inexistent part is the possible support of the following, which would ruin the structure: the One, in some part, is not, inconsistency is the law of being, the essence of the structure is the void."[284] The emergence of such uncanny phenomena as inexistent parts or singular elements would fundamentally upset the operation of the redoubled count by which the state seeks to ward off the void that is always the foundation of its precarious consistency. The state of a situation in effect is an imposing defense mechanism set up to guard against the perils of the void.

After the initial guiding decision that mathematics provide the science of being, the fundamental thesis of the whole meta-ontological inquiry in *Being and Event* then affirms that there is an excess of parts over elements, of inclusion over belonging, of representation over presentation. There are always more ways to regroup the elements of a set into parts than there are elements that belong to this set to begin with: $p(\alpha) > \alpha$. The state of a situation, in other words, cannot coincide with this situation. The cardinality of the set of all parts or subsets of a set is superior to the cardinality of this set itself and, in the case of an infinite set as with most situations in this world, the magnitude of this excess must be assumed to be strictly beyond measure. "There is an insurmountable excess of the subsets over the terms" which is such that "no matter how exact the quantitative knowledge of a situation can be, we cannot estimate, except in an arbitrary decision, 'by how much' its state exceeds it."[285] This is, finally, the ontological impasse—the point of the real in the science of being—around which the author builds the entire artifice of *Being and Event*: "This gap between α (which counts as one the belongings or elements) and $p(\alpha)$ (which counts as one the inclusions or parts) is, as we shall see, the point at which lies the impasse of being."[286]

In the second half of *Being and Event*, Badiou exploits this point of the real that is proper to the metamathematical analysis of being, in order to discern in its deadlock, not some originary lack as a cause for pious ecstasy or postmodern respect before the unpresentable, but the closest site where an event, as a contingent and unforeseeable supplement to the situation, raises the void of being in a kind of insurrection and opens a possible space of subjective fidelity. In normal circumstances, the

[284] Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement*, p.113.
[285] Ibid., pp. 113 and 309.
[286] Ibid., p. 97.

structural impasse that is intrinsic to the state of the situation remains invisible, so that the void that is its foundation appears to be foreclosed. This foreclosure is the very operation that allows the smooth functioning of the established order of things—when everyone does what comes naturally because the state of the situation in effect appears to be second nature. Exceptionally, however, an event can bring the excess out into the open, expose the void as the foundation of all being, and mark the possible onset of a generic procedure of truth. As Badiou observes: "What makes that a genuine event can be at the origin of a truth, which is the only thing that is eternal and for all, is precisely the fact that it relates to the particularity of the situation from the point of its void."[287] An event is always an anomaly for the discourse of pure ontology, insofar as its irruption attests to a breakdown in the count of the count and thus brings out the real of the science of being. And while its chance occurrence uncovers the void that is the foundation of the entire structured situation in which it occurs, the event itself is a multiple that is wholly unfounded, that is to say, defined by the feature of self-belonging which all ontology consists in forbidding. A seemingly natural and well-ordered situation then becomes historical when what is otherwise a structural impasse, proper to the law of representation as such, becomes tangible through the effects of a radically contingent event. As the doctrine of the weakest link already implied, all historicity occurs at the point where a deadlock of structural determination is crossed by the irruption of a rare event.

Here, of course, I cannot discuss all the categories that mark the intermediate steps on the overall itinerary of *Being and Event*, an itinerary which ranges from the pure multiple of being to the subject, by passing through the situation, the state of the situation, the void, the point of excess, nature and historical situations, the site of the event, the intervention, fidelity, the generic, the indiscernible, and the forcing of truth. What should become evident is how, all along this itinerary, a modern doctrine of the subject as the local configuration of a procedure of truth paradoxically gets anchored in the deconstruction of metaphysics. For the purpose of our discussion, the most important argument in all of *Being and Event* effectively holds that an event, which brings out the void that is proper to being by revealing the undecidable excess of representation, can only be decided retroactively by way of a subjective intervention. In a concise and untranslatable formula, a final thesis thus sums up the trajectory of the entire book: "The *impasse* of being, which causes the quantitative excess of the state to wander beyond measure, is

[287] Badiou, *L'Ethique*, p. 65.

in truth the *passe* of the Subject."[288] A subject is needed to put a measure on the exorbitant power by which the state of a situation exceeds this situation itself. Through the chance occurrence of an event, the structural fact of the ontological impasse is thus already mediated by subjectivity; without the intervention of a subject faithful to the event, the gap in the structure would not even be visible. The impasse is never purely structural but also at the same time dependent upon a haphazard intervention. In every subject, as in an equivocal nodal link, a structural law is tied onto the contingent occurrence of an unpredictable wager. "Everything happens as though between the structure, which liberates the immediacy of belonging, and the metastructure, which counts for one its parts and regulates the inclusions, a breach were opened that cannot be closed except by a choice without concept," writes Badiou: "The fact that at this point it is necessary to tolerate the almost complete arbitrariness of a choice, and that quantity, this paradigm of objectivity, leads to pure subjectivity, that is what I would like to call the symptom of Cantor-Gödel-Cohen-Easton."[289] A subject, then, is that which decides the undecidable in a choice without concept. Setting out from the void which prior to the event remains indiscernible in the language of established knowledge, a subjective intervention names the event which disappears no sooner than it appears; faithfully connects as many elements of the situation as possible to this name which is the only trace of the vanished event; and subsequently forces the extended situation from the bias of the new truth *as if* the latter were indeed already generically applicable. "Situated in being, the subjective advent forces the event to decide the truthfulness of this situation," Badiou concludes, and if we take into account the various conditions or generic procedures of truth, we understand why he writes in the introduction that "strictly speaking, there is no subject except artistic, romantic, scientific, and political."[290]

Though essentially a repetition of the argument from Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*, the pivotal thesis about the impasse of being as the pass of the subject is nevertheless open to a fundamental misunderstanding, which in my view is due to the primarily ontological orientation of *Being and Event*. From a Lacanian point of view, above all, the thesis might as well be inverted so as to reduce the subject's passing to the structural impasse pure and simple. To come to terms with the unbearable kernel of the real, a subject must then not only renounce all imaginary ideals and

[288] Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement*, p. 471.
[289] Ibid., p. 311.
[290] Ibid., pp. 471 and 26.

symbolic mandates, but also assume the essential inconsistency of the symbolic order itself. The end of analysis, in other words, lies not just in accepting the divided and alienated nature of the subject as one's positive condition, but in acknowledging that what divides the subject is nothing but the lack that keeps the symbolic order from ever achieving any meaningful closure. The pass in psychoanalysis displaces the bar, so to speak, back and forth between the divided subject $ and the symbolic order which then in turn appears to be marked by the signifier of lack S(∅). The event, in this case, would be like a symptomatic slippage which exposes the fact that the symbolic order itself is incomplete—unable as much as the subject is to offer any answer to the abysmal question of the other's desire: *Che vuoi?* The subject "is" nothing but the empty place opened up in the structure by the very failure to answer this founding question. Recognition of this ineradicable void in the midst of the structure would then already coincide with the traumatic truth itself—if, that is, there exists such a thing as a truth of the real in psychoanalysis, which would have to be more than its passing acknowledgement.

Žižek, for example, describes this passage as a kind of ideological anamorphosis, or change of perspective, whereby that which previously served as an unshakable guarantee of meaningfulness all of a sudden appears merely to cover a gaping chasm of nonsense. The sole task of the subject, then, lies in the purely formal act of conversion which assumes this immediate speculative identity between absolute power and utter impotence, by recognizing the point where the dazzling plenitude of being flips over to reveal its morbid foundation in a thing-like nothingness. Typically, what at first appears to be a purely epistemological obstacle, due to the subject's limited capacities as compared to the ungraspable power of some truly infinite entity, from a slightly different perspective—by looking awry at what is usually overlooked—turns out to be an essential ontological feature, inherent to the blocked structure of being itself. "Where it was, I shall come into being": for a subject, the formal act of conversion thus consists in somehow "becoming" what one always already "was" beforehand, namely, the very gap or empty place that impedes the symbolic order to attain full closure. All that happens has already taken place; there is nothing new under the sun, except for the formal gesture by which a subject assumes responsibility for what is happening anyway. "The 'subject' is precisely a name for this 'empty gesture' which changes nothing at the level of positive content (at this level, everything has already happened) but must nevertheless be added for the 'content' itself

to achieve its full effectivity," as Žižek concludes in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*: "The only difference lies in a certain change of perspective, in a certain turn through which what was a moment ago experienced as an obstacle, as an impediment, proves itself to be a positive condition."[291] The subject thus not only poses that what seems to be presupposed as something objectively given is already his or her own doing, but the activity of pure self-positing must in turn be presupposed as being split from within by an insurmountable deadlock which is not external but immanent to its very essence. In a formal turnabout or instantaneous flip over, devoid of any actual change, the subject's pass would thus immediately coincide with the recognition of the impasse of the structure of being itself, that is to say, the gap between the real and its impossible symbolization.

The essence of truth, from this psychoanalytical perspective, is not a process so much as a brief traumatic encounter, or illuminating shock, in the midst of common everyday reality. This interpretation thus fails to understand the procedure whereby a truth is not something we chance upon in a slight change of perspective but something that is actively produced, through a step-by-step intervention, after an event. Žižek, for instance, mistakenly sums up Badiou's philosophy by speaking repeatedly of the miracle of a "Truth-Event."[292] Even regardless of the awkward large capitals, this syncopated and apocryphal expression collapses into an instantaneous act what is in reality an ongoing and impure procedure, which from a singular event leads to a generic truth by way of a forced return upon the initial situation. Whereas for Žižek, the empty place of the real that is impossible to symbolize is somehow already the act of truth itself, for Badiou a truth comes about only by forcing the real and by displacing the empty place, so as to make the impossible possible. "Every truth is post-evental," Badiou writes in *Manifesto for Philosophy*, so that the event which in a sudden flash reveals the void of a given situation cannot itself already be the truth of this situation—hence the need for a militant figure of fidelity such as the one studied in *Saint Paul*: "Fidelity to the declaration is crucial, because truth is a process, and not an illumination."[293]

Badiou's *Being and Event*, however, may still give the false impression that a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective is the proper way to articulate the impasse of being with the pass of the subject. I would

[291] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 221 and 176.
[292] Žižek, "The Politics of Truth," in *The Ticklish Subject*, passim.
[293] Badiou, *Manifeste pour la philosophie* p. 89, and Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 16.

suggest therefore that we reread this book's central thesis from the point of view of Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*, which also argues that from the real as the impasse of formalization we should be able to grasp formalization as the forceful passing of the real. The earlier work indeed seems to me much more effective in explaining where exactly this thesis imposes a vital step beyond psychoanalysis—a step which the later work barely signals in the title of its final part: "Forcing: Truth and Subject. Beyond Lacan."[294]

Following the ontological orientation of *Being and Event*, the debate with psychoanalysis indeed depends purely on the *location* of the void: whether on the side of the subject as lack (for Lacan) or on the side of being as empty set (for Badiou). If the polemic were defined only in these terms, the answer on behalf of psychoanalysis could still consist in locating an ever more fundamental lack in the midst of the structure of being—before identifying the subject itself with this empty place, as would be the case for Žižek. In fact, the irrefutable radicality of this prior lack or void, as revealed in the ontological impasse, can then be used as an antiphilosophical rebuttal against any given subject's imaginary confidence and dogmatic mastery over a truth without precedent.

Following the algebraic and topological articulation of *Theory of the Subject*, however, the irreducible difference with regard to psychoanalysis lies rather in what *happens* near the borders of the void which will become the site of a possible event: whether a vanishing apparition of the real as absent cause (for Lacan) or a forceful transformation of the real into a consistent truth (for Badiou). The polemic, then, can no longer be reduced to the simple location of lack but instead resides in the inescapable choice between lack and destruction, between a vanishing cause and a symptomatic torsion, or between the determining placement of an empty space and the displacement of the excessive power of determination itself. Seen from this earlier point of view, any purely formal act of conversion or speculative judgment, which makes the subject's pass immediately transitive to an impasse of the structure, in fact would turn out to be as yet devoid of truth. What would be needed for a rare generic truth to emerge, in addition to this initial act of subjectivation, is the forcing of the situation and the gradual sequencing

[294] Badiou, "Le forçage: vérité et sujet. Au-delà de Lacan," in *L'Être et l'événement*, pp. 427-475. Part of this meditation has been translated into English as "Descartes/Lacan," in *UMBR(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* 1 (1996):13-17. In the same issue, see also the excellent introductions to Badiou's work by Sam Gillespie and Bruce Fink.

of a subjective process by which the structure is actually transformed from the point of its breakdown.

Badiou's *Being and Event* in this sense can be said to be both more encompassing and more limited than his *Theory of the Subject*. More encompassing, insofar as the latter starts from the given that there is subjectivity, whereas the former work uses the deductive power of mathematics to give the subject its substructure in ontology. And more limited, insofar as the ontological definition of being, event, truth, and subject risks to remain caught in a structural dialectic which in reality is only half of the picture. By this I mean that from the strict point of view of what can be said about being, the subject of truth is defined by a lack of being, rather than by the process of giving being to this very lack. The ontological discourse, in other words, gives us the pure algebra of the subject without elaborating the topology of its purification; no theory of the subject can be conceived, though, without a constitutive dimension of impurity. From a set-theoretical perspective, the event can be seen as a vanishing mediator of the void—a revelation of the unpresentable empty set, or non-place, which founds the presentation of each and every placement. Mallarmé, not surprisingly, re-emerges in the later work as the poet-thinker of the event of the event at its purest. From the older logical or topological perspective, however, the doctrine of structural causality is incapable of giving consistency to the actual making of a new truth. What is more, the subject can then no longer be reduced to a unique figure of fidelity in connection with the name of the vanished event, but must be unfolded according to the various figures of a twisted subjective space. In short, if *Theory of the Subject* gives us an intricate subjective configuration without much further ontological support, then the systematic metamathematical inquiry gives us only a one-dimensional figure of the subject, transitive to the structure, in *Being and Event*. These limitations not only give rise to certain misunderstandings in the reception of this last work but also constitute the main impetus behind the current continuation of its overall project.

Since the publication of *Being and Event* and in an implicit return to *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou has thus formulated a triple self-criticism, a more complete answer to which will eventually become the positive table of contents of his *Logics of Worlds*.[295]

[295] For a good summary of this recent self-criticism, see Badiou's Preface to the Spanish edition of *L'Être et l'événement* as *El ser y el acontecimiento*, trans. Raúl J. Cerdeiras, Alejandro A. Cerletti and Nilda Prados (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 1999), pp. 5-8.

1. All the stuff of a given situation cannot be fully accounted for in the sole terms of belonging, which, as we saw, is the only verb for the ontological discourse. The key to understand the forthcoming work then lies in the greater attention given to the question not only of being but also of appearing, or being-there. This logical and topological emphasis will require a remodelling of the concept of the situation, particularly through the theory of categories as opposed to the strictly ontological purview of axiomatic set theory. Astonishingly, this current reorientation is already announced in the author's very first review article more than thirty years ago. Badiou indeed concludes his analysis of Althusser by pinpointing the problem of how to define that to which the action of a structure is applied. "There must exist a previous formal discipline, which I would be tempted to call the *theory of historical sets*, which contains *at least* the protocols of donation of the pure multiples onto which the structures are progressively constructed," Badiou writes: "This discipline, which is closely tied in its complete development to the mathematics of set theory, no doubt exceeds the simple donation of a procedure of *belonging*, or of an inaugural system of empty differences."[296] This previous discipline is none other than the theory of categories, which as an expansion of the set theory of *Being and Event* will form the basis for Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*. Situations are then constructed no longer purely on the grounds of a relation of being as belonging and the impasse of inclusion, but in terms of networks, trajectories, and paths, which together give topological coherence to a universe of appearing, or a world. This is the logic of appearing anticipated in the small unpublished booklet, *Being-There*, which will no doubt reappear as part of *Logics of Worlds.*

2. The ontological perspective risks to define the event exclusively in terms of a sovereign and punctual irruption of self-belonging. Badiou's recent work, however, underscores ever more clearly to which extent the truth of an event not only constitutes a vanishing apparition of the void of being, but also sets off a regime of consequences to which the belaboring of a truth gives way in a forced return to the situation of departure. In addition to the ontological definition of the event, therefore, we must consider its logical aftermath, following the inferences that are the lasting result of the work of the subject. The event not only is a punctual and self-belonging encounter but also opens up a process of successive implications; it surely emerges in a sudden flash but its traces must also be elaborated according to a duration that is its own. Without such a

[296] Badiou, "Le (re)commencement du matérialisme dialectique," p. 461.

process, the event may indeed induce comparisons with the notion of the act in psychoanalysis, as in the most recent works of Žižek or Alenka Zupančič.[297] Since the polemic in *Theory of the Subject* and its succinct but potentially misleading summary in *Being and Event*, Badiou has been relentless in his effort to counter this temptation, not by ignoring its insights but by closely examining its most forceful inner mechanisms, for example, in the unpublished seminar on *Lacanian Antiphilosophy*.

3. The definition of the subject that corresponds to the ontological perspective of the event is also one-sided. It only includes the effects of fidelity, without considering how any inquiry into the truth of a situation encounters other subjective figures as well, such as those of reaction or denial. It is precisely in this sense that *Being and Event* is more limited than *Theory of the Subject*, where the subject is defined in terms both of the act of subjectivation and of the subjective process in which at least four figures are tied in a knot: anxiety, the superego, courage, and justice. Badiou's *Logics of Worlds* will pick up on this older analysis from the point of view of the different conditions of truth, in order to distinguish how for each one of these conditions the act of subjectivation likewise opens up a subjective space configured by the complex interplay between the figure of fidelity and its obscure or reactive counterparts. Part of this ongoing investigation can be appreciated in the unpublished seminar *Axiomatic Theory of the Subject*.

In this seminar Badiou initially defines the act of subjectivation as a hysterical figure, capable of detaching an opening statement from the event itself, which as such disappears no sooner than it appears. From the event, ontologically defined in terms of self-belonging, $E \in E$, the hysterical act of subjectivation thus consists no longer just in naming the void but in extracting or detaching an indispensable first statement as true: $E \rightarrow p$. A declaration of love is no doubt the simplest example of such an operation of detachment. This first figure would be hysterical insofar as the subject of the statement somehow remains personally

[297] See my articles "The Žižekian Act" and "Ethics after Lacan: Act or Event?" (forthcoming). Lacan, incidentally, began to develop his own understanding of the act in his seminar *L'acte psychanalytique*, which was interrupted due to the events of May '68 in France. A comparison between Žižek and Badiou's thečory of the subject, I should add, is seriously hindered by terminological matters—with Žižek calling "subject" (of lack) and "subjectivation" (as interpellation) what for Badiou would be more akin, respectively, to (evanescent, hysterical) "act of subjectivation" and (consistent, masterly) "subjective process." Invoking opposite reasons yet using the same terms, each thinker could thus accuse the other for remaining at the level of mere subjectivation!

implicated in the statement itself, as in the Lacanian formula: "Me, the truth, I speak."[298] Every subject of a truth process, in this sense, would first emerge by being hysterical. To derive a regime of consequences from this initial statement and thus to give consistency to a universalizable truth about the entire situation in which the event took place, a masterly figure is then required through which a series of further statements can be inferred from the first one that are no longer tied to the particular person of the speaking subject. This inferential process follows the simple rules of logical implication: given p, if $p \rightarrow q$, then q. While the point of emergence of a new truth is always caught in a hysterical scheme, the operations of the master name the figure of consequent fidelity. Mastery and hysteria would thus appear to be co-dependent in their mirroring relationship—with both being required before a truth can come into existence. In fact, if the implicated person of the hysterical act of enunciation is the unconscious to be repressed beneath the bar of the mastery of consequences, then we can also say that, vice-versa, the unconscious of the hysterical figure is a regime of mastered inferences. Or perhaps the hysterical figure does not "have" an unconscious but somehow "is" the unconscious. The act of subjectivation is necessary but also strictly speaking inconsequential, yet at the same time the enthralling intensity of the hysterical speech act can always be put forward to denigrate and mock the meagre outcome of the master's inferences. This is how the hysteric, like any good antiphilosopher who is never far removed from this figure, can remind the master of the need always to begin anew.

Badiou himself rather quickly abandons the twin names—though not the processes—of the master and the hysteric so as to avoid any confusion with the theory of four discourses in Lacanian psychoanalysis. The last two figures of reaction and obscurantism in Badiou's new axiomatic theory of the subject also correspond only vaguely to Lacan's university discourse and the discourse of the analyst. A subjective figure, rather, becomes reactive whenever the logical outcome of a truth process in retrospect is considered to be indifferent as compared to the event that caused it. This event might as well not have taken place and the result would still be exactly the same: no matter if p or not-p $\rightarrow$ q. In a strangely perverse argument, the fact that an event has taken place with unmistakable consequences is thus denied. The subjective support of truth is then no longer split by an emergent speech act nor barred by the labour

[298] Badiou, *Théorie axiomatique du sujet*, seminars of December 4, 1996 and January 9, 1997.

of consequences but purely and simply obliterated. In a certain sense, the reactive figure re-enacts the "rightist" deviation of the dialectical process discussed above, whereas the obscure figure is enraptured by a "leftist" solution, which turns the event from an singular condition into a radical and unattainable origin that from times immemorial precedes and overwhelms the search for a specific truth in the present. Knowledge of this transcendent origin is then simply imposed and transmitted, instead of being actually detached, which means forever to obscure the possibility that an unprecedented regime of consequences can be initiated in the here and now by a rare temporal act of subjectivation. In this denegation of all present temporality, the obscure figure is fundamentally a figure of death. Is it then a coincidence that Badiou's seminar parts ways with the Lacanian theory of four discourses precisely at this point where the obscure figure is discussed? Should we not consider the passing acknowledgement of sexual difference, of desire and the death drive, or, in a politicised reading, the recognition of the real kernel of social antagonism, as such a radical and obscene absolutely prior origin, which always already threatens to render impossible—or merely imaginary and naive—the consequent belabouring of a new and unheard-of truth? At this point I leave it up to the reader to decide how in this light we might not only reframe the criticisms raised by someone like Žižek but also interpret the latter's thought from within the theory of the subject as it is currently being reworked by Badiou.

For Badiou, in the final instance, everything revolves around the simple question: how does true change occur in a given situation? Not only: what is being, or what is the event? But: what truly happens *between* ordinary configurations of the multiple of being and their supplementation by an unforeseeable event? Badiou's principal concern, in my view, is not with a pristine opposition but with the impure difference of being and event, while the subject is that which operates in the equivocal space of this in-between. His critics are mostly one-sided, if not mistaken, in charging his philosophy with dogmatism or absolutism for relying on a sovereign divide separating being from event, or with decisionism for defining the event in terms of a strict self-belonging. Whenever Badiou establishes such a divide as that between truth and knowledge, or between being and event, these should not be taken as two already separate dimensions or spheres which only his critics transcribe with large capitals, but from the point of a subjective intervention they stand as the extremes of a ongoing process of detachment and scission. Despite a recurrent temptation by Mallarmé's wager, Badiou is rarely

taken in by the absolute purity of truth as a voluntaristic and self-constituent decision in the radical void of the undecidable. To the contrary, much of his philosophical work is guided by the hypothesis that the oppositions between being and event and between structure and subject, far from constituting in turn a structural given that would merely have to be recognized, hinge on the rare contingency of a process, an intervention, a labour. Truth as an impure and ongoing process actively destroys the premise of a simple face-off, no matter how heroic or melancholy, between an established order of being and the untainted novelty of an event. Was this not, after all, the harsh subject lesson to be drawn from the events of May '68 according to Badiou himself?

Being and Event in this respect admittedly proves itself to be much less decisive and insightful, or rather, as a treatise in ontology it is by necessity much more purified and decisionistic than *Theory of the Subject* or the forthcoming *Logics of Worlds*. The impure and equivocal nature of all truth processes, which is not easily grasped in the algebraic science of being as being, is by contrast inseparable from any topological understanding of the subject. When the ontological inquiry is reread from the point of view of the older subject theory, even Badiou's later philosophy begins to revolve around two key concepts—the site of the event and the forcing of truth—which his critics and commentators tend to ignore but which in fact sum up his contribution to the forgotten tradition of dialectical materialism. From the ontological view, the matheme of the event indeed is $E_x = \{x \in X, E_x\}$, that is, not just a pure event of self-belonging $E \in E$ cut off from the situation S but an event *for* this situation, E_x, as determined by the site $X \in S$. There is little doubt in my eyes that the idea of the evental site is a continuation, in ontology, of the search for a dialectic in which every term or multiple, even the otherwise unfounded multiple of the event, is marked by the structure of assigned spaces in which this multiple is placed. Otherwise, the ontological discourse risks almost literally to lead us back to the false structural or creationist scheme of P vs. A, insofar as the event constitutes a pure vanishing insurrection of the void which founds the structure of being and is revealed in the immeasurable excess of $p(\alpha) > \alpha$. Even Badiou's later thought remains dialectical, despite the mathematical turn, in rejecting such stark opposition between being and event, in favour of the specific site through which an event is anchored in the ontological deadlock of a situation that only a rare subjective intervention can unlock. An event is not pure novelty and insurrection but is tributary to a situation by virtue of its specific site.

A subject's intervention, moreover, cannot consist merely in showing or recognizing the traumatic impossibility around which the situation as a whole is structured. If such were to be the case, the structural dialectic would remain profoundly idealist—its operation delivering at most a radical, arch-aesthetic or arch-political act that either renders visible the unbearable anxiety of the real itself, or ultimately calls upon the annihilation of the entire symbolic order in a mimicry of the revolutionary break, which can then perfectly well be illustrated with examples drawn from Antigone to Hollywood. Badiou's thought, by contrast, seeks to be both dialectical and materialist in understanding the production of a new truth as the torsion, or forcing, of the entire situation from the precise point of a generic truth, as if the latter had already been added successfully onto the resources of knowledge available in this situation itself. Without such a process, the real that resists symbolization will only have been the site of a possible truth but it is not already the given truth of the situation itself; in fact, the real in this case would merely indicate a structural impossibility and not a evental site whereby the regular structure of a situation becomes historicized. The subject, finally, is a material process of making or doing, which requires a putting to work of an event. It does not come to coincide, in a purely formal act of conversion, with the impasse of the structure as with the real kernel of its own impossibility—through the traumatic symptom with which a subject can only identify after traversing the ideological fantasy. At best, to acknowledge this radical impasse, as in the case of antagonism for the political philosophy of radical democracy which I have discussed elsewhere, is still only the inaugural act of subjectivation bereft of any subjective process; at worst, it is actually that which forever blocks and obscures the consequential elaboration of a new truth. For Badiou, a subject emerges only by opening a passage, in a truly arduous production of novelty, through the impasse—forcing the structure precisely there where a lack is found, so as to make generically possible that which the state of the situation would rather confine to an absurd impossibility. In a famous Chinese saying, this means nothing if not to bring the new out of the old. To force a new consistent truth out of the old order of things from the point where our knowledge of the latter is found wanting.

Badiou's overall philosophy can then be read as an untimely recommencement of dialectical materialism in the sense in which the latter would be a philosophy not of pure and absolute beginnings but of impure and painstaking recommencements. It is a thought of change situated in whatever can be said of being as pure multiple yet

supplemented by the irruption of an event, the truth of which emerges not in a unique and instantaneous vanishing act that would be the event itself, but rather after the event in an ongoing process of fits and starts, of destructions and recompositions, of backlashes and resurrections, of fidelity and the extreme fallout of reaction and obscurantism. An event is a sudden commencement but only a recommencement produces the truth of this event. Badiou's philosophy could thus be said to obey not one but two ethical imperatives: "Never give up on one's desire!" but also "Always continue!" that is, "Always rebegin!" As he says in his latest seminar on the theory of the subject: "The ethical would be to rebegin rather than to continue."[299] According to a thoroughly reworked materialist dialectic, then, always to rebegin means for a subject to keep drawing consequences of events that take place in emancipatory politics, artistic experiments, scientific discoveries, and loving encounters; to force these events in return to come to bear generically on the current situation; and thus to bring a precarious regime of truth, as a small fragment of immortality, out of our finite encyclopaedias of available knowledge. Far from being a masterly or dogmatic discourse, philosophy then only seeks within its own domain to register the effects of these truths that are produced elsewhere, behind the philosopher's back, and to invent a conceptual space of compossibility in which to shelter them.

[299] Ibid., p. 83. See also Badiou, *L'Ethique*, pp. 70 and 78. In fact, the figure of (re)commencement is a constant throughout Badiou's work. See, for example, the interview with Natacha Michel about *Théorie du sujet*, "Re-naissance de la philosophie," *Le Perroquet* 6 (1982): 1, 8-10; and 13-14 (1982): 1, 10-13; or the article about Marxism which anticipates Badiou's arguments in *Peut-on penser la politique?*, "La figure du (re)commencement," *Le Perroquet* 42 (1984): 1, 8-9.

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Towards a Material Imaginary: Bataille, Nonlogical Difference, and the Language of Base Materialism

F. SCOTT SCRIBNER

The notion of base materialism stands as a key element in Bataille's attempt to re-think the ground of community. Base materialism, of course, was developed as a critique of both the natural and logical aspects of Marxian dialectical materialism. In this spirit, commentators like Denis Hollier have rightly emphasized the abject character of matter in its power to refute or call into question the economies of logic, rationality, and science.[300] Such approaches, however, have largely failed to develop perhaps the most important – and, albeit the most obscure – aspect of Bataille's notion of materiality for community: the idea that matter itself stands as a primordial psycho-social language.

Through a close reading of essays like "The Pineal Eye" and "The Language of Flowers," I will argue that Bataille articulates the notion of base materialism not merely as a critique of the economy of logic, but, perhaps more fundamentally, in order to develop a material imaginary that would give life, direction, and meaning (*sens*) to community.[301] While in "The Language of Flowers," for instance, Bataille will speak of the inherent meaning of a flower in terms of "an obscure vegetal resolution," suggesting that the materiality of matter stands as limit concept between matter and language, I will argue, his most important

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[300] Denis Hollier, "The Dualist Materialism of George Bataille," *Yale French Studies*, 78: 124-139 (1990).

[301] Citations from Bataille our taken from the following English translation: *George Bataille: Visions of Excess, Selected Writings 1927-1939*, trans. Stoekl, Lovitt, and Leslie, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). Hereafter abbreviated as VE. The term 'material imaginary is described in detail in the first section.

term for developing something akin to a material imaginary (at the heart of matter) is articulated through the notion of "nonlogical difference". And although this obscure term of "nonlogical difference" has been largely neglected by Bataille scholars, I will show, through an exposition and analysis of this term, that it remains key to understanding matter in terms of a material imaginary. It thus remains key to properly understanding the significance of the materiality of matter in the constitution of community. And ultimately, through an exposition of Bataille's insistence on the elision of matter and meaning – for instance, through his account of the inherent meaning of matter in "The Language of Flowers" and his idea of nonlogical difference, I will suggest that something like a material imaginary is at work in his attempt to develop a psycho-social language of matter. And just what I mean by a material imaginary is explained in the explained in the following section.

1. The Hypothesis of a Material Imaginary

Admittedly, the phrase "material imaginary" is an unusual term; but it is one, I believe, – however insufficient – that best describes Bataille's unique account of the materiality of matter in terms of a psycho-social language. In an experimental character, it is posed as a tentative hypothesis and heuristic device.

The term imaginary is borrowed from J. Lacan, the French psychoanalyst and cofounder of *The College of Sociology*.[302] Now Lacan offers three notoriously difficult and obscure terms to describe the topology of desire: the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary. In briefest possible terms: the symbolic is that order represented by the law of language and culture. It is the mediating third term in the dynamic between self and other, self and thing. The real, by contrast, is identified as the impossible: it is the truth of desire, represented in the symbolic as lack.[303] Now the imaginary is akin to the Freudian *imago*; it refers to the register of conscious and unconscious images, and defines an *immediate*

[302] Cited in "A Note on the Foundation of a College of Sociology," in *The College of Sociology*, ed. Denis Hollier, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 4.
[303] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), x.

relation between self and thing in which there is "a sort of coalescence between signifier and signified".[304]

It is not necessary to grasp these terms in detail, however, because my description of Bataille's quest after the materiality of language as a material imaginary is already a transfiguration and elision of this Lacanian schema. What I am suggesting is that while Lacan intends to make a sharp distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary, Bataille's approach to language through base materialism refuses such a distinction in order to emphasize that our very autochthonous relation to the world as meaningful arises perhaps precisely in the dissolution or conflation of these two orders.[305]

Now in view of the previous Lacanian description of the imaginary in terms of the collapse of the signifier and signified, it is striking that this elision of meaning and thing mirrors Bataille's own account of the inherent meaning of matter (or, again, the elision of matter and meaning). *And it is from this juncture, from this moment of collapse between meaning and thing, in the realm of the image, specifically the image of destiny, that I employ the term material imaginary to describe Bataille's project*. Thus, Bataille insists, beyond any empiricism, it is through our encounter with the raw physical immediacy of the world that we give ourselves over to destiny and to the seductive images of chance.[306] Here his work on community and myth acknowledges the importance of base materialism and the sacrificial horror of the material real as a mechanism for overthrowing the given symbolic order, thereby fostering a dream – perhaps the dream-like image of a material imaginary, in which the destiny of this "myth-lie" is transformed in to a "*living* myth".[307] This work of revealing the immanent language of matter, however, must begin with a critique of traditional materialism.

2. The Critique of Traditional Materialism

[304] Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 210.

[305] Of course, for psycho-analysis the fall into the imaginary is a problem. As Anika Lemaire explains, the neurotics problem is "a loss of the symbolic reference" and this "causes him to relapse to the level of the imaginary". Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. David Macey (New York: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1977), 227.

[306] As Bataille readily acknowledges, "(A)cts undertaken in the pursuit of seductive images of chance are the only ones that respond to the need to live like a flame" (VE, 231).

[307] VE, 231.

Against the utopian politics of idealism – that is imperialism or fascism – Bataille posits a geological revolution in the materialist bowels of the earth. The vile and base reality of the earth is the ground for any metamorphosis of meaning, including the jabber of idealism. Thus any recourse to images is: "borrowed from the most concrete of contradictions; it is reality on the material order, human physiology that comes into play".[308] The attempt to envision community demands a rethinking of the current symbolic order through a return to its generative source in matter. One might consequently deduce then, that an imaginary closest to the material is most real. But how does one reach the real, and what could 'real' ever mean?[309] This, of course, is the fundamental question of materiality.

The constitution of mythic narratives through the practice of ritual is not simply the positing of another paradigm, but a sacrificial practice which ruptures the human and its identity – a rupture which opens upon a materiality. Materiality for Bataille is the opening towards a primordial, real order. He clarifies: "(t)he word materialism is used ... to designate the direct interpretation ... of raw phenomena ...".[310]

While Bataille's view might seem similar to Marxian materialism, or at least Engel's view of material nature in *Anti-Duhrung*, Bataille expresses a need to clearly distance himself from Engels by marking the failures of natural materialism.[311] Engels is simply a point of departure. For Bataille the problem is clear: "The substitution of nature for logic is only the Scylla and Charybdis of post-Hegelian philosophy".[312] In fact Bataille understands nature in 'natural materialism' as a materialist ontology, a form of idealism not significantly different from logic itself. Both of these substitutions are merely incarnations of 'identity logic'.

The question then is how one might think materialism and its concomitant dialectic apart from the incantations of identity logic. As a tentative sketch, which intends primarily to mark a difference between Bataille and the tradition he attempts to reconfigure, I suggest that Bataille's advance first be posed precisely in the language of traditional dialectics. Bataille's notion of materiality, in distinction from the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic, might be posed as a non-negative

[308] Ibid., 36.
[309] Here I am using the word "real" in the quotidian, rather than Lacanian sense.
[310] VE, 16; my italics.
[311] See VE, "The Critique of the Foundations of the Hegelian Dialectic".
[312] Ibid., 107.

dialectical materialism; a dialectic of positivity which abandons the determination of speculative dialectic and speculative knowing; a dialectic where the "thinginess" of language, that is language's materiality, becomes the impetus toward which we give ourselves over to destiny. Materiality is a form of positivity: its meaning is not predicated on a determinate negation. In other words, it is not 'we' who negate 'being' in our determination of language, but possibly the inverse. Indeed, perhaps it is language which determines us in regard to its own material sensibility. Which is to say that the dialectic is only our own contradictions worked out and assuaged through our exposure to the 'material real'.

To avoid idealism Bataille thinks matter from the perspective of a psychological process in which one evades all recourse to authoritative foundations by submitting only to what is below oneself. He insists: "I submit entirely to what must be called matter since that exists outside myself and the idea and I do not admit that my reason is the limit of what I have said . . .".[313] Matter, in its radical alterity, is situated here not as a superior principle to a servile reason, but simply as what is other. When speaking of matter one cannot speak of the limits of reason. Matter is the unlimited. "Base matter is external and foreign to ideal human aspirations, and it refuses to allow itself to be reduced to the great ontological machines, resulting from these aspirations".[314] In other words, Bataille finds materiality efficacious in subverting all appeals to ontological authority. In this sense, materialism functions as a conduit of the psychological process of transgression: "it was a question of disconcerting the human spirit and idealism before something base, to the extent that one recognized the helplessness of superior principles".[315] It is often difficult to grasp the radicality of Bataille's materialism. Rather than simply returning to materialism as the given ontological ground upon which one reconfigures the symbolic orderings of exchange, capitalist and otherwise, Bataille moves to dismiss the circles of economic retribution by throwing out the ontological ground itself.

3. Transgressing the Symbolic Order:

[313] Ibid., 50-51.
[314] Ibid., 51.
[315] Ibid..

The Myth of the Pineal Eye

It is difficult to grasp the meaning and role of base materialism within Bataille's work without adequately understanding some basic tenets involved in his attempt to think the ground of community. Specifically, Bataille recognizes that a revolt against a corrupt state is merely to partake within the same logical paradigm, and in this sense can be understood (in his words) as little more than "impotent agitation". For Bataille, the only possibility of 'real action' is the radical reworking of the symbolic order. And it is this transformation of the symbolic order – made possible by base matter – that is the fundamental work of political transformation. This transfigurative work is the work of myth. Now myth for Bataille is not a mere fiction or fictioning which one self-consciously and wilfully creates. Rather, myth arises spontaneously out of a renunciation of the will, by giving oneself over to chance. And as we will see, it is out of this renunciation that a real encounter with materiality and base materialism becomes possible. Specifically, it is matter itself whose immanent material imaginary holds the possibility of making myth real by generating new symbolic forms essential for the revitalization of community.

For Bataille, an entire community which gives itself over to chance in sacrifice, to an abyss, or radical absence, opens upon the nothing which is the limit, the life and death of community itself. This moment of absolute loss stokes the crucible which destroys and reconfigures the symbolic forms of a community whose very vitality depends upon its rendering of these forms unto destiny. Thus, the play between the symbolic and its rendering unto destiny at the moment of loss is a differential moment that makes the imaginary of any community and its destiny real. In risk, through "the power of the naive unconscious" "seductive images" turn what was but a dream given over to chance, into the reality of living myth. This is seen most clearly in Bataille's story of the "Pineal Eye".

The developmental transitions within the "Pineal Eye" story elucidate the intent of Bataille's task. In brief he makes three moves: (a) he questions the validity of the standard symbolic order of science; (b) he suggests an alternate topological axis, namely the pineal eye, thereby providing us with the conditions for mythological representation; and finally (c) he fulfils them in a histrionic *reconte* of the "Pineal Eye" story.

The materiality which arises from Bataille's self-sacrificial language is clear at that point where all representation is ultimately destroyed. And in the story of the "Pineal Eye" such a moment is achieved in the enactment

of the gibbon sacrifice. Here, the anal orifice, the pineal eye, and the sun irrupt in an overlay of meanings, such that a profoundly vertiginous incontinence ensues, and language dissipates into an existential disgust. Bataille is quick to point out that: "the pineal gland remains only in a virtual state and can only attain meaning . . . with the help of *mythical confusion*, as if better *to make human nature a value foreign to its own reality, and thus to tie it to a spectral existence*".[316] One ties oneself to a spectral existence in the horror of an ek-static doubling in which the eye protrudes, swells, and implodes, mirroring the sun, "the celestial eye that it lacks". The human has torn itself open to the face of the universe. "The spectral image of this change of sign," the evolution and fragmentation of the pineal symbolic in its revelation of the imaginary, can only be "represented by a strange human nudity . . .".[317] Mythically lived ritual then, erupts into the spectral image of ek-static exposure; an exposure that is a profoundly visceral experience. The spectral existence which ties humans to something foreign, to their own nature is an immediacy, a material imaginary, a 'psycho-social' materialism whose real presence refutes the idealism of much symbolic interpretation. Thus, the literary aspect of the "Pineal Eye" and its dynamic narrative must be understood as only a means to the material real or what I have been calling the material imaginary.

In fact, Bataille goes to great lengths to distinguish his symbolic from the surrealist order. His diatribe against the surrealists essentially dismisses those who idealize base existence, those "refined literati" and "lovers of an accursed poetry" who engage in a "gratuitous literature" which reveals a purely fictive symbolic stripped of relevance.[318] Against the surrealist's "conspicuous literary exploitation" Bataille responds with the baseness and stinking decomposition of a material imaginary. The political and revolutionary character which gives impetus to Bataille's writing and to his desire to reconfigure our vision of the imaginary through this sacrificial writing becomes immediately clear. He retorts "what cannot move the heart of a ditch-digger already has the existence of shadows".[319] While the story of the "Pineal Eye" made clear the conditions necessary for the development of a new mythology through an ecstatic exposure to the material real, Bataille offers us a still more

[316] Ibid., 89; my italics.
[317] Ibid., 90.
[318] Ibid., 38-43.
[319] Ibid., 43.

developed sense of what he means by materiality and a material imaginary in his essay "The Language of Flowers".

4. The Psycho-Social Language of Matter: "The Language of Flowers"

Even without the machinations of ontological hierarchies Bataille understands matter to have a meaning – however obscure. This eccentric claim of his – that, *matter have meaning* apart from any ontological ground, is exhibited in his essay "The Language of Flowers". Here matter's significance is conceived as an "obscure vegetal resolution". This materiality to which one is exposed to in chance must be understood at the level of a primordial glimpse at the meaning of the material real.

In this essay on flowers a strange genealogical and possibly mythic task traces abstract meanings to their immanent material forms. Bataille's clearest example is that "love can be posited from the outset as the natural function of the flower".[320] The flower's symbolic quality is due to a 'distinct property'. The flower does not appear, signify or represent love. "… [I]t is to flowers that one is tempted to attribute the strange privilege of revealing the presence of love".[321] Bataille's material imaginary relates our being to nature through a primordial psycho-social association. Bataille is insistent that a red rose, by its very materiality, signifies love.[322] The flower's "obscure vegetal resolution", its primordial material imaginary, pre-originally links me to my world in autochthonous meaning – albeit an obscure meaning. In this sense, one might think of Bataille's work as the most radical of phenomenologies.[323]

Yet the ideality of beauty, whether attributed to women or flowers, dissolves into a "tragi-comic" "death-drama", in which the earth trumps the sky, and the high decomposes to base a materiality, signalling the failure of human ideas. The movement towards all ideals and ideality, as we shall see, irrupts in a decomposition and mutilation. Like the flower which rots in the sun and is returned to 'its original squalor' of the manure pile, so too man, in his vegetal nature reaches towards the ideal heights of the sun but erupts through his own organic limits in an explosive auto-mutilation. The death-drama of high/low,

[320] Ibid., 11.
[321] Ibid., 11.
[322] Ibid., 12.
[323] See for instance my paper "George Bataille and the Question of Phenomenology"

ideality/materiality is witnessed in the relation between Van Gogh, the sun, and his sunflowers, whose materiality, failing to reach an ideal luminosity, becomes a maddening materiality which erupts in Van Gogh's masochistic acts, in his drive toward baseness.[324] The innate materiality is a brutishness that one cannot escape. We might therefore say that each individual, and in turn community, is driven toward materiality.

The "Language of Flowers" reveals the sense in which material things, like flowers, innately possess a language, that is a meaning, in and of themselves. This materiality, however, as we noted, is not nature, substance, or essence, but it is forcefully caught up with a language – Bataille wants to say a psycho-social language. Still, such an immanent meaning is not one on the order of traditional language or discourse. The obscurity of Bataille's claim that the materiality of material nature exhibits an inherent autochthonous meaning, I believe, could be further illuminated by briefly turning to the work of Maurice Blanchot.

Blanchot works from the other side, from the opposite direction. Rather than showing that matter has an inherent meaning, as Bataille does, his claim is that language itself exhibits a materiality: Words themselves exhibit a certain materiality. He explains: "My hope is that the materiality of language, in the fact that words are things, too, are a kind of nature ...".[325] The positivity of the dialectic we had spoken of earlier derives itself precisely from *the fact* of materiality. While traditional language, as a determination, is a negation, materiality arises as a positivity from the ruin and impossibility of all negativity and negative dialectics. Blanchot further clarifies the positivity of materiality:

> Just now the reality of words was an obstacle. Now, it is my only chance. A name ceases to be the ephemeral passing of non-existence and becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence; language abandoning the sense, the meaning which was all it wanted to be, tries to become senseless. Everything physical takes precedence: rhythm, weight, mass, shape . . .. Yes happily language is a thing: it is a written thing, a bit of bark, a sliver of rock ... The word acts *not* as an ideal force but as an obscure

[324] VE, 63.
[325] Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus,* trans. Davis (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1981), 46.

> power, as an incantation that coerces things, makes them really present outside themselves.[326]

The materiality of the word for Blanchot is an "obscure power" just as the materiality of the 'flower' for Bataille is an "obscure vegetal resolution". Here, we cannot readily define the limit of the interstices of word and thing, nor can we even delimit the sense in which word is not thing nor thing itself a language. Blanchot's claim that words exhibit a materiality, I hope, at minimum, helped fortify Bataille's assertion – from the other direction – that the materiality of matter exhibits an inherent psycho-social language, so that each approach together works from its respective direction to show the insufficiency of the distinction of word and thing, language and matter. I believe, one significant but overlooked aspect of Bataille's attempt to develop a material imaginary – an imaginary at the interstices of word and thing – lay in the notion of nonlogical difference. And it is to this term to which we now turn.

5. The Matter of Nonlogical Difference

Like the Heideggerean notion of ontological difference, or perhaps even more like the Derridean notion of sexual difference, Bataille offers us the idea of a "nonlogical difference": a difference which names that pre-original, material differentiation prior to human, logical, cognitive categories. In emphasizing that it is at the level of matter that community begins and ends, Bataille refers to nonlogical difference as follows. He writes:

> In this way the boundless refuse of activity pushes human plans – including those associated with economic operations – into the game of characterizing universal matter; matter, in fact can only be defined as the *nonlogical difference* that represents in relation to the economy of the universe what crime represents in relation to the law.[327]

Bataille warns us that incessant human action and planning demands matter's enframing as a universal, whereas matter should be opened to its own primordial material difference. Matter can only be thought

[326] Ibid.; my italics.
[327] VE, 129.

appropriately by acknowledging the necessity of a non-adequated approach to it: matter, in its most authentic sense, can only be experienced as a nonlogical difference. Like the idea of sexual difference, what if matter before the opening up of any dispersion resided already as a plurality, as differential at its core. What if this differential was a nonlogical difference, prior to any determination, a material imaginary; a material meaning that gave sociality a direction prior to any production.

The rupture of all economy by materiality itself, as if by crime, is that *nonlogical difference* which gives *sens* (sense/direction) to community beyond any immanence. First, Bataille's analogy that nonlogical difference's relation to the universe is akin to what crime represents to the law makes clear its transgressive character. One participates in the transgressive power of nonlogical difference through an embrace of base materialism and the experience of raw phenomena. The uncanny revulsion one experiences in and through base matter is the transgressive revolution in which the logical ordering of the symbolic and its law are over-turned before the primordial nonlogical differentiation inherent within matter that stands, as we saw in "The Language of Flowers", as something like a primitive psycho-social meaning. Now what is crucial to recognize here is that, as Foucault notes, sacrificial acts are transgressive passages which do not pass forever beyond the limit into silence, but rather mark and re-mark the limit of possibility of itself.[328] My point is that, recalling the Lacanian terms with which we began, Bataille's account of the materiality of language, characterized by nonlogical difference, can be identified with neither the logical differentiation of the symbolic nor by the real, as a passage into the silence of the impossible. In fact, thought on the model of ontological difference, nonlogical difference appears precisely in this tension between the given symbolic order and its utter annihilation. And it is in this space that base matter arises both as a catalyst to transgression in revulsion, and at that transgressive limit as a reply in the form of a primordial psycho-social language whose nonlogical differentiation offers the purest response to the ordering of the social short of the unity in the silence and death of the impossible.

Whether or not this place of primordial language defined by a nonlogical difference is described in any strict sense as a material imaginary is besides the point. As Bataille himself recognizes, the

[328] Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 29-52.

struggle and insufficiency of language is never clearer than in the act of naming. And what we have been trying to name is that transgressive space of language delineated by Bataille's base materialism and the materiality of language. To reiterate, the following elements first led me to suggest that something akin to a material imaginary was at work in Bataille's account of base matter in terms of a language: First, the autochthonous language of flowers offered a primordial psycho-social language anterior to symbolic differentiation and defined desire as a giving oneself over to chance and to the image of destiny; and second, our analysis of nonlogical difference helped further amplify and clarify the inherent meaning of matter revealed in its transgressive power. The transgressive capacity of base matter, whether as excrement, corpse, or rotting flower, holds out the possibility of an original, materially differentiated language in the fleeting transgressive passage between the logic of symbolic ordering and the silence of the impossible (the real); and it is at this point of tension, strung between death and the signifiers of everyday language, that Bataille situates his own account of language in terms of base materialism. While I hoped to have – at least in part – clarified Bataille's rather difficult and obscure project through an analysis of the language of flowers and his notion of nonlogical difference through the suggestive notion of a material imaginary, this term too, like all terms, remains insufficient, and we are left as always before the mute horror of base matter and the problem of naming.

Regrettably, this exploration can only end with the uneasy and experimental temperament with which it began. This project closes then not with a reiteration of our accomplishments that would be a sort of 'cashing out' of claims for which we would have no justification. Rather in trying to conceive the significance of materiality for community, following Bataille, I suggest that the force of base materialism resides not merely in its ecstatic power which gives one over to the impossible. But rather, in delimiting a materiality as a psycho-social force, as a materiality which offers us up the possibility of an original imaginary, Bataille seems to succeed where Husserl could only dream. What Bataille's dream offers us is an original, immediate meaning; an immanent directionality, mythic source, and political space for community; a language that is not yet a language, whose material utterance is silent, always already bound in a relation of non-relation with the impossible.

Pli 13 (2002), 219-228.

Peter Abelard's Stoic Ethics

Peter Abelard, *Collationes*, Edited and Translated by John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001)

JOHN SELLARS

Medieval philosophy rarely figures prominently in courses offered to students of philosophy. One of the impediments is not only a relative lack of readily available translations of primary texts but also adequate critical editions of the original texts upon which such translations may be based. The task of editing such a text involves all of the skills associated with editing a classical text – the examination of original manuscripts, an analysis of their relative merits as sources, and finally the collation and assessment of variant readings. The student of modern philosophy, concerned primarily with texts produced after the invention of printing, is rarely forced to confront such textual problems. By contrast, the student of ancient or medieval philosophy must first establish a trustworthy text from the surviving manuscript sources. Neither the effort involved, nor the importance of such work, should be underestimated. For how can one assess the philosophical interest or value of what a philosopher has written without first determining precisely what they wrote? And attention to the details of written language is, of course, vital when assessing a philosophical argument.[329] One could, of course, simply confine oneself to the history of philosophy since Gutenberg's introduction of movable type in the middle of the fifteenth century, but

[329]* Abbreviation: *PL* = *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844-55).
As just one example of the potential philosophical significance of minor textual variants, the transmitted texts of a passage in Diogenes Laertius 7.134 vary by a single letter, a privative '-'. Thus the text could say either that the Stoic principles (ρ χα) are corporeals (σ⌊ματα) or that they are incorporeals (σ⌊ματα). This obviously has considerable implications for the understanding of Stoic ontology.

that would be to ignore four fifths of the two and half thousand years of the history of Western philosophy and so to fall into a temporal parochialism of the worst sort. Students of philosophy should be grateful, then, when new critical and trustworthy editions of ancient and medieval texts become available. When those editions also include reliable modern English translations, philosophers have even more reason to acknowledge the debt they owe to those who do such essential work.

The new edition of Peter Abelard's *Collationes* published in the series 'Oxford Medieval Texts' is neither the first modern critical edition nor the first modern English translation.[330] Nevertheless it is most welcome, not only for supplying the Latin and English texts on facing pages, but also for the accompanying editorial material, including a substantial introduction filling around a hundred pages, a detailed analysis of the argument in the work, and all the indexes and concordances for which one could hope. The volume is a collaboration between John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi. Marenbon – author of the recent *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* [331] – is responsible for the Introduction and the translation; Orlandi is responsible for the preparation of the Latin text and the account of the manuscript tradition.

* * *

Peter Abelard is primarily remembered on two counts: first, his work as a logician and, second, his romance with Heloise which resulted not only in their famous correspondence but also in Abelard being castrated by her uncle.[332] He is not, however, so well known as a writer on ethics or

[330] See Peter Abelard, *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum*, ed. Rudolf Thomas (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1970); Peter Abelard, *Ethical Writings: 'Ethics or Know Thyself' and 'Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian'*, trans. Paul Vincent Spade (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).

[331] John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[332] Many of Abelard's works – including his letters, ethical works, and theological works – can be found in *PL* 178. His logical works – including his glosses on Porphyry, on Aristotle's *Categories*, and on Aristotle's *On Interpretation* – are gathered together in *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Bernhard Geyer, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 21 (Münster in Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919-33). Abelard's own account of his relationship with Heloise can be found in his autobiographical *Historia Calamitatum*, which can be found in *PL* 178 and is translated in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 57-106.

politics. Yet these are the central concerns of this work. The text survives in three principal manuscripts. The first, now in Vienna, dates from the end of the twelfth century; the second, in London, dates from the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century; the third, in Balliol College Oxford, is from the mid fourteenth century. The Viennese manuscript was discovered in 1827 and the text was first published – in an edition based upon that manuscript alone – in 1831.[333]

The title on the oldest of the manuscripts – the Viennese – is *Dialogus* (p. xxiii) and, as this manuscript formed the basis for the first printed edition, this has become the work's most common title, sometimes expanded to *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum*, 'Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian'. I would have preferred it if Marenbon and Orlandi had retained this more familiar title rather than use their alternative *Collationes*. Indeed, they themselves acknowledge that the work is "more commonly known" as *Dialogus* (p. xxii). Their preference for *Collationes* is based upon the use of this word within the text to refer to each of the two dialogues or conversations (pp. xxiii-xxiv). Of course, this is a matter of minor importance and merely a question of personal preference. However, here I shall continue to refer to the work as *Dialogus*, the title under which I have come to know this work.

* * *

If there is one feature essential to philosophy – that is, one feature common to all definitions of philosophy – then it is the rejection of unquestioned belief, opinion, or assumption in favour of rational analysis. The philosopher – however one might understand the function or purpose of philosophy – does not accept a proposition on unquestioned faith or authority. Rather, he subjects it to a rational examination. One of the reasons for the neglect of medieval philosophy may perhaps be the not completely unwarranted assumption that during this period philosophy was for the most part reduced to the status of a handmaiden to theology and thus rendered ineffectual. It is this very relationship between philosophy and religion – or reason and faith – that forms the central theme of the *Dialogus*.

The text is comprised of two *collationes* or *dialogi*, the first between a Philosopher and a Jew; the second between the same Philosopher and a

[333] *Petri Abaelardi Dialogus inter Philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, ed. F. H. Rheinwald (Berlin, 1831).

Christian. Abelard speaks in his own voice only in the 'Prefatio' where he recounts a dream in which the three characters appeared to him and asked him to act as an impartial referee for their dispute. It is interesting to note that although Abelard does not explicitly align himself with the Philosopher, nor does he align himself with the Christian. Abelard makes his Philosopher say that he – Abelard – is *said* to be a Christian (*qui Christianus diceris*), not that he *is* one (§ 3 = pp. 4-5). It is unclear, then, precisely where Abelard's own sympathies lie. Indeed, ideas found in Abelard's other works are placed into the mouths of all three participants (p. lxii). Yet traditionally it has been assumed that the Philosopher presents Abelard's own thoughts, thoughts prudently put into the mouth of a fictional character.

The Philosopher is the most important of the three characters, being the one who initiates the discussion into the authority of revealed law and the only one to appear in both dialogues. In each dialogue he examines critically the claims of authority made for revealed law by the Jew and the Christian. He is introduced as one who believes in a single God – but neither the same God as the Jew or the Christian – and as one who is content with natural law (*naturali lege contentus est*) rather than the laws recorded in sacred texts (§ 1 = pp. 2-3). As the work progresses Abelard puts into the mouth of the Philosopher ideas derived principally from Cicero and, in particular, Stoic ideas concerning the nature of virtue (p. xlv). Seneca is also drawn upon, as are Augustine's accounts of Stoic doctrines, and the Philosopher cites Cato – the famous Stoic sage – as an example of a moral role-model (§ 131 = pp. 142-43).[334] It is thus tempting to suggest that Abelard's Philosopher is a Stoic, or at least a philosopher heavily influenced by Stoicism (p. lii).[335] Of course, such a philosopher

[334] Other sources for Stoicism used by Abelard include Boethius' Latin commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (in *PL* 64; see Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 244-45). For further discussion see Michel Spanneut, *Permanence du Stoïcisme: De Zénon à Malraux* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973), pp. 186-208; Michael Lapidge, 'The Stoic Inheritance', in Peter Dronke, ed., *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 81-112.

[335] The Stoic doctrines that the Philosopher takes up are the unity of virtue, that virtue is the highest good (pp. lxviii-lxix), and the claim that there are no degrees in virtue (p. lxxii). In particular, he draws upon Cicero's accounts of Stoic ethics in *De Officiis* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (§ 98 = pp. 116-17). Abelard's own admiration for Stoicism can be seen in his references to Seneca in his correspondence with Heloise as the greatest teacher of morals (*PL* 178, 297 = *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, pp. 243-44) and in *Historia Calamitatum* as the greatest of the philosophers of the past (*PL* 178, 131 = *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, p. 72). Such admiration can also be found in the *Dialogus* itself (§ 81 = pp. 102-03) where the Philosopher describes

following a natural law based upon reason alone would not have existed in the early twelfth century and so Abelard's character is very much a fiction (p. l). The matter is complicated somewhat by the reference to the Philosopher as a descendent of Ishmael, suggesting that the character was based upon an Arabic philosopher (p. li). But perhaps this should be read simply as a gesture towards the fact that Islamic philosophy – also heavily indebted to ancient philosophical sources – was always clearly separated from theology. This would have given Abelard a contemporary model for a philosopher conceived independent of any religious affiliation, something presumably inconceivable in the Latin West. It is also worth noting that the Philosopher has little sympathy for his two opponents and no desire to effect a reconciliation with either of them. On the contrary, he dismisses the Jew as stupid and the Christian as mad (*Iudeos stultos, Christianos insanos* [§ 3 = pp. 4-5]).

Central to the Philosopher's examination of the claims to authority made by the Christian and the Jew is a distinction between natural law (*naturale ius*) and positive justice (*positiue iustitie* [§§ 133-34 = pp. 144-45]). This distinction may be understood as one between what is necessary and universal on the one hand and historically contingent on the other. The former is uncovered by reason; the latter usually relies upon written authority (p. lxxviii). Here Abelard draws upon Cicero's *De Inventione* (esp. 2.160-62). For Cicero, a law of nature (*naturae ius*) is not the product of opinion but rather something closer to an innate instinct, whereas customary law (*consuetudine ius*) is merely whatever has become a regular habit for a particular community. An example of an arbitrary positive law is punishment by castration, a topic no doubt close to Abelard given his own experience. The Philosopher challenges the status of religious practices such as Christian baptism and Jewish circumcision, denying their claims to be something more than merely culturally and historically contingent conventions (p. lxxix). The task of the philosopher, for Abelard, is to question the status of such practices – which are grounded only upon written authority – and to subject their standing to rational scrutiny. In this medieval philosophical text, then, philosophy is certainly no handmaiden to theology.

Indeed, it is the conception of the function of philosophy outlined by the Philosopher that perhaps illustrates Abelard's principal debt to Stoicism in the *Dialogus*. The Philosopher makes clear at the outset that his search for truth (*ueritas*) is not an end in itself but rather a preliminary for achieving the 'salvation of my soul' (*anime salutem me* [§ 11 = pp.

Seneca as the greatest teacher of morals (*maximus morum edificator*).

14-15]). Later, Abelard – perhaps unexpectedly given his fame as a logician – has his Philosopher argue that it is ethics that is the most important part of philosophy:

> For what does the study of grammar or logic or the other arts have to do with what needs to be investigated about true human happiness? They lie far below this peak nor do they have the strength to reach so high a summit (§ 68 = pp. 84-85).[336]

As he continues, the Philosopher argues that dialectic is indeed a handmaiden, but a handmaiden to ethics, not to theology.[337] The primary function for philosophy is the cultivation of happiness (*beatitudo*) and in order to achieve this the philosopher must call into question those unjustified religious laws that still continue to generate so much conflict and misery. Only a rational analysis of ethical principles, grounded upon an examination of nature, can bring any lasting happiness. This is the central claim made by Abelard in the *Dialogus*, albeit in the mouth of a fictional character.

* * *

The value of this new edition of the *Dialogus* is that it makes accessible an interesting yet neglected philosophical text by one of the most important medieval philosophers. That it includes both a critical edition of the text and a modern translation makes the volume both accessible to the general philosophical reader and invaluable to the specialist. More editions of medieval philosophical texts like this one will perhaps help to open up a substantial period in the history of philosophy that is not usually taught in departments of philosophy, let alone studied by many philosophers in any great detail.

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[336] *Quid enim ad studium gramatice uel dialetice seu ceterarum artium de uera hominis beatitudine uestiganda? Longe omnes inferius ab hac eminentia iacent nec ad tantum se attollere ualent fastigium.*

[337] Abelard expresses similar sentiments in his own voice in *Historia Calamitatum*. In particular he emphasises that for the ancient philosophers a certain way of life (*uita*) was more important than theoretical learning (*scientia*). See *PL* 178, 132 (= *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, pp. 72-73).

Pli 13 (2002), 225-243.

What's a Brain Supposed to Do?

Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

Alain Berthoz, *The Brain's Sense of Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, *What Makes Us Think?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

MICHAEL FERRER

Workers in the humanities have yet to fully confront the challenges and promise implied for their practices by the claims of the cognitive sciences.[338] Such an encounter is nearly inevitable today, though its effects are bound to be uneven, as is the case whenever writers of varying degrees of scientific competence and sympathy approach and make use of the latest theories. The ideal impact of these relatively new disciplines would be to help put an end to some of the sloppier ideas about cognition, language, and subjectivity which still hold court across the disciplines, rather than to furnish the agents of cultural studies with fashionable new catchwords to augment their shrunken vocabularies. However, it's too early to tell, and fruitless to speculate. Suffice it to say here that the ascendancy of cognitive science signals a sea change for the history of thought which philosophy, in particular, cannot afford to ignore, and to which the human sciences as a whole should come to pay close attention,

[338] I am using this category, here, as a somewhat illegitimate umbrella under which I include the disciplines which make up the cognitive sciences 'proper'—cognitive philosophy, …semantics, …psychology, etc.—and those which belong, more exactly, to the neurosciences.

if only to clarify the relevance of this enterprise for intellectual practice at large.

The reception and independent development of cognitive philosophy and neuroscience in France hold a unique importance in this regard. The methodology and experimental aims of French neuroscientists are fundamentally the same as those of their Anglo-American counter-parts; the philosophical lineage from which they are able to draw is, of course, very different. The positions endorsed by the writers whose work I review here situate the emerging problems of cognitive neuroscience at the hub of a number of convergent lines of inquiry, either ignored or openly ridiculed by analytic thinkers: German idealism; phenomenology; materialist ontology; theoretical biology; vitalism. What this situation reveals, almost casually, is an approach to the mind-brain problem that circumvents the dead ends of cognitivism to arrive at a broader theoretical forum in which to develop new questions, questions largely precluded by the predominance of analytic philosophies.

The reviews which follow are admittedly more or less partial, emphasizing the idea of the brain developed in each of the texts. I'll consider the books in what seems to me to be the most developmentally logical order, noting details of original publication along the way.

1. Cybernetics and the trouble with models

Jean-Pierre Dupuy's *The Mechanization of the Mind* [*Aux origines des sciences cognitives*, Paris: La Découverte, 1994] presents itself as a genealogy of cognitive science, in as literal a sense as is manageable. He describes the 'parentage' of cognitive science by cybernetics and characterizes the relationship of the former to the latter as that of a child anxious to overcome and forget its upbringing. Given this object of focus, the book manages to say almost as much about other, contiguous practices—information theory, systems theory, and the theory of self-organizing systems which developed out of second-order cybernetics—as it does about cognitive science per se. The organizing category here is that of 'subjectless processes'; Dupuy traces its influence, not only through the fields just mentioned, but also down the less obvious byways of structuralism, existentialism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In so doing, he lays the groundwork for any future evaluation of cognitive science that might hope to redress any of several 'missed opportunities,'

at the same time that he manages to narrow the gap in pedigree between Continental and analytic philosophies of mind.

This is accomplished almost in a single stroke, by recalling at the outset the *idée fixe* which occupied the architects of cybernetics. The rest of the book, as, indeed, the whole history of cybernetics, describes the working out of this single idea, namely that of the adequation of organisms and machines, and the additional, leveling equivalence with the models employed to represent both. Modeling, as Dupuy repeatedly points out, is not newly arrived to science with the advent of cybernetics. Rather, the innovations of the movement consist in this three-way parity, the formal authority of models over their referents, and the object which those models ultimately aim to explain, which is to say, the notion of 'aim' itself—in a quite literal sense. Before it was to adopt its futuristic moniker, cybernetics began as a clunkier 'theory of teleological mechanisms,' initially fashioned via an "analogy…between the conceptualization of anti-aircraft defense and the processes at work in the voluntary movement of a human subject" (45). Applied mathematician Norbert Wiener and several others elaborated the consequences of this analogy, in a groundbreaking article that presented what was essentially a new theory of signal processing. They relied on a handful of now familiar terms—homeostasis, feedback loop, input-output relays—to qualify the capacity of a system to adjust "the relationship it has established between input and output" (46) and orient its response to incoming stimuli accordingly.

This quasi-behaviorist position marks out the central feature of cybernetics: the equation of simulation with duplication. This works in two directions. First, it implies that "meaning [or purpose] is by its very nature counterfeit: its essence is confused with its appearance." As a result, "[t]o simulate this essence, for example by means of a model, is to remain true to it, since simulation amounts actually to duplicating it." (9) At the level of subjective processes, this entails an absolute *non-resemblance* between the directional content of identity and the responsive mechanisms which generate that apparent content. So it is that the central activity of symbol manipulation accomplished (theoretically) by a Turing machine could find itself eliminated by the more rigorous formalism of the 'neural network' model. Neuropsychiatrist Warren McCulloch, the hero of Dupuy's book, invented this model, though he rarely receives the credit. Rather than assume a merely practical correspondence between behavior, mentality, and computation, McCulloch was the first to describe the brain itself as a kind of computer,

radicalizing the analogical position of Wiener, et al., into an ontological position. As McCulloch would one day put it: "Everything we learn of organisms leads us to conclude not merely that they are *analogous* to machines but that they *are* machines" (50).

In his own inaugural article, written with another mathematician, Walter Pitts, McCulloch detailed the platform necessary to identify the mind with a logic machine that could be physically embodied, describing the brain as a network of (highly idealized) neurons in which the ideal operations of cognition are actualized. He expressed this in a mathematical model assumed to encapsulate all the essential features of the mind/brain:

> In this model, each neuron can receive impulses at any instant from its neighbors, itself firing if and only if a weighted sum of the ones and zeroes that code the existence or absence of an impulse in the afferent synapses exceeds a certain limit, called the "excitation threshold"…[E]ach idealized neuron is an elementary arithmetic calculator that computes a logical (Boolean) function of its antecedents. The brain as a whole is taken to be a network of such calculators. (55)

Memory and pattern recognition—hence, learning—can thus be understood as derivative abilities emergent from the gradual fixing, engendered by habituation to regular cycles of reverberation, of electrical circuits arranged in random networks. One of Dupuy's stated aims is to restore the central importance of McCulloch's contribution to both cybernetics and cognitive science, and he is persistent in doing so throughout, eventually demoting the innovations of Wiener, the movement's recognized spokesman and popularizer.

The book's central chapter summarizes the ten conferences, held between 1946 and 1953, hosted by the Macy Foundation, through which the course and interdisciplinary directions of cybernetic research were developed. This ends up being a complicated record of multivalent disagreements and misunderstandings, peppered with some productive exceptions and side effects. Out of this account, Dupuy draws his several related criticisms of the movement. First, the cyberneticians displayed an evident disciplinary imperialism; anxious to reduce the investigations of sociology, biology and philosophy of mind to the terms provided by their own narrow methodology, they saw their enterprise as "the apotheosis of physics" (87). To this end, they tended to treat their pet theories as proven

facts, using them to browbeat their opponents, and disregarded important differences which inhere between artificial objects and natural processes, in favor of neat schemas and clever devices. Dupuy reads this as the tragic flaw of the movement. This inclination complicated every attempt at dialogue with other disciplines, contributing to the several 'missed encounters' that corrupted the inheritance of cognitive science, foreclosing potentially fruitful contact with phenomenology and social theory especially. Cognitive science was to retain the formalist stubbornness of its progenitor, assuming at the same time an upstart a-historicism that obscured its heritage. The burden of this suppressed heritage is what has consigned orthodox cognitive science to the ghetto of Artificial Intelligence, the software/hardware metaphor being a malaprop bootleg of McCulloch's neural network model, the potential of which would go unrealized until the advent of connectionism in the '70's.

The most intriguing part of the book concerns Dupuy's contention that phenomenology would have been a better suited matron for the young cognitive sciences, tempering their incestuous fascination with AI. This claim pivots on the importance of phenomenology in the current project to 'naturalize' intentionality. Phenomenology provides an alternative to the theory of mental content endorsed by analytic philosophy. Both have a shared beginning in the break from psychologism, but phenomenology lacks any commitment to the prioritization of language or 'propositional attitudes' dear to analytic philosophers of mind. This affords it a conception of mental content able to avoid the problems associated with the "linguistic interpretation of intentionality" (97) at work within cognitivism. Dupuy suggests that Brentano's notion of "immanent objectivity" readily connects up with the logic of McCulloch's neural network model—and so with that of contemporary connectionism. Unfortunately, this chapter amounts to less than a sketch before Dupuy again picks up the strand of the Macy conferences, detailing the role of information theory and the challenge presented by the embryology of Paul Weiss, both of which would contribute to the elaboration of second-order cybernetics. This latter section is certainly essential to the story being told, but with some structural finagling the book could easily have accommodated a more extensive development of the theses regarding phenomenology—or of those on complexity and social theory, for that matter, which are barely squeaked out before the book comes to a close.

At several places throughout the text, Dupuy cites Heidegger's statement that "[c]ybernetics is the metaphysics of the modern age," alongside the opposite assertion that cybernetics represents the most

thoroughgoing deconstruction of the transcendental subject. He believes both statements are accurate, and this dilemma looms large throughout the book. In terms of the contemporary debates between cognitivism and connectionism, there is a pointed split between these alternative legacies. Cognitivism, Dupuy notes, retains a form of transcendental subjectivity in the "physical symbol system" (93), 'mentalese,' and so forth. Connectionism, on the other hand, explicitly gears itself towards the elimination of these symbolic residua. How the struggle between these two will play out, and what its practical consequences might be, remain to be seen; it has been suggested that this wrestling match should be expected to occupy the best part of the forthcoming century. Dupuy's history lesson underlines the stakes involved in forgetting the forgetting, as it were, of the several failures that contributed to this bi-polarism. We should hope that current and future generations of researchers will bear his suggestions in mind, and resist the tendency towards auto-fascination that blinkered their ancestors.

2. Action, perception, and simulation

Casting a contemporary light on problems first raised by cybernetics, Alain Berthoz's *The Brain's Sense of Movement* [*Le Sens du Mouvement*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1997] draws on an impressive body of experimental findings[339] to support his position that the brain is, effectively, a simulating machine evolved to predict and facilitate the quickest appropriate organismic response to novel events. Perception, we are repeatedly told, is simulated action. Too vigorously constructive to concern itself much with criticism, the book maintains a polemical undercurrent. As Berthoz notes in the Introduction, "it was actually believed for twenty years that understanding language, an attribute specific to humans, would enable us to understand cognitive function" (4). This idea, the guiding thread of functionalism, provides the absent object of critique throughout his argument. The best way to overcome functionalism is to display the successes achieved doing just what Putnam, Fodor and others urge us not to do, namely, paying close attention to the specific neural underpinnings of cognition, and to the multiple sensory receptors which provide information about the global position of the body. Additionally, the best way to counter models of the

[339] All of which I'll ignore, presenting just an outline of the 'brain-as-simulator' model which Berthoz develops.

brain borrowed from AI is to emphasize the specific contributions of morphology and environmental constraints to the development of the biological mechanisms that give rise to perception and awareness.

If we are to believe Berthoz, the fulcrum of subjectivity is better located in the semicircular canals of the ears or the pit of the stomach than in the propositional attitudes of any homuncular monologist, or in a disembodied program of algorithms. Much of the book is taken up with an attempt to expand our catalogue of the senses by enumerating the varied channels through which information arrives, unlabeled, at our brains. For Berthoz, these imperceptible processes which compose perception being, for Berthoz, more determinant than any supposed causal properties of the mental representations made available to awareness. All the important decisions are made in the dark. As for the proper attribution of desires and beliefs, these belong to the realm of virtual action. Neural processes assume an ontological priority over phenomenological effects; 'actual experience' is always conditioned by a logic of simulation—that is, by the preconscious modeling of possible courses of action, informed by multiple registers of environmental information.

In order to approach the details of this assertion, a cursory unpacking of some of the assumptions running through the specifics of Berthoz's argument is necessary. To begin with, perception of the external world is understood to be essentially the product of the brain's endogenous structure and activity, rather than being constituted by the identity of unambiguous signals coming from the outside. The eyes do not look out onto a world so much as they provide cues that aid in its construction. This labor builds up and draws from repertoires of multiple, dynamic maps and schemas of potentially useful relationships; its accuracy is practical and discriminating rather than complete and inclusive. (Berthoz will call this the "projective" activity of the brain, situating this idea in a theoretical lineage beginning with the Empedoclean theory of 'extramission', running through J.J. Gibson's notion of 'affordances', and continuing beyond.) The time in which this construction occurs is on the order of milliseconds; its sole material being electrical signals traveling through highly differentiated networks of neurons working in parallel. These signals are transmitted at variable speeds – Rodolfo Llinas is cited as saying, "we think at 40 hertz and move at 10 hertz" (16). Between the reception of external information, its subjective registration, and the execution of any task, there are series of delays occurring at the level of

the distribution of neural impulses. It is here that the editorial work of simulation which concerns Berthoz is performed.

The first priority is to do away with the conventional division of the senses. Throughout the book, Berthoz presents a picture of the brain operating under conditions of a sort of generalized synaesthesia, this extending well beyond mere haphazard confusion between the familiar channels of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Several related, popularly neglected modalities are pushed to the fore: proprioception, kinaesthesia, balance, and the sense of gravity. Opening chapters detail Berthoz's assertion that perception and motor activity are intimately involved with one another, the sense of orientation provided by proprioceptive and vestibular information overcoding the activity of the other senses without necessarily taking priority: "[T]he brain does not process sensory cues independently. Each time it commits to an action, it makes assumptions about the state of certain receptors as the action unfolds…These groupings of receptors are called configurations, and it appears that the brain checks configurations of specific receptors as it plans movement" (5). The work of the brain integrates in both a physiological and a mathematical sense; physiological, in that it combines sensory information from different modalities; mathematical in the "literal…sense of progression from the derivative of a variable of movement to its integral." (47)

The brain's capacity for simulating action begins with its ability to modulate sensory information "at its source, to adapt it to the requirements of movement." (29). This ability is based in information provided by just those receptors of which we are not normally aware—the vestibular, muscular, and cutaneous receptors that describe positions of the body and, in the case of the vestibular system, its movement through space. Triggering a given configuration of receptors results in the activation of corresponding repertoires of neurons, which are also involved in the execution of motor activity: "[T]he more a receptor returns a high-order derivative of the mechanical variable it detects, the greater the likelihood the brain will anticipate this variable itself at some future time"(28). The brain is able to memorize positions of the body on the basis of the activation of neural repertoires corresponding to those positions. As anticipation arises from the frequency of activation of a particular repertoire, simulation must only be identified with endogenous activation of that repertoire, without its terminating in commitment to action. Simulation of movement by the brain is thus not necessarily equivalent to visual representation of a trajectory; it can take place at the

level of schematic descriptions which may not be made available to awareness. Indeed, one of the most impressive features of Berthoz's theory is the range of phenomena it is able to take into account, running the gamut from mild illusions of movement to full-blown dreams.

The thesis of simulation also provides Berthoz with the appropriate framework in which to articulate a powerful theory of memory involving the contributions of the entire body, rather than just the shallow space of a cranial cinema oriented towards recognition and nostalgia. Memory has evolved "to predict the consequences of future actions by recalling those of past action." It is "expressed at all levels of cerebral functioning. Even muscular fibers have a memory…" (115). Berthoz describes a host of kinds of memory related to spatial apprehension and orientation: navigational, inertial, rotational, translational, and locomotor memory. Each of these is determined, in different ways and to different extents, by information provided by visual and vestibular cues descriptive of position and movement in space relative to objects, landmarks, and the pull of gravity. "[I]n carrying out a navigational task, the brain in a way follows an internal representation, a model of the trajectory that anticipates the path, and not the other way around" (126). It is not within the purview of Berthoz's account to speculate about more abstract employments of this variety of "topokinaesthetic memory," but the implications for the development of spatial reasoning and the construction of concepts are profound. I don't think it would be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that the application of this conception of dynamic simulation to the tasks and vocabulary of philosophy might provide the basis for an entirely new line of research. However, to expand further on this hint would carry us too far afield from the modest remit of a review.

We should rather pause here and wonder whether, even given the strength of Berthoz's exposition, it isn't illegitimate to say that *the brain* 'predicts,' 'projects,' 'makes plans,' utilizes 'maps,' and so forth. Doesn't this remain a questionable transposition—attributing to the brain skills that are already problematically ascribed to the subject? Is it valid to use jargon lifted from 'folk psychology,' that bugbear of neuroscience, to qualify neural activity, even if that qualification appears accurate? There are (at least) three ways to approach this question. First, we might admit that this is an invalid vocabulary, without necessarily disregarding the success of the overall argument. Second, we could say, with Dupuy, that such teleological concepts "are indispensable, and perfectly legitimate, so long as one keeps in mind that they have only heuristic and descriptive relevance" (Dupuy 10). The third, and most provocative, response would

be to suggest that this is a perfectly legitimate vocabulary; it just *is* the case that the vocabulary of folk psychology is derivative of these more fundamental procedures, at least in these instances. This would, I think, best characterize Berthoz's own position. Where this might leave him vis-à-vis the Churchlands, or Fodor for that matter, is too complex a question to be pursued here.

After an extensive series of concrete applications of his theory, Berthoz winds down into a discussion of illusions and hallucinations, before resting his feet for a slightly precious chapter entitled 'Architects Have Forgotten the Pleasure of Movement.' He concludes with a summary of the main points of his argument and a somewhat hurried assertion of the significance of our neuroscientific understanding of perception for the general welfare of humankind. I shall have occasion to return to this aspect of his conclusion in just a moment.

3. Semantic dualism and natural ethics

The title of the last book under discussion, *What Makes Us Think?* [*Ce qui nous fait penser?*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1998], is somewhat misleading. A worthwhile question in itself, it is hardly touched upon directly in any of the conversations between Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, although the ambiguity of the title affords some interpretative leeway. It might be read, for instance, in terms of either compulsion or production. If approached in the former sense, the book offers little in the way of definite scenarios, unless the subjects of conversation are themselves put across as examples (i.e., mind-body dualism, the relationship between science and philosophy, the natural foundations of morality, and so on). If we read the title with the latter slant in mind, there is more room to maneuver, but the problems or answers suggested are still vague. The audience for this important book deserves to be as broad as possible, however, so we should forgive any titular inexactitude if it means a greater likelihood of popular appeal. That said, a more suitable, if less catchy, title is presented by Ricoeur, on page 109: "How can the intersubjective knowledge that every one of us has be enriched—and, if necessary, rectified—by the fact that I know more about what goes in the brain?"

The book is roughly divided into two halves of several chapters each. In different ways, these are wholly taken up with questions of ethics, the relations between facts and norms. The first few chapters tackle how we

should speak about the brain, what good it does anyone to have a better understanding of the brain, and whether or not this really entails a better understanding of the 'personal' brain. These make up the book's more original and compelling half. After a transitional chapter, 'Consciousness of Oneself and Others,' the few remaining chapters deal with the requirements and imperatives for a naturalized universal morality. These are less satisfying, since Ricoeur and Changeux are usually in basic agreement but find themselves at the same loss for new ideas as anyone who has tried to define a humanist ethics in which revulsion at violence, intolerance, and religious stupidity, would be balanced by a respect for social plurality. The ground covered is already well trodden; the points made are less exactly delimited than in earlier chapters, and neither proposes any particularly bold theses. This is not to say that these chapters are without interest or insight, but simply that the specificity and focus of the encounter are somewhat blunted.

Things are livelier when they disagree, of course, and they spend the first several chapters circling around an argument, the terms of which are persistently stated and restated without ever being definitively pinned down. The book might have been stronger had Ricoeur and Changeux afforded themselves the space required to deepen this part of the debate at a more technical level, setting questions of morality aside for a subsequent volume or two. Then again, it might have become tedious after a while were they stick to the roles they assume here. The question mentioned above –"How can the intersubjective knowledge that every one of us has be enriched, and, if necessary, rectified, by the fact that I know more about what goes in the brain?"– presents just one of the ways in which the issue gets formulated. That it comes from Ricoeur, moreover, is not incidental. Much of the time, Changeux finds himself on the receiving end of the interrogation. Ricoeur, for all his apparent sympathy, is clearly uncomfortable with the evident ontology of neuroscience, which he rightly characterizes as tending inevitably towards the 'eliminativist' end of the spectrum. However, although there is an element of misty nostalgia underlying Ricoeur's position, it leads him to pose several difficult, deeply interesting questions leveled at lingering anthropomorphisms and lazy "shorthand expressions" (41) in the language of neuroscience—at this juncture, we should recall Berthoz (Ricoeur makes specific mention of the notion of 'anticipation'), whose work Changeux draws on. Strangely, Ricoeur's methodology borders on a materialism more sober even than that of his interlocutor, who is, perhaps, sometimes too generous in his claims regarding the

achievements of his chosen field. Changeux's optimism renders him almost beatific, and he is not nearly as aggressive as Ricoeur when it comes to pressing the latter for a justification of the terms relied on by phenomenology.

Ricoeur's central tactic consists in a rigorous insistence on semantic dualism. The reasoning behind this insistence is sound: the brain does not belong to me in the same way my hands belong to me; it is exempt from my experience of myself—a point confirmed by neuroscience. There are 'two bodies,' objective and subjective, and two discourses, neuronal and mental; in each pair, the former is the province of science, the latter, of philosophy. "I do not see a way of passing from one order of discourse to the other" (15), he says, and Changeux will be hard pressed to convince him otherwise. Changeux's ever-helpful suggestion is that the two of them work to construct a 'third discourse' which might mediate the relationship between the two realms of discourse via recourse to common terms. Spinoza, the most frequent common point of reference, is cited as inspiration for this project. Ricoeur agrees to the assignment, albeit with some hesitation. His primary contribution will be to consistently point out the complex difficulties involved in moving from one register to the other, noting also that "the semantic gap is as great between the cognitive sciences and philosophy as it is between the neurosciences and philosophy" (28).

The structure of the book, quietly doubling as a primer in neuroscience, seems designed to consign Ricoeur to the position of grumbler, at least for the first half. Changeux gets all the pages of exposition; Ricoeur has comparatively little opportunity to elucidate his views on phenomenology or hermeneutics, so the tendency to concentrate on semantic issues is inevitable. The book would have benefited if Ricoeur put his phenomenology on the line more often and if Changeux recapped less and grumbled more. His several swipes at Ricoeur's religious leanings are accurate and effective, but these don't really cut to the core of the deeper philosophical disagreement between them. But, again, the book deserves a wide readership, so these charges might be beside the point; technical agonistics can be saved for the specialists.

Besides, the substance of their disagreement is evident throughout their attempts –or rather, I should say, Changeux's attempts and Ricoeur's (mostly) counter-attempts– at constructing a third discourse. Changeux's idea is both simple and compelling; indeed, a thinker less crafty than Ricoeur might have gone along with it unquestioningly. Ricoeur's trick is to wonder if the terms relied on by neuroscience—or,

rather, by the vocabulary of neuroscience culled from 'natural language'—is really so objective, whether natural language, shot through with metaphor, doesn't necessarily mislead when it comes to describing the brain and, additionally, whether the language of experimentation can profitably enhance the vocabulary of daily, intersubjective experience. Ricoeur doesn't have a monopoly on this sort of criticism; his use of the term 'substrate,' for instance, meets with frustration on the part of Changeux. Nor is he exclusively critical, offering the semiotic term 'indication' as a possible contribution to their third discourse. These are relatively minor instances, however. Ricoeur complains about Changeux's imprecise use of the word '*world*', while Changeux lets Ricoeur get away with saying things like "This heart of hearts has its own particular status that it would appear you will never succeed in explaining in your science." Actually, Changeux's response to this statement provides a good example of his unflagging hopefulness: "Why do you say 'never'?" (69).

In the second half of the book, the points covered in the first half are marshaled to address issues of morality. The topic of evolution is introduced, and Ricoeur's more appreciative attitude to evolutionary theories, Gould's in particular, changes the tenor of the conversation. The discussion centers on the possible continuities between biological and cultural epigenesis, expanding into consideration of the cultural bases of prejudice and violence. Changeux presents some compelling arguments and examples as to what neuroscience might tell us about the tendency towards violence and cultural bias, but little comes of this, as Ricouer's interests lie elsewhere. Ricouer's reference to Kant introduces the question of moral justification which Changeux, interestingly enough, dismisses entirely, on the grounds that it "open[s] the door to fundamentalisms and all manner of allegedly divine justice" (258). Ricoeur doesn't think so. Retreating into an apologetic mode at odds with his vigilance up to this point, he presents a weak defense of religion. Changeux calls him on this, repeatedly, but Ricouer is unfazed. The issue then begins to devolve into questions of respect for religious plurality. Ricoeur teeters for a moment on the brink of obscurantism, from which he is pulled back only by Changeux's indignation. It is here, at the point where the most significant gains might have been made, that the discussion founders.

Berthoz also concludes his book with a consideration of violence, specifically religiously inspired violence. This runs less than two pages, and is more willful than explicative, but this is to its benefit. To the series

of Ricoeur's several questions running along the lines of "[D]oes a better knowledge of neural function help me somehow better understand interpersonal relations?" (104), Berthoz presents the beginning of an answer which dramatically underscores Changeux's many patient attempts to show that this is in fact the case. Citing instances of cruelty ranging from Pol Pot to the two French youths who murdered their playmate, Berthoz suggests that

> to commit such acts the mind must be so constrained by the perception that fascinates it that it suppresses any alternatives. The functioning of the brain is corrupted, as it is with hypnosis…The human brain operates with powerful mechanisms of territorialism…this leaves the brain with a propensity for retreating into pre-established schemas that it then projects onto the world and onto others…All these various social structures have a common mechanism for restricting the operation of the brain within a set of rigid interpretations, using methods somewhat akin to hypnosis. (Berthoz, 265-266)

Language this direct is largely missing from the encounter between Changeux and Ricoeur. The advantage of neuroscience is precisely that it need not retain any commitment to pluralism or respect for social convention. Ricoeur misses the significance of his own key point: Our brains are not our own, they do not belong to us, we cannot recognize ourselves in their activity. This is already what objective knowledge adds to subjective experience—a displacement of identity that disavows cultural belonging and the authorization of violence. The basis for a universal ethics will not be reached through negotiation between different, competing cultural traditions, but under the conditions set by a demand that those traditions relinquish their claims to superiority in the face of a knowledge which evaporates the differences between them. At the very least, this requires the commitment of scientists who, with Changeux, acknowledge that the social status of their practices immediately involves a taking of sides, and who do not hesitate to assume an unequivocal position with regards to the moral and theological implications of their discoveries. "Failing that," as Berthoz writes, "we risk the worst" (266).

Notes for Contributors

- Submissions should be sent to *Pli*, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.

- They should be printed in double line spacing and be accompanied with a copy on disk in RICH TEXT FORMAT only. If possible, an e-mail address should be included for any further correspondence.

- Accepted submissions will be printed from the electronic copy supplied. Footnotes will be printed at the bottom of the page. Italics and other typographical features (such as accents and text in Greek) will be printed as they appear in the electronic copy (so do not underline items that will eventually appear in italics, such as titles of books, for example). All submissions should be supplied in and will be printed in Times New Roman font.

- Footnote references should conform to the style of the following examples:

  I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), hereafter *CPR*.
  G. Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 24.
  D. W. Conway, 'Genealogy and Critical Method', in R. Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 318-33, esp. p. 320.
  D. Sedley, 'Epicurus, On Nature Book 28', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 3 (1973), 5-83, p. 56.

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