

HYPO-HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

Claire Colebrook

Hypo-hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism: this awful portmanteau word, in all its ungainly confusion, captures something crucial about the present.¹ In the essay that follows I want to use this fractured single word to indicate an event. Perhaps the word event is not quite right, but I want to avoid words such as “mindset” or ideology, simply because what I am referring to is a way of speaking, imagining, or figuring that does not occur completely at the level of thinking. In fact, one of the features of “hypo-hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism” is that it is (to refer to Deleuze’s terminology) an “image of thought”: the assumption of a certain orthography that delimits the questions and problems posed, and allows for a certain potential for disturbance to be lulled in advance.² Indeed, hypo-hapto-neuro-mysticism is an alluring inertia that operates by situating itself, resentfully, against what might count as thinking. In a recent special issue of *differences* focused on new directions in science studies, Karen Barad reiterated what has now become an almost unquestioned attack on the detached and disembodied nature of “theory,” in favor of theorizing that would take the form of touch:

Theorizing, a form of experimenting, is about being in touch. What keeps theories alive and lively is being responsible and responsive to the world’s patternings and murmurings. Doing theory requires being open to the world’s aliveness, allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonder. Theories are not mere metaphysical pronouncements on the world from some presumed position of exteriority. Theories are living and breathing reconfigurings of the world. The world theorizes as well as experiments with itself.³

My claim, in opposition to the careful work of Barad and the far less careful work of others, is that theory is *not theory* (and philosophy is not philosophy) if it is grounded in the tactility of the body. The idea of theory opens a necessarily critical distance of philosophy, even if that distance is contaminated, impossible and never as inhuman as it might strive to be.⁴ If (following a certain Heideggerian tradition) thinking is taken to be a comportment to the world that is without home, solace, identity or body—or at least where embodiment and dwelling offer almost nothing—then hypo-hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism—by contrast—indulges in the

HYPO-HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

easy comfort that all so-called thinking is always connected, in touch, and oriented towards a world that is necessarily one's own. What I am going to try to describe as hypo-hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism, is *not* a mode of thinking precisely because it operates less by way of statements, assumptions and values, and instead comes to a halt before a complex of mesmerizing images and barely thought-out figures. This orientation of pseudo-“thinking” is one in which a certain notion of the intellect as detached calculation is resented or accused in the name of a supposedly more primordial and proximate living ownness. We might refer to this lure of the counter-intellect as an inversion of the cave allegory: rather than turn away from the things that are directly before us to consider the source of light that makes our world possible, we turn away from the problems of visibility and the disenchanting, disconnected and distanced force of *theoria*, and immerse ourselves in a world that is deemed to be irreducibly proximate. Indeed, rather than call this neuro-mysticism or faith in connectedness a way of thinking, we might argue that there has come to be a type of “thinking 2.0” that recognizes the damage thinking can do to itself, and decides *not* to think, or at least to think in such a way that thinking proclaims its irredeemable weakness in favor of more profound, living and human powers.

If we define thinking more broadly to include images and figures that are not fully thought through, then hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism might help us to confront a problem of thought, or a complex—a tension that is in part a symptom (suggesting something that needs to be worked through), and a reaction formation: a tendency to consider thought's weakness and timidity (its containment within itself) as a *proper* state of affairs. Far from confronting and working through a problem, thought declares the problem to be more than solved. It screams ever more shrilly that the very features that might appear to be wounds, breaks or paralyses are in fact expressive of joyous life itself. The fact that we are increasingly abandoning thought (as intellection) is proclaimed as a redemption from Cartesianism, logic, disembodied abstraction and the delusion of mind. Just as thinking ought to confront its destructive and *dichotomous* relation to the earth, theories of embodied, embedded and affective mindfulness proliferate.

In order to anticipate and give some sense to what follows I will cite James Cameron's 2009 film *Avatar*, recently consecrated by Bruno Latour's compositionist manifesto.⁵ In *Avatar* the land of Pandora is the bearer of a substance desired by the rapacious, war-mongering and instrumental American forces; the Pandoran natives are literally connected to their ecosystem by touch; they travel—not by harnessing horse power through central command—but by attaching their pony-tails to the animal's tail. Unlike the technologically domineering invaders who use tanks and surveillance to command the scene from without, the Pandoran natives are connected to a land that is one grand, thinking, complex, proximate, and auto-poetic whole. Knowing does not take the form of abstract thinking, but feeling and doing in a manner that is collective. Here, we approach a first definition of the complex I want to explore today: theory today is tending towards a form of mysticism insofar as it appeals to direct intuition or immediate contact and literal proximity; there is a privilege accorded to the felt rather than stated (to affect and touch over concept and system).

But the paradigm is primarily neural, for what “the brain” has come to figure, after the “decade of the brain,” is not a command centre or ghost in the machine but a plastic, evolving network that comes into being not by imposing code but by being ever more responsive, more connected and more dynamic. This neuro-mania is a form of *hyper*-haptocentrism precisely because it is touch—body to body and from the body to itself—that overcomes the distance and difficulty of thinking. At the same time this complex is also a *hypo*-haptocentrism precisely because touch is best thought of (as in the neural network) *not* as one part to another part, or one thing to another thing, but as a mutually proliferating and multiply connected whole, in which there are not so much parts that touch, but a web of touch from which one might discern relatively stable tendencies. Even though the single term, “hyper-hapto-neuro-mysticism,” identifies a complex, I will begin by breaking down the inter-related forces that make up this field.

HAPTOCENTRISM

This term, coined by Jacques Derrida, might at first seem counter-intuitive. How could *touch* be a privileged motif when Western thought has been dominated by disembodied calculation, individual autonomy, reason and universal truths that are not mired in the physical and contingent particulars of the body? Indeed, much of the work today on touch and affect (inspired, in part, by Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of affect) makes a claim for a directly revolutionary force of affect precisely because the connectivity of affect bypasses the universalizing and formal demands of reason. For Derrida, however, touch, proximity and affect have been mobilized as figures that enable a tradition of the metaphysics of presence. Indeed, the very reason or logocentrism that would supposedly be circumvented by embodiment and haptics, establishes itself as a form of self-contact without distance or mediation:

What remains, as I suggested earlier—*against* Heidegger, in a way—is that one might have to go in for a structure of experience in which this “privilege” or “priority” (*Vorrang*) of sight or touch (whether “exorbitant” or not) no longer means much, if the said “tradition” (“since the beginnings of Greek ontology”!) never shows any privilege for the gaze (no optical theoretism) without an invincible intuitionism that is accomplished, fulfilled, fully effectuated, starting from a haptical origin or *telos*; if there is no optical intuitionism without haptocentrism; and if furthermore (in regard to this intuitionism, which is finally homogeneous, undifferentiating, absolute, stubborn, absurd, and in the final account insensible or “smooth”—i.e., deaf, blind, and impassive) the fate of this intersensibility (henceforth irreducibly tropological, figural, and metonymic) allows one to see and hear and feel and taste a bit of touching everywhere: indeed, who would deny that we can touch with our voice—close or far away, naturally or technically, if we could still rely on this distinction, in the open air or on the phone—and thus, even to touch the heart.⁶

One can use the term “metaphysics of presence” to indicate that across a series of competing claims and traditions a certain ideal of knowing and truth promises to overcome the risks and contingencies of irreducible gaps by some means of a self in touch with itself. Knowledge and experience more generally are properly and normatively defined in terms of the value of proximity (a value that is not one value among others, but the axiom through which all value can be thought). If there is such a thing as reason it is because the thinking subject can intuit directly, without distance or disturbance that which would remain the same through time, and also be true for any subject whatever. That which is true and good is that which remains present, proximate, intuitable, without distance. It follows that the self is considered primarily and properly as auto-affective: for the self experiences itself without distance, delay or difference. The subject is that which precedes and grounds all further experience, and becomes the Cartesian subject when grounding is no longer that of a substance that requires nothing else in order to be but becomes the self-present cogito.⁷ Ideally, as in the ethics of Levinas, one might also experience the other—not at a distance as an object to be grasped, but as pure singularity and alterity, without the mediation of concepts or general rules.⁸ And we might even say that today the immediate appeal of some tendencies of object-oriented ontology lies in a claim to immediacy: we are not separated from the world by subjective conditions of givenness but can and should make direct contact with a world of things of which we are part, not ground; if there is a gap between ourselves and the world it is no different in principle from the gaps that separate (and tie) all things to each other.⁹ When phenomenology revolutionizes philosophy, and criticizes the supposition of a pure disembodied and given reason, it returns explicitly to touch—no longer the light of reason affecting itself, but a literal, embodied and actual touch. On phenomenology's own reading, this is a fulfillment of philosophy's *telos*—for the thesis of the lived body that constitutes itself and its world through living praxis accounts for the genesis of reason. Reason can be truly justified and grounded upon the lived; at the same time, touch will increasingly radicalize philosophy. For touch is not the self-presence of reason, but—as in Merleau Ponty's flesh, or Jean-Luc Nancy's sense, or Deleuze's affect—what is posited as the generative givenness from which all logics emerge and which cannot be fully known, mastered or rendered present to thought. It seems as though thought abandons its claim to be able to coincide with itself in a presence of self-touch. And yet, for Derrida, this is when haptocentrism becomes hyper-haptocentrism. For

HYPO-HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

the seeming circumvention of the calculating distance of reason is overcome in what—referring to Nancy—Derrida describes as an absolute realism.¹⁰ All of Derrida's work can be considered as a deconstruction of proximity: the condition for something being near to itself and touching itself is that there be distance.¹¹

HYPER-HAPTOCENTRISM

Derrida uses this phrase specifically in his book concerned with touch and Jean-Luc Nancy, but it flows from the logic of deconstruction. That is, phenomenology regarded itself as revolutionary in *not* relying on any transcendence—any already assumed term such as cogito, being or substance—that would account for the appearing of the world. In so doing it would be a radical thought of genesis: returning to things themselves and the givenness of the given, phenomenology would purify the question of appearing from any presupposed ground. It would eventually be the lived body or flesh that ultimately came to function as the site of fecund generation, in which there would be no intrusion of the distanced commands of reason or cognition. Here, Derrida situates phenomenology's supposed radicalism, *and* Nancy's seeming departure from a metaphysics of self-commanding reason, within haptocentrism. It is now not reason that bypasses the body in order to be self-affecting, for the body possesses its own self-sensing awareness. This self-touching also—attractively—never reifies into a formalized system but becomes nothing more than ongoing self-revelation. Philosophy's autonomy and self-coinciding principle of logocentrism is at once displaced by modes of affection that occur beyond consciousness in the narrow sense, and yet it is this self-sensing, affective, touching power of flesh, life and world that yields a hyper-haptocentrism. The world now senses itself: this is at once a displacement of the *human* privilege of auto-affection, but it is also a continued valorization of proximity. Nothing is left untouched. The world touches itself, senses itself, and is brought to its own presence, in a phrase that is summed up by Derrida as not only hypo-haptocentrism but “absolute realism”: “Touch remains for Nancy the motif of a kind of absolute realism, irredentist and postdeconstructive.”¹² Philosophy that had always elevated its own reason through an axiology of proximity, has now been subjected to critique for having been too distanced from the life, flesh and world that is its origin and unthought condition; the turn to affect, flesh, life and sense is a turn away from the self-constitution of reason (where one aspect of life commands the whole) towards a *total self-sensing*, in which self and other, mind and world, touch and touched are mutually constitutive. I want to leave Derrida and his argument with philosophy and metaphysics (and Nancy's supposed absolute realism) aside for now, and ask whether the notion of hyper-haptocentrism has any purchase for the present, beyond philosophy strictly speaking.

I want to begin by going back to haptocentrism as one of the ways in which a normative conception of touch goes beyond logocentrism and ontotheology. It is the concept of touch that provides a norm for philosophical reason and life; reason, it is assumed, may always return to itself and touch itself, just as life always remains proximate to its proper origin. I would suggest that the motif of *proper touch* or proximity has a more general ethical value, evidenced in the privilege of face to face encounters, of genuine feeling, and of sympathy, empathy and affect more generally over various forms of non-life (whether that be modern disenchantment, technology, isolation, rigid rule following or disengaged intellection). Touch has this genuinely ethical value *not* when it is one body or thing making contact with another body or thing, but when contact is communal, mutual, and disclosive of a certain pre-given ground of life, love, spirit or feeling from which our individual bodies are only temporarily (if at all) detached. Consider the following quotation from disgraced Penn State football coach Jerry Sandusky's auto-hagiography:

When we dare to care; when we reach out and touch someone's hand, trying to make the world a better place, we get back so much more than we give. To see the gleam in a child's eye when he or she succeeds. To see happiness come across the face of a lonely person sets off a very warm feeling. I have walked with some of society's so-called best, but I've also been hugged by some of society's least. I know I cherish the latter a lot more. In this plan we are but one little candle, but when you dare to care it does make for a better world.

We are given many talents, and God creates hope for us all. He lifts us to great heights. We have conquered parts of outer space, yet He is always there to humble us by exposing us to great suffering and hurt. God reveals himself in the outstretched hands of a loved one; in the outstretched hands of a child in need. He reveals himself through those who are handicapped; those who have the least. He brings love, hope and happiness to those of us who already appear to have so much more. He touches us after a tough loss, but no matter how bad we've done that day, friends and family will still be there. ... Nobody has touched more lives than God....¹³

For all its clichéd banality Sandusky's ongoing self-justification nevertheless draws upon and articulates a certain ethos and mythos of touch. To touch another is *not* the taking of a pleasure, although it might initially seem to require a sacrificial abandonment of one's safe self-enclosure ("when we dare to care"). To offer touch is to give oneself more than one had, by giving away. Touch might appear, at least metaphorically, as the ethical concept par excellence: the power of touch signals both the capacity to reach towards what is not oneself, and to be open to what is not oneself (to be touched).

And yet there is a problem with this ethos of touch, which (with the benefit of hindsight) lies in its knowing and self-aggrandizing paternalism. If there has been a move away from haptocentrism towards hypo-haptocentrism, both in philosophy and beyond, it might be for the same reasons. Both philosophy and popular culture more generally have become wary of the ethical problem of expertise and paternalism. The Sandusky quotation is a "top down" or centred model of touch. There is a toucher who bestows life and spirit upon a body that requires the touch of life. (Think of spirit animating matter, God breathing life into Adam, or the general promise that lies in being anointed.) God is the locus of the good, and when I reach out and touch another (when I "dare to care") it is ultimately the hand of God that acts through us all. Touch is an unquestioned good precisely because the isolated, damaged, lost individual is so abandoned that they do not have the wherewithal or sense to redeem themselves; they require the caring and intervening touch of a higher power. This centred model, where touch is properly and primarily located in a higher benevolent power (and which might be read as the *locus classicus* of colonial and other enlightening paternalisms) has been displaced by a dispersed touch, where there is no distinction between toucher and touched, and there is no God's eye view or elevated good reason that might validate or sanctify touch.

Deconstruction, as already noted, rejected the privilege of reason as a mode of self-presence that might ground and legitimate ethical claims: the valorization of proximity was displaced by deconstruction's attention to the ways in which reason would always need to take place through the deferrals and distance of time and space. The figure of a thought that feels itself, is present to itself, and coincides with itself represses the diffuse and never presentable geneses through which it comes into being. But if there are philosophical grounds for rejecting the supreme self-governance of reason, there are also everyday ethical reasons: post-Kantian ethical theory begins from the idea that there is no privileged self-knowing, self-grasping foundation, and so in the absence of foundations one can never speak or act with supreme authority.¹⁴ Centred and transcendent models of the good enabled paternalistic justifications: I could reach out and touch you, act for you, because I am closer to a divinity or reason that is really your proper being. On such a paternalistic or "specialist" understanding, there is a good that can be approached, approximated and that can act as the ground for decisions. From Kant to Derrida the emphasis on a necessary gap or distance between the self-presence of the ground and the discursive differences of reason has precluded any notion of moral experts or foundations. We begin, in media res, at a necessary distance from any supposed origin. But in addition to philosophical reasons for questioning haptocentrism or the notion of some proximate good that might provide a foundation for ethics and morality if only it could be grasped, there are—as I have already suggested—practical and cultural reasons.

Without positing some causality between cultural conditions and structures of feeling, or ideologies and cultural production, it might nevertheless be worth asking why we are making the much-proclaimed affective turn *now*? Why, today, are we insisting that it is not only reason that has the power to come close to the sense of the world, but that life as such—beyond humans—senses itself. The skin, the body, things, plants,

HYPO-HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

animals: these are not isolated inert objects that are simply there for the sake of a self-present reason, but have their own sense. Further, and more importantly, everything touches. We must (so the story goes) go beyond valorising the hand of man that has been figured and privileged as not simply a body part or an organ oriented to survival, but as a capacity for touching and rendering a life-world (what Derrida refers to as “humanualism”); for all life from insects to things is part of this grand self-touching world. We might say that “man” (the figure of self-affecting, self-constituting and self-present reason) is no longer the privileged figure of presence that calls out to be displaced: for it is now life, the world, cosmos or Gaia that is always already in touch with itself. I would suggest that it is no longer resistant or counter-normative to privilege process, dynamism, inter-connectedness, embodiment, affect and de-centered auto-poetic systems over distinct and logically oriented individuals. We have shifted from human or rational haptocentrism, in which knowledge and the good are grounded on a privileged locus of auto-affection—a reason that touches itself, or a subject that presents to itself—to hyperhaptocentrism, in which everything is in touch with everything else. There is one grand network of proximity and mutual, dynamic inter-affective touch.

Hyper-haptocentrism is at once a theoretical motif and a pop culture fetish. Hyper-haptocentrism’s manifest refusal of man might also be read as an ultrahumanism. That is, if man has been valorised and regarded as “the subject” it is because it was man who was not a being among beings, but the locus of reason and self-presence that enabled any world or thought of being emerge. Rather than reject the value of proximity and affective self-presence through which man appears to himself, this power to be affective is now attributed to all life, and all non-life beyond man. We can see this, as I have already suggested, both in popular culture (especially when it targets the logical subject of modernity) and in theory (also focused on the same target as “man.”) Consider, again, the highly dichotomous film *Avatar*, which sets itself against the managerialism of modern man. The military forces that are the villains of the narrative are oriented towards a single object—unobtainium—and use instrumental reason and technology to achieve their desired end, regardless of the means, and regardless of the more complex and distributed forces that they will need to encounter to secure unobtainium. Pandora’s Navi’I, by contrast, inhabit a world that is—in the words of the sympathetic character portrayed by Sigourney Weaver—structured like a “neural network.” The Navi’I communicate with the animals they ride and their surrounding fauna not by command, but by touch. The film is at once a post-humanist manifesto—targeting the man of technology and reason in favor of an affective, interconnected and communal whole—at the same time as it is an ultra-humanist reaction formation: the Navi’I are indeed avatars, images of a new ideal of humanity. What renders the Navi’I ultrahuman rather than inhuman is that they exemplify the values of responsive self-presence that have always defined man against the mere inertia of things. This is not a haptocentric world, in which a privileged being is elevated due to its capacity for self-presence, while all else is left out of touch. Rather, everything is proximate to everything else, in one grand self-communicating whole.

When Bruno Latour opened his compositionist manifesto by referring to *Avatar*, and linked the film to the Gaia hypothesis, he reinforced a widespread thesis of mindfulness: the world is not inert matter blessed with the capacity to be represented and known by subjects. The world itself possesses living and self-organising properties. More importantly, the world as it is known follows from its *capacity to affect*, just as our being—our identity—emerges from the various ways in which we are affected.¹⁵ The world of Pandora in *Avatar* is a post-human (ultra-human) eco-utopia, not simply because it is composed of affective relations, in which bodies relate not by way of externally imposed systems (logic, language) but by affective communication and proximity, but also because it is like a neural network. There has been a reaction against the isolated and distanced man of reason, who affects himself in order to be present to himself, along with a turn towards the neural paradigm. The brain, formerly and mistakenly perceived as a computer, is now—we are constantly reminded—not a central command centre, but a responsive, adaptive, distributed, dynamic, affective and embodied system.¹⁶ This new neural paradigm was articulated in the works of Maturana and Varela, who tellingly also referred to Buddhism’s model of an ego-less consciousness that is nothing other than its relation to the world.¹⁷ The legitimated and science-based theories of the brain as less like a computer and more like a coupled and responsive system intersect with a wide range of fictional and non-fictional genres, such as *Avatar* but also popular science, mysticism and contemporary cultural production. The brain is no longer the Cartesian

ghost in the machine, nor does talk of the brain threaten to reduce the rich complexity of life to biological determinism. On the contrary, the brain as an adaptive, responsive network that changes itself offers at once a way out of the horrors of the self-enclosed subject, and solves the ethical problem of touch.

HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

Mysticism does not approach what is other than itself discursively but passes to direct contact, but this contact is not one in which the self has mastery. The self does not impose its logic on what is other for the sake of knowledge, but is transformed by the encounter. Latour's account of the affective and embodied nature of knowledge avoids mysticism by stressing the notion of articulation: the body becomes what it is by being affected, just as the world that affects the body takes on its layers of difference through the complex encounters it enables: the world is different, and differentiated, according to the multiple approaches it offers. But, as Cameron's *Avatar* indicates, the neural paradigm is not always so cautiously and multiply articulated. Latour (following James) refers to the multiverse, where the power to affect and be affected, cannot be exhausted in one mode or level of actualization. Latour's compositionist manifesto is however posed directly against a tradition of critique that would somehow establish a point outside the assumptions and practices through which the world is given; it is not surprising, then, that he would appeal to Cameron's *Avatar*, where the land of Pandora is likened to a neural network, in order to overcome the modern divorce between knowing and deciding mind, and a nature that would provide some stable ground for knowledge. Beyond Latour's work the notion of the neural network or global brain serves to unify in a manner that overcomes the ethical tension of touch. If bodies are always already connected, and always already attuned to a world of others then touch is at once life's proper mode, at the same time as one could determine clearly and in advance that certain styles of touch—those that were neither mutual nor attuned—could be distinguished as *improper*.

On the one hand there can be no ethics without touch: the isolated body that is sufficient unto itself, without relation, and without the tendency or capacity to be affected could not be said to be a living being. (This much is already explicit in Latour's work on the body and his insistence on the power to be affected.) But ethics is also, necessarily, a question of distance, and "letting be." Touch and relations in general are required precisely because the other person or other living being is different, and one cannot assume in advance any right or imperative to touch. The other to whom we reach out, or about whom we "dare to care," is also other only in a certain incapacity to be touched. We are presented with an ethical imperative to reach out and touch (and be touched), but we must also recognize a certain distance and alterity that cannot be reduced. This is the motif of Levinas's work on the necessary alterity of the other, an alterity that (according to Derrida) must at once resist the violence of any all-subsuming relation but that must, also necessarily, suffer the form of a lesser violence: "A Being without violence would be a Being which would occur outside the existent: nothing; nonhistory; nonoccurrence; nonphenomenality."¹⁸ There is always some subsumption and reduction of the other, and just as Derrida insists that there is no such thing as a non-violent relation—for all relations must to some extent reduce the pure distance of ethics—we can begin to conclude that *there is also no such thing as proper touch*. Recognizing the other *as other* reduces the other's absolute separation. And yet for all this supreme difficulty of touch, touch has come to be regarded not so much as cure but as the sign that there has never had been any problem at all. The idea that the world, others, knowledge, feeling and even one's own self might be different and untouchable has been diagnosed as a modern ill—a problem of the wrong way of thinking—that simply needs to be recognized as a false problem.

For some time a computational model of the brain has been criticized for continuing a tradition of Cartesian separation from the world. It is not the case that the brain, housed within the body, processes information and then directs the body to act. The brain is not a "ghost in the machine," nor is it some distinct organ located within a body that it commands. Rather, the brain is an embodied, adaptive, plastic, dynamic and—most importantly—distributed network. In the case of cognitive science two distinct claims are made. First, relations precede subjects: in the beginning is a connection to the world, *from which* something like a distinct and thinking subject is formed. It makes no sense to ask how selves come to know and represent the world,

HYPO-HYPER-HAPTO-NEURO-MYSTICISM

for in the beginning is the world—a “coupled” system of embodied brain and affecting world. There are not selves who touch, but a general realm of affect and interconnectedness from which distinct individuals are effected (effects of affect). Second, the brain does not stop at the borders of the skull, or the mind or the self, but is extended.¹⁹ The extended mind includes all those supplements, prostheses and technologies through which we think: the notes on our iPad, the smartphone’s auto-correct function that has adapted to our personal lexicon, and the shopping suggestions on one’s Amazon homepage.²⁰ These devices don’t read your mind, as though your mind were some sort of container; the mind just is a series of inter-connected and adaptive tendencies. The mind is not a thing, and is not contained within any single body; it is itself a network and a node in broader networks. The mind is always already in touch with everything else in one grand “mindful” cosmos.²¹ This notion has not only taken hold of critical theory, cognitive science and crossover studies that shuttle between the two; it also has popular culture purchase and it is here that the neural paradigm becomes a form of mysticism, or positing of direct and unmediated contact.

Indeed, it might be worthwhile to connect three works concerned with touch precisely because they articulate different economies of touch (and yet indicate—sometimes by avoiding it—a common problem). The first, that I have already quoted, is Jerry Sandusky’s *Touched*—a rather unremarkable reiteration of the ways in which paternalistic touch is sanctified by way of a prior assumption of haptocentric value: the touch from father to child is an extension of a divine touch that is grander than us all and that operates beyond our ken. The second text is Jacques Derrida’s *On Touching*, which accuses various strands of supposedly post-Cartesian phenomenology of a hyper-haptocentrism. The third “text” is the recent Fox television series *Touched* in which a young autistic boy is cared for by his father, his mother having died in the twin towers attacks of 9/11. The young autistic child, Jake, cannot be touched, and yet it is his physical untouchability and linguistic silence that renders him ultimately into a pure force of touch and communication. Each episode poses some problem (often political) of a gap or distance—siblings separated across nations, children given away into adoption, lovers who have missed encounters and lost touch, and a whole series of intertwining connections that are maintained mystically by way of the coupling of the young autistic boy Jake and technology. Jake collects mobile phones, numbers, sequences, patterns and all forms of digitalized data but uses these seemingly inhuman and formalized systems to discern and disseminate links among humans. He will continually write a number, only for that number to appear on an airline schedule, apartment door or birthdate, and this in turn will allow the father—the mystified but submissive conduit—to execute plans that will reunite lost souls. In one episode two musician siblings, one of whom has undergone gender reassignment, are reunited; the episode concludes with a montage of musicians and singers across the globe contributing to one unifying cross-cultural anthem. At the level of politics the Fox series offers a classic example of Fredric Jameson’s notion of ideology,²² where symbolic resolution is provided for political problems: the scars of 9/11—of an unbridgeable, unreadable and violent cultural war—are overcome in a cosy “love makes the world go around” anthem. Even 9/11 discloses a greater benevolence: the father, played by Kiefer Sutherland, has abandoned his job as a journalist to become a networker, executing, while not questioning, his son’s enigmatic “messages.”

But I would suggest that this political working-through is possible because of a deeper problem of touch, and a notion of hypo-haptocentrism. The young child, in his inability to touch, is liberated from the messy, concrete and sexually fraught networks of physical proximity. He then functions as (and articulates) a utopian figure for a touch that is everywhere and nowhere—freed from the determining systems of language and the located finitudes of the body. Like Cameron’s *Avatar*, the series opposes a “top-down” bureaucratic and manipulative corporate power (the bio-tech company that is harnessing the intuitive and empathetic neural networks of specially gifted individuals) to the silent communication of Jake, whose “voice” is heard only in each episode’s opening:

490000 babies will be born today... each of them unique... and each one of them a link in the greater human chain. And the moment their umbilical cord is severed they’ll become an individual, their own hopes, dreams and desires. And in fact each one of us is made up of a dozen systems which in turn comprise 60 trillion cells and those cells house countless proteins, DNA organelles; what appears to

be an individual is actually a network; each one of us is in fact a living breathing community but it doesn't stop there; why would it? Every individual hope you harbor; every dream you attain, every desire you fulfill has an impact far greater than you can imagine. At least that is how it looks from where I am sitting.²³

This paradisiacal condition of the untouchable yet always fully attuned child is heightened by the ongoing plotline of the series in which the father and son are at constant war with state child services, who appear to be in collusion with capitalist corporations to exploit the extraordinary evolved skills of the young Jake and his kind. Twenty-first century figurations of ethics at once fetishize touch and proximity—ranging from theories of affect to a whole series of pop culture appropriations of the neural paradigm (such as the television series *Perception* in which a professor of neurology is unable to achieve personal proximity and touch but nevertheless solves a series of crimes through his capacity to “read” the brain’s complex networks and messages). It is as though the individual, with his specific body and violability might be magically transported from the entire problem of the necessary violence of touch and given over to a virtual touch that is achieved by refusing and resenting cognition. Not only does this lure of hyper-hypo-hapto-neurocentrism intensify (while providing an alibi for) what Abigail Bray has referred to as “corporate paedophilia,” where the child is fetishized and yet also presented as the innocent potentiality that will save us from technocracy, it precludes a consideration of the ethics of touch at a cosmic level.²⁴

We should not, perhaps, be surprised that the deconstructive insistence on a certain necessary violence could not be heard. Touch, I would suggest, is—and should remain—an ethical problem. There can be no proper touch because all living is a form of contamination, where the condition of being a living being must be at once a relation of unthought touch and proximity, alongside a no less necessary refusal of unconditional touch. Both the hysteria that surrounds excessively violent touch, and the euphoria that surrounds the fantasy of pure touch mitigate rather than confront what ought to be the compelling problem of touch. We live by touch and yet can never—as living beings—either achieve or avoid the contamination of touch. Touch is required for any achievement of the proper, and yet there is no proper touch. It is symptomatic that precisely when the impossible question of touch ought to be posed—when we are dealing increasingly with the violence and intrusion of touch (both human to human, and human to non-human)—that we present touch as salvation and cure, rather than the impossible predicament that can never be silenced.

CLAIRE COLEBROOK is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University.

NOTES

1. Shortly after completing a draft of this paper Amia Srinivasan coined the term “neuro-evo-evangelism,” which captures in part what I am hoping to investigate in this paper. “In the Long Cool Hour. Review of *The Ethical Project* by Kitcher, P.” *London Review of Books* [Online] 34:23 (2012): 17-18. Available from <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n23/amia-srinivasan/in-the-long-cool-hour>, accessed 21 May 2013. I am also hoping to tie a redemptive ethics of touch to the neural evangelism that has intensified since the decade of the brain and that has allowed Colin Blakemore to speak of “neuro-everything.” “Neuro-Everything: Revealing the Secrets of the Human Brain.” (2013) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmB_OgZkbQo.
2. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia, 1994.
3. Karen Barad, “On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I Am.” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23:5 (2012): 206-223, 207.
4. I am grateful to Justin Clemens and Matheson Russell for raising this critical point: while I am concerned in this paper with diagnosing an unthinking appeal to redemptive touch, the positive outcome would be to maintain a form of affectless philosophical critique, at least in theory. In addition to the world’s “murmurings” and “patterings” (Barad) I would suggest that there is another world that is stony, white and silent.
5. Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a “Compositionist Manifesto.” *New Literary History* 41:3 (Summer 2010): 471-490.
6. Jacques Derrida, *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*. Trans. Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, 203-4.
7. Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?* Trans. William B Barton, Vera Deutsch and Eugene T Gendlin. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1967, 166.
8. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
9. Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*. Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2011.
10. Derrida, *On Touching*, 60.
11. *Ibid.*, 291.
12. *Ibid.*, 60.
13. Jerry Sandusky, *Touched: The Jerry Sandusky Story*. Champagne: Sports Publishing, 2000, 220.
14. Onora O’Neill, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 156.
15. Bruno Latour, “How to Talk About the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies.” *Body and Society* 10:2-3 (2004): 205-229.
16. Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
17. Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: the Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. Boston: New Science Library, 1987.
18. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 147.
19. Richard Menary, ed., *The Extended Mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010.
20. Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
21. Michael Baime, “This is Your Brain on Mindfulness.” *Shambala Sun*, July 2011. http://www.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu/~britta/SUN_July11_Baime.pdf.
22. Fredric Jameson, *The political unconscious: narrative as a socially symbolic act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.
23. “Entanglement,” Episode 5 of Fox series “Touched,” Aired on 4.12.12.
24. Abigail Bray, “The Question of Intolerance: ‘Corporate Paedophilia’ and Child Sexual Abuse Moral Panics.” *Australian Feminist Studies* 23:7 (Summer 2008): 323-41.

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

Todd May

Anti-humanism isn't what it used to be. When I was younger, anti-humanism was associated with names like Heidegger, Althusser, and Foucault, especially the Foucault of *The Order of Things*. It was a reaction against the privileging of the human perspective, a privileging that placed the human at the center of experience, or gave the human a particular and elevated role to play in shaping the world, or ascribed to the human subject a transparency that allowed it to know itself and determine its future and world according to that knowledge. We might see this, a bit overly simply, as a reaction against the existentialist privileging of subjectivity and the subjective formation of experience. For Heidegger, humanism was the privileging of the human over Being, and the task of thought was to return the human from the lord of Being to its shepherd. For Althusser, as for other structuralists, centering analysis on the human mistakenly ascribed a central role to human or perhaps conscious human control. What was required was an analysis that saw the human as product rather than author of the world's processes. For Foucault, the human was simply a passing historical category, one that, as he announced, "would be erased, like a face drawn at the edge of the sea."¹

More recently, anti-humanism seems less a reaction against humanism and more an attempt to place the human in a wider field. I am tempted to say that this new arena of thought is less an anti-humanism than an a-humanism. Since anti-humanism has been around for a generation or so—that is to say, from when I was younger—it is a less urgent task to push back against the human. What has taken the place of anti-humanism are forms of thought that instead see the human as a something that occurs alongside or within more encompassing perspectives. We might say, again in an overly simple way, that the task of current a-humanist thought is not to displace the centrality of the human but to diminish its theoretical size, or that the new a-humanism does not so much *displace* the human or its significance as *dissolve* it.

Two currents of thought exemplify this. One, with which you will all be familiar, is the fashionable theoretical prominence of evolutionary thought. Evolutionary thought sees the human as the product of a long and contingent history, one that did not aim to produce us, and will undoubtedly produce something else eventually

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

as the result of changing ecological conditions or even perhaps of our own environmental ineptitude. Moreover, in effacing the animal-human distinction—by showing, among other things, that other animals are much smarter than we once thought and that we are much dumber than we once thought—the human is placed back into nature as one biological category alongside others.

At first glance the a-humanism of evolutionary thought might seem similar to Foucault's anti-humanism in *The Order of Things*. After all, don't both see the human, or in Foucault's case "man," as a passing phenomenon, one that emerges out of a pre-human history and will dissolve into a post-human one? This superficial similarity dissolves, however, when we recognize that Foucault is talking here about the category of "man" as a conceptual element of an epistemic formation, while evolutionary thought is talking about actual human beings. Otherwise put, Foucault displaces the significance of human subjectivity through historicizing the category of "man," while evolutionary thought sees human beings themselves as historical phenomena that emerge and dissolve through a particular history. The concept of "man" will not be dissolved; it will be displaced by other concepts in the next epistemic formation.

The other current of thought, not entirely divorced from the first, we might call loosely a kind of systems thought. It places the human within a larger material system that sometimes operates at the sub-human, sometimes at the human, and sometimes at the supra-human or group level. We can find the roots of this perspective in the thought of Gilles Deleuze on the one hand and Donna Haraway's seminal "Cyborg Manifesto" on the other; two interesting contemporary versions of it are to be found in John Protevi's *Political Affect* and Jane Bennett's *Vital Matter*.

Protevi's interest is in how affect works in politics. It is a challenge to theories of politics that are too intellectualist. But his claim is not simply that affect plays an important part in our political behavior. He doesn't want only to say, for instance, that the affect mobilized into white anger played a huge role in my home state of South Carolina's embarrassing itself by voting for Newt Gingrich in the recent primary. His has bigger fish to fry than that. Protevi places the entire concept of affect in a systems view that recognizes affect to operate both beneath and beyond the conscious subject, and in the relations between beneath and beyond. Borrowing not only from Deleuze, but also from biologists like Francisco Varela and cognitive theorists like Antonio Damasio, he develops the concept of *bodies politic*, a concept that can refer to individual bodies, pre-individual parts of bodies, and groups of bodies, whether small-scale or civic. "The concept of bodies politic is meant to capture the emergent—that is, the embodied and embedded—character of subjectivity: the production, bypassing, and surpassing of subjectivity in the imbrications of somatic and social systems."²

The structure of Protevi's system is a rich one, and I can only gesture at it here. Roughly, it asks us to stop thinking of our world as a set of discrete elements in interaction, but rather as a dynamic system of processes in which what appear to be discrete elements are in fact emergent properties arising from the unfolding of the system itself. This dynamic system is not an utter chaos of interaction. There are certain virtual points of the system, called attractors, that draw the process toward them. However, this drawing-toward does not guarantee that the system will arrive there. And even when it does, that arrival does not result in a state at rest. As Deleuze reminds us, the actual is always inhabited by a virtual that can de-stabilize—or in Deleuze's term "deterritorialize"—the system.³ Moreover, systems do not exist in isolation. They are connected to other systems in a variety of ways. This means that any particular system, for example an embodied human being, is subject both to systems exterior to it, for example other human beings, as well as systems in which it is itself an element, for example various bodies politic.

In this approach, it is not difficult to see the role affect might play. At the simplest level, a political leader can appeal to the affective level as well as the cognitive one. But Protevi's systems approach allows for much more sophisticated operations of political affect, such as the contagion of affect across various bodies politic, a contagion that can spread more easily if there are attractors in the system (or systems within the system, system here being a relative term) that are receptive to it. In his book, Protevi offers the example of the case

of Terri Schiavo, whose apparent responsiveness to external stimuli, a responsiveness that in fact was only the random expressions associated with her persistent vegetative state, can induce an affect of concern across a body politic, one that in her case had nothing to do with her actual biological condition.

The a-humanism of Protevi's approach can be seen in his placement of the human inside the dynamic system, and in his claim that the human is subtended and, if I may be allowed the term, supertended by forces that not only make it what it is but that operate across it, at times effacing its ontological integrity. The same can be said of Jane Bennett's recent *Vibrant Matter*, a book that, like Protevi's, embeds the human in a system that not only questions the primacy of human action over matter but more importantly seeks to lend the concept of action to matter that is usually considered inert.

Borrowing Bruno Latour's term *actant*, Bennett sees matter as possessing an efficacy that has often been missed in discussion of the relation of human to environment. The model she criticizes characterizes this relation as one in which the human acts, most animals simply behave (although some act more or less), and the rest of the environment is acted upon. Bennett finds this model to be inadequate on two levels. First, it does not adequately characterize what happens in an environment: that is, it falls short descriptively. There is much more activity that takes place than just that ascribed to the human. Second, it is politically inadequate in that it does not point the way forward toward a proper environmental ethic. That is to say, it is also normatively insufficient. She writes, "to begin to *experience* the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally, is to take a step toward a more ecological sensibility."⁴

With regard to description, Bennett borrows Deleuze's concept of assemblage in order to show that environments are processes of interaction among disparate acting elements. "Assemblages are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant matter of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within."⁵ She offers as an example of such assemblages the 2003 blackout, which was the product not only of human error or a freak weather event—a thunderstorm that struck the electric grid—but an intersection of these with many other elements, including the character of electricity as involving both active and reactive power.

Another example, on which she spends a chapter, is eating. We think of obesity as the product of human decision. In fact, she argues, things are more complex. Fatty foods are of different types. As they enter our bodies they do different things. Omega-3 fatty acids work differently on the body from saturated fats. They may produce improved human moods, which in turn affect how humans act. Saturated fats, since they aren't nutritional, may not satiate human hunger, provoking more eating behavior. In short, food is "an actant in an agentic assemblage that includes among its members my metabolism, cognition, and moral sensibility. Human intentionality is surely an important element of the public that is emerging around the idea of diet, obesity, and food security, but it is not the only actor or necessarily the key operator in it. Food, as a self-altering, dissipative materiality, is also a player."⁶

This view leads to a wider conception of politics than one centered in human activity. Invoking and modifying Dewey's view of a public, Bennett writes, "A public is a cluster of bodies harmed by the actions of others or even by actions born from their own actions as these trans-act: harmed bodies draw near each other and seek to engage in new acts that will restore their power, protect against future harm, or compensate for damage done."⁷ A public, then, is a community of actants modifying one another in transversal and often unpredictable ways. Both Protevi's and Bennett's a-humanisms are politically sensitive. In fact, they take politics as a goal of their analysis. They seek to offer an understanding of politics that opens possibilities that a more humanist politics would not have recognized. The question I want to raise here, which will take the form of a dilemma, is that of what kind of politics can be enacted with an a-humanist understanding. Ultimately, I will claim that a-humanism has its limits, and that much of what we would like to promote under the banner of politics will require an inescapably humanist approach. It is not that we can or must ignore the lessons of contemporary a-humanism. Far from it. Rather, the claim will be that the kind of politics many of us would want to endorse

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

cannot emerge as directly from contemporary a-humanism as we might like, but must instead take it on board in a more indirect fashion.

In order to approach the question of the relation of a-humanism to political activity, let's leave anti-humanism and a-humanism to the side for a moment, and turn toward politics. Most traditional political thought can be classified as falling under the liberal tradition. This tradition, as Iris Marion Young helpfully reminded us, cleaves to the distributive paradigm, which, in her words, "defines social justice as the proper distribution of social benefits and burdens among society's members."⁸ The question for such a politics is, What is owed to whom and why? This owing, of course, does not need to be material. It can be, for instance, the owing of protection for certain rights. So someone like Robert Nozick, for whom any redistribution would be anathema, is still a card-carrying member of the liberal tradition and the distributive paradigm that characterizes it. One might ask here not only what is owed, but to whom it is owed and, in addition, who does the owing? The first question has different answers. For Nozick, for instance, it is everyone who is equally owed liberty. For John Rawls, by contrast, while everyone is owed basic liberties, those who are the least advantaged are also owed whatever resources might assist them in such a way that societies must be arranged to their greatest benefit. The question of who is owed is, of course, inseparable from that of what is owed. If one owes resources to those who need them, then one does not owe anything to those who don't. However, when it comes to who does the owing, everyone in the liberal tradition is agreed. It is the state or one of its aligned institutions that does the owing. The state owes the protection of liberty, the resources or opportunities that are required, the goods that are to be shared or distributed. This should not be surprising. After all, in a society of any size, there will a whole lot of owing going on. And if there is, this places a burden on whatever entity it is that is doing the owing. And in most societies, the natural entity that fills the bill here is the state. Therefore, the liberal tradition, the distributive paradigm, and the focus on the state are of a piece.

The distributive paradigm need not, however, be tied to the state and the liberal tradition. For instance, inasmuch as one takes on board in a political fashion Levinas' ethics of unpayable debt to the other, one would have the makings of a theory of something like distribution. This distribution would not be of anything that could actually be given. That is the point of Levinas' ethics; one is never quits with the other. Instead, it would be a theory of infinite owing, of the kind one sees in moments of Derrida's political thought, for example in his discussions of hospitality or democracy-to-come.

The distributive paradigm as a theory of owing is in one sense of a piece with a-humanism, and in another in tension with it. The way it is of a piece with a-humanism is that it can meet some of the specific demands posited by a-humanist theories. For instance, it appears in evolutionary theory in the question of what is owed to non-human animals. In an intriguing and hopeful development, Spain is considering offering basic rights of protection of life, liberty, and against torture, in keeping with Paola Cavalieri's and Peter Singer's Great Ape Project. This is a classic liberal political strategy, continuous with the history of liberal enfranchisement of previously marginalized groups.

Bennett's a-humanism asks of us that we conceive our relation to ourselves and our environment differently, and act toward the environment out of that conception. Rather than seeing ourselves as stewards of the environment, we should see ourselves as entire environments—of microbes, worms, and organs—nested within other environments. "If [traditional] environmentalism leads to the call for the protection and wise management of an ecosystem that surrounds us, a vital materialism suggests that the task is to engage more strategically with a trenchant materiality that is us as it vies with us in agentic assemblages."⁹ This creates a set of duties for us, but from within the complex we inhabit.

Protevi's case is more complex, since he does not posit particular demands to be met. However, at least one of the elements of his analysis would be amenable to the distributive paradigm, and even state action. The conception of attractors posits certain areas that attract forces to particular structural arrangements. Inasmuch as one can detect those attractors, there could be a duty to shuttle things toward certain attractors and away from

others. For instance, in his discussion of Hurricane Katrina, Protevi traces a convergence of environmental conditions, historical immigration, and racialized fear. One can imagine here a duty to intervene against the racialized fear that, in the case of the hurricane, motivated so many of the false stories about violence and reinforced the efforts of national authorities to obstruct the practices of mutual aid that were rife among those stranded during the days after Katrina struck.

While the liberal conception of owing or of duties may be consonant with contemporary a-humanism, the structure of distribution is not. The distributor is an entity that is in a relation of hierarchy to the distributed. The state gives, the people receive. One might object here that the people also give, in the form of taxation. However, the point of taxation is to allow the state to give. Taxation helps states pay what they owe, whether it be to those in need, the military, or, in contemporary practice, for protection for well-heeled corporations. By contrast, a-humanism conceives a much more nearly egalitarian structure, one that does not privilege any particular entity but instead sees all entities as emergent properties of a system, a system conceived not hierarchically but, in Bennett's term, "horizontally."

This horizontality is in keeping with the goal of a-humanism, which is to undermine the privileges associated with humanist thought. By placing the human, or elements of what is usually associated with the human, into a system, a larger process, hierarchies are flattened out. It is the dynamic system, rather than any particular element in it, that is the object of analysis. This flattening out runs counter to the structure of a distributive approach toward politics, and to that extent counter to the traditional liberal view.

Recently, however, and alongside—although not in tandem with—contemporary a-humanism is an approach to politics that is more horizontal. I should note in passing that this approach is not entirely new. Anarchist thought as it existed in the nineteenth century and has been recently revived as a non-hierarchical approach to politics. However, traditional anarchism is not our concern at the moment. What I am interested in here is the emergence of what might be called a politics of solidarity, one that stresses more egalitarian moments in politics rather than distributive ones. This approach can be seen, although a bit ambivalently, in the work of Alain Badiou. It appears much more clearly in the political thought of Jacques Rancière. It is to him, then, that we turn in order to seek a more horizontal view of politics, one whose structure converges more closely with the structure of contemporary a-humanism. It is also in his thought that we will see mostly clearly the limits of this convergence.

For Rancière, the central element of politics is collective action out of the presupposition of equality, a presupposition that inheres in the action if not in the conscious reflection of those engaged in it. "Equality is not a given that politics then presses into service, an essence embodied in the law or a goal politics sets itself the task of attaining. It is a mere assumption that needs to be discerned within the practices implementing it."¹⁰ We must ask then what it is to act out of equality. But preliminary to that, we must ask what kind of equality is to be presupposed. If people are to act out of the presupposition of equality, what exactly is the equality out of which they act? Here Rancière's answer may seem surprising. The equality out of which they act is the equality of intelligence.

The idea of the equality of intelligence may sound strange to many of us. It certainly did for me the first time I read Rancière. But when he writes of the equality of intelligence, he does not mean that we are equally capable of scoring the same on SAT exams or getting the same scholastic grades (although he does argue that we are all much more capable of that than current social arrangements might lead us to believe). He does not mean that we can all understand advanced quantum theory, thank goodness. What he is after is more pedestrian. We can all talk to one another, reason with one another, and construct meaningful lives on the basis of this reasoning and our own reflections. While our specific intellectual skills may differ from one another, we are all equally capable of using those skills to communicate, to discuss, to make decisions, to take account of the world around us, and to act on the basis of all this. The presupposition of the equality of intelligence is the starting point for all politics. "[O]ur problem," he writes, "isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

under that supposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible—that is, that no opposing truth be proved.”¹¹

The obstacle, of course, is that societies are not arranged on the presupposition of equality. In fact, they are arranged on the contrary presupposition. Social arrangements fall into various hierarchies of inequality. There are those who make decisions governing the lives of others and those who are governed. There are those who do intellectual work and those who do manual work. There are those who contribute to the public space and those who are relegated to the private sphere. And, in the end, there are those who have a part to play in forming and deciding the character of a given society—those who count and whose views are counted—and those who do not. Rancière calls this social ordering the “police.” “Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of place and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution another name. I propose to call it *the police*.”¹² The idea here is that social space is partitioned into specific roles that reflect a variety of presupposed inequalities, and that partitioning is policed (and often self-policed) in order to sustain the partitions.

Given this picture of social arrangements, much of what is called “politics” in everyday language is, for Rancière, not really politics but merely more humane or more efficient policing. For instance, to subsidize the poor with welfare payments is still policing, since it retains the partitioning of social space as it is. There is no challenge to the partitioning itself, merely a blunting of some of its more deleterious effects. This is not to say subsidizing the poor is no better than not subsidizing them. It is instead to keep alive the distinction between policing and real politics.

Politics begins with the challenge to the police order in the name of equality. Here is where the radical nature of Rancière's thought begins to emerge. Equality, in challenging hierarchies, does not seek to offer another, better social partitioning than the one that is the object of challenge. To engage in politics is not to commend one police order as better than another. It is to challenge the concept of partitioning itself. The presupposition of equality does not work by offering a stabilizing set of equal roles for everyone to play; it works by undermining the hierarchies inherent in the very idea of a stabilizing set of roles. “I...propose to reserve the term *politics* for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration—that of the part that has no part...political activity is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogeneous assumption, that of the part who have no part, an assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the contingency of the order, the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being.”¹³

This quick, and undoubtedly inadequate sketch of Rancière's view allows us to see the horizontal character of his view. Rather than a hierarchical division into distributor and recipient, Rancière's thought lays the groundwork for an egalitarian political solidarity. This would seem in keeping with the a-humanism we have been discussing, and in one sense it is. In another sense, though, it is in tension with it. We can see the tension in the previous quote, which concludes that the presupposition of equality is an equality of “any speaking being with any other speaking being.” This character of the presupposition seems to place it squarely within a humanism of the kind that would be anathema to a politics rooted in a-humanism. We must ask, then, what role the idea of the equality of speaking beings plays in Rancière's thought, and whether there is a way to conceive or re-conceive this role in terms that would be more open to a-humanism.

For Rancière, politics is the creation of a collective subject, a *subjectification* as he calls it. This collective subject neither arises from nor produces collective action under the presupposition of equality. It is co-extensive with it. We might say that the action produces the collective subject just as the collective subject produces the action. What is a collective subject? It is a collection of individuals who presuppose the equality of one another in their common action. But in order for that to happen, there has to be the ability for such recognition. Rancière

uses the term “speaking being” to refer to such an ability. I’m not entirely convinced that the connection between speaking and the ability to presuppose another as an equal is as close as his writings indicate that he thinks it is. That is, it does not seem to me to be a necessary condition of the ability to presuppose another to be equal that one is a speaking being. However, at least some higher level cognitive capacities must be in play in order for that ability to be displayed.

Moreover, a collective subject requires more than simply that ability. It requires co-ordinated actions with others on the basis of the expression of that ability. In order to be a member of a collective subject in political action in Rancière’s sense, I must be able to presuppose the equality of another and act alongside that other out of that presupposition. This does not require that I reflectively recognize myself as having that ability or as expressing it in my contribution to collective action. Recall that for Rancière the presupposition of equality in a political action is often “discerned,” not consciously claimed. Nevertheless, beings capable of political action through solidarity must be able to act in a mutual fashion out of that presupposition in order to form the collective subject that solidarity requires.

Sally Scholz, in her book *Political Solidarity*, defines political solidarity, as opposed to what she calls social solidarity or civic solidarity as, “a unity of individuals each responding to a particular situation of injustice, oppression, social vulnerability, or tyranny.”¹⁴ This definition is kin to Rancière’s concept of subjectification, and it captures the bottom-up view of politics that we are articulating here in contrast to the distributive view we saw above. It is also a structural kin to the a-humanism we described at the outset. Political solidarity is the coming together of disparate elements in a horizontal way, an *assemblage* in the term Deleuze uses and Bennett borrows, that gives rise to an emergent state of the system—a collective political movement. (Bennett further notes that in Rancière’s thought, both its fluid and disruptive character parallel her a-humanist vision, although this is a bit wide of the current point.)¹⁵

However, if we turn away from the structural similarities between solidarity and a-humanism, we see an aspect of solidarity that seems to push it into the humanist camp, namely the requirement that participants in a solidarity movement be able to presuppose the equality of others and act in a co-ordinated fashion out of that presupposition. Beings that can do that must share a good bit with humans, or at least be human-like in some important ways. Not only must they have those particular abilities, but if we are to be able to form movements of solidarity with them, they must be able to presuppose and act in a co-ordinated fashion with human beings. This will limit the population of beings capable of solidarity; it recalls to us the restriction Rancière places upon politics as involving the equality of speaking beings.

And so here we have a dilemma. In order to accommodate contemporary a-humanism, we can revert to a more traditional politics that might allow for a distributive approach to the issues a-humanism raises. However, this carries with it all the problems of distributive approaches and in addition the problem that it is structurally divergent from the recognition to which a-humanism seeks to call our attention. On the other hand, we can embrace a more horizontal politics of equality, a politics of solidarity, but at the cost of limiting the participants in that solidarity to those who display particular human or human-like characteristics.

For the remainder of this paper, I would like to press on the second half of this dilemma. I believe there is much merit in solidarity approaches to politics, and I would like to investigate how far this solidarity might extend. In order to do so, I will take up the possibility of solidarity with non-human animals as a test case. This will allow us to see both the possibilities and limitations inherent in seeking to combine solidarity with a-humanism. And in order to perform this test case, I will turn briefly to Donna Haraway’s *When Species Meet* and Vicki Hearne’s seminal article “A Walk with Washoe: How Far Can We Go?” The literature of human/non-human interaction is vast, and far beyond my own expertise. My hope is that a glance at these two pieces will at least give us entry into the discussion of the relationship between humanism and solidarity.

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

When Species Meet is an extended meditation on the kinds of relationships humans have with non-human animals, from experimental testing to placing videocams on animals to human/animal sport. Its aim is not to prescribe a specific form of engagement between human and non-human animals, but instead to display the various ways in which we are intertwined with our living kin. Along the way, however, Haraway makes particular suggestions, as when she asks us to think of laboratory animals not so much as objects of intervention, even if rights-bearing ones, but as workers. She writes, "My suspicion is that we might nurture responsibility with and for other animals better by plumbing the category of labor more than the category of rights, with its inevitable preoccupation with similarity, analogy, calculation, and honorary membership in the expanded abstraction of the Human."¹⁶ This suggestion is in line with her broader effort to press us to expand our thought to reach out and capture our relationships with other animals, rather than conceptually narrowing those relationships to the current confines of our thought.

This project comes out clearly in her long discussion of the relationship she has with her dog Cayenne Pepper during the human/canine sport called "agility." Here the recognition of her dog's advanced skills meshing with the trust required between her and Cayenne Pepper yields a complex sporting relationship that is necessary in order to prevail in the game. This complex relationship must be developed between the particular beings in the game. It cannot be mapped out in advance. What it requires first and foremost, however, is abandoning preconceived notions of an abyss that separates the human from the non-human. "If we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming *with*—in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake."¹⁷

Vicki Hearne is also concerned with undermining preconceived notions of human/non-human relationships, but from another angle. She points out that we often presuppose the ability to form relationships with other animals to lie along an evolutionary continuum. This would mean that we are capable of having the deepest relationships with our closest evolutionary relatives, the great apes. This view is reinforced by the idea that chimpanzees seem to be able to communicate in language. The example she appeals to is that of the chimp Washoe, who was the first chimpanzee to be taught American Sign Language. However, mutual linguistic communication is not the only way in which relationships can develop. After all, while chimpanzees can communicate, it is difficult with most chimps to develop the kind of trust we associate with the best forms of domestication.

With dogs, however, the situation is different. In a gesture similar to that of Haraway's, Hearne shows us how training can integrate dogs into a group that includes humans and canines more readily than can be had with most great apes. This integration need not be one that is entirely that of canine subservience, although it does require integration of the dog into human culture more than the other way around. She insists, however, that beings capable of such integration display a moral capacity that cannot be reduced to the intellectual capacity associated with the ability to speak a language. "Command of language is a clue we use with one another, but command of language turns out to be useless without respect for language. If I respect your words that means that I give myself to responding meaningfully to what you say."¹⁸ The ability to speak may be more accurately ascribed to chimpanzees, but the ability to form a moral community with humans may lie more deeply with dogs.

Both Hearne and Haraway are concerned to show the complexity of human/non-human interaction. They pointedly display that the kinds of relationships we can have with other animals are deeper and more variegated than we have thought. This is in keeping not only with their experiences but with recent biological and evolutionary research that has shown the previously unrevealed genius of various non-human species. Once we jettison what Haraway calls "human exceptionalism," we can open ourselves to the possibility of more interesting and more engaged relationships with other species.

But can any of this amount to political solidarity? Does it yield the possibility of collective action under the common presupposition of equality or "a unity of individuals each responding to a particular situation of

injustice, oppression, social vulnerability, or tyranny”? There is some form of solidarity, to be sure. There is some kind of unity between human and non-human animal. This unity is the product of an understanding that emerges between the two, an understanding that may have cognitive elements but is not reducible to them. It is a unity that forms a bond, and that bond in turn may lead to behavior like mutual protection, affection, tighter co-ordination of behavior. But it does not seem to lead to the political solidarity envisioned by Rancière. As Bennett notes, “my conatus will not let me ‘horizontalize’ the world completely.”¹⁹

Sally Scholz contrasts what she calls social solidarity with political solidarity. She writes that, “the solidarity that victims of domestic abuse share with each other is not equivalent to the solidarity of a social activist movement aimed at changing a culture of abuse. In both cases, the initial sense of solidarity marks the bonds of a community united by some shared characteristic or similarity (social solidarity) while the second sort of solidarity indicates political activism aimed at social change (political solidarity).”²⁰ What can occur between humans and other animals, particularly when humans of the sensitivity of a Donna Haraway or a Vicki Hearne are involved, is more like social than political solidarity. There can be a community bound by sharing, but not a collective action requiring the presupposition of equality.

This does not mean that humans must consider non-humans as less than equal. That is an entirely different issue, one that I cannot address here. It means only that there cannot be the type of recognition of mutual equality that can allow for political coordination of the type that Rancière marks when he speaks of the equality of speaking beings.

There seem to be at least two lessons to be drawn from this. The first is that solidarity may stretch more widely than those in the sway of the distributive paradigm can see. The philosopher Bernard Williams, in his article “The Human Prejudice,” writes that “the only moral question for us [humans] is how we should *treat* them [i.e. non-human animals].”²¹ Given what we have just seen, this seems to me to be mistaken. There are other moral questions as well. As Hearne and Haraway have shown, there are moral questions not only of how we treat other animals but more broadly of how we relate to them. There are questions of what kind of bonds we should have with them, questions of how we should encounter them, and questions of how we should view them.

And this last question, the question of how we should view them, leads to the second lesson, and back to contemporary a-humanism. In its attempt to place the human within a wider systemic nexus, the work of Protevi and Bennett and others shows us how to see ourselves as part of a larger whole rather than as its master or privileged character. If I may be permitted an ugly neologism, it horizontalizes our perspective, allowing us more readily to become engaged with the world rather than to see it lying at our cognitive feet. As Bennett puts the point, “The political goal of a vital materialism is not the perfect equality of actants, but a polity with more channels of communication between members.”²² Among the important contributions that a-humanism may offer is to allow us to see ourselves as part of a natural order in such a way that we can look across rather than down on other beings. Given our current treatment of the environment and non-human animals, this is not a little.

However, although not a little, it does not amount to political solidarity. Contemporary a-humanism sits uneasily with political solidarity, a form of political action that cannot cut its moorings to humanism. This is not because it somehow involves a political failure, no more than contemporary a-humanism involves one because it does not issue out into political solidarity. Ultimately, there may be a level of irreconcilability between contemporary a-humanism and political solidarity. They are not entirely opposed. They can approach each other. But in the end they do not touch.

This leaves us with our paradox. On the one hand, if we embrace the distributive paradigm for politics, we can accord certain elements or aspects of the environment or certain non-human animals a type of justice. The cost of this is that of losing the perspective and insights that contemporary a-humanism lends us, to violate the horizontal structural approach it commends, and to engage in all of the problems that have been cited for

HUMANISM AND SOLIDARITY

distributive approaches to justice. On the other hand, if we embrace an approach roughly of the type Rancière recommends, we gain on a variety of political fronts but cannot realize at the level of political solidarity the horizontality contemporary a-humanism seeks. Political solidarity must yield, at some point, to a more distributive approach. While Williams may be mistaken in claiming that the only moral question in relation to other animals is how to treat them, he would not be mistaken in thinking it an important one.

How troubling is this paradox? That depends on how deep one's commitment to jettisoning humanism is. If humanism is to be completely overthrown, then we must overthrow a politics of solidarity with it. Alternatively, if we want to take on board the lessons of contemporary a-humanism without abandoning a politics of solidarity, then our task is twofold. First, we must recognize the limits—whatever they may be—of a-humanism for political solidarity. Second, and on the other hand, we must do our best to create routes of solidarity with other beings, and perhaps especially other animals. (I have left the issue of cyborgs out of the discussion, for reasons both of space and expertise, the latter having at least something to do with personal tendencies toward the luddite.) That solidarity can inform our practices, as can contemporary a-humanism. And perhaps someday we might be able to move toward something like a political solidarity that transcends the human. But until then we must live with our limitations, both theoretical and political, and allow them to impose on us a kind of modesty that, after all, would not be entirely foreign to contemporary a-humanism itself.

TODD MAY is Class of 1941 Memorial Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Clemenson University.

NOTES

I want to thank John Protevi and Jane Bennett for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

1. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Random House, 1970 [1966], 387.
2. John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 33.
3. Protevi distinguishes several types of de-territorialization: a relative de-territorialization that moves the system from one attractor to another, a deeper but still relative de-territorialization that creates new attractors, and an absolute de-territorialization that resists the pull of attractors in favor of something more nomadic.
4. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, 10.
5. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23-24.
6. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 51.
7. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 101.
8. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 16.
9. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 111.
10. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, 33.
11. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Trans. Kristin Ross. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991, 46.
12. Rancière, *Disagreement*, 28.
13. Rancière, *Disagreement*, 29-30.
14. Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2008, 51.
15. See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 106-7.
16. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 73.
17. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 244.
18. Vicki Hearne, "A Walk with Washoe? How Far Can We Go?" *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name*. New York: Knopf, 1986, 20.
19. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 104.
20. Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 5.
21. Bernard Williams, "The Human Prejudice." *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 141.
22. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 104.

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH: NIETZSCHE AND D.H. LAWRENCE

Keith Ansell-Pearson

It is not the courage of the man smiling contemptuously in the face of death that will save us all from death. It is the courage which yields itself to the perfect suggestion from within. When a man yields himself implicitly to the suggestion which transcends him, when he accepts gently and honourably his own creative fate, he is beautiful...

D. H. Lawrence, "The Reality of Peace"

Still is the bottom of my sea: who could guess that it hides sportive monsters!

Imperturbable is my depth: but it glitters with swimming riddles and laughter.

Today I saw a sublime man, a solemn man, a penitent of the spirit: oh, how my soul laughed at his ugliness!...

Hung with ugly truths, the booty of his hunt, and rich in torn clothes; many thorns too, hung on him—but I saw no rose.

As yet he has not learned of laughter and beauty. This huntsman returned gloomily from the forest of knowledge.

He returned home from the fight with wild beasts: but a wild beast still gazes out of his seriousness—a beast that has not been overcome!...

He must unlearn his heroic will, too: he should be an exalted man and not only a sublime one—the ether itself should raise him up, the will-less one!...

It is precisely to the hero that beauty is the most difficult of all things. Beauty is unattainable to all violent wills...

When power grows gracious and descends into the visible: I call such descending beauty...

Nietzsche, "Of the Sublime Men", *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of his life, and facing the certainty of his imminent end, Derrida said, in a moment of genuine frankness, he had not yet learned how to reconcile himself to death, in particular, to his own death. This is a remarkable confession coming from a philosopher and a great one at that. But surely it is true that it is virtually impossible to prepare for death in the sense that all those things that enable us to plan for the future, such as departure schedules, maps, guides, dictionaries, manuals, lose all meaning when we face the prospect of our death.¹ Death is surely that which reveals life's difficult and uncomfortable side. In this essay I want to examine Nietzsche and Lawrence on matters of life and death. In particular I want to show the importance of the need to reconcile ourselves to our inevitable fate, that is, to the fact of our death. Since its beginnings it has been philosophy's dream to either comprehend death or to conquer the fear of death. However, what matters is the kind of comprehension of death we develop and cultivate. We don't wish to be like Plato and seek in death true life, or eternal life, and in which an immortal soul is our access to the real truth about life.

According to one commentator, from beginning to end Nietzsche's work is a reflection on the passing of human life and how it gives rise to new things, in short, a reflection on time.² And, of course we know that death is an essential dimension of this passing of life and the passage of time. In fact, death is a radical interruption of the continuity or flow of life and our confrontation with death is one that puts us before a wall of incomprehension and, for some, even a mystery. I appeal to Lawrence as the thinker who powerfully shows us not only how it is possible to dissolve this mystery but why it is necessary to do so. Lawrence's position is that we cannot enslave ourselves to a mystery. His exploration of death is, ultimately, as we shall see, of a Spinozist inspiration. I bring Nietzsche and Lawrence into rapport because I think both are in search of beauty, including the beauty of knowledge and of understanding. Did Nietzsche not speak of the need to make of knowledge the most powerful affect and did he not write out of the passion of knowledge? Perhaps nowhere is the light of this knowledge needed more than with regard to the matter of death.

NIETZSCHE'S EPICUREAN ATTACHMENT TO LIFE

One thing is for certain in life: we form a brotherhood of death if not a brotherhood of anything else. Death is certainly the end of life but far from being its goal. Death is a stupid fact of life, and yet it is possible to die proudly in the name of the love of life. We should encourage human beings to think much more about life than they do about death, and so as to deprive life of much of its morbidity. We ought to practise the "rational" and "voluntary" death. We need to learn how to transform a stupid physiological fact into a moral necessity, to learn to know to die at the right time and to say "No" when the conditions of life are such that it's no longer right or meaningful to say "Yes". If death is taught by some, perhaps as a slow suicide of the body and the will, then there are those to whom departure from life should be preached! As concerns these consumptives of the soul, who are hardly born before they begin to die and who long for teachings of weariness and renunciation, we should approve of their wish to be dead, guarding against awakening these dead souls and damaging their living coffins.

These are *some* of the thoughts Nietzsche has about death in his writings. However, Nietzsche would not have us dwell unnecessarily on death. For Schopenhauer philosophy is motivated by wonder and astonishment at the world, quickly followed by dismay: wonder at the world that it is and at its contingency, and then recognition of its dreadful character. Philosophy, he says, "starts with a minor chord."³ Philosophical astonishment is qualified by the recognition of wickedness, evil, and death as essential features of the world: "Not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a miserable and melancholy world..."⁴ By contrast, Nietzsche tells that he would rather have human beings think about life than death: "It makes me happy that human beings do not want at all to think the thought of death! I should like very much to do something that would make the thought of life even a hundred times more appealing to them."⁵ Indeed, it is a striking feature of Nietzsche's texts how little there is in them on the subject of death. There are key moments in a text where the topic is deliberately not even mentioned or referred to. For Nietzsche, there is among human beings no greater banality than death, with

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

birth second in line and then followed by marriage.⁶ Of course, he recognizes that these are little tragi-comedies that in each of their performances are played by ever new actors, and with regards to the arts of living, including dying, everything depends on the new actors and little on the play.

In her *Therapy of Desire* Martha Nussbaum explains well the nature of Epicurus's intervention in a society "that values money and luxury above the health of the soul", and in which "every enterprise is poisoned by the fear of death, a fear that will not let any of its members taste any stable joy, but turns them into the grovelling slaves of corrupt religious teachers."⁷ As Lucretius has it:

...fear of death
Induces hate of life and light, and men
Are so depressed that they destroy themselves
Having forgotten that this very fear
Was the first cause and source of all their woe.⁸

In his middle period Nietzsche picks up the Epicurean doctrine on death and puts it to critical effect. For Nietzsche our religions and moralities do not wed us to the earth as a site of dwelling and thinking; rather, we consider ourselves "too good and too significant for the earth", as if we were paying it only a passing visit. The "proud sufferer" has thus become in the course of human development the highest type of human being that is revered.⁹ Nietzsche clearly wishes to see much, if not all of this, overturned, but in the name of what and for what ends? Aphorism 501 from *Dawn*, entitled "Mortal souls", in which Nietzsche suggests that it is a question of relearning both knowledge and the human, including human time as mortal time, offers a partial clarification. In fact, several aphorisms in the book consider humanity's misguided dream of an immortal existence. *Dawn* 211 is an especially witty aphorism in which Nietzsche considers the impertinence of the dream. He notes that the actual existence of a single immortal human being would be enough to drive everyone else on earth into a rampage of death and suicide out of being sick and tired of it! He adds:

And you earth inhabitants with your mini-notions of a few thousand mini-minutes of time want to be an eternal nuisance to eternal, universal existence! Is there anything more impertinent!¹⁰

The wiser strategy is for us to take more seriously the creature that lives typically for seventy years and give it back the actual time it has hitherto denied itself. Nietzsche is inviting us to replace the sublime dream of immortality with a new sobriety toward existence, as this aphorism makes clear:

With regard to knowledge (*Erkenntniss*) the most useful accomplishment is perhaps: that the belief in the immortality of the soul has been abandoned. Now humanity is allowed to wait; now it no longer needs to rush headlong into things and choke down half-examined ideas as formerly it was forced to do. For in those days the salvation of poor 'eternal souls' depended on the extent of their knowledge acquired during a short lifetime; they had to *make a decision* overnight—"knowledge" took on a dreadful importance.¹¹

Nietzsche argues that we are now in a new situation with regard to knowledge and as a result we can conquer anew our courage for making mistakes, for experimentation, and for accepting things provisionally. Without the sanction of the old moralities and religions individuals and entire generations "can now fix their eyes on tasks of a vastness that would to earlier ages have seemed madness."¹²

Nietzsche wants two things: the first is for the certain prospect of death to introduce into every life a precious and sweet-smelling drop of levity, as opposed to an ill-tasting drop of poison that makes all life appear repulsive;¹³ and, second, what he radically calls the "wise regulation and disposal of death", and as something which belongs to the morality of the future, a morality that at present is ungraspable and immoral sounding but which can provide humanity with a new dawn of which, he writes, "it must be an indescribable joy to gaze."¹⁴

Nietzsche does, however, appreciate that there will be times when we need to think about death and the moment will come when we may even be able to prepare for our own death. The task is to die proudly, Nietzsche provocatively puts it, where one can no longer live proudly. For Nietzsche, it is for “love of *life*” that one should want death to be “different, free, conscious, no accident, no ambush...”¹⁵ Here one elects to die “brightly and joyfully”, and, moreover, “among children and witnesses: so that a true leave-taking is still possible, when the one who is taking his leave *is still there*.”¹⁶ Here there can take place a true assessment of life’s achievements and aspirations, offering “a *summation* of life”. All this can take place, Nietzsche holds, “in contrast to the pitiful and ghastly comedy which Christianity has made of the hour of death.”¹⁷ He notes that whilst today we have a new sensibility with respect to torments of the body—we cry with indignation and rage whenever something inflicts torment on another’s body, be it a person or an animal—we have not yet extended such a sensibility to torments of the soul. This is another reason for his objection to Christianity, which is the supreme religion when it comes to such torments. Christianity, he claims, has put these torments to use to an unprecedented and shocking degree. The Christian religion has succeeded in making of the earth a wretched place, merely by erecting the crucifix everywhere, thereby branding the earth as the place “where the righteous are *tortured* to death!”¹⁸ It is Christianity that has turned the deathbed into a bed of torment, and against which Nietzsche espouses the virtue of the rational or free death: “Natural death”, he writes, “is the suicide of nature, that is to say the annihilation of the rational being by the irrational to which it is tied.”¹⁹

Nietzsche champions Epicurus as a figure who has sought to show mankind how it can conquer its fears of death. Identifying the goal of a good life with the removal of mental and physical pain, Epicureans place “the eradication of the fears of death at the very heart of their ethical project.”²⁰ As a “therapy of anguish” Epicureanism is a philosophy that aims to procure peace of mind, and an essential task here is to liberate the mind from its irrational fear of death. It seeks to do this by showing that the soul does not survive the body and that death is not and cannot be an event within life. For Nietzsche the teaching of Epicurus triumphs anew in the guise of modern science which has rejected “any other representation of death and any life beyond it.”²¹ Nietzsche writes contra the yearning for immortality. In *Dawn* 72 he writes that we are in the process of renouncing our concern with the “after-death”—this is where the teaching of Epicurus triumphs anew—and in *Dawn* 501 he writes that the most useful accomplishment with regard to the advancement of knowledge resides in the giving up of the belief in the immortality of the soul. The renunciation of this belief prepares the way for a new era of human experimentation through the passionate pursuit of knowledge (Nietzsche writes of this “passion of knowledge” in *Dawn* 429). Nietzsche, then, wishes us to give up on the desire for an immortal existence. He does not present his case against immortality in typical terms of standard philosophical argument but, as with almost all the topics he covers, he expresses his “opinions” on things (as in “assorted opinions and maxims”) and uses wit and insight to support his viewpoints and opinions.

Nietzsche’s thinking on death is informed by a number of Epicurean commitments and rests on an Epicurean-inspired affirmation of life. For Nietzsche, Epicurus is the inventor of what he calls “heroic-idyllic philosophizing”²² and, along with the Stoic Epictetus, he is a philosopher in whom wisdom assumes bodily form.²³ It is heroic because conquering the fear of death is involved and the human being has the potential to walk on the earth as a god, living a blessed life, and idyllic obviously because Epicurus philosophised, calmly and serenely, and away from the crowd, in a garden. In *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche writes of a “*refined heroism*” “which disdains to offer itself to the veneration of the great masses...and goes silently through the world and out of the world.”²⁴ This is deeply Epicurean in inspiration: as noted, Epicurus taught that one should die as if one had never lived.

Writing in 1878 the French philosopher, Jean-Marie Guyau, hailed at the time as the “Spinoza of France,” portrayed Epicurus as the original free spirit: “Still today it is the spirit of old Epicurus who, combined with new doctrines, works away at and undermines Christianity.”²⁵ In Germany Friedrich Albert Lange’s *History of Materialism* of 1866, a text that deeply impressed the young Nietzsche, was largely responsible for the revival of interest in Epicurus. Lange devoted a chapter to Epicurus and a separate chapter to Lucretius’s poem, *On the Nature of the Universe* (*De Rerum Natura*).²⁶ The aim of the explanation of nature sought by Epicurus “is

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

to free us from fear and anxiety.”²⁷ As Lange notes, in Epicurus physics is placed in the service of ethics: “The mere historical knowledge of natural events, without a knowledge of causes, is valueless; for it does not free us from fear nor lift us upon superstition. The more causes of change we have discovered, the more we shall attain the calmness of contemplation; and it cannot be supposed that this inquiry can be without result upon our happiness.”²⁸ If events can be explained in accordance with universal laws, with effects attributable to natural causes, an important goal of philosophy can be attained and secured, chiefly liberation from fear and anxiety. Moreover, if peace of soul and freedom from pain are the only enduring pleasures, then these constitute the true aim of existence, including the philosophical endeavour.

As one commentator puts it, Epicurus “distilled the major theses of his ethical teaching into a simple fourfold remedy” known as the *tetrapharmakos*: (a) God should not concern us; (b) death is not to be feared; (c) what is good is easy to obtain; (d) what is bad is easily avoided.²⁹ We can secure the goal or *telos* of a human life by incorporating these four views and altering our view of the world accordingly. And, removing “the fear of death...is an essential step towards the goal.” For Epicureans it is vitally important we think about death correctly or adequately, since it is an integral part of what it is to live a good life: “Our conceptions of the value of life and the nature of death are inseparable. In that case, we learn not to stop focusing on death, but to stop thinking about it in the wrong way.”³⁰ Implicit in this conception is the idea that one can stop fearing death by thinking clearly and adequately. For Epicurus the fear of death emanates from false opinions and false value judgments, and the therapeutic task of improvement is an intellectualist one. According to Pierre Hadot, overcoming our fear of death is also a “spiritual exercise.”³¹

The key goal for Epicurus is to liberate the body from pain and remove disturbances from the soul. Central to his counsel is the thought that we need to accustom ourselves to believing that death is nothing to us; our longing for immortality needs to be removed: “...there is nothing fearful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life.”³² What appears to be the most frightening of bad things should be nothing to us, “since when we exist, death is not yet present, and when death is present, then we do not exist.”³³ The wise human being “neither rejects life nor fears death. For living does not offend him, nor does he believe not living to be something bad.”³⁴ If, as Epicurus supposes, everything good and bad consists in sense-experience, then death is simply the privation of sense-experience. The goal of philosophical training, then, is freedom from disturbance and anxiety in which we reach a state of *ataraxia* or psychic tranquillity.³⁵

If, as Hadot has suggested, philosophical therapeutics is centred on a concern with the healing of our own lives so as to return us to the joy of existing,³⁶ then, at least in the texts of his middle period (1878-82), Nietzsche can be seen to be an heir to this ancient tradition. Indeed, if there is one crucial component to Nietzsche’s philosophical therapeutics in the texts of his middle period that he keeps returning to again and again it is the need for spiritual joyfulness and the task of cultivating in ourselves, after centuries of training by morality and religion, the joy in existing. In the final aphorism of *The Wanderer and his Shadow* Nietzsche writes, for example:

Only the *ennobled human being* may be given freedom of spirit; to him alone does *alleviation of life* draw near and salve his wounds; only he may say that he lives for the sake of joy (*Freudigkeit*) and for the sake of no further goal...³⁷

Nietzsche recognizes in Epicurus what he calls in one note a “refined heroism,” and here the thought seems to centre on conquering the fear of death, of which Nietzsche says he has little.³⁸ For Epicurus the study of nature should make human beings modest and self-sufficient, taking pride in the good that lies in themselves, not in their estate, and as opposed to the display of learning coveted by the rabble.³⁹

In his middle period, then, Epicurus is an attractive figure for Nietzsche because of the emphasis on a modest lifestyle, the attention given to the care of self, and also because he conceives philosophy not as a theoretical discourse but one that, first and foremost, is a kind of practical activity aimed at the attainment of eudemonia

or the flourishing life.⁴⁰ Nietzsche wants free spirits to take pleasure in existence, involving taking pleasure in themselves and in friendship, and in simple, modest living.

Nietzsche is keen, then, to encourage human beings to cultivate an attitude towards existence in which they accept their mortality and attain a new serenity about their dwelling on the earth, to conquer unjustified fears, and to reinstitute the role played by chance and chance events in the world and in human existence.⁴¹ As Hadot notes, for the Epicurean sage the world is the product of chance, not divine intervention, and this brings with it pleasure and peace of mind, freeing him from an unreasonable fear of the gods and allowing him to consider each moment as an unexpected miracle. Each moment of existence can be greeted with immense gratitude.⁴² Indeed, as Graham Parkes has noted, Nietzsche expresses in his writings, especially *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a kind of gratitude with respect to life that is “reminiscent of Epicurus,” with meditation cultivating “a keen appreciation of the ‘once-only’ character of existence in a radically contingent universe.”⁴³ Parkes cites from section 5 of “Old and New Law-Tablets” in *Zarathustra*: “Thus does the nature of noble souls wish it: they want to have nothing for free, and least of all life. Whoever is of the rabble wants to live for free: we others, however, to whom life has given itself—we are always wondering *what we can best give in return!*”

We are to accord value to the slightest moment of existence. As Hadot has pointed out, Epicurus’s teaching seeks to transform our relationship to time, in which we become focused on the present moment, and this transformation presupposes a quite specific conception of pleasure, “according to which the quality of pleasure depends neither on the quantity of desires it satisfies, nor on the length of time it lasts.”⁴⁴ As Guyau notes, true pleasure bears its infinity within itself, and as Nietzsche teaches the time of the moment is “eternity”, an eternity reclaimed “for the fair earth”, as Marcuse put it.⁴⁵ As Hadot puts it, the “secret” of Epicurean joy and serenity “is to live each instant as if it were the last, but also as if it were the first”. In this way we “experience the same grateful astonishment when we accept the instant as though it were unexpected, or by greeting it as entirely new...”⁴⁶ Metrodorus memorably expressed the wisdom one might acquire by living the Epicurean life: “Remember that, born a mortal, with a limited life-span, you have risen up in soul to eternity and the infinity of things, and that you have seen all that has been and all that shall be.”⁴⁷

But is Epicureanism a philosophy of life-affirmation, or does it simply depict a universe of atoms and the void that is indifferent to life and in which freedom consists in little more than attaining a contemplative tranquillity with respect to this fact? As Lawrence observes in an Epicurean moment, the universe has no why or wherefore but at all times simply is. Indeed, we cannot even say what it is as it is “unto itself”.⁴⁸ As James Porter notes, life has no intrinsic value for Epicurus, but does this mean that life is an indifferent for him?⁴⁹ When viewed from a third-person point of view, that is, the cosmological one (of atoms and the void), then life has no claim on us; rather, it discloses to us that “we are nothing more than physical entities, mere fortuitous combinations of matter which reduce to their elements upon disbanding.”⁵⁰ From the viewpoint of nature, then, life is an indifferent. The matter changes, Porter argues, when we take a first-person perspective on life, that is, the world of sensations, desires, and needs, or of nature in its human aspect. Here we find that life by definition is not indifferent but a meaningful source of value. As Porter puts it, the issue facing the Epicurean philosopher “is to decide just what this value is and where it lies.”⁵¹ The argument is that life is a source of human pleasure and thus of moral happiness, involving a strong attachment. Porter argues that once we connect pleasure to life it is possible to show that Epicurus has a philosophy of life in addition to a philosophy of death and that, in fact, it is this emphasis on life and not death that dominates his writings.

Porter goes on to note that the “apparent pessimism” of the doctrine “clashes with the joy and even fascination with life” that are found in the Epicurean perception of the world.⁵² The task is to account for this disparity and the urgent question to focus on is that of what makes creatures cling to life and remain attached to it. We can rule out, he thinks, the fear of death since such a fear produces phantasms of life (such as ideas of the afterlife) and does not prolong or propagate life itself. He thinks that love of life, in the form of an attachment to life, precedes the fear of death, operating at a primitive level of psychic attachment, “and may even precede” what he takes to be the most primitive root fear present in the fear of death, that of the fear of the blank void or *horror*

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

vacui. Furthermore, it cannot be supposed that what makes us cling to life is constant novelty since this seems to be a consequence of the love of life and not its cause. The Epicurean affirmation of life, the practise of its love, consists in attending to and enjoying the present feelings or sensations of life, that is, living in the here and now without desire and expectation and in a condition of gratitude. As Porter puts it, "To love life is to be in an unqualified state of affirmation about what lies most immediately to hand: it is the pleasure, the unalloyed passion, and even thrill, of living itself."⁵³ For Epicurus, then, a correct understanding of our mortality is one that should lead to the enjoyment of this mortal life. The Epicurean love of life "*is a love of mortal life* and not a love of life abstracted from death, much less of immortal life."⁵⁴ Moreover, this Epicurean love of life is not a longing for life, but "rather an immediate expression of what is dear about life, what is most life worthy in life," and which makes it something fragile and easily ruptured.⁵⁵

Nietzsche is capable of arresting psychological insight into Epicurus. In 1882, in *The Gay Science*, he writes, for example:

I see his eyes gaze upon a wide, white sea, across rocks at the shore that are bathed in sunlight, while large and small animals are playing in this light, as secure and calm as the light and his eyes. Such happiness could be invented only by a man who was suffering continually. It is the happiness of eyes that have seen the sea of existence become calm, and now they can never weary of the surface and of the many hues of this tender, shuddering skin of the sea. Never before has voluptuousness (*Wollust*) been so modest.⁵⁶

As Monika Langer has recently noted in her interpretation of this aphorism, although clearly a paean of sorts to Epicurus, Nietzsche does not elaborate on the origin or nature of his happiness and suffering, but rather tacitly encourages the reader to consider various possibilities. In the end she argues that Nietzsche is reading Epicurus as a figure who whilst standing securely on firm ground, gazes at the sea and is able to enjoy the possibility of uncertainty it offers. She writes, "Literally and figuratively he can float on the sea."⁵⁷ Epicurus is depicted as the antithesis of modernity's shipwrecked man since such is his liberation and serenity he can "chart his course or simply set sail and let the wind determine his way."⁵⁸ Although he might suffer shipwreck and drown or survive he does not live in fear of dangers and hazards: "In taking to the sea he might lose his bearings and even his mind." In contrast to modern man who is keen to leave behind the insecurity of the sea for the safety of dry land, "Epicurus delights in the ever present possibility of leaving that secure land for the perils of the sea."⁵⁹

This interpretation misses the essential insight Nietzsche is developing in the aphorism. Rather than suggesting that the sea calls for further and continued exploration, hiding seductive dangers that Epicurus would not be afraid of, Nietzsche seems to hold to the view that Epicurus is the seasoned traveller of the soul who has no desire to travel anymore and for whom the meaning of the sea has changed. Rather than serving as a means of transportation or something that beckons us towards other shores, the sea has become an object of contemplation in the here and now. It is something to be looked at for its own sake and in a way that discloses its infinite nuances and colours. One might describe this in Heidegger's terms, with its mode of being changed from the ready-to-hand (either threatening or alluring, but in both cases on the background of a form of instrumentalization, such as exploration) to something more akin to the present-at-hand, except that here the disclosing attitude is not one of theoretical detachment but a sensitivity that entails a special receptivity that is hard to attain and maintain.⁶⁰ One might even invoke *Gelassenheit* to define the experience.

The scene Nietzsche depicts in the aphorism is one of Epicurean illumination or enlightenment: Epicurus is not estranged from nature and recognizes his kinship with animals and the elements of nature. Rather than deploying his contemplation of the sea to bolster his own ego (thinking of his own safety or taking pride in fearlessness), Epicurus abandons his sense of self altogether so that he can open himself up to the sea of existence, and perhaps here we find an alternative to Dionysian ecstasy, entailing a more peaceful and less grandiose loss of the self into the *Ur-Eine*. Unlike Christ, Epicurus does not walk on the water but floats serenely on the sea, buoyed up by it and even cradled by it, happy with the gifts life has to offer, and existing

beyond fear and anxiety even though he is opening himself up to troubling realities, such as the approach of death and his personal extinction: “We are born once and cannot be born twice, but we must be no more for all time.”⁶¹

Nietzsche finds in Epicurus a victory over pessimism in which “death becomes the last celebration of a life which is constantly embellished.”⁶² This last of the Greek philosophers “teaches the joy of living in the midst of a world in decay and where all moral doctrines preach suffering.”⁶³ As Richard Roos puts it, “The example of Epicurus teaches that a life filled with pain and renunciation prepares one to savour the little joys of the everyday better. Relinquishing Dionysian intoxication, Nietzsche becomes a student of this master of moderate pleasures and careful dosages.”⁶⁴ Like Epicurus, then, Nietzsche seeks to live and philosophize away from the masses, without masters or gods, idyllically and heroically. Here we encounter that “refined heroism” that accepts death without fear and chooses not to even speak about it.

We have to acknowledge that there are gaps, potentially significant ones, in Nietzsche’s appreciation of Epicureanism as a philosophy of life and death. For example, he never subjects to critical analysis the effectiveness of Epicurus’s arguments but simply assumes that the rediscovery of the certainty of death within modern science, along with the demise of the Christian afterlife, is sufficient to eliminate mortality as a source of anguish. But the triumph of the Epicurean view that we are mortal and need not live in fear of an after-life is not necessarily a triumph for the Epicurean view that we should not fear death: one can eliminate fear of the after-life by exposing it as a myth, but this does not liberate us from the fear of extinction. To his great credit this is something Schopenhauer clearly appreciated: our fear of death is not over the pain but firmly centred on the fact of our personal extinction.⁶⁵ Nietzsche does not make it clear whether he thinks the Epicurean arguments suffice to console us for the fact of our mortality, though there are places in his corpus, such as book five of *Dawn*, where he appears to be offering new post-religious consolations, such as the consolation we can gain from the recognition that as experimental free spirits the sacrifices we make of our lives to knowledge may lead to a more enlightened humanity in the future (others may prosper where we have not been able to).

I now want to shift perspective and examine Lawrence on death, especially on the need to understand death. Here my question is a simple and modest one: what is the nature or character of this “understanding”? My view is that Lawrence makes a remarkable contribution to our thinking of death.

LAWRENCE’S ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND DEATH

Let’s now ask a seemingly simple question: Is it possible to understand death? In *Women in Love* Lawrence puts the problem as follows: “To know is human, and in death we do not know, we are not human.”⁶⁶ Death would appear to be something we cannot understand and the annihilation of all conditions of understanding. As one writer has put it, “Death exposes the limit of all concepts and so death itself is incomprehensible.”⁶⁷ But, then, as Lawrence also notes, in his attempt to “understand” death, “death, beautiful death searches us out, even in our armour of insulated will. Death is within us, while we tighten our will to keep him out. Death, beautiful clean death, washes slowly within us and carries us away.”⁶⁸ As Nietzsche notes, it is for certain that we form a brotherhood of death if not a brotherhood of anything else: “Everyone wants to be the first in this future—and yet death and deathly silence alone are certain and common to all in this future.”⁶⁹

It is the very “impenetrability of death” that we find so frightening and that a philosopher such as Epicurus uses to defuse the fear.⁷⁰ The way he does this is by seeking to show that death involves not simply no more pleasures and pains, but no more experience of any kind. What, then, is the problem in being dead? Epicurus finds consolation in the fact that we do not survive death, but what about us? Is it really possible to step outside the perspective of our own lives to see things from the perspective of death? More pertinently perhaps, is death as the end of our experience of the world a way to relieve us of its threatening character, or does it instead heighten the threat to our engagements and involvements? As one writer puts it, it is the prospect of death that places the “nothing”, the end of my world, before my eyes. Death is the end, the disintegration, and annihilation

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

of everything I know and can imagine; death is even the annihilation of all conditions for understanding, “of all the conditions by which we think something, ourselves included.”⁷¹ Philosophers such as Gadamer considered our questions regarding death as necessarily a cover for the unthinkable, namely, non-being. And is it not the case that we are always thinking death from the perspective of life? This is something Lawrence recognizes I think but in a moment of genuine serenity: although this constitutes the limit of our thinking of death, it is a limit we need to affirm.

In his reflections on death Lawrence makes central the task of *understanding* death. I shall focus on several of the essays found in the remarkable collection *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*, in particular an essay from 1917, a not insignificant date, entitled “The Reality of Peace”. Lawrence is not oblivious to what Herbert Marcuse has called “the ideology of death.”⁷² In this powerfully written essay Lawrence writes:

We have wanted to deal death, ever more and more death. We have wanted to compel every man whatsoever to the activity of death. We have wanted to envelop the world in a vast unison of death, to let nothing escape. We have been filled with a frenzy of compulsion: our insistent will has coordinated into a monstrous engine of compulsion and death.⁷³

Nevertheless, Lawrence holds that it is vitally important we make the effort to understand death and to make the reality of death central to any philosophy of life.

How is it possible to “understand” death? For Lawrence it consists in recognizing that death, like life, is desire, or that there is a desire of death as much as there is a desire of life. Apart from these two desires we can only recognize pure being where we are absolved from desire and rendered perfect. In a quasi-Spinozist moment, Lawrence writes, “In true understanding I am always perfect and timeless.”⁷⁴ We are, then, desire and understanding, in which desire is twofold, of life and of death. All the time we are active through these two powers that are both contrary and complementary. The desire of life is a desire of “putting together”, that of death is “putting asunder”. The view that there is only life, or pure life, is a mistaken and misleading point of view:

We wish to say that we are single in our desire for life and creation and putting together. But it is a lie, since we must eat life to live. We must, like the leopard, drink up the lesser life to bring forth our greater. We wish to conquer death. But it is absurd, since only by death do we live, like the leopard. We wish not to die; we wish for life everlasting. But this is mistaken interpretation.⁷⁵

If life feeds death, so death feeds life. Death, says Lawrence, including “the dark flux of undoing”, are an inevitable half. It is through “understanding” that we can pass beyond the scope of this duality into perfection, “in actual living equipoise of blood and bone and spirit”, but the understanding has to be dual, with both life and death understood.⁷⁶

Lawrence acknowledges our understanding of death is always an understanding of death in life and an act of the living. Death, however, can cease being a mystery, an event that causes us embarrassment and shame. Our actual death can be a fulfilment of our own knowledge. Although it is impossible to destroy death it can be transcended in understanding. Here, Lawrence says, we “envelop and contain it”, and by this means we set ourselves free.⁷⁷ In a moment of great insight Lawrence writes:

If we live in the mind, we must die in the mind, and in the mind we must understand death. Understanding is not necessarily mental. It is of the senses and the spirit.

But we also live in the mind. And the first great act of living is to encompass death in the understanding. Therefore the first great activity of the living mind is to understand death in the mind. Without this there is no freedom of the mind, there is no life of the mind, since creative life is the attaining a

perfect consummation with death. When in my mind there arises the idea of life, then this idea must encompass the idea of death, and this encompassing is the germination of a new epoch of the mind.⁷⁸

Death is so difficult for us to comprehend simply because we desire most of all to belong to life. Lawrence calls this a “primal desire”, which is like a desire to come into being or the desire to achieve a transcendent state of existence; we might call it a desire for absolute life. Although the desire for death is equally strong within us, it is a desire that we find it almost impossible to admit to: “We cannot admit the desire of death in ourselves even when it is single and dominant. We must still deceive ourselves with the name of life.”⁷⁹ What is the desire for death in the human? It is a desire for anarchic revolution, for violent sensationalism, for the breaking down of things, for putting things asunder, and so on. Creation and dissolution are the “systole diastole of the physical universe.”⁸⁰ Although creation is primal and original, and corruption is only a consequence, it is an “inevitable consequence” and as inevitable as the water that flows down the hill. For Lawrence we are now presented with an ethical task, namely, that of reconciling ourselves to ourselves:

I must make my peace with the serpent of abhorrence that is within me. I must own my most secret shame and my most secret shameful desire. I must say, “Shame, thou art me, I am thee. Let us understand each other and be at peace”. Who am I that I should hold myself above my last or worst desire? My desires are me, they are the beginning of me, my stem and branch and root...⁸¹

At one point in the essay Lawrence writes of this ethical task in strikingly Nietzschean terms as one of “incorporation and unison.”⁸² It is a condition of freedom, he says, that in the understanding we fear nothing. Powerfully he writes:

In the body I fear pain, in love I fear hate, in death I fear life. But in the understanding I fear neither love nor hate nor death nor pain nor abhorrence. I am brave even against abhorrence; even the abhorrent I will understand and be at peace with. Not by exclusion, but by incorporation and unison. There is no hope in exclusion. For whatsoever limbo we cast our devils into will receive us ourselves at last. We shall fall into the cesspool of our own abhorrence.⁸³

Lawrence thus invites us to pull down the craven veils that we hang up to save our appearances: everything must be understood, included, and nothing on earth is to be ashamed of.

Ultimately, Lawrence, thinks we must choose in favour of life; indeed, life is the very domain of the voluntary and the spontaneous, the domain of choice itself. As he puts it:

Life does not break the self-insistent will. But death does. Death compels us and leaves us without choice. And all compulsion whatsoever is death, and nothing but death.
To life we must cede our will, acquiesce and at one with it, or we stand alone, we are excluded, we are exempt from living. The service of life is voluntary.⁸⁴

For Lawrence, then, it is vitally important we understand death. If you ask him why, the only answer he can give is that we are death. As he says, there is no “hope” in exclusion. He appreciates that what he calls the “anguish of this knowledge”, the knowledge of what we are within the *flux* of death, is a death of sorts in itself. It is the death of our established belief in ourselves and the end of our current self-esteem. Thus, those “who love in the mind must also perish in the mind.”⁸⁵ Here we pass into a new mode of being as Lawrence figures another meaning of the overman: “That which is understood by man is surpassed by man. When we understand our extreme being in death, we have surpassed into a new being.”⁸⁶ For Lawrence, the ultimate incorporation we can make, and Nietzsche may have been hinting at this when he spoke of the incorporation of truth as our great task and experiment,⁸⁷ is death and its desire. He writes:

ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

I shall accept all my desires and repudiate none. It will be a sign of bliss in me when I am reconciled with the serpent of my own horror, when I am free both from the fascination and the revulsion. For secret fascination is a fearful tyranny. And then my desire of life will encompass my desire of death, and I shall be quite whole, have fulfilment in both. Death will take its place in me, subordinate but not subjected, I shall be fulfilled of corruption within the strength of creation. The serpent will have his own pure place in me, and I shall be free.⁸⁸

What is sublime in life is not an indomitable will, but the will to surrender and having the courage to yield to the fate of death, or, should I say the fate of a life? On this question Lawrence invites us to become serene: although the inevitable dark hand of death plucks us into darkness, it is something to be feared only with strange satisfaction and reverence. Our final satisfaction is “to be gathered blossom by blossom”, all our lives long, “into the finality of the unknown” which is our end.⁸⁹

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, then, we can say that Epicurean philosophy shows how it is possible to affirm life and just what this consists in. Here death provides the horizon by which life appears to us as something to be prized and in the midst of our recognition of its precarious character. However, even the Epicurean dissolution of the fear of death cannot provide a satisfactory response to our anxiety over our personal extinction. It is here that perhaps the fear of death remains. Lawrence’s treatment of death shows the need to comprehend death and as a way of dissolving something of its enigmatic or mysterious character. However, there is an inevitable limit in our understanding of death since it necessarily remains a metaphor for understanding something about the nature of life. Nietzsche himself wrestled with this problem and let me finish by citing a most curious and thought-provoking note of Nietzsche’s from his notebooks of 1881:

Fundamentally false evaluations of the *dead* world on the part of the *sentient* world. Because we *are* [the latter] and *belong* to it! ... It is a *festival* to go from this world across into the “dead world” ... Let us see through this comedy and thereby *enjoy* it! Let us *not* think of the return to the inanimate as a regression! ... *Death* has to be reinterpreted! We thereby *reconcile* ourselves with what is actual, with the dead world.⁹⁰

So, the question remains: just how do we “reinterpret” death?

KEITH ANSELL-PEARSON is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick.

NOTES

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3. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Volume Two. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover Press, 1966, 171.
4. Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, II, 172.
5. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, section 278.
6. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, section 58.
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8. Lucretius, *The Way Things Are*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, 88.
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10. Nietzsche, *Dawn*, section 211.
11. Nietzsche, *Dawn*, section 501.
12. Ibid.
13. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, section 322.
14. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, section 185.
15. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. Duncan Large. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, IX: section 36.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Nietzsche, *Dawn*, section 78.
19. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, section 185.
20. James Warren, *Facing Death: Epicurus and His Critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 6.
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22. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, section 295.
23. Nietzsche, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, section 224.
24. Nietzsche, *Human, all too Human*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, section 291.
25. Jean-Marie Guyau, *La Morale D'Epicure*. Paris: Librairie Gémier Baillière, 1878, 280.
26. See Nietzsche's letter to Carl von Gersdorff of end of August, 1866, in Christopher Middleton, Ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996, 18-19.
27. F. A. Lange, *The History of Materialism*. London: Kegan Paul, 1925, First Book, 103.
28. Lange, *History of Materialism*, 102. See also Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*. Trans. R. E. Latham. Middlesex; Penguin, 1994, 39: "All life is a struggle in the dark... This dread and darkness of the mind cannot be dispelled by the sunbeams, and the shining shafts of day, but only by an understanding of the outward form and inner workings of nature."
29. Warren, *Facing Death*, 7.
30. Ibid.
31. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Trans. Michael Chase. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995, 93-101.
32. Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus." *The Epicurus Reader*. Trans. Brad Inwood & L. P. Gerson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994, 29.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. For further insight into ataraxia in Epicurus see James Porter, "Epicurean Attachments: Life, Pleasure, Beauty, Friendship, and Piety." *Cronache Ercolanesi*, 33 (2003): 205-227. Porter describes it as "stable (katastematic) pleasure" (214), and, furthermore, as the "basal experience of pleasure" on account of it being the criterion of all pleasure" (218). In this sense, then, it is more than a condition of simple or mere happiness: "it seems to operate as life's internal formal principle, as that which gives moral sense and shape to a life that is lived..." (218).
36. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 87.
37. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, section 350.
38. Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*. Ed G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin and New York/Munich: dtv and Walter de Gruyter, 1967-77 and 1998, 8, 28 [15].
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ATTACHMENT TO LIFE, UNDERSTANDING DEATH

40. For further insight see Julian Young, *Nietzsche. A Philosophical Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 279-81.
41. See Nietzsche, *Dawn*, sections 13, 33, 36. On Epicurus on fear and chance see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 87, 223, and 252.
42. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 252.
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44. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 223.
45. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*. London: Ark, 1987, 123.
46. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 225.
47. Cited in Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 226.
48. D. H. Lawrence, "The Reality of Peace" in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*. Ed. Michael Herbert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 27.
49. Porter, "Epicurean Attachments", 206.
50. Porter, "Epicurean Attachments", 207.
51. Ibid.
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57. Monika M. Langer, *Nietzsche's Gay Science: Dancing Coherence*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 67.
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61. Epicurus, "Vatican Sayings," 14.
62. Richard Roos, "Nietzsche et Épicure: l'idylle héroïque." *Lectures de Nietzsche*. Eds Jean-François Balaudé and Patrick Wotling. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2000, 283-350, 299.
63. Ibid. 301.
64. Ibid. 309.
65. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, volume one. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover 1969, section 54, 283.
66. Cited in Michalski, *The Flame of Eternity*, 81.
67. Ibid.
68. Lawrence, "The Reality of Peace", 42.
69. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 278.
70. Todd May, *Death*. Durham: Acumen, 2009, 25.
71. Michalski, *The Flame of Eternity*, 81.
72. Herbert Marcuse, "The Ideology of Death." *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Emancipation*. Eds Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce. London: Routledge, 2011, 122-32, 124.
73. "The Reality of Peace", 32.
74. Ibid. 38.
75. Ibid. 39.
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78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid. 36.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid. 35.
83. Ibid.
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85. Ibid. 34.
86. Ibid.
87. See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, section 110.
88. Lawrence, "The Reality of Peace", 38.

89. Lawrence, "Life", *Death of a Porcupine and other Essays*, 18.
90. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Volume 9, 11 [70].

DE OMNI RE SCIBILI: KEVIN HART PHILOSOPHER,
THEOLOGIAN, POET

Christopher Watkin

In 1486 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola compiled nine hundred theses which dealt, or so he claimed, *De omni re scibili*, “On Everything Knowable.”¹ It is a claim that might cause even the most audacious thinker to blush just a little, and it would smack of presumption to more circumspect souls. In an attempt to speak about everything Pico’s theses intermingled philosophy and theology, and it is no secret that these two rival queens of the sciences, not to mention poetry and literature, mathematics and physics have, both before and since Pico’s theses, maintained a simmering disagreement about how “everything knowable” ought to be known and spoken.

This rivalry is fuelled when we insist on seeing each discipline as occupying a determinate space on some notional map of all human knowledge. We will call this the topographical model. In this model, each discourse is exhaustive in its own domain, able to say everything that is to be said, but impotent outside its own bounds. Mathematics says all there is to say about pure numbers, physics about forces, theology about God, and so on, and the rivalry comes when one discipline seeks to exert what it sees as its own sovereign right over all or part of a foreign disciplinary territory. One of the most valuable traits of Kevin Hart’s work viewed as a whole is that it undercuts any such parochial beating of the bounds between philosophy, theology and poetry, and offers us a much more adequate and interesting approach than that contained in the territorial response to the question of how to speak of everything knowable.

In an article from 2004 entitled “The right to say everything,”² Hart Discusses Blanchot’s and Derrida’s responses to two related questions: 1) can we say everything? and 2) do we have the right to say everything? In his engagement with Blanchot and Derrida in the article, Hart deals in the main with the second of the two questions. It is our contention that an exploration of the first question, “can we say everything?”, provides us with a way of reading across Hart’s own poetic, philosophical and theological work and understanding how these different discourses relate to each other without either treating them as incommensurable or claiming to be able unproblematically to translate between them.

Hart quite rightly points out that our response to the questions largely depends on what we mean by “everything”. Evoking Whitehead’s *bon mot* that the whole of Western philosophy can be considered as footnotes to Plato,³ Hart asks: does this mean that Plato has said everything? “Cervantes and Shakespeare, for example, are most certainly not contained in Plato and cannot merely be added to the dialogues.”⁴ Returning later in the same article to the relation between literary and philosophical discourse, this time in the course of a discussion of Derrida’s treatment of the right to say everything, Hart quotes an interview with Derrick Attridge from 1992:

he [Derrida] further admits different ways of saying everything. “I know that everything is in Shakespeare,” he says, “everything and the rest, so everything or nearly.” And he goes on: “But after all, everything is also in Celan, and in the same way, although differently, and in Plato or in Joyce, in the Bible, in Vico or in Kafka, not to mention those still living, everywhere, well, almost everywhere ...”⁵

What is at stake here turns on the meaning of “everything.” If it is taken to mean “anything that comes into one’s head” in a loose sense, then the claim that we can say everything is as relatively uncontroversial as it is relatively uninteresting. If it is taken to mean “everything, however unacceptable to public taste,” as Hart explores in relation to Blanchot’s writing on Sade, then it is widely assumed but hard to prove.

There are two further senses of “everything” that might be understood here, however, and it is the difference between the two that can help us to understand Hart’s own corpus as a whole. First, there is the extensive sense of “everything”: there is no aspect of human life or existence which is off limits to a particular discourse. In addition to Derrida’s examples mentioned above, we could think of Roland Barthes’ evocation of Proust in an interview from 1974, in which he claims that the author of *A la recherche* provides a complete system for reading the world: there is nothing in our everyday life that does not refer to Proust: “Proust can be my memory, my culture, my language” says Barthes.⁶ And if this is true of great literature then it is also true of great philosophy. Paul Ricoeur argues that

all great philosophies [...] are *de omni re scibili*, about everything knowable, but each in accordance with the unique perspective of its thetic act and of the strategy it selects to continue the positing act.⁷

Plato can be my memory, my culture, my language. As can Marx, as can the bible, and as can Shakespeare. Each of these can be adequate to everything. Every great philosophy, as well as all great literature, is about everything knowable.

The second sense of “everything” is the exhaustive sense: everything can be said in a way that exhausts all that can be said and leaves nothing left to say on a particular subject. Taken in this topographical sense, it is false to claim that we can say everything. No one discourse can exhaust everything that is to be said, otherwise we needn’t bother wasting our time with *Romeo and Juliet* once we have read the *Republic*, or vice versa.

These two latter senses of “everything” are not synonymous, for “everything” can be extensive without being exhaustive. For example there is no human pursuit, no engagement with the world, no aspect of society which cannot be addressed in a Marxist register. There is nothing about which the Marxist is forced to admit “I have nothing to say on that subject,” from cookery to set theory to professional sport. It does not follow from this, however, that once the Marxist has engaged with the subject there is nothing left for the Freudian, or the Christian, or the Derridean, or the poet, to say. Marxist discourse can speak about everything without exception, but does not exhaust all there is to say about any one thing. Each discourse, in short, has a legitimate and non-exclusive claim to speak *de omni re scibili*. Whereas in the topographical model each discourse is exhaustive in its own domain but does not extend beyond it, in this model—we could call it the aspectual model—each discourse extends to everything but does not exhaust all that can be said about any one thing.

But if we remain at the level of discourses we have yet to grasp the subtlety of the relation between poetry, philosophy and theology as it bodies forth in Kevin Hart's work. Each of these discourses, as Barthes and Ricœur already hint, is not merely a way of talking about everything, but a way of experiencing everything, a way of holding oneself in the world. In an interview published in 2010, Kevin Hart is asked this question: "You have written for many years. How important a part of your life is writing poetry?" Here is the response in full:

Writing poetry is a qualitative limit that runs throughout my life; it's a "how" of my being. And that's been true for so long that I cannot separate "writing poems" from "living." I don't have a life apart from writing poems. Of course, I have other things in my life that are extremely important to me—my family and friends, my work as a theologian—but my life simply wouldn't be my life without writing poems. Exactly the same would be true if you asked how important a part of my life is being a Christian. It's not a part of my life at all; it's a "how" of the whole thing.⁸

Two points from this answer are particularly relevant for our argument. First, in the way it is described here writing poetry is not a local, topographically restricted pursuit; it is not one piece of a grand jigsaw puzzle making a portrait of Kevin Hart. Rather, it is a mode of the whole. Secondly, what Hart calls a "'how' of the whole thing" is a composite. If writing poetry is the "how" of one's being, it does not follow that one is honour bound to renounce philosophy, theology or whatever else might also shape one's "how". Elsewhere he makes a similar comment about prayer: it is not a part of life but a way of conducting the whole of life.⁹ Similarly, in a third interview he talks about the experience of God that is "not grasped in terms of a positive or a negative content; it is given by way of a new structure, a fresh way of being in relation with God and with others."¹⁰

It is this coextensivity without exhaustivity that seems to be missed by the reviewer who puzzles aloud over Hart's Blanchot monograph *The Dark Gaze* in the following terms:

But beyond pedagogical lessons to be drawn, the question still remains why a poet and a Christian believer would undertake the intellectual, existential, and even spiritual labouring (I would even say kenosis) necessary for this pursuit of the dark gaze.¹¹

Hart's engagement as a theologian with Blanchot, or as a poet with theology, is not just about pedagogical lessons, about what philosophy might learn from poetry, or how philosophy can show theology a thing or two; it is rather each time about everything, about the "how" of everything. What we witness in Hart's work is not a dialogue between philosophy, poetry and theology, because the metaphor of dialogue figures the conversation partners both as too self-contained and as too internally homogeneous to capture the subtlety and the value of their complex relation.¹² What we have in each case is a "'how' of the whole thing," and we might add that in each case one is likely to find Hart's readings compelling or not depending on one's own disposition, one's own "'how' of the whole thing."

At some point in history, a wit who found himself piqued by Pico della Mirandola's intellectual bravura (some say it was Voltaire) added an ironic addendum to the claim to speak "de omni re scibili," namely "et quibusdam aliis": "and of certain other things besides," suggesting that "everything" might not have been quite enough to satisfy Pico's intellectual appetite. But with tongue firmly out of cheek we can say that this supplement to Pico's title captures well the extensive but not exhaustive nature of the "everything" that can be said in philosophy, theology and poetry. By this "et quibusdam aliis" I refer to Prof Hart's interest in and engagement with that which cannot be captured in any discourse or discourses. In "The right to say everything" he evokes Blanchot's *Outside, Neutral, Imaginary and Impossible*, insisting that "the writer who reduces the distance between his or her voice and its eternal murmur is the one who draws close to saying everything."¹³ Similarly, in relation to the mystical tradition of Christian thought and experience he argues that "God is not an object that can be received and internalised by a subject,"¹⁴ that "no gaze can contain divinity,"¹⁵ and again that "Not all of our relations with God [...] can be captured in propositions."¹⁶

Neither philosophy nor theology nor poetry can internalise, contain or capture its object exhaustively and each individually (or indeed all together) in speaking of “everything knowable” always leaves “more besides.” Even when one has spoken of everything, in the extensive sense, indeed especially when one has spoken of everything, there yet remains to the phenomena a “more besides.” Kevin Hart not only discusses this relation between the “everything” and the “more” in his phenomenological engagements with Blanchot and Derrida, but he also instantiates it in the admirable breath of his own philosophical, theological and poetic “how.”

CHRISTOPHER WATKIN is Senior Lecturer in French Studies at Monash University.

NOTES

1. See *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems*. Ed. and Trans. Stephen A. Farmer. Tempe: MRTS, 1998.
2. Kevin Hart, "The right to say everything." *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 9:1 (2004): 7-17.
3. Hart, "The right to say everything", 8.
4. Hart, "The right to say everything", 8.
5. Derek Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 1992, 67. As quoted in Hart, "The right to say everything", 13.
6. "Proust is a complete systems for reading the world. [...] In our daily lives there is no incident, meeting, trait or situation that does not refer to Proust: Proust can be my memory, my culture, my language; I can remember Proust at all times, like the narrator's grandmother with Madame de Sévigné. The pleasure of reading Proust—or rather of re-reading him—has something therefore, at least in terms of sacredness and respect, of consulting the bible." Claude Jannoud, entretien avec Roland Barthes, *Le Figaro* (27 juillet 1974), in Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*. Éd. Eric Marty. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002, 4:569. Author's translation.
7. Paul Ricœur, "Irrationality and the Plurality of Philosophical Systems." *Dialectica* 39:4 (1985): 309.
8. Pradeep Trikha, "Receiving Unintended Gifts: An Interview with Kevin Hart." *Antipodes* 24:1 (2010): 65.
9. "When I was in my early 20s I converted to Catholicism after a long period of searching. What I think drew me to the Catholic church is that in Catholicism, prayer suffuses all of one's life by virtue of the sacraments. Prayer is not something which occurs just on Sunday, it doesn't occur only at particular moments of intensity or by particular conventions, one's whole life is given up to prayer in many, many modes. And so everything to do with the faith is trying to put you in relationship with God and trying to make that relationship grow deeper and more mature." "Encounter: The Poetry and Prayers of Kevin Hart." ABC Radio National, June 5 2011. Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/encounter/the-poetry-and-prayers-of-kevin-hart/2953494>.
10. "Encounter: The Experience of God." ABC Radio National, June 18 2000. Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/encounter/the-experience-of-god/3468150>.
11. Graham Ward, review of Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred*, *The Journal of Religion* 86:3 (July 2006): 500.
12. It would be profitable to develop this thought through Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of *corpus*, an open-ended juxtaposition of disparate and connected 'parts' that form a discernible but infinitely modulable body: "There would have to be a *corpus* of such infinite simplicity: a drop-by-drop nomenclature of bodies, a list of their entries, a recitation itself enunciated out of nowhere, and not even enunciated, but announced, recorded, and repeated, as if I say: foot, belly, mouth, nail, wound, hitting, sperm, breast, tattoo, eating, nerve, touching, knee, fatigue... It goes without saying that failure is part of the intention." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 57.
13. Hart, "The right to say everything", 10.
14. See "Encounter: The Experience of God."
15. Kevin Hart, "The Kingdom and the Trinity." *Religious Experience and the End of Metaphysics*. Ed. Jeffrey Bloechel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 162.
16. Hart, "The Kingdom and the Trinity", 153.

CHOREOGRAPHING COUNTER-EXPERIENCE

Michael Parmenter

I

If Kevin Hart dreams Blanchot,¹ his native tongue is, by his own confession, phenomenology.² It is not surprising then that the idea of *experience* should feature so predominantly in his writings on philosophy, theology and poetry. Not that Maurice Blanchot is unconcerned with *experience*: quite the contrary. As Hart has informed us, “Blanchot’s entire work... broods on *experience*.”³ But is Blanchot’s concept of experience at all comprehensible without the phenomenological notion of intentionality? The relationship between the former and the latter could indeed be described as one of counter-dependence.

II

“Everything begins with the reduction,”⁴ is the bold opening statement, not of a text on phenomenology, but of a public lecture entitled *The Experience of Poetry* presented by Kevin Hart in Melbourne 1995. As implied by this title, phenomenology and poetry both begin with the reduction to experience: something, Hart tells us, that Husserl himself identified when, in a 1907 letter to poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, he notes that “in ‘pure art’ the aesthetic gaze is kin to the phenomenological gaze.”⁵ Perhaps one of the reasons for Kevin Hart’s phenomenological nativity can be found in the fact that he is also an artist. Between the poet and phenomenologist there is a natural fraternity.

III

Another possible reason that Hart might be counted amidst the congregation of phenomenologists is his Christian faith. Again, not to excommunicate analytical or post-structuralist Christians, but Hart has identified that between phenomenology and Christianity, there too are affinities. Does not Husserl, as Hart reminds us,

CHOREOGRAPHING COUNTER-EXPERIENCE

close *Cartesian Meditations* by quoting St Augustine: “truth dwells in the inner man”?⁶ And isn’t it true that the key phenomenological notion of intentionality goes back from Husserl to the priest Franz Brentano, and through him all the way to the Church Fathers. Indeed, isn’t the basis of many of the critiques of phenomenology that it sets up a transcendental subject, like a little Sun King; the divinely ordained centre around, and in the light of whom, the phenomena of the world dance?

The relationship between *Phenomenality and Christianity*, as Hart notes in his essay of that name,⁷ is complex and conflicted, but if we cannot demand that God himself appear as a phenomenon, there is no reason why various Christian modalities such as faith and prayer might not lend themselves to phenomenological study. And might we not even consider the possibility of the phenomenon of God’s absence?

IV

We thus have ample reason to believe Kevin Hart when he informs us that phenomenology is his native-tongue, and imagine too that experience might play for him the role of a proto-language, a type of pre-reflective attunement with being.

But isn’t this the very notion of experience that has been so strongly critiqued by post-structuralist thinkers? Doesn’t Derrida himself launch his critique of metaphysics with the assertion that the concept of experience belongs to the regime of presence and that “we can only use it under erasure”?⁸ However this proves to be more of an opening gambit on Derrida’s part, and it isn’t long before he has re-characterized experience in terms of *arche-writing*, as involving temporalisation, mediation, rupture and above all the movement of *différance*.

The phenomenological reduction does not rule out the necessity of experiencing phenomena in the context of a particular meaning horizon, especially if we concede Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that “the most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction.”⁹ Experience certainly does draw from a dimension of pre-reflective attunement but this is always understood and described in the context of a frame of reference: “Presentation and representation,” Hart reminds us, “are always imbricated.”¹⁰ If we also consider Blanchot’s assertion that for there to be any experience at all, *something radically other* needs to be in play, then we could affirm that *all* experience is, in a limited sense at least, ‘counter-experience’.

V

Rather than casting his lot with phenomenological thinkers who continue to tease out the complexities of the phenomenological notion of experience, Kevin Hart engages himself with those who challenge or even venture beyond the very limits of experience. Rather than fishing in the rich depths of phenomenology, Hart believes there is more to be found in the turbulent side-waters. As he has so clearly articulated, both the *ex* and the *peri* of *experience* invoke connotations of *out from*, *limit*, *periphery* and *peril*, so perhaps the true inheritors of Husserl’s phenomenology are to be found amongst his wayward and rebellious offspring, rather than the dutiful stay-at-homes.

VI

With thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion, the concept of experience is radically reconfigured: both philosophers challenge the privileging of the constituting subject of intentionality and shift attention to the nature of phenomenality itself. With Levinas, the face of the Other makes an appeal and questions the subject. *I* am summoned by the *Other* in what Levinas calls “a reversal of intentionality.”¹¹ Marion, for his part, defines *counter-experience* as that which “irreducibly contradicts the conditions for the experience of objects.”¹² Rather than being given in a limited or inadequate manner, Marion theorizes phenomena that impose themselves absolutely. With the *saturated phenomenon*, intentionality, as with Levinas, is inverted: “I become

the objective of the object” he notes in *Being Given*.¹³ The *saturated phenomenon* overwhelms the subject, the ‘I’ is powerless to master the conditions under which a phenomenon may appear, and is itself called into question. This is not just a phenomenology of the *invisible*, but of the *unforeseeable*.

In terms of the work of these philosophers, Hart defuses the potential objection that, rather than critiquing the power-play between subject and object, Levinas and Marion have simply turned the tables. In contrast to the idea of reverse-intentionality, counter-experience, understood in terms of intentionality, might take on the sense of what we might call *palintentionality*, a movement of intentional relation that reaches in both directions at once. As Hart notes: “the transcendent and the transcendental are correctly positioned when arranged as an *aporia*, that is when one is pulled this way and that at the same time.”¹⁴ Hart draws attention to an image from Hegel: “A stream flowing in opposite directions,”¹⁵ but we might just as easily, if a little more colloquially, sing along with Aretha Franklin when she wonders, “Who’s Zoomin’ Who?”.

VII

Hart’s notion of counter-experience is enriched further still by his engagement with the thought of Maurice Blanchot. Here we are talking of a completely different order of experience, the experience of *non-experience*. Hart’s interest in Blanchot stems from his consideration of the possibility that “God reveals himself only at the very edge of the concepts we are obliged to use.”¹⁶ Blanchot attempts to think the sacred and faith outside dialectical constraints.

In my opening image I contrasted Hart’s phenomenological *native tongue*, with Blanchotian *dreams*; but this is not a dialectical pairing. The anthesis of the daylight world of the *native tongue* would be night or sleep, that which negates the waking I, only to return it to itself with renewed vigor, upon waking. The *dream* though is not restorative sleep; its disruptions take place not in the night, but in an *other night*, a night without stars, a night *outside* night.

What Hart names Blanchot’s *counter-spirituality* shatters the very security of the co-relation, and visits upon the subject a disequilibrium that calls its very being into question. Counter-experience, understood through Blanchot, runs tangentially, not oppositionally, to intentional experience, thus opening up the possibility of a shift into a completely different mode of experience, an oscillation, between our experience of an event in terms of the correlation, and of an event that without warning, casts us into the utter abandonment of non-relation.

VIII

Through Hart’s nuanced and multifaceted encounters with Derrida, Levinas, Marion, and Blanchot, experience in its varied modes presents itself as mobile, contestatory and destabilizing. The three dimensions of counter-experience as I have characterized them—experience as always *counter*, experience as *palintentional*, and experience as *outside* intentionality—can be understood to weave together in a peri-choretic interlacement. Experience is always exposure to otherness involving gestures and counter-gestures of give and take, advance and retreat: a flow of current and counter-current consecrated to the task of contending with the unforeseeable. If we were to attempt to identify the ungraspable nature of experience, that which, in fulfilling itself affects its own erasure, we would describe it as movement, or even as dance.

IX

One of the tropes which returns frequently in the writings of Kevin Hart is Paul’s image from Philippians 3:13 of “the self figured as *epectasis*, an endless stretching out towards the Other.”¹⁷ The image is used frequently by Gregory of Nyssa, who occasionally reads the Pauline image back into Old Testament texts. It is the same restlessness that we find almost contemporaneously in St. Augustine, “our hearts are restless, till they rest

CHOREOGRAPHING COUNTER-EXPERIENCE

in thee.”¹⁸ This image of the movement of desire, is not just a description of human being, but seems to be a characteristic of the created order itself. Do we not hear the same restlessness in the *anxious longing* of creation in Romans 8? Even certain man-made phenomena seem to transcend themselves: “Poems have a desire” Hart notes in an interview with John Kinsella, “they have a desire for us.”¹⁹

At the risk of drawing too deeply from the Heideggerian etymological well, I cannot resist drawing attention to the fact that the comparable term in a cluster of Indo-European languages, *tendare*, derives from the Sanskrit root *Tan*, meaning: to reach or to stretch. We have this root of course in our words *tension*, *contend*, and of course *tent*, a structure supported by stretching. The same root is also found not only in the verb to *intend*, and thus in the notion of *intentionality*, but also, in a form closer to its source, in the German *Tanz*, the French *danse*, and the English *dance*.

X

Thus a key concept in Hart’s philosophical anthropology, the tensional relationality of experience and the movement of our never-ending desire—a desire that is only intensified in being fulfilled—invokes the eternal reach of the dance. Dance is always a reaching towards, therefore is always engaged with alterity.²⁰ But dance is never just a matter of moving, but of also being moved. Dance is a response to the call of the world and of the Other and thus partakes of the palintentional exchange with otherness.²¹ Dance is thus the image of our very desire to seek fulfillment in the beyond.²²

XI

If you think that my invocation of choreographic motif is a little forced, I take encouragement in the fact that Hart himself has, through a spokesman, made the same association. During a discussion with Derrida concerning the frequency of the particular Pauline image of *epectasis* in the Church Fathers, Hart notes that Derrida confessed his lack of familiarity with the texts in particular, but that he saw “no reason to object to the language of *perichoresis* and *epektasis*.”²³ *No reason to object*, indeed, since both terms invoke the dance of alterity.

XII

It seems to me that not only does Kevin Hart understand the movement of experience to entail a complex dance of move and counter-move that takes place within the *peri-choretic* weave of pre-reflective-, palintentional- and counter-spiritual experience, but that in order to investigate this phenomenon it is imperative that one use an appropriately contra-directional methodology. In engaging with the philosophers that he does, Hart refrains from making sweeping judgments either for or against their sometimes hyperbolic gestures. Rather, he sympathetically engages in conversation with his interlocutors, dancing with them, allowing them to contest the very assumptions, tonalities, structures that, as phenomenologist, Christian, artist, constitute his native tongue. In his rich and generous essays into the various dimensions of experience Hart employs what I would call a choreographic hermeneutic.

In a review of one of the works of Jean-Louis Chrétien, Hart notes that “there are times, many of them, when one wishes that Chrétien would pause to entertain objections that run against the current of his ideas”—note the invocation of the Hegelian *counter-current*. Hart continues, “if anything, a little counterpoint would make his discourse more genuinely polyphonic, perhaps even more choric.”²⁴ As Hart notes in another essay, there is more to be gained by pondering the choric nature of our response to the call to saintly life than in framing it in negative terms: “Our *epektasis*,” he affirms, “is neither singular nor straight forward.”²⁵

MICHAEL PARMENTER

It is precisely this polyphonic, this choric, this choreographic manner of investigation that I find so impresses in the work of Kevin Hart. His *peri-choretic* weave of poetry, theology and philosophy challenges and enriches our understanding—our experience—of experience.

MICHAEL PARMENTER is a doctoral candidate at the University of Auckland and L'Université de Paris-1 (Panthéon/Sorbonne)

CHOREOGRAPHING COUNTER-EXPERIENCE

NOTES

1. Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, viii.
2. Kevin Hart, "Poetry and Revelation: Hopkins, counter-experience and *reduction*" *Pacifica* 18 (October 2005): 269.
3. Kevin Hart, *Postmodernism: Beginner's guide*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2004, 52.
4. Kevin Hart "The Experience of Poetry", *Boxkite: A Journal of Poetry and Poetics* #2. Ed James Taylor. Sydney: The Poetics Foundation, 1998, 285.
5. Kevin Hart, "Preface," *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*. Eds Carole Bourne-Taylor, Ariana Mildenberg. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010, xi.
6. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957.
7. Kevin Hart, "Phenomenality and Christianity." *Angelaki* 12 (2007): 37-53.
8. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1976, 60.
9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Donald A. Landes. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, lxxvii.
10. Hart, "The Experience of Poetry", 288.
11. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991, 47.
12. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given*. Trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, 215.
13. Marion, *Being Given*, 146.
14. Hart "The Experience of Poetry", 299.
15. Kevin Hart "The Experience of the Kingdom of God' *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response* Eds Kevin Hart, Barbaras Eileen Wall. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 81.
16. Hart, "The Experience of the Kingdom of God", 72.
17. Kevin Hart, "Blanchot's 'Trial of Experience'," *Oxford Literary Review* 22:1 (July 2000): 127.
18. St Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. I.
19. John Kinsella "John Kinsella Interviews Kevin Hart, Melbourne, 1995" <http://www.johnkinsella.org/interviews/hart.html> Accessed 1/06/13
20. We must, it seems, go beyond Valéry's notion of the dance that rests always and only in relation with itself: "the dancing body seems unaware of everything else; it seems to know nothing of its surroundings. It seems to hearken to itself and only to itself, to see nothing as though its eyes were jewels...lights that serve no useful purpose." Paul Valéry, "Philosophy of the dance" *What is Dance?* Eds. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 61.
21. See Jaana Parviainen, *Bodies Moving and Being Moved: a phenomenological analysis of the dancing subject and the cognitive and ethical values of dance art*. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1998.
22. See Roger Munier, *Si j'habite*. Saint Clément de rivièrre: Fata Morgana, 1994, 39. "He is, in his stampings, swaying hips, leaping and sudden stops, a presence called by the invisible, invoking the object of desire. He is ecstatic, certainly, in his frantic gesticulation, but in the end he is all but consumed. In becoming sign, he exceeds himself. Body of lack and desire, eternal horizon, like desire itself. He is self and beyond self. He is dancing".
23. Kevin Hart, "Encyclopaedias and Other Things: Some Recent Theology," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 6:3 (Fall 2005): 60.
24. Hart, "Encyclopaedias", 59.
25. Kevin Hart, "God and the Sublime" *God out of Place?: A Symposium on L.P. Hemming's Postmodernity's Transcending: Devaluing God* Ed. Yves de Maeseneer. Utrecht: Ars Disputandi, 2005, 37.

EROS, POEISIS, THEOLOGY

Claire Colebrook

I

Kevin Hart's poetic corpus is marked by two features that are at once formal and yet also separated conceptually by an aporetic tension: *eros* and *poiesis*. At the level of form *eros* characterizes a poetry of address that is frequently hymn-like, or even apostrophic: what is addressed elicits and retreats. By *poiesis* I want to refer to a radically asubjective quality of writing whereby language operates by its own self-making and quasi-autonomous force. If *praxis* is a living body's mode of acting in order to further its own being, then *poiesis* is that mode of acting and making that detaches itself from life, or we might say that *poiesis* brings praxis into being.

Giorgio Agamben, critical of the increasing tendency to contain all action within a dominating will—even seeing the world of art objects as nothing more than the act of the artists—argues for *poiesis* as a mode of making and doing that cannot be reduced to the self-constituting will of man. For Agamben, rethinking the distinction and indistinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* would enable us to rethink the ways in which a constituted system of meaning emerges from human action, while also bearing a force that disturbs any notion of human self-mastery. For Agamben, “The Greeks [...] made a clear distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* (*poiein*, ‘to pro-duce’ in the sense of bringing into being) and *praxis* (*prattein*, ‘to do’ in the sense of acting). As we shall see, central to praxis was the idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act, while, by contrast, central to poiesis was the experience of pro-duction into presence, the fact that something passed from nonbeing to being, from concealment into the full light of the work.”¹ Hart, similarly indebted to Heidegger, takes a different path from Agamben, and I would argue that the reasons for the difference between Hart and Agamben are both theological and philosophical. Agamben's conception of the divine, if we can call it that, is counter-deconstructive: critical of regarding language as the constituted system that would limit what might be thought, Agamben argues that what requires our attention is that immanent zone of the human that is most enigmatic and interior: “It is more

urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way—within man—has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values. And perhaps even the most luminous sphere of our relations with the divine depends, in some way, on that darker one which separates us from the animal.”² It would follow, then, that for Agamben *poiesis* would return human acting not to self-transparency but to man’s own opacity to himself. What is most other and transcendent—divine even—is that in ourselves which can be lived but never articulated. Poetry would not be expressive of what can be said, but would be marked by an event of *saying* in which nothing more is given than the mute inertia of human language. For all the theological framing of his work, Agamben is part of a wider counter-deconstructive tendency to criticize the positing of some divine non-presence. Just because this world is never fully given, this does not legitimate a stopping short at the limits of language and then arguing for some inhuman, transcendent beyond. Poetry would be constitutively immanent, and would be part of returning thought to its emergence from an action or praxis that is never fully transparent.

For Hart, by contrast, it is because the immanent, human and sensual world always gives itself in fragments (fragments that will never compose a final presence) that poetry or the voice ‘we’ address to the world takes both the self and the word to a mode of transcendence that is best approached by way of *eros*. Drawn by desire and incompleteness to an otherness that promises fulfillment, the self who addresses the world is at one and the same time bound by the already given forms of speech. Even so, by virtue of the desire that requires but goes beyond speech this desired sensuous world annihilates or sacrifices the individual voice and opens to a divine presence. *Eros* and *poiesis* might then be seen as formal strategies for rethinking the very possibility of relation: not relations that emerge from or are reducible to life, but relations within life that can never be lived.

II

What is the relation between *eros* and *poiesis*, and how might such a relation be thought at all fruitfully today—in the twenty-first century—when it might seem that we ought to be thinking beyond our own desires, our own bodies, and also the things of our own making? Does not the twenty-first century—the epoch of the anthropocene and the post-human—demand questions that are cosmic rather than human, catastrophic rather than erotic, and certainly not theological? If I pose this series of questions to the poetic corpus of Kevin Hart I do so primarily because of this beautifully reflective poetry’s *prima facie* lack of urgency and its apparent disjunction with Hart the philosopher’s insistence on the gap of negativity that would preclude this sensuous world from ever offering us solace or presence. There seems to be so much in this poetry that is languid, yearning, and yet resigned to the waiting of desire. It is almost as though the great deconstructive call to responsibility that follows from the radical lack of presence and good conscience is then ameliorated by the sensuous beauty of this world that promises (but never yields) redemption. If there is something irresponsible about the theological tone—about suggesting that the life of this world might have its spirit elsewhere and therefore need not be the proper domain of our concern—there seems something doubly irresponsible about Hart’s theological poetics, in which the spirit that is being anticipated, intimated, desired but never disclosed, is nevertheless insistently felt. It is as though we have the worst of all worlds: Hart’s poetry at once focuses on the smallest of things, the simply present and the immediately felt, and yet every desired sensation opens to an infinite that captivates desire but never arrives. This is at once a poetry of *eros*, of radical incompleteness, and yet also a poetry that takes seriously the condition of *poiesis*: the poem stands alone, allowing words, desires, sensations and affects to bear a persistence or survival that transcends the moment of their making.

If we were to ask why one ought to read this poetry today we might have a task on our hands. Yes, Hart’s work possesses a fragile sublimity, with each word of prayer and each touch of flesh opening onto a desired infinite that can never be presented; but, as recent eco-critics of Derrida have insisted, the fetishization of the futural and open dimension of deconstruction occurs precisely when this planet’s time and potentiality are contracting.³ Despite all this, I want to suggest that it is the coupling of *eros* and *poiesis*, especially as articulated via Hart’s poetry, that might awaken thought from its anthropocentric slumbers, and I want to do so by focusing on Hart’s use of a poetic form in “Gacela.” Consider, first, the very possibility of poetic form: there is a

wanting or desiring to say, a will to speak, but this desire proceeds not by way of emergence from self, but as a submission or sacrifice to an already given structure of articulation. The repeated “I want” of the *Gacela* is it once insistent and personal but also destructive of the self who speaks precisely because of its impersonality and formality. It is as though the most intimate of givens—the self, desire, speaking—were also the most distant and inhuman. I want to suggest that *eros*, considered poetically and therefore theologically (as that which is at once the self’s own but also the self’s undoing) has a binding and unbinding power, radically finite and also therefore necessarily infinite. The repetition of the “I want” is at once an expansion and opening out of the self to a proliferating world that seems to elicit desire and voice, such that the *eros* of the poem is primarily connective and open, at the same time as the poetic distinction and formal repetition of the “I want” constrains and distances desire. The very desire that the world elicits, from the poem’s opening “There is...,” follows the sunlight on hair to a series of fleeting refractions, dreams and reflections: “the stream / That makes the bird a fish and then a bird.” (“Stream” is at once the stream of mango juice, present and sensual, and the transforming stream of water.) It is as though the opening presents two worlds: the ‘there is’ of tangled sunlight (that will proliferate and increase with movement and complexity) and the “there are” of sleep, guns, dust, statues, laziness, storms and war:

There is the sunlight tangled in your hair
And there are soldiers sleeping with their guns.
“This viper, the world!” Teresa cried, and yet

I want the mango’s wealth of juice, the stream
That makes the bird a fish and then a bird;
I do not want the desert’s cayenne dust

There is at once a desired and described transformation, that allows the poem’s opening “there is” to arrive at a final “I want to feel.”

I want the snake to shed its skin and fly,
I want to feel the sunlight in your hair.⁴

But there is also a counter-movement that is undecidable. The seeming opposition between the embrace (“I want”) of fecund appearing set against the refusal (“I do not want”) of inertia is complicated by the figure of Teresa. Here, it is at once the passionate refusal of this “viper” world that is almost immediately counteracted by the, “and yet” The student “dreams” of Cleopatra, and within the dream “sees the asp reflected in her eyes.” Dreaming, eyes, reflections and Cleopatra: all seem to indicate a proliferating desire and yearning for the world, and yet the *reflection* of the asp intimates the very risk or danger of experience.⁵ It is this desire for the world that at once yields a self of wanting and not wanting, where the wanting exposes the self to the complications of appearing, and where the *not* wanting or refusal of stasis and inertia still hints at a world of simulation and doubling; the statues are fighting, and the soldiers are tossing and turning, and there is “imitation of war.” It is as though the desire that is elicited by the world is multiplied by the world’s own rich appearing and seeming. The repeated “I want” that is prompted by the poem’s opening—“There is”—gestures to various forms of transformation, complication and multiplication: bullets becoming giddy, roads tying in knots, gun chambers spinning, and the flight of birds. What is refused is dust, fighting, turning to stone. And yet even that fixity of being turned to stone is a metamorphosis. The ongoing embrace and vibrant life of the ‘I want’ begins with sunlight in hair, and yet never arrives at its desired end.

The unfolding voice of “*Gacela*” proceeds by being at once drawn to the fecundity of the world and the multiplying light while nevertheless battling against all the negations of life. The initial “There is...” yields a series of “I wants” but concludes by returning to hair and sunlight, only this time with a desire to feel. From “There is the sunlight...” to “I want to feel the sunlight,” Hart’s “*Gacela*” grants experience a structure of *eros* and *poiesis*: experience is always experience *of*, such that every yearning desire exposes the self to a path of

EROS, POESIS, THEOLOGY

refusal, and every articulation of that same desire—"I want"—takes the form of a repetition that compromises desire's singularity, rendering it impersonal.

One might think here of a theology that is not so much *post-human* as counter-human. It is the condition of desire to be drawn toward that which is given, but that which *in being given* also withdraws. It is this necessary wanting and not wanting that enables a theological poetics. The letter, the sensation, the touch, the affect—all are intimately felt and lived, but also open to what cannot be fully lived. All begin with an assaulting and undeniable presence, and yet all refuse any full presence. All are finite, but precisely by way of finitude enable a poetics of separation—a confrontation with a world that is *not* one of our own making or meaning. Hart's poetry is marked by an erotics that is both proximate and distant in equal measure.

I would suggest that this give us pause for thinking about poetics, deconstruction and theology today. One notion might be that deconstruction was fundamentally a refusal of proximity: any supposed presence, nearness or being would always be given through a series of traces that could never be brought to presence. It would follow that a responsible deconstruction would be a refusal of the present, the near, and certainly all forms of theism.

Consider this other possibility: perhaps the easy leaps to the post-human, and the simple affirmation that we can simply think beyond our own conditions and be post-theological are delusional, hubristic and symptomatic of an epoch in which we have long ceased to perceive, witness or desire the world (where desire is not a wanting to possess, but rather a mode of self-loss). Perhaps then a theological poetics of *eros* might draw us near to what is close at hand in order to destroy an all too easy complacency of finitude.

III

Deconstruction and religion have fallen on tough times lately. If there's a darling of Derrida studies today it is probably Mark Hagglund, who names Hart as one of the great domesticators of the thought of the trace.⁶ If, for Hart, the materiality of the trace—in its inscriptive distinction and ungrounding power—detaches us from any simple worldly finitude, it also necessarily opens an uncontainable infinite and irreducible immateriality. By contrast, Hagglund has tirelessly insisted that such theological gestures are unfaithful to the destructive power of the trace; what we have is finitude, nothing more. To posit some presence beyond the trace, even an intimated presence, is to do an injustice to the radical atheism of deconstruction. The trace, in its finitude and movement, gives us only the destruction of presence, and *not* the destruction of a present world that would thereby indicate some "beyond presence." This gesture might seem worthy and salutary today: for all the arcane rigor and exegetical focus of Hagglund's argument, it might still have some practical purchase. If we could just resign ourselves to finitude we would not be laboring under the illusion of redemption; we might start asking the proper—materialist—questions. All we have is here and now, and our response can appeal to nothing more than what is of our own unwilled, but responsible, making. By the same token, we might say that Hart's poetry just adds to the regressive opiate of religion. First, and ostensibly, Hart's is a corpus dominated by *eros*, and an *eros* of the smallest, most immediate and fleeting of things: a kiss, sunlight on hair, the taste of a mango, late afternoon rain. The diction of these events is not that of significance or sense but of sensation, in a way that can be understood through Hart's own thoughts about poetry and writing via Blanchot and Mallarmé. This is an erotic poetry of poesis; the poem stands alone, and in turn allows sensations to stand alone: not in their significance or meaning for the poet, but in a mode of sacrifice. A kiss does not present *eros* in the form of a unification of the self, but a giving over of the self to something that draws out, stands apart and almost annihilates: "And once I nearly die inside your kiss." The poem *articulates*—in the sense of cutting out and marking out—the desire of the sensation, *sensations as desires*, or as forces to create relations that are not those of the self.

Hart's poems appear to emanate from what is most personal and human—desire, and the qualities that generate desire—but his poetry grants once-human, once-personal events, a separation or 'stand alone' quality that is

destructive of *chronos*, and destructive of the finite time that—for Hagglund—can only appear in the finitude of things coming into being and passing away, in a time of non-presence in which the now is implicated in an absent past and absent future.⁷ But what if the desired sensations destroyed the processes that marked out events as sequential and bound up in a necessary passing away? What if the cutting power of desire destroyed the present or the sake of some quality that was radically eternal, not capable of being reduced to finitude? In both “Gacela” and “Your Kiss” it is poetic form—something that despite use and reappearance has an ideal iterability—allows each instance of desire to intimate an imbrication with a desired that is radically excessive and infinite in being irreducible to an insistent finitude. One can see in this mode of poetics just the sort of spiritualism that Hagglund objects to in Hart’s philosophy: if the trace cannot be exhausted by any worldly referent or sense then for Hagglund this means we are left with a definite absence of sense, an imperative to refuse what cannot be presented. For Hart this pressing and desired finitude opens to a spirituality that is not that of presence. Three words: *poiesis*, *eros*, and theology. *Poesis*: those things that emerge from our making possess a power that is not ours. They stand alone or endure, indicating a time or survival beyond the self. *Eros*: the desire that draws the self from itself necessarily possesses a force of annihilation or sacrifice that is not so much one of *self-loss* (where I lose myself) as *self-loss* (where the self is lost, giving over to what can only be desired, never given.). Theology: all reading is a submission to what is given, finite and before the self. The given demands to be read, to be given voice and spirit; and yet the same imperative to read is also a recognition of a spirit that can never exhaust or be exhausted by the letter. Hart’s poetry generates a separation of the sensation and the letter, and operates by an *eros* of finitude that opens onto infinity. Both disturb the world to the point of indicating a radically uncontainable power.

YOUR KISS

I feel your nakedness inside your kiss
(And once I nearly died inside your kiss)

All day the sky just lazes on the sea
And I am swimming in that tide, your kiss

How everything I see is soaked with time
(But in your arms I’ve always sighed “Your kiss!”)

It’s summer and the days peel off their skin
And naked half the day I ride your kiss

At night my walnut tree soaks up the dark
(Just as one night in bed you lied your kiss)

Death has its fundamentalists as well
But I shall take another guide: your kiss!

The heart is ringing in its spire of bone
(Then pushes time aside — just for your kiss)

NOTES

1. Giorgio Agamben, "Poiesis and Praxis." *The Man Without Content*. Trans. Georgia Albert. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, 68-69.
2. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 15.
3. *Deconstruction in the Anthropocene*. *Oxford Literary Review* 34.1. Ed. Timothy Clark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
4. Kevin Hart, *Flame Tree*. Highgreen: Bloodaxe, 2003, 96.
5. Kevin Hart, "Introduction." *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response*. Ed. Kevin Hart and Barbara Wall. New York: Fordham, 2005, 1-19, 12.
6. Martin Hagglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and The Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, 6.
7. Martin Hagglund, "Radical Atheist Materialism: A Critique of Meillassoux's *After Finitude*." *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Eds Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman. Melbourne: re.press, 2011.

RESPONSE

Kevin Hart

Since I started to think for myself I have been living in a triangle whose apexes are philosophy, theology, and literature. Sometimes it is an equilateral triangle, sometimes an isosceles triangle, and sometimes a scalene triangle. Always, though, at least since I knew the word, its center has been phenomenology, albeit a phenomenology that differs in one or more ways from its classical formulations. Chris speaks very kindly about my negotiation of academic disciplines. To my mind, I have simply been faithful in observing the many “regions of being,” as Husserl calls them, by which phenomena give themselves to us. Husserl was a great philosopher, and to some extent his posthumous publications are his greatest work, but he was not a poet. His metaphor “regions of being” has nothing to do with space but everything to do with the many ways in which phenomena give themselves to us. I shall return to this in a moment, but beforehand let me say something more general about how I see phenomenology.

A common narrative about phenomenology is that it begins with Husserl and then quickly frays into other versions of the philosophy that contest one or another of the master’s assumptions or procedures. So intentionality is questioned, transcendental consciousness is rejected, the reduction is dropped, and so on. You all know the joke: phenomenology is a church composed entirely of heretics. The same point can be put more positively. Perhaps no other philosophy has shown itself capable of getting by without so many concepts and protocols that its founder took to be essential. Or, again, perhaps there is no other philosophy that is as capable of re-inventing and re-launching itself from unlikely sites. I do not think of myself as a heretic in phenomenology, and yet I think that it still needs to discharge two main assumptions. The first is that it begins with Husserl. And the second is that it occurs in philosophy, and only there. It is true that Husserl brought clarity and precision to phenomenology. He did so mostly in the context of Neo-Kantianism, and we can often feel that contexture in his writings. Yet, as Heidegger saw very clearly, phenomenology begins in the Greeks’ experience of nature manifesting itself. Heidegger also showed that it can be used to read the texts of Greek philosophy, and not only those texts: I am thinking of his lectures on Paul’s letters. Already an important point has been made: phenomenology is *itself* a hermeneutic; it offers us ways of reading, though, to be sure, only

RESPONSE

Heidegger, and never Husserl, sought to read by way of phenomenology, and then only for a brief period. Paul Ricœur said that phenomenology needed hermeneutics in order to stop its slide into idealism. I think, rather, that it is its own hermeneutics: intentional analysis provides an extremely subtle series of ways of reading all sorts of texts, from philosophy to poetry.

Husserl saw, quite correctly, that phenomenology and art are very close relations: the phenomenological gaze and the aesthetic gaze are similar in important respects. It is easy to point to Francis Ponge, the poet of *Le parti pris des choses*, as a prime example of this, yet one could point just as readily to Maurice Blanchot whose narratives are preoccupied with prompts to reduction, from life in the “daytime world” of work and politics to the worklessness that occurs when undergoing the rigors of the approach of the neuter in the “nighttime world” of literature, a space in which everything we know as “world” is brought relentlessly into question. Michael has drawn attention to my interest in Blanchot, who I take to be the strongest French narrative writer since Proust, the most consequent atheist of the last century, and one of the most subtle and creative readers of Heidegger. Like Wallace Stevens, I can say “I love Maurice Blanchot,” but I love him as a phased counterpart of what I try to do. He attends to what precedes phenomena and I look to what exceeds them; and once again I shall have something more to say about this a little later.

To my mind, phenomenology has no borders; it participates in many discourses without belonging finally to any of them. It is the gentle art of nudging phenomena so that they show themselves. The kind of nudging that is required differs from phenomenon to phenomenon, and of course we must ready ourselves to perform the act. It has two phases, ἐποχή and reduction; for phenomenology turns on a dative (the person to whom something is made manifest, including his or her lived body) as well as on a genitive (the manifestation of something). What I am calling a nudging is simply a shift of attitude, a passage from asking “What?” or “Why?” to asking “How?” The questions “What?” and “Why?” have their rightful places, even in Husserl’s philosophy, yet it is the question “How?” that uncovers the problem of constitution, how a phenomenon is rendered present or absent, and in what precise manner.

How a phenomenon gives itself to someone depends on what Husserl called the “region of being” at issue: a number gives itself in a manner quite different from how an object gives itself, which, again, is quite different from how a non-Euclidean construction or a painting by Salvador Dali gives itself. A number’s phenomenality is exhausted in cognition, but not so for an object, while a Dali canvas deliberately frustrates cognition. We still have to chart all the regions of regions of being, and so in a sense phenomenology has only just commenced. (Deleuze dreamed of a book composed entirely of concepts; I dream of a book that documents all the regions of being, the ways in which phenomena can give themselves.) Another sign of the proximity of its beginning is that only recently have we begun to think capaciously about phenomenality. Marion questions Heidegger’s restriction of phenomenality to being, and Heidegger in turn extended phenomenality from the realm of objects to the realm of being. If phenomenality is linked to *Gegebenheit*, then Meinongian objects, poems by John Ashbery, and divine revelations, all lay claim to phenomenality. Not always the same phenomenality, of course. For Husserl, phenomenality is granted by transcendental consciousness and the phenomenon, and Marion is the first person to challenge his authority and to argue that, by rights, phenomenality belongs to the phenomenon. In doing so, of course, he prizes intuition over intentionality, and replaces the subject with what he calls *l’adonné*. It is unclear, it seems to me, whether *l’adonné* is an extreme ξένωσις, a contraction of the Cartesian subject to a point, or if it is part of a declension of the “I”: the ablative of the self, say, rather than the nominative.

Let me briefly cut my figure against this ground. In the first place, the standard history of phenomenality, from Husserl to Marion, remains within the field of subjectivity and inwardness. Even Michel Henry is in this field; in some ways, he exemplifies it in an extreme manner. It comes as no surprise to locate Augustine as a founding father here. Husserl quotes *De vere religione* at the end of the *Cartesian Meditations*: truth is to be found in the “inner man,” and true religion leads us back there. For Husserl, phenomenology is the true religion because it leads us to the true inner self, the transcendental dimension of consciousness. By contrast, my main interest has been what I call “the basilaic reduction,” which is exemplified in the parables of Jesus

about the Kingdom. Jesus's parables show us how to pass from "world" in all its senses—κόσμος, *imperium mundi*, and all the rest—to what is radically prior to it, what he calls "kingdom." It is not that we are led to a transcendental consciousness in which we can constitute phenomena, including God, and so make them present to us. Instead, we are led back to see that we are called to live *coram deo*—in accordance with the two great commandments—and that if we do so our lives shall differ markedly from how they have been lived before: we shall experience experience in a new way. It's worth noting that, on this approach, we do not seek to make God present to ourselves, whether by knowing (natural theology) or by unknowing (apophatic theology) but rather we seek to live so as to become present to God.

The basilaic reduction is not simply kenotic, though, and so it differs from Marion's and Lacoste's phenomenologies; rather, it has two moments: the first is κένωσις and the second is ἐπέκτασις. Eugen Fink was partly right about the reduction; it unhumanizes us, leads us to the margin of the world, and partly disengages us from its attraction. Yet he was mistaken, I think, to hold that there is a special consciousness to which we are led, and to suggest that we remain on the margin of the world. The movement of ἐπέκτασις involves the risk of stretching into the Kingdom, which I take to be the primary state in which God reveals himself as Fatherly King. The revelation is Abrahamic, not specifically Christian, and at heart I do not think that it is confined to the West. A theology of religions finds appeals to the Kingdom in theistic and non-theistic religions alike. So if one wishes to speak of the phenomenality of God within Christianity, one has two options. The first is to say that Christ is the phenomenality of God. He is the datum for the self-revelation of the Father, the one who transforms revelation into manifestation by way of parables, sayings, and acts. Revelation re-veils as much as it reveals—the Father remains hidden—yet the specificity of the Christ consists in making a revelation manifest. The second way of speaking of the phenomenality of God is by way of the Kingdom. Origen was only partly right when he said that Christ is himself the Kingdom that he proclaims; in my judgment, the Kingdom approaches in and through love, *caritas*; its movement is caught in the Latin expression *modus sine modo*, a way without a way. We love God *modus sine modo*, at the extreme limit of how we love one another, and God loves us in another scansion of the Latin expression: in a way without a way. God comes to us not in a flash of pure self-presence but as a trace.

Claire offers a very subtle criticism of a recent affiliation of deconstruction and atheism. To my mind, deconstruction is a moment in phenomenology; it is the moment of de-sedimentation in genetic phenomenology, which Derrida, under the influence of Jean Hyppolite, extended to the notion of structure. Derrida offers a powerful criticism of self-presence or full presence, though he often thought that this criticism extended to presence in all its modes. It does not; it is restricted, or should be restricted, to fulfilling intuitions, real or imaginary, and the real ones are few and far between, mostly to be found in logic and pure mathematics. In a brilliant analysis, Derrida shows that even in mathematics we cannot rely simply on a fulfilling intuition: empirical signs are needed. Where Derrida goes wrong, I think, is in proposing archi-writing as a master region of being. It is true that in writing all being is given without being. When I say "Whose woods these are I think I know" no physical woods appear before me: the being of the woods is given without sensual being. And it may well be true that all our intentional relations with the world involve language. Yet the being of the tree also gives itself to me by way of perception, anticipation, recollection, resemblance, fantasy, and so on. What interests Derrida is the trace that is left by being without being, by the withdrawal of the absolute character of any singular phenomenon: these woods, the idiom of Robert Frost, and so on. *X* without *X*: the syntax of the trace is something Derrida associates with Blanchot. Now does it follow that the trace is necessarily linked to the finite? Certainly not for Blanchot; for him, the Outside is neither finite nor infinite. And of course the syntax of *X* without *X* is not unique to Blanchot.

Is the trace confined to the finite? I do not think so. Before saying anything about it, though, let me put something to the side, something that Claire raises in her paper: it is the issue of God and infinity. It was only in the fourth century that Christian theology transformed its notion of God by making infinity an essential trait of the deity. Only when Gregory of Nyssa proposed in his *Against Eunomius* that the defining trait of divinity is infinity rather than ungeneratedness did God and infinity become linked. He did so in order to combat the

RESPONSE

philosophical wing of Arianism. Now Gregory had unlimitedness in mind, and the idea was very risky for the Greeks: to say that God is without limit seemed to deny the essential dignity of God. Nowadays, of course, unlimitedness is not a risky notion: without mathematical infinity, as explored by Leibniz, we could not have bridges or space ships. Calculus is the domestication of infinity. In medieval and modern theology, however, it is not the mathematical infinite that is important but rather the claim, clarified by Aquinas, that simpleness is infinite. That which is compound is necessarily finite. If God is simple (and his triune nature is a matter of real distinctions, not divisions), then God is infinite. Now if this absolutely singular and metaphysically simple deity were to become incarnate, the absolutely singular character of its simple nature would withdraw: one would be left with a trace. The adventure of the trace does not turn on finitude or infinitude, on composition or simpleness. Deconstruction is something that happens to texts by dint of a phenomenon giving itself in the region of being called writing. Any ontology of finitude that Derrida held was in addition to his formulation of deconstruction.

The syntax of *X* without *X* begins with Augustine; it can be found in the fourth book of his *The Literal Commentary on Genesis*. Our predications of God take the form, he says, of *X* without *X*, and this is because of the transcendence of God. The deity exceeds phenomena. Now what Blanchot and Derrida discovered is that the same syntax can be used in that region of being that precedes phenomena, what Blanchot calls “the space of literature” and what Derrida calls “la différance.” To use Jean Wahl’s distinction, the syntax appropriate to transascendence turns out to be appropriate to transdescendence as well. One might say that that part of postmodernity associated with Blanchot and Derrida is preoccupied with the specular relations of transascendence and transdescendence, with what exceeds phenomena and what precedes them. Yet this preoccupation loses force as soon as one rejects spacing or *différance* or writing as a master region of being, and points instead to the plurality of such regions.

The best early attempt to map the regions of being was made by Richard of St Victor in the twelfth century. His ark treatises have usually been read as labored allegories of medieval psychology, yet they can be read as offering as complete a map as he could make of the different ways in which phenomena can manifest themselves. If Richard provides a proto-phenomenology of all that is, Husserl allows us to bring precision to it. Richard’s concern is with the gaze, the various stages of contemplation, and Husserl’s concern is with the refinement of the gaze, of the development of phenomenology as a “spiritual exercise” to do with contemplation of phenomena. Phenomenology was always waiting in theology, and it was doing more than waiting to be discovered; it was working, concerning itself with the constitution of phenomena.

Of course, phenomenology is always at work in poems as well. Poems are sites where “regions of being” are concatenated in intense and memorable ways, and perhaps this is what makes us think, with reason, that great poems say everything. For in a poem perception does not overwhelm anticipation, modes of absence jive with modes of presence, the region of being we call “resemblance” sits with the region of being we call “phantasy.” I think that Claire points to this in her reading of “Gacela” and in her general comments on my poems.

KEVIN HART is the Edwin B Kyle Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Virginia and Professor in the School of Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University.

VOMIT APOCALYPSE;OR, QUENTIN MEILLASSOUX'S *AFTER FINITUDE*

Justin Clemens

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently Anglophone Continental philosophy has been marked by an emergent trend which goes under a variety of names, but which is perhaps best known as “speculative realism” (SR) (alongside such fellow-travellers as “object oriented ontology”). Its proponents now include—and exclude—such personages as Ian Bogost, Ray Brassier, Levi Bryant, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, and Timothy Morton, among others.¹ The rapid success of SR and object oriented ontology has been remarkable but also controversial: the trend has been accompanied and prosecuted by often-scathing polemics from all sides. Notably, much of the discussion has taken place online—which perhaps makes SR the first philosophical movement of the post-convergent digital media environment.²

Despite the many differences separating its putative adherents, there are nonetheless certain shared convictions within this general approach. The approach—broad and diverse as it is—is explicitly and recurrently marked by three key features. The first is a thoroughgoing hostility to the Kantian critical heritage, at every level, and especially the latter’s alleged anthropomorphism, subject-centeredness, and representationalism. The second is a concomitant conviction that there must be a return to objects, to things-in-themselves, or what Meillassoux himself designates as “the Great Outdoors,” outside any subjective relation. The third concerns the necessity for the development of new means of thought itself, on the basis that an active priority must be given to renovating philosophy as such, independent of any existing practices.

In this article I turn to Meillassoux’s work in particular—not least because it seems to offer the strongest arguments yet presented in SR—and re-examine it according to these features. I will, first, give a brief account of some of Meillassoux’s central claims and arguments, focussing on his treatment of these aspects; second, summarize some of the major criticisms that have been levelled at it, in order to; third, suggest how such

criticisms might themselves be supplemented by a further critique of Meillassoux's presuppositions about logic; fourth, show how his recently-elaborated doctrine of the material sign at once attempts to answer these logical difficulties yet ends by repeating the difficulties, before; fifth, concluding with some summary polemical remarks about SR's approach more generally. It is with this conclusion that I suggest that Jacques Derrida's analysis of the non-vicariousness of vomit in Kantian aesthetics returns as a kind of disavowed master-trope of the "objects" of SR itself.

2. SOME KEY MOMENTS IN *AFTER FINITUDE*

In his extraordinary text *After Finitude*, Meillassoux makes the strong claim that all post-Kantian philosophy has been dominated by what he calls "correlationism," that is, the fundamental thesis that there is no possible access to things-in-themselves except by way of a correlation (however that correlation is conceived).³ Correlationism maintains that objects cannot be thought of without subjects, and vice-versa. In Meillassoux's words:

by "correlation" we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other. We will henceforth call *correlationism* any current which maintains the unsurpassable character of the correlation so defined.⁴

There are two, apparently opposed consequences that flow from the correlationist impasse: first, what Meillassoux calls "weak correlationism," which deabsolutizes all thought of being by referring to the necessity of correlation (e.g., nothing can be said of Things-in-themselves, since anything that might be said has to pass through representations that always-already bind it); second, "strong correlationism," which reabsolutizes the correlation itself (e.g., intentionality is irreducible in any philosophical account of reality to the extent that it must itself become a fundamental element of any ontology).

Against this allegedly deleterious capture by critical philosophy, Meillassoux proposes a return to a classical, pre-critical philosophy, one of whose models is Descartes. To this end, Meillassoux revivifies and radicalises a series of old-school arguments: that mathematics is capable of thinking the thing-in-itself (*qua* the "primary qualities" that are absolutely independent of us); that all thought is governed by the principle of non-contradiction (the sole discriminator of any possible consistency); that the only necessity is contingency itself (that there is no reason whatsoever for anything to take place). In the course of his demonstration, Meillassoux revises David Hume's famous argument against causal necessity as challenging even the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason: "rather than affirming like Hume that reason is incapable of proving a priori the *necessity* of laws, I propose to show that, quite on the contrary, reason proves to us a priori the *contingency* of laws."⁵ This principle of unreason will be renamed in turn as the "principle of factuality," that is, the presentation of the "non-factual essence of fact as such."⁶

Having effected a kind of destruction of correlationism to his own satisfaction, Meillassoux proceeds to reconstruct a classical ontology, but now of a post-Kantian kind. For if, as Meillassoux says, he wishes to return to the classics, he nonetheless recognises that it remains necessary and desirable that an overturning of correlationism must retain certain correlationist elements. The key distinction here is between "metaphysical realism," which sustains by means of a principle of sufficient reason the necessity of a substance of some kind (e.g., "God"); and "speculative realism," the maintenance of absolutist thinking without recourse to any necessary substance whatsoever. Only the latter can simultaneously take into account the force of the correlationist arguments *and* turn these arguments against the necessity of correlation itself. Rather than a necessity of a certain being (metaphysical realism) or of any correlation (correlationism, weak or strong), the speculative realist will affirm the absolute necessity of contingency alone.

Such contingency is to be considered truly absolute. Meillassoux therefore argues against all probabilistic reasoning regarding the regularity or stability of all and any physical laws. The universe could utterly change at any moment; so that, in the words of W.B. Yeats, “a terrible beauty is born.” Yet the incontrovertibility of such annihilation does not simply mean that nothingness becomes the *fons et origo* of existence. Meillassoux’s project is, quite to the contrary, to make it impossible that some thing not exist. Yet how can this be? From what he calls the two “anhypothetical principles,” those of unreason (the absolute non-existence of any principle of sufficient reason), and the principle of non-contradiction (the absolute impossibility of thinking the existence of a contradictory being), he draws the conclusion that the only absolute necessity is the absolute impossibility of a necessary being. Why? Because the principle of unreason guarantees what Meillassoux here calls “a hyper-Chaos,” irreducibly omnipotent and capable of producing anything at all at any time, from eternal stasis to the unutterably unthinkable. This hyper-Chaos comes with one cool, incontrovertible guarantee, however: that “a necessary entity” “is absolutely impossible.”⁷

Two remarks. First, on Meillassoux’s account, “*a contradictory entity is absolutely impossible, because if an entity was contradictory, it would be necessary.*”⁸ A contradictory entity would not be able to *become* other than it is, because it would precisely always already *be* other than it is; if that was the case, then it would destroy any possibility of determination of entities and change. Unable not to be other to itself, this being would be necessary. Yet a necessary being contravenes the principle of unreason. Despite this argument, however, it is not the principle of non-contradiction per se upon which Meillassoux relies—he sees non-contradiction as an anhypothetical principle, that is non-derivable but rationally demonstrable, but one bearing only on the possibility of the thinkable—but the principle of unreason upon which, Meillassoux claims, it is possible to verify the principle of non-contradiction itself. Second, Meillassoux wants to uphold a strong version of this principle of unreason: “it is necessary that there be something rather than nothing because it is necessarily contingent that there is something rather than something else.”⁹ It therefore becomes necessary that at any time, at least one contingent being exists, given that this reinscription of modal categories means that Meillassoux’s claims must hinge on actuality, not upon pure possibility in general. Yet the ontological status of this contingent existent remains uncertain, for reasons I will return to below.

The striking and rigorously counter-intuitive nature of Meillassoux’s program should not blind us, however, to his various sleights-of-thought. I am tempted to suggest that the success of his work is founded on a double appeal: on the one hand, and despite his adverting to Galileo and modern science, Meillassoux returns a sovereignty to philosophical reasoning as such, and to pure reason’s independent powers to think the real; on the other, the apparent rigour of this program is in fact nothing of the kind, but the effect of an assemblage of assertions that insist on their own consistency without being able to argue for it. Meillassoux’s work at once purports to free philosophers in general of their dependence on any other discourse, returning them to a classical position of sovereign thought-power, at the same time that its own weaknesses enable them not to feel compromised by any existing mode of philosophy in particular. Meillassoux’s position also thereby enables interventions into science, literature, theology, what-have-you, from a position of intimate exteriority.

It is surely for these and other reasons that *After Finitude* rapidly attracted a great deal of criticism from a variety of positions.¹⁰ Lorenzo Chiesa argues that Meillassoux’s insistence on “non-totalization” can only be ensured by covertly introducing “a supreme form of totalization.”¹¹ Simon Critchley worries that the return to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities might induce an ethics that obliterates all cultural differences.¹² Alexander Galloway believes that Meillassoux relies on mathematics as ahistorical, but today mathematics can only be understood in its historicity: “The mode of production today is math.”¹³ Martin Hägglund confronts Meillassoux with the allegedly superior theory of time provided by Derrida.¹⁴ Peter Hallward claims that “Meillassoux’s rationalist critique of causality and necessity seems to depend on an equivocation between metaphysical and physical or natural necessity.”¹⁵ Graham Harman thinks that “Meillassoux gives us a frankly dualistic ontology when it comes to contingency.”¹⁶ Adrian Johnston thinks that Meillassoux’s rationalist claims are unable to be scientifically supported, at the same time that he relies on their epistemological superiority.¹⁷ Jon Roffe has argued that Meillassoux cannot coherently think ontological

change: “Meillassoux’s hyper-chaos cannot destroy time; it *cannot* even coherently be thought as the ground of time, since it is in fact time, taken in this minimal differential sense, that grounds the possibility of any otherwise, and any identity.”¹⁸ Christian Thorne targets Meillassoux’s “worse” than “almost illiterate” history of philosophy as essentially relying on disavowed paranomasia in fudging distinctions between epistemology and ontology.¹⁹ Alberto Toscano holds that “Meillassoux’s attack on the idealist parameters of correlationism is ultimately idealist in form.”²⁰ For Christopher Watkin, “it is rationally illegitimate, according to the contingent norms of rationality that prevail at the moment, to disqualify a non-rational discourse on the absolute on pretext of its irrationality.”²¹ Alenka Zupancic maintains “the great Outside is the fantasy that covers up the Real that is already right here.”²²

Whatever one might make of such critiques, Friedrich Nietzsche himself would undoubtedly add that part of the difficulties with most—not all!—of these responses is that, at the very moment that they offer strong propositions countering this or that aspect of Meillassoux’s work, they literally cannot allow themselves to go all the way with their destruction: for real demolition inevitably undermines its own rationale. What I would therefore like to propose here takes a slightly different angle, proceeding by a kind of “deconstruction” of the rhetorical assemblage of Meillassoux’s text, unpicking the seams in his style of argumentation. I do this by focussing on Meillassoux’s self-confessed general principles, as well as the status of the articulations he attempts to forge between them.

First, let’s pinpoint Meillassoux’s general tendency to select from *particular* logical and mathematical enterprises the principles or axioms that suit him, without his always acknowledging that: i) these do not necessarily have the same import outside their self-restricting frame of operations (this is especially the case with his use of set-theory axioms which are, precisely, a *set*), nor are they necessarily compatible with each other outside such frames (of course, they may well be, but this is *assumed* by Meillassoux, never *demonstrated*); ii) the legitimacy of scientific discourse can only be prioritised by the downgrading or abandonment of all other forms of thought, whose symptom in Meillassoux’s text is the constant shifting between the names of “science,” “logic” and “mathematics,” without their differences ever going beyond the invocation of various received syntagms (e.g., at points, Meillassoux suddenly starts to speak about “mathematized science”); iii) that these metastatic shifts find an attempted resolution in Meillassoux by an ambiguous recourse to the literary.²³ Even in more recent work, in which Meillassoux has clearly recognized these problems and offers some arguments to deal with them, I believe his response fails on its own terms.²⁴ The errors are constitutional, not cosmetic; they emerge whenever a philosophy takes itself as immediately being able to take other discourses outside their own terms.

Such sleights-of-thought have immediate consequences for the consistency of Meillassoux’s theses. Precisely to the extent that he has to consider mathematics as essentially a non-discourse of pure reference in order to evade the correlationist critique, Meillassoux ends up unable to sustain *or* abandon the distinction between existence and reference without implicitly reintroducing totality on the one hand, or the paradoxes of self-reference on the other. One upshot of this is that Meillassoux’s deployment of the principle of non-contradiction is in fact *arbitrary*. It has no demonstrable privileged status, either “externally” or “internally,” according to his own arguments. To his credit, Meillassoux does everything he can not to accept this, even going so far as to give a little non-analysis of a rival logical innovation, paraconsistent theory, for which true contradictions are sometimes possible and conceptually acceptable. Here is Meillassoux:

We claimed to have established the necessity of non-contradiction because a contradictory being would be a necessary being. But it could be objected that we have conflated *contradiction* and *inconsistency*.... for contemporary logicians, it is not non-contradiction that provides the criterion for what is thinkable, but rather inconsistency.²⁵

In his own defence, Meillassoux proceeds to propose something quite dissatisfactory:

We would need to point out that paraconsistent logics were not developed in order to account for actual contradictory facts, but only in order to prevent computers, such as expert medical systems, from deducing anything whatsoever from contradictory *data* (for instance, conflicting diagnoses about a single case), because of the principle of *ex falso quodlibet*. Thus, it would be a matter of ascertaining whether contradiction, which can be conceived in terms of incoherent data about the world, can still be conceived in terms of non-linguistic occurrences. We would then have to try to demonstrate that dialectics and paraconsistent logics are only ever dealing with contradictions inherent in *statements* about the world, never with *real* contradictions in the world—in other words, they deal with contradictory theses about a single reality, rather than with a contradictory reality.²⁶

This is unconvincing. The situation is worsened further by Meillassoux purporting to gesture towards possible criticisms of his theses so as to strengthen their grounds. Yet he finishes this subsection with a significant dismissal: “we will not pursue this investigation any further here...”²⁷ But why not? This is palming off the impossible as if it were merely a tactical consideration.

First, what possible import can the empirical circumstances of the development of paraconsistent logics have on the sorts of abstract argumentation Meillassoux delights in? In short, none—otherwise one could immediately turn this around and assert that the veracity of Meillassoux’s own arguments might themselves also depend on a *particular* contingency. To even mention this as a possible argument, then, is highly suspicious. Note his use of the word “only”; note, too, the implicit treatment of “data” as if data were essentially equivalent to a “statement.” Yet this must be precisely *not* the case—otherwise there would presumably be no need to develop a radical new logic to handle it. Meillassoux, moreover, knows this; otherwise there would be no need to raise it at all (even if only to then, preposterously, claim that the problems he is identifying strengthen his argument although he doesn’t actually need to confront them really at all....). If Meillassoux wants to render data equivalent to, if not a subset of, other linguistic phenomena, then he has a great deal more work to do. Perhaps inevitably, then, without such work, the question concerning technology raises its Medusa Head in a symptomatic form. The claim that paraconsistency develops “*only in order to prevent computers from...*” means that Meillassoux can only recoil from the appalling image of *Techné* he sees reflected in the shining Aegis of Philosophy, waving his unscabbarded principles in the air.

For it is not simply the case that paraconsistency deals only with “statements” and not “real contradictions.” Quite to the contrary, as I have already been suggesting, “data” must be irreducible to a linguistic phenomenon, as is not only evident from the remarks above, but because data is itself a term with more than a simple onto-technological bearing. In a universe that can itself be considered essentially informatic, data is as real as it gets, indissociably material and mathematised at once. Such data is irreducible to contemporary computing issues, as is evident from contemporary computational ontologies, such as those of Gregory Chaitin, Edward Fredkin or Stephen Wolfram, which tend to render the “real” universe as essentially operating according to differences-without-substance-or-subject.²⁸ Once again, this is not to affirm the viability of such theories, only to suggest that Meillassoux’s claims regarding his own *preference* for non-contradiction are too weak to exclude the possibility of the separation of contradiction from inconsistency.²⁹

Against Meillassoux’s assertions, there is an immediate, stringent and powerful ontological interpretation of an extremely simple version of paraconsistency, which, in lieu of Meillassoux’s philosophical propositions regarding the primacy of the principle of non-contradiction, affirms the primacy of the law of excluded middle. If one takes even a basic comprehension of the “laws of logic” as in principle able to be understood and applied independently of each other, as Meillassoux *de facto* does, then affirming the primacy of excluded middle immediately gives us a bizarre but sustainable ontology: *real differences prior to identity or contradiction*.³⁰ Moreover, and in line with a wide range of paraconsistent theses, such an “ontology” falsifies the ancient proposition concerning contradictions *ex falso quodlibet*: under such paraconsistent conditions, not all *real*

contradictions are necessarily “explosive”; nor do they necessarily entail, as Meillassoux declares, any kind of necessary being (rather, they bear upon constrained local determinations and not on any totality).³¹ Then again, one might also suggest that such logics at least reintroduce the possibility of necessary beings that are anything but God. Whether or not one would wish to establish and defend such an ontology is a moot point. The upshot in the current context is simply that we can now also say this means that there is always a philosophical *decision* to be taken regarding *means*, and this decision cannot be grounded logically, as the choice of logic is itself integral to such a decision.

Even in the famous ur-example that Meillassoux denominates as the “arche-fossil,” an ancestral remnant that science confirms as anterior-to-any-possible-givenness-whatsoever, his own grand gestures deceive him. Let’s put it like this: the example is reliant on results generated by radioactive dating, that is, a scientific theory, as rigorous as it gets, which depends upon measuring the decay of isotopes. One can hardly fault Meillassoux’s desire to affirm that “There is contingent being independent of us, and this contingent being has no reason to be of a subjective nature,”³² but the example he proposes has the actuality of modern particle physics in the background: one can’t make the machines to generate these dates without such an actuality. But certain dominant interpretations of physics seem to contest the application of non-contradiction at the sub-atomic level. However one wishes to interpret this situation (is it contradiction only at the level of the pre-scientific everyday or real contradiction at the level of being or a mere *façon de parler*, etc.), it turns Meillassoux’s program into something a little weird: the existence of the arche-fossil can only be presented on the basis of technologies that function according to physical theories that certain strong interpretations suggest contradict the laws of non-contradiction. At the very moment that Meillassoux wishes to align himself with mathematized physics—or, more precisely, to draw essential lessons from its procedures and results that affront every possible correlationist response—he departs from it with the very concept that was supposed to exemplify it.

But to say this is also to say that Meillassoux is *assertoric* where he should be *argumentative*, or that he draws on contingencies as proofs. In Meillassoux’s own terms, it is this: once it becomes clear that there is no particular philosophical priority that has to be given to the principle of non-contradiction, and that the question of means is non-derivable, then *the condemnation of “correlationism” cannot be maintained*. Or, rather, it reveals that the accusation of “correlationism” itself conflates two quite different issues, the question of the irreducibility of the thought-being distinction and the question of the means of philosophy itself. To put this another way, speculative realism is not a post- or pre-Kantianism, but a *hyper-Kantianism*, one which effects a critical reduction of the subject-object distinction but which, in doing so, mistakes the status of philosophical means *as* means. In doing so, it succumbs to rhetoric without, for that, being able to conceal the affiliations it denies; worse still, it conceals the contingency of its own presuppositions in purporting to announce them; last, it fails entirely to think *the real of means*.

Ray Brassier has analysed the consequences of this failing in the strongest critique of Meillassoux to date, which precisely targets the consequences of treating mathematics as giving a description of the primary qualities of real objects. If Meillassoux is clearly relying on Alain Badiou’s own prior arguments here, it is in a manner that is perhaps characteristic of speculative realism more generally: the thinkers they invoke to license their own projects provide arguments that entail conclusions antithetical to their own. In this particular case, Brassier shows that, whereas Badiou’s theses about the ontology of set theory function “subtractively,” that is, as essentially non-empirical claims about the place in which thought and being can meet in the void, Meillassoux covertly reintroduces a form of Pythagoreanism-that-he-must-deny. For “Meillassoux is forced into the difficult position of attempting to reconcile the claim that being is not inherently mathematical with the claim that being is intrinsically accessible to intellectual intuition.... The problem lies in trying to square the Galilean-Cartesian hypothesis that being is mathematizable with an insistence on the speculative disjunction whereby being is held to subsist independently of its mathematical intuitability.”³³ This situation must pose serious problems for Meillassoux. On the one hand, being cannot be mathematical, which would be simple Pythagoreanism; on the other, mathematics is the only means by which being can be coherently be thought, which requires a fuller account of the privileges of means. The emergence of a thought that considers its own

emergence as contingent reintroduces a temporal schematism that contravenes its own thought of time.

Meillassoux has presumably taken Brassier's critique seriously, because he has recently attempted to treat the problem with a supplementary theory, that of the "meaningless sign."³⁴ Unfortunately—and decisively—precisely the same problems and misunderstandings recur in the putative solutions proffered here. Hence Meillassoux, in his attempt to give a speculative grounding to the claims of modern mathematized science, asserts: "Against all reduction of the meaningless sign to its material basis (sound or mark) we must maintain *that there exists in the very sign itself a stratum of immateriality* that not only *has nothing to do with meaning* but that precedes it, conditions it, and can exist independently of it." The demonstration (which symptomatically has recourse to a little "Fable of the Contented Paleographer") purports: "to exhibit a minimal condition, modest yet fundamental, of various contemporary formal languages—logical as well as mathematical. This minimal condition, as we shall see, has to do with our capacity to think a meaningless sign. I will then derive this capacity to think a meaningless sign from the principle of factuality, by showing that there is an essential link between this sort of sign and absolutized contingency." I believe that Meillassoux does not show such "an essential link."

How does Meillassoux proceed? First, he makes a distinction between the *primo-absolutizing* (properties necessary for every being) and the *deutero-absolutizing* (the absolute property of independence from the human). Second, he proffers a criterion for differentiating natural from formal languages. In Euclid, definition precedes postulates and axioms, whereas in set theory, there is no such initial definition of terms (here, Meillassoux is drawing again on Badiou); hence the set is understood by him as a sign without meaning or reference, whereas it is operator-signs that give meaning (that is, properties). Meillassoux identifies the crucial differentiator between *primo-* and *deutero-* as determined by the function that meaningless signs (henceforth: MS) play within their respective levels. Formal languages give a *structural* role at the level of *syntax* to the MS, which is therefore supposedly alone capable of giving us access to deutero-absolute truths. Against both formalism and Badiou, then, Meillassoux constructs "*an ontology of the empty sign*," which derives from thinking the consequences of the form of the pure MS itself. "Formal meaning," says Meillassoux, "is the rule-governed use of meaningless (or non-signifying) syntactical units." A familiar position, it is true, but one that Meillassoux wishes to radicalise.

The level of immateriality of the MS which allegedly "precedes, conditions and is independent of it" draws on the type/token distinction, whereby the deposition of three 'a's constitutes an instance of the *type* 'a'. (By the way, linear logic might here contest the "illimitable reproducibility" Meillassoux assigns to this situation.) Apparently this distinction is not conformable to the distinction material/concept. Unlike Saussurian "arbitrariness" which is "arbitrary" vis-à-vis the relation between the material (signifier) and its meaning (signified), there is here an arbitrariness of what Meillassoux calls the "kenotype" itself (from the Greek, *kenos*, empty). Such a kenotype could materially be anything ("it is infinitely variable in principle with regard to its form, and this form has no necessity in itself"), which gives, within each sign a sameness of sensible similarity (so to speak) *and* a sameness of iterative identity. We should therefore attend to the constitution of the sign before any link to any signified whatsoever.

Meillassoux proceeds to some further distinctions. In a little interlude, "The Fable of the Contented Paleographer," he provides two superposed lines of marks, about which he remarks: every *reproduction* of the same mark is also a *recurrence*, which can be thought as: i) sensible non-dissimilar difference, that is, as *repetition* or monotony; ii) as *iteration*, i.e., as the non-differential, unlimited recurrence of marks, whereby the latter escapes the effect of the former, i.e., as intemporal and nonspatialized, which leads to: iii) *reiteration* as differential and unlimited, qua possibility opened by the thinking of differences outside any sensible repetition. According to Meillassoux, it is through this thought of reiteration that we can think the pure absence of necessity. But, strictly speaking, Meillassoux's demonstration entails something quite different, that is, *the absolute necessity of materiality*. Even if we accepted the description of the meaningless sign and the kenotype, we still have to say if we wish to remain consistent (i.e., non-contradictory) that the kenotypic

VOMIT APOCALYPSE

potentiality is only *potentiality* insofar as it is and is not the material sign that indexes it.³⁵ Note how this—strangely enough—repeats one of Meillassoux’s own arguments from *After Finitude* (the demonstration of the necessary existence of a contingent being) against him, at the very moment that he himself has begun to operate at the level of the very “statements” (here the principle of the infinite reproducibility of letters) to which he condemned paraconsistent logics.

Three further remarks: 1) the “reduction” of which Meillassoux speaks harbours a multiplicity of possible interpretations, all of which he essentially ignores, apart from the most negative; 2) the “stratum of immateriality” he designates simply cannot be said outside its material signs, because *materiality is irreducible no matter what its actual material is or how this material presents itself*; 3) his position now comes a cropper of Derrida’s critique of presupposition (of which more below). The key here is that the “stratum of immateriality” of which Meillassoux speaks is itself precisely *void*; and that the various kinds of repetition he invokes beg the *question of the possibility of repetition itself*. Indeed, this is precisely the point at which we can return to the problematic of hyper-Kantianism as providing the disavowed key to speculative realism and object oriented philosophy, with a little help from Derrida. As Hägglund has quite rightly suggested, “Although Meillassoux rarely mentions him by name, Derrida is clearly one of the intended targets for his attack on the idea of a ‘wholly other’ beyond the grasp of reason.”³⁶ But we can go further: it is Derrida’s work, particularly his deconstruction of the sign, to which speculative realism is indebted in a fashion that is embarrassing and unacceptable for it.

In an extraordinary but lamentably-underquoted essay, Derrida deconstructs Immanuel Kant’s *Third Critique* in an unprecedented fashion.³⁷ It is not an exaggeration to say that “Economimesis” is probably unique in the entire tradition of commentary on Kant, for at least three reasons:

1. the *literality* of Kant’s text is foregrounded throughout (e.g., “Is it merely an accident of construction, a chance of composition that the whole Kantian theory of mimesis is set forth between these two remarks on salary?”)
2. the “logic” of strict contradictions that begin to show up in Kant’s text is not an occasion for its dismissal by Derrida, but a demonstration that it is impossible not to incarnate such contradictions, which are articulated on the basis of the aforementioned literality;
3. a new anti-Kantian-Kantian figure is drawn from this investigation, whose name is “vomit” insofar as vomit names the impossibility of vicariousness, that is, the non-supplantability of utterly non-subjective being.

Let’s listen to Derrida himself on the issue:

What is absolutely foreclosed is not vomit, but the possibility of a vicariousness of vomit, of its replacement by anything else—by some other unrepresentable, unnameable, unintelligible, insensible, unassimilable, obscene other which forces enjoyment and whose irrepressible violence would undo the hierarchizing authority of logocentric analogy—its power of identification.... The word vomit arrests the vicariousness of disgust; it puts the thing in the mouth; it substitutes, but only for example, oral for anal. It is determined by the system of the beautiful, “the symbol of morality,” as its other; it is then for philosophy, still, an elixir, even in the very quintessence of its bad taste.³⁸

My thesis is therefore as follows: it is this vomit that is the disavowed paradigm of the speculative realist utopia: precisely not subject nor subjectivisable, precisely not conformable to the phenomena-noumenon distinction; precisely the name for the factuality of matter without any possible representation and without any possible meaning. Vomit is the paradigm of SR’s Great Outside, of its allegedly-levelled objects. More cruelly, then, SR would be a fundamental *name for a recoiling from and repetition of the factuality of Kant’s vomit as the paradigm of thought within thought itself*. To put it differently: the spew is here a truly real contradictory thing.

To summarize: SR would have, despite itself, the virtue of enabling a distinction to be drawn *within* the Kantian-phenomenological heritage between *intentionality* and *means*, so that the latter category can take on its full import as indispensable to the practices of *contemporary* philosophy, whereas the former takes on a properly regional or derivative aspect. Yet SR, to the extent that it is concerned with battling correlationism or, at a lesser level, with affirming the rights of the Great Outside, becomes a symptom of an unthought within “method” insofar as it simultaneously proclaims the total independence of being, yet cannot give any arguments for such an assertion without falling into contradictions that must be sutured by a self-corroding rhetoric. In the penumbra of Kant’s vomit’s splatter, the objects of the great outside, and perhaps even the Mallarméan “*Perhaps*,” start to look and smell again like the most delightful, sub-philosophical, idealist elixirs.

JUSTIN CLEMENS teaches at the University of Melbourne.

NOTES

1. See, *inter alia*, I. Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology; or What It's Like to Be a Thing*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012; R. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; L. Bryant, *A Democracy of Objects*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011; L. Bryant *et al.* (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Melbourne: Re.press, 2011; G. Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*. Melbourne: re.press, 2009; T. Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012. I would also like to thank A.J. Bartlett, C. Gelder and J. Roffe here for their comments on earlier versions of this article.
2. This feature has led Brassier to comment that: "The 'speculative realist movement' exists only in the imaginations of a group of bloggers promoting an agenda for which I have no sympathy whatsoever: actor network theory spiced with pan-psychist metaphysics and morsels of process philosophy. I don't believe the internet is an appropriate medium for serious philosophical debate; nor do I believe it is acceptable to try to concoct a philosophical movement online by using blogs to exploit the misguided enthusiasm of impressionable graduate students. I agree with Deleuze's remark that ultimately the most basic task of philosophy is to impede stupidity, so I see little philosophical merit in a 'movement' whose most signal achievement thus far is to have generated an online orgy of stupidity." See R. Brassier and M. Rychter, "I am a nihilist because I still believe in truth," *Kronos*, 4 March 2011, <http://www.kronos.org.pl/index.php?23151.896>, downloaded 29 October 2012.
3. Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. R. Brassier. London: Continuum, 2009.
4. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.
5. Q. Meillassoux, "The contingency of the laws of nature." *Society and Space* 30:2 (2012): 325.
6. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 79.
7. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 65.
8. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 67. Italics Meillassoux's.
9. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 76. Italics Meillassoux's.
10. I was unfortunately not able to incorporate here the work by L. Braver, Bryant, Harman, E. Joy, A. Kotsko, C. Norris, J. Roffe, et al., which appeared at the time of completing this essay in *Speculations* IV (2013), <<http://www.speculations-journal.org/current-issue/>>.
11. See L. Chiesa, "Hyperstructuralism's Necessity of Contingency." *S* 3 (2010): 159-177.
12. S. Critchley, "Back to the Great Outdoors." *TLS* (28 February 2009): 28.
13. A. Galloway, *French Theory Today: An Introduction to Possible Futures, No. 4: Quentin Meillassoux, or The Great Outdoors*. New York: TPSNY, 2011, 11.
14. M. Hägglund, "Radical Atheist Materialism: A Critique of Quentin Meillassoux," *The Speculative Turn*. Melbourne: re.press, 2011, 114-129.
15. P. Hallward, "Anything is possible." *Radical Philosophy* 152 (November/December 2008): 51-57.
16. G. Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 142.
17. See A. Johnston, "Hume's Revenge: A Dieu, Meillassoux?" in *The Speculative Turn*, 92-113.
18. J. Roffe, "Time and Ground: A Critique of Meillassoux's Speculative Realism." *Angelaki* 17:1 (2012): 65.
19. C. Thorne, "Outward Bound: On Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude*." *Speculations* III, 273-289.
20. A. Toscano, "Against Speculation, or, A Critique of the Critique of Critique: A Remark on Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude* (After Colletti)," in *The Speculative Turn*, 87.
21. C. Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 151.
22. A. Zupancic, "Realism in Psychoanalysis." *JEP: European Journal of Psychoanalysis* 32 (2011): 33.
23. Christian Gelder has studied this phenomenon in an unparalleled form, in an as-yet unpublished manuscript which shows how the matrix of Meillassoux's thought is a kind of Derridean Mallarméanism; I owe this point to his ongoing work, which I hope will soon be in print.
24. See Q. Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign." Lecture Transcript, Freie Universität Berlin, 20 April 2012. No page numbers.
25. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 78.
26. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 79.
27. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 79.
28. See for example Fredkin's website with accompanying papers <<http://www.digitalphilosophy.org/Home/Papers/TOC/tabid/63/Default.aspx>>, or G. Chaitin, "Epistemology as Information Theory: From Leibniz to Ω ," *Collapse* 1 (2006): 27-51.
29. Indeed, Meillassoux's claims don't conform to or confront any of the recent accounts of the subject. See, for example, G. Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, for Priest's own account of "dialetheism," i.e., that there can be true contradictions.
30. Here is Alain Badiou's summary of the situation: "it seems that the two great Aristotelian principles (non-contradiction and the excluded middle), as forwarded in *Metaphysics* G, condition three logical types (and not two, as it was long believed).

In effect, one can universally validate both principles (classical logic), or the principle of contradiction alone (intuitionist logic), or the excluded middle alone (para-consistent logics)." Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*. Trans. A. Toscano. London: Continuum, 2009, 532.

31. For an extraordinary recent account of critiques of the principle of non-contradiction, see B. Cassin, *Jacques le Sophiste*, Paris: EPEL, 2012, in which she confronts such an Aristotelian principle with the scabrous inventions of Lacan and the sophists. From another tradition entirely, with utterly different methods and references, one might also look at the work of Greg Restall, e.g., "We have seen that considering a logic as a consequence relation makes the parallels between laws of non-contradiction and laws of the excluded middle striking. In classical logic, the laws are strong. Contradictions are at the bottom of the entailment ordering, and excluded middles are at the top. In logics such as R the situation is more subtle. Contradictions need not entail everything, and excluded middles need not be entailed by everything. Yet, just as it is natural to accept excluded middles, on the basis of R-reasoning, it is natural to reject contradictions on the basis of the very same reasoning. A paraconsistent logic such as R makes the way open for the acceptance of contradictions, and controls the consequences of such acceptances, but it does not make them mandatory. There are many different laws of non-contradiction, and, and some are present, even paraconsistent logics such as R." Greg Restall, "Laws of Non-Contradiction, Laws of the Excluded Middle and Logics," in Eds. G. Priest, J.C. Beall, B. Armour-Garb, *The Law of Non-Contradiction; New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 84.

32. R. Dolphijn and I. van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*. Ann Arbor: OH Press, 2012, 71.

33. R. Brassier, "The Enigma of Realism: On Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude*." *Collapse* II (2007): 43. One can see how Harman's ignorance of logic renders such insights impossible for him. Hence, in *Quentin Meillassoux*, Harman's "hyperbolic method" declares that Meillassoux's "critique of 'correlationism,' in my view, will be remembered as the death blow to the mainstream continental philosophy that ran from 1900 (Husserl's *Logical Investigations*) to 2005 (the year before *After Finitude* was published)" (p. 124).

34. Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition": np. All further references will be to this paper.

35. It is at this point that a real confrontation with Meillassoux's incredible tract on Mallarmé, *The Number and the Siren*, trans. R. Mackay (Sequence/Urbanomic, 2012) would be necessary, precisely around its brilliant account of the virtuality of the *peut-être*, the *perhaps*, of *Un coup de dés*. See also his critique of Badiou in "Badiou and Mallarmé: The Event and the Perhaps," trans. A. Edlebi, *Parrhesia* 16 (2013): 35-47, where the "PERHAPS" "silently resists its eventualization" "because it is not so much a promise as a pure actuality," (p. 38). My thesis, briefly put, is this: Meillassoux deliberately contradicts himself between *After Finitude*, where non-contradiction plays a foundational role, and *The Number*, wherein an impossible virtuality takes command of the deliberately vacillating precision of the actual (the "707" or "706" or "708" or whatever of the hermetic cipher); Meillassoux himself is therefore seeking to create, to construct his own work as *an object that is by its own arguments contradictory*....and therefore, as he claims in *After Finitude*, would be a *necessary being*. Meillassoux's work would thereby become the Realist God that he claims Kant destroyed, that is, an absolutely necessary substance. To which one can only whistle admiringly: What subtlety! What ambition! What inconsistency!

36. Häggglund, "Radical Atheist Materialism," 115.

37. J. Derrida, "Economimesis," *Diacritics* 11:2 (1981): 2-25.

38. Derrida, "Economimesis," 25.

CRITICAL HISTORY: FOUCAULT AFTER KANT AND NIETZSCHE

Bregham Dalgliesh

INTRODUCTION

Shortly before he died at the age of fifty-seven, Michel Foucault spoke of his efforts to alter his “way of looking at things ... [and] to change the boundaries” of what he knew.¹ After thirty-five years of philosophical labour, during which he always sought to go astray from himself, Foucault wondered if in the end he had found his orientation in thinking. Instead, he reminisced, he had merely come to think differently, albeit “from a new vantage point;” despite the impression of progress, the irony is one ends up “looking down on oneself from above.”²

If Foucault is right and the philosopher’s vocation remains an *askēsis*, or the exercise of oneself in the activity of thought, the longer one practices thinking, the higher and wider one’s perspective becomes. With few exceptions, the rule for philosophers is to become profound, not monarchs. Similarly for Foucault, whose voyage in thought ended in mid-ocean, though not too late for him to clarify that what he had been trying to articulate—from the day he left the *École Normale Supérieure* in 1951 until his death in 1984 as professor at the *Collège de France*—was a critical history of thought. As Foucault entered what would also be the last months of his life, he left us in no doubt about his serendipitous philosophical journey. From the perspective afforded by hindsight—and even though it metamorphosed in a “somewhat confused fashion”³—he outlined a unique philosophical method. Insofar as it is Kantian derived and Nietzschean inspired, it is both critical and historical. Yet it is definitively Foucauldian too, in as much as critique targets thought in its historicity.⁴ Hence Foucault’s analytical focus on the games of truth and their inextricable relation to power, as well as the modes of self-formation they constitute.⁵

An articulation of Foucault’s *œuvre* of a critical history of thought defines the purpose here. To begin with, the first section gestures at a concept of the *œuvre* wherein its form is defined by the establishment of a field

of inquiry, while its content is characterised by disjunctions and multiplicity. In section two the criticisms of Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor are examined. Their insistence on defining the form of an *œuvre* by the unity and continuity of its content means they reject Foucault's endeavour outright. As a consequence, they are unable to fathom how Foucault can both critique and draw upon enlightenment thought at the same time. Section three then traces the origins of Foucault's *œuvre* of a critical history in Immanuel Kant's project for a philosophical history of reason, which Foucault recycles through Nietzsche's critique of Western metaphysics and subjectivity. Subsequently, in section four we analyse how Foucault both rejects and incorporates key elements of enlightenment into his thinking, while section five delineates the essence of critical history and its focus on self-formation. Finally, in the conclusion we consider the relevance for critique today of a Foucauldian *œuvre*.⁶

FOUCAULT AND THE CONCEPT OF THE *ŒUVRE*

The question that first comes to mind from these introductory remarks is why advocate a Foucauldian *œuvre*? For a start, several other commentators discern a common thread in Foucault's writings, whether John Rajchman's "ethic of free thought," Hubert Dreyfus' and Paul Rabinow's "interpretive analytics," Stuart Elden's "mapping of the present," or Alan Sheridan's "political anatomy."⁷ Other writers, however, are more explicit in discerning an *œuvre*. In its highly topical choice of sexuality or the techniques of normalisation, Foucault's work coheres around what Todd May calls "histories of the present."⁸ Akin to Michael Mahon's idea of the "genealogical problematic" that informs Foucault's writings,⁹ these genealogical histories are fuelled by a "philosophical ethos," which itself is indicative of an *œuvre* and might be situated within a larger corpus of enlightenment thought.¹⁰ In this sense Foucault's effort to deploy critique as a means to articulate an ethics relevant for today defines a consistent *œuvre*.¹¹ For Johanna Oksala, it amounts to a "nominalist political ontology" of the social practices that define our present reality.¹² Nonetheless, these thinkers do not develop Foucault's *œuvre* in terms of the philosophical method of a critical history of thought, nor for that matter do they address its very possibility.

In fact, before we can elaborate any content, we must first deal with the objection to the form of this endeavour. Foucault himself could be said to oppose any attempt to articulate an *œuvre*, with his riposte to those who detected an affinity between archaeology and structuralism a case in point. As a reaction against the "Author-God"¹³ (or "author-generator"¹⁴), Foucault lays down a 'labyrinth' as his condition of possibility for writing. His methodological reason is authorial effacement, such that the explanatory power of the episteme comes to the fore and we cease demanding that Foucault remain the same.¹⁵ We can therefore ask if an *œuvre sans auteur*—from, to boot, a chameleonic author who is a consummate academic wheeler dealer,¹⁶ and with a "sardonic laughter" that haunts even Gilles Deleuze¹⁷—is possible?

To be sure, the purpose here is not a retroactive Whig interpretation of Foucault's work, which as Roger Deacon argues would simply violate his thought.¹⁸ Instead, we can initially distinguish between an author and an individual. As the former, one's writings are presented for public consumption. It requires one's work to display continuity and a minimum level of coherence, which eventually translates into a "neo-identity."¹⁹ However, as an individual the author enjoys the same right to privacy as any other citizen. There is no obligation to stay the same, or duty to be publicly accountable for who one is. With echoes of the *ad hominem* fallacy, Foucault refuses an explanation of an *œuvre*—the author's publicly mediated neo-identity—with reference to a person's private life.

Secondly, he rejects the valorisation of an *œuvre* due to the political preferences of the writer and her intellectual lineage. It fuels a cult of the author and its associated vicissitudes of style, which is no more acute than in Paris where intellectual affinity is as fickle as that of fashion. Such a reduction of author to *engagement* spurs the hagiographer to impute magic into texts, and to deploy them for the causes the author might have championed. Instead, the value of a text resides in the extent to which it serves a strategic purpose.²⁰ For this to occur, an author's words must be released from the texts in which they originate, as well as from the academic rigours

CRITICAL HISTORY

that accompany their interpretation. Finally, Foucault readily acknowledges the link between the individual, a neo-identity and an *œuvre*. If to change how one thinks is a game with oneself, which is constitutive of who one is, then it cannot be kept from one's public in the shape of what one produces, or the texts that one publishes for consumption in return for self-affirmation.²¹

It is this oscillation between a right to privacy vis-à-vis one's *œuvre* as it enters the public domain, the demand to evaluate a text in terms of its critical purpose rather than the *engagement* of its producer, and the centrality in his life of the transformation of himself by thought, such that he wears his mind on his sleeve,²² which accounts for the confusion in how to interpret Foucault.²³ It also fuels scepticism about the very possibility of an *œuvre* and his association with it. If we are to have any hope of filling out its content with (Foucauldian) critical history, therefore, we must articulate the form the requisite *œuvre* might take.

A point of entry is Foucault's "founder of discursivity." It develops out of the politics of doing philosophy in 1960s France, which inheres in Foucault's comments above in the preface to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and his methodological injunction to privilege the text over the author. The politics concerns relieving the author of responsibility by dissipating the ordering of spoken things into discourse, which allays the anxiety inherent to any act of writing and allows it to begin anew.²⁴ Here, Raymond Barthes' "book of Logothetes" is useful, wherein he lauds Sade, Fourier and Loyola as inventors of language.²⁵ By first rejecting the dominant language and its distortions of thinking, the logothete goes on to ground their own linguistic register, which takes shape in a self-contained *œuvre*. However, the logothete's text is characterised by an infinite variety of strategies, approaches, problematisations and perspectives. As a "series of bits and pieces, a baroque fabric of odds and ends," the *œuvre qua* text constitutes a continuum, yet without any logical order, teleological rationale or organic coherence.²⁶ Within a baroque *œuvre*, therefore, the author is a heuristic device, rather than the "ontological principle" of the text.²⁷

Foucault in fact intimates as much. During a debate at the *Société française de philosophie* in 1969 (published as *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*), he says his aim in *The Order of Things* had been to excavate the episteme, or those discursive layers that stand outside the categories "of the book ... [or] author."²⁸ To get beyond the anthropocentric reductionism implied by the latter, Foucault speaks of the "transdiscursive" author, who constructs a house of writing in which other authors find their home. The "founders of discursivity," whether Freud and Marx (and their discourses of psychoanalysis and Marxism, respectively) or Nietzsche, Marx and Freud (and their constitution of the field of hermeneutics²⁹), establish the framework and norms that give birth to future texts. These authors have an "inaugurative value." They force, within the Kuhnian paradigm they give birth to, a constant return to the origin. However, this is not out of any obligation to be faithful to the founder, but an act of homage and a point of departure for modifying the field of discursivity.³⁰

Foucault, I want to argue along with Paul Rabinow and Edward Saïd,³¹ is one such founder of discursivity. His field is philosophical method, which many of us work with or against, but rarely without reference to. Typically, we deploy it in our everyday practice of thought, which is an amalgam of *askēsis*, or training, and *mathēsis*, or theoretical knowledge.³² In this respect, the form of his *œuvre* is critical history, while its content is knowledge, power and ethics. It suggests the *œuvre* is neither the exclusive product of the author, nor the arbitrary construction of the reader. It is the co-constructed effect of the constitution of the author's interpretative horizons by the episteme, and the product of the dynamic inherent to the field of discursivity that is grounded by the author.³³ Although initially the outcome of the author's comprehension of the episteme, the *œuvre* ultimately detaches itself from any authorial subject. While an *œuvre* endures as a discursive field, the author is merely its home ground. Authorship is a hostage of the historical and reactive, as it must be when the *graphē* insinuates itself into the *bios*.³⁴

THOUGHT WITHOUT REASON

With this understanding of the form of a Foucauldian *œuvre*, why advocate a content of the practice of critique in respect of the imbroglio of truth, power and subjectivity? One approach is to consider the question in terms of its origins. Why, that is, do Foucault's foes go to such lengths to emphasise the fact that, because his trajectory of critique was characterised by frequent oscillations between knowledge, power and self-formation, it is impossible to assign value to his thought, let alone talk about it in their vocabulary of an *œuvre*?

The answer lies in what is unsaid, yet implied and taken for granted. From the perspective of “*auteurist* criticism,”³⁵ thinkers without an underlying unity and continuity are rarely taken seriously. To be fair, even Foucault's friends differ in their taxonomies. Is he a philosopher, social critic or political theorist,³⁶ an historian—in which case, of knowledge, institutions, power, social structures, the human sciences, ethical practices, or perhaps all of these at the same time³⁷—or, as he himself implied, a critical historian of thought whose work is political because empirical and oriented toward the present?³⁸ To paraphrase Foucault, we might say that for his foes the absence of a stable authorial subject behind his *œuvre* makes it tantamount to madness, or “thought without reason.”³⁹

Let me home in on the arguments against Foucault's folly, where his detractors focus on the status of truth as an effect of the apparatuses of power/knowledge and the contradiction it lands him in when it comes to advocating critique. For Habermas, Foucault's aversion to truth means that neither the archaeologist's stoic gaze that freezes history into an iceberg, nor the cynical gaze of the genealogist who defrosts and remoulds it, move us beyond a subjectless will to power. Genealogical historiography, which assumes power has a transcendental status that usurps reason's claim to objectivity, suffers from the same illusions Foucault detects in the human sciences. According to Habermas, Foucault's Nietzschean treatment of power as the historical *a priori*—that “border of time that surrounds our present ... [and,] outside ourselves, delimits us”⁴⁰—eliminates any trace of subjectivity, which lands him in “contradictory self-thematizations.”⁴¹ Ultimately, Habermas despairs, Foucault is unable to adjudicate the all-pervasive power circulating in the social body. If he is to convince Habermas that he is more than a young conservative whose critique of modernity does not turn in on itself—if Foucault is to do more than aestheticise politics into a transfiguring play of freedom with reality—he must assuage Habermas' skepticism.⁴² Why, Habermas exasperates, ought we to resist apparatuses of power/knowledge?⁴³

In line with Habermas, Charles Taylor denounces the monolithic relativism of Foucault's apparatuses of power/knowledge and the impotence of his critique. This is linked to Taylor's concern with Foucault's analysis of power, in which there is no place for freedom or truth.⁴⁴ Rather than follow Taylor by articulating a community's moral ontology and its importance to the constitution of identity, especially the underlying image of the self who enjoys the power to will, Foucault opts for the hermetic “critic-in-small.”⁴⁵ His neo-Nietzschean arbitrariness of interpretation, and interpretation as an imposition of domination, means that Foucault's construction of the subject as a self-centred work of art is difficult to accept in the face of his rejection of modern thought.⁴⁶ In answer to his question about a conceptualisation of power without associated notions of truth and freedom, Taylor laments that Foucault is doubly relativistic. He cannot differentiate various frameworks of “life/thought/valuation,” nor judge between the different forms of power they imply.⁴⁷

In this light, my intention is to meet Foucault's critics on their own terms by arguing that he incorporates and goes beyond the philosophical legacy of enlightenment thought. For his critics, certain concepts, such as power and knowledge, and many core values—truth and freedom prime among them—are the sole preserve of an enlightenment inspired mode of thinking, which also includes an exclusive practice of critique. This is why Habermas, most tellingly, wants to interrogate Foucault's desire to bring “off a radical critique of reason.”⁴⁸ If Foucault fails, then so too does his Nietzschean laundering of Kant and the effort to discern from within enlightenment an alternative mode of critique. Similarly, as Taylor says, Foucault's account of power/knowledge is empty in respect of truth and liberation and silent about their causal relation. Because, in Taylor's interpretation of enlightenment, any talk of power must include its nemesis, truth *qua* means to

CRITICAL HISTORY

freedom, Foucault simply does not “speak coherently.”⁴⁹ For Habermas and Taylor, philosophical incoherence and political danger infiltrate Foucault’s Nietzschean attempt to have his Kantian cake and eat it. One simply cannot reject the value legacy of enlightenment, yet at the same time both claim a share of the inheritance of its concepts, such as truth and freedom, and argue for an alternative language of critique—critical history—through which to think them.⁵⁰

KANT, NIETZSCHE, FOUCAULT

The above criticisms personify the negative reception of Foucault beyond the Gallic context that nurtured him. His bad press is largely due to mutually exclusive interpretations in post-war France and Germany of Kant’s call to take up pens around a history of reason.⁵¹ In France, it produced various philosophies of the subject, which eventually defined the positivist remit of the human sciences. Amongst others, Foucault spearheaded the attack against humanism in *The Order of Things*, especially against the dominance of positivism that relied on a Kantian transcendental subject. To be sure, there were other critical alternatives available, whether Alexandre Kojève’s and Jean Hyppolite’s Marxist rendition of Hegel’s dialectic of history, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology or Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism, yet Foucault’s concern was to resuscitate—rather than reject—Kant.⁵² Meanwhile, in Germany the history of reason was taken up by Karl Marx and carried forward by Max Weber and the Frankfurt School in the form of a history of social rationality, which defers to a critical theory to reconcile reason to its moments of social diremption.⁵³ Habermas is one of the leading heirs of this tradition, and has steered the philosophical discourse of modernity away from the subject into communicative action and the capacity of language for world disclosure,⁵⁴ albeit at the expense of foreclosing any discussion around whether his interpretation of our inheritance—the responsibility to provide an endogenous normative foundation for modernity⁵⁵—is actually a viable avenue.⁵⁶

In contrast to both the French and German heeding of Kant’s call, Foucault worked in the French tradition of the philosophy of science called epistemological history. With echoes of the sociology of scientific knowledge and its explanation of the content of knowledge through its context, critique is a matter of analysing the social and political conditions of possibility (*savoir*) for scientific knowledge (*connaissance*).⁵⁷ A critical history of thought follows in the footsteps of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem, who were successive occupants of the chair in the history and philosophy of science at the Sorbonne. Foucault not only acknowledges his debt to Bachelard for *épistémocritique*, which investigates the truth and falsity of statements that constitute a scientific discourse, but he extends his gratitude to Canguilhem for *épistémologiques*, or the analysis of scientific knowledge in terms of its discursive practice and the rules for its use. Most importantly, Foucault learns from Canguilhem that the “history of a concept ... [depends on] its various fields of constitution and validity... [rather than] its progressive refinement.”⁵⁸ On this understanding, Foucault’s encounter with Kant corresponds with the attempt in France to properly understand him at the turn of the twentieth century, when it becomes possible to distinguish the “doctrine” of the Kantian system from the “idea” of criticism.⁵⁹ Although both implicate one in an “attitude” of thinking, Foucault aligns himself with the “idea”. It requires that we cut ourselves off from Kant’s linking of criticism to metaphysics “in order to release the purity of the idea of criticism.”⁶⁰

It is within this nationally specific intellectual heritage that Foucault develops his life-long quest to salvage Kant’s concept of critique from any metaphysical doctrine through the voice of Nietzsche. In his *petite thèse* on Kant’s *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*,⁶¹ we see the first mention of an “archaeology of the text” as a vehicle to dethrone anthropocentrism and facilitate the birth of “*homo criticus*.”⁶² However, of most importance for the purposes here is Foucault’s sudden change of tack at the end of his complementary thesis, where he calls forth Nietzsche to rescue us from Kant’s anthropocentrism.⁶³ The question of *Was ist der Mensch?*, Foucault writes, has finally found its answer in *der Übermensch*.⁶⁴

Foucault’s attempt to release the purity of Kant’s critical potential is manifest in his interest in “*philosophische Archäologie*,” which in the tradition of Bachelard and Canguilhem mentioned earlier proffers a method for

excavating the socio-political and discursive conditions that render scientific knowledge possible. With echoes of what Foucault would undertake in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Kant yearns for a history of reason not in terms of its transcendental or phenomenological conditions, but of its concrete manifestation in the historical *a priori*. As Kant outlines in *Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, a *philosophische Archäologie* excavates “the facticity of reason” from the “nature [or rationality or episteme] of reason” itself.⁶⁵

To be sure, Kant’s *philosophische Archäologie* and Foucault’s archaeology differ in more than name. Most obviously, for the former reason is always potentially transcendental. However, for Foucault, who follows Nietzsche to “the threshold beyond which contemporary philosophy” can start thinking again, reason is resolutely historical due to the ontological priority of power.⁶⁶ The fundamental influence of Kant on Foucault, as well as Foucault’s attempt to resuscitate critical philosophy by purging it of transcendental aspirations, is further evident in terms of critique’s purpose.⁶⁷ As is well known, Kant aligns philosophy and modernity by assigning the former the responsibility for answering four questions that are crucial to the attempt to ground the latter: what can I know?; what ought I to do?; what may I hope for?; and what is man?⁶⁸ But in *The Order of Things* Foucault demonstrates that humanism subordinates the epistemological and moral questions to the anthropological, whence various foundational philosophies of the subject. Kant the philosopher of *Aufklärung* must be rescued from Kant the inadvertent founder of humanism’s transcendental subject, for although he paved the way for the advance of critical thought, Kant “ultimately relegated all critical investigations to an anthropological question.”⁶⁹

Although Foucault acknowledges that Heidegger determined his philosophical development, he recognizes as we saw earlier that Nietzsche’s influence ultimately prevailed.⁷⁰ In his definitive turn from Heidegger to Nietzsche, which is key for the purposes of rescuing Kant from the philosophy of the empirico-transcendental *doublet*, the focus of Foucault’s critique broadens from knowledge to apparatuses of power/knowledge, the episteme to the *dispositif d’ensemble* or apparatus.⁷¹ Nonetheless, Dreyfus and Rainbow are correct to insist that there is “no pre- and post-archaeology or genealogy in Foucault.”⁷² Instead, after 1968 the analysis of systems of thought, which organise and regulate how the subject experiences herself, is subsumed by the problematic of how such systems come into existence through contingent historical processes that are manifested as events.⁷³ Foucault’s Nietzschean turn is, as John Rajchman argues, a natural outcome of his desire to make Heidegger’s philosophical anti-humanism political.⁷⁴ The result is critique with a “double gaze.”⁷⁵ Archaeology discerns the nominalist ontological premises within the field of the apparatus *qua* grid of intelligibility,⁷⁶ while the “politicisation effected” by genealogy concerns an analysis of the event within it.⁷⁷ Archaeology is the methodological framework and genealogy the weapon that targets discourses. Foucault hereby wants to show how discursive events constitute the present and “ourselves—either our knowledge, our practices, our type of rationality, our relationship to ourselves or to others....”⁷⁸

FOUCAULT’S ETHOS: KANT AND NIETZSCHE AGAIN

The importance of Nietzsche is not solely in terms of genealogy as a method to humble the transcendental aspirations of Kantian metaphysics. Foucault is also able to deploy Nietzsche to find an exit for Kant’s Third Antinomy, in which the only way *homo phenomenon* can be free of natural causes is to posit *homo noumenon*, or “man,” who stands outside time and space and whose will is determined by pure practical reason.⁷⁹ While Kant’s antinomy of (noumenal) freedom and (phenomenal) necessity is caught in a dualist spatial relationship, for Nietzsche the solution involves a non-dualist temporal relationship. Therein, necessity belongs to the realm of the past and freedom to that of the future. Their confluence in the present gives rise to a subjectivity that is simultaneously one of being (necessity) and becoming (freedom).⁸⁰ Kantian maturity of self-legislated obedience to the moral law, where *der Mensch* is the outcome of self-actualisation, is subsumed into Nietzschean maturity where *der Übermensch* dissociates autonomy from any universalisable moral law in a process of perpetual self-overcoming. Autonomy becomes goal-directed agency that is manifest in the world, rather than agency directed at transcendental goals.

CRITICAL HISTORY

In this light, it is obvious why Foucault's critique is a double wager: in the first place, he stands to gain the erasure, like the now famous face drawn at the edge of the sea, of humanism's condition of possibility, "man"; secondly, if successful, Foucault can claim a part of the inheritance of Kantian *Aufklärung*, and the right to redefine critique and rethink autonomy.⁸¹ By inaugurating the return of critical philosophy "in the void left by man's disappearance," Foucault writes a critical history of thought from three very Kantian points of departure, yet which proceed along a very Nietzschean road: how have my questions been produced and the path of my knowing determined (versus what can I know?); how have I been situated to experience the real and how does exclusion operate in delineating the realm of obligation for me (versus what ought I to do?); and what are the struggles in which I am engaged and how have the parameters for my aspirations been defined (versus what may I hope for?)⁸² In short, on the understanding that reason is internal to discursive practices, Foucault's *œuvre* is a critical history that analyses how subjects are articulated vis-à-vis limits that are inherently contingent in nature due to power, but which are typically experienced as necessary because of a truth effect.

Indeed, this baroque *œuvre*, which Foucault speaks of in terms of his "project," is pieced together in a short summary of his work for the *Dictionnaire des philosophes* in 1984. Although the synopsis is signed Maurice Florence, the author is unquestionably Foucault. In keeping with the French tradition of these brief intellectual biographies written under a pseudonym, he speaks about Maurice Florence's *œuvre* as a "critical history of thought."⁸³ It suggests that Foucault's quest to build a bridge between Kantian critique and Nietzschean genealogy finally started to make sense through his analytical focus on ethical self-formation and its relation to contemporary conceptions of freedom. This in turn obliged Foucault to take up Kant from another angle, that of *Aufklärung*. What intrigues Foucault here is how the "idea" rather than the "metaphysics" of critique is upheld by Kant, which is evident in the way he speaks of an age of enlightenment in terms of a Nietzschean "*Ausgang*" that we are continually having to locate.⁸⁴

Foucault's fascination is with Kant's conception of enlightenment as a mode of thinking "difference" in the present. To discern it requires a certain ethos, and in his reflections on enlightenment (or really Kant's interpretation of it) Foucault turns to Baudelaire. The ethos contains, firstly, a will to appropriate the present, or at least to tease out the eternal within the ephemeral. Secondly, the ethos allows us to treat the present with irony, precisely in order "to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is."⁸⁵ The modern ethos attuned to the present in this way is clearly taking its cue once again from the Nietzschean injunction to live in the "*Augenblick*," or that moment when one is liberated from the seriality of time and affirmative of it through an aesthetic articulation of autonomy by a self-overcoming subject.⁸⁶ Foucault's ethos is the weapon that makes living with *amor fati* bearable, while the philosophy that attends to this task has "attitude," which is expressed as "a permanent critique of our historical era."⁸⁷

It is in *Qu'est-ce que la critique? [Critique et Aufklärung]* that Foucault first outlines this "critical attitude," which is coterminous with any act of government, or more precisely the governmentality through which the subject, power and truth find their historical articulation (typically, the obedience of the subject via a discourse of truth). As such, the offspring of governmentality is resistance, which Foucault describes as a "critical attitude." It is manifest as a simple refusal to submit to various modes of governing at specific historical junctures, which is definitive of *Aufklärung* as an *Ausgang*.⁸⁸ Following Frédéric Gros, therefore, there are three axes in Foucault's relation to enlightenment: firstly, the insistence on the non-necessity of philosophy, in the sense of the lack of any internal legitimation of it, such that its only justification can be found externally in an attitude of the permanent questioning of the present; secondly, the subject's relation to truth is through an ethical act of courage—an ethos—rather than via a moral gymnastics in tune with an epistemology; and, thirdly, the refusal to obey, or resistance, is the condition for the opening up of a theoretical field, such as mental illness or sexuality, and an historical inquiry into its contingent moments of construction with a view to deflating the perception of their necessity.⁸⁹

Critique, as David Owen tells us, pursues "maturity through reflection on *modernity*, where this reflection is articulated via a historical reconstruction of our being in the present."⁹⁰ From this perspective, critique is akin

to a sentry on duty that keeps watch for the impending dark, which always threatens to envelope agonistically derived spaces of freedom. In the event that it does, critique discloses the contingent nature of power/knowledge and hereby acts as a “solvent” of domination that allows us to seek an *Ausgang*.⁹¹ It is as a radical skeptic of the necessary—or a critical historian of the contingent—that, after his numerous sojourns in America during the 1970s, Foucault attempted a *rapprochement* between the divergent trajectories of critique that emanate from the enlightenment.⁹² To some extent, Thomas McCarthy demonstrates it is feasible in terms of a shared heritage of socio-historical analysis that seeks to gain “critical distance from ... rational beliefs.”⁹³ Similarly, Allen rejects the spurious opposition between Foucault’s contextualism and Habermas’s commitment to a mode of reason that can transcend practices. Instead, she conjoins them in a “principled form of contextualism” that turns on how context-transcending ideals are in constant need of an unmasking of their status as semblances of power.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the particularities of Foucault’s approach should not be underestimated. In this respect, Paul Veyne writes that Foucault’s critical history shows that gestures, even those of inclusion and integration, always fail to “fulfil the universalism of a reason” and hereby leave emptiness outside.⁹⁵ A task of philosophy is thus to make the insatiable human appetite for knowledge aware of the concomitant forms of domination that it engenders. It is a tradition that can be traced back to Nietzsche, who writes in the *Genealogy of Morals*: “what sense would our entire existence have, if not this that in ourselves this will to truth has become conscious of itself as a problem?”⁹⁶ Foucault’s insight is to marry the will to power with the will to truth, whence the notion of apparatuses of power/knowledge and the ethico-political axis of any critical philosophy today: “How is it possible to exist as rational beings, who are fortunately destined to practice a rationality that is unfortunately shot through with intrinsic dangers?”⁹⁷

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THOUGHT

So how is critique to proceed in its ambition to inform reason that, because it is neither unequivocally universal in its remit nor transcendental in its representations, its practices are destined to oscillate between those in which subjectivity is mired in immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*) and practices that enable the conditions for maturity (*Mündigkeit*)? Foucault’s critical history proceeds on the basis of two interrelated moments of ideal criticism and real transformation. The former is less a question of pronouncing on what is wrong than highlighting the familiar, yet unchallenged, ways of thought on which the practices we accept rest.⁹⁸ To be sure, ideal criticism presupposes that we resist the tendency to prioritise the social as the sole reality and, relatedly, that we rehabilitate thought as an independent entity that merits a history of its own. Ideal critique allows us to re-appropriate the world by deconstructing the processes that have shaped it. It is “the means to *think the world* as it is and *as it could be*,” which in the first instance requires a demonstration that things are not as self-evident as they may seem.⁹⁹ Because the task of criticism is to make facile gestures difficult, ideal criticism succeeds to the extent that it ushers in—if not implores from those concerned—the second moment of critique, that of real transformation, “[for] as soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes ... quite possible.”¹⁰⁰

Critical history’s twin components, which can never be separated and so engender a continuous criticism, proceed against the backdrop of a modification of enlightenment values. It targets the limits of the necessary on behalf of the “constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects.”¹⁰¹ Here, critical history can initially be contrasted with philosophical critique. Foucault’s ideal criticism is indebted to Kantian philosophical criticism. However, on the proviso that the possibility of a legislative judgement premised on an analytic of truth is jettisoned, critical history delegates the concrete political moment of transformation to those implicated. Instead of being transcendental and concerned with the very possibility of metaphysics,¹⁰² critical history is archaeological and concerned with giving impetus via genealogy to the undefined work of freedom as incessant self-overcoming. Rather than a formal critique undertaken to necessarily limit the remit of reason, critical history is a practical critique preoccupied with the possibility of transgression, in particular of those limits that are a product of the contingent and the arbitrary and which define what we are, do and think.¹⁰³

CRITICAL HISTORY

Insofar as the immanent critical theory of the Frankfurt School is concerned—which takes its cue from Marx’s clarion call to philosophers to stop interpreting the world and to start transforming it, while its Kantian purpose is to democratise the “conditions of social life that are controllable by human beings”¹⁰⁴—the key points of difference with Foucauldian transformative critique are epistemological and political. As we have already seen, Foucault does not entertain a privileged, transcendental perspective for truth. The critical historian assumes the role of a specific intellectual, who is situated inside practice and thus unable to speak on behalf of others from a perspective outside of it, which is in contrast to the universal intellectual whose critical theory strives to “align theory and practice” by being transversal, effective and pragmatic.¹⁰⁵ Further, the domain of the political is as much intra- as extra-state, not least because Foucault is analysing, firstly, the sovereign power targeted by the critical theorist, as well as its inextricable relation to knowledge, and, secondly, the bio-power that critical history reveals to be coterminous with its sovereign sibling, whence Foucault’s plea to cut off the King’s head.¹⁰⁶

Critical history is therefore nominalist, which is not to deny that a thing exists. Rather, in order to know what it is, it is necessary to understand how it came into being.¹⁰⁷ For the purposes of apprehending the historicity of forms of experience via their reduction to the domain of thought, one steps back from one’s conduct and presents it to oneself as an object for questioning. A nominalist critical history of thought depicts how experience is formed, reformed and transformed. For Foucault, it is not the contractual, transcendental, phenomenological or interpretive capacities of self-consciousness that act as the conditions of possibility for experience, nor anything else akin to an authentic being who stands before, outside or over against the apparatuses of power/knowledge. Instead, experience is simply the process of rationalisation of existence that produces subjects or subjectivities, which is simply one of the possible ways to organise self-consciousness.¹⁰⁸ Because it is historical in character and determined by reason that is at best ambivalent, the process of rationalisation demands a critical history of thought that analyses its objective, normative and subjective axes of truth that have formed, and continue to constitute, who we are in the *actuel passé*, or present past.¹⁰⁹

In his role as a critical historian who is engaged in a perpetual test of the limits of experience within the domain of thought, Foucault accepts Kant’s invitation to participate personally and collectively in the ongoing activity of enlightenment on condition that Nietzsche accompanies him. Critical history articulates how apparatuses of power/knowledge structure and modify who we are, with the focus on the relations of subjectivation and objectivation. The question, Foucault says:

is to determine that which has to be the subject, on what conditions it is subjected, the status it must have, and the position it must occupy in reality or the mind in order to be a legitimate subject of this or that discourse—in brief, it is a question of determining its mode of subjectivation;.... But the question is also, and at the same time, to establish under what conditions a thing becomes an object of discourse, how it is problematised as an object to be known, by what procedures of division it is subjected, and the precise aspect of it which is considered relevant. This is a matter of ascertaining its mode of objectivation.¹¹⁰

By enunciating the relations of subjectivation and objectivation that constitute discursive subjects and objects, Foucault actualises in thought the games of truth in respect of which we experience ourselves. Intrigued by the fact that the course of history only offers valorisations that are neither true nor false, they simply are, critical history analyses the emergence of games of truth in their manifestation as apparatuses of power/knowledge.¹¹¹ Foucault limits his focus to scientific, political and ethico-moral games of truth, where through the relations of subjectivation and objectivation human beings are posited as subjects and objects of bodies of discourse—most obviously, of knowledge, power and freedom—which produce our objective, normative and subjective experience.

Anticipating his critics, Foucault wonders if it is possible to pose a more classical philosophical question than that which examines the relation between our experience of knowledge, power and ethico-morality as each

manifests itself in our modern corpus of thought. Moreover, he asks if there is a more systematic way to answer it than to research each independently of the other—as well as in their correlation in the historical discourses of sex through which being is constituted—for the purposes of a critique that rethinks the subject's relation to experience in which one is simultaneously an object and a subject?¹¹²

CONCLUSION

In order to demonstrate the existence of a Foucauldian *œuvre*, the concept itself was first rearticulated. Insofar as its form is concerned, the *œuvre* is a co-construction between the author and the episteme, which is manifest as a field of discursivity. Further, this structural aspect of the *œuvre*, which is only tangentially linked to the author, enables us to think of its content as a “baroque” heterogeneous ensemble that is the product of the lifetime reflections of an individual. Specifically, the content of the Foucauldian *œuvre* is knowledge, power and ethics, while its form is the philosophical method of critical history.

To establish the latter, the focus in the remainder of the article has been on two key figures. When, through the figure of Foucault, Kant, the philosopher of knowledge, meets Nietzsche, the philosopher of power,¹¹³ we discover a method called critical history that targets the systems of thought in which the historicity of how we experience ourselves resides. On the basis of a shift beyond Kant and Nietzsche, Foucault's critique of how apparatuses of power/knowledge constitute the ethico-moral and political games of truth through which subjectivity is experienced. It is tantamount to what Heidegger termed Kant's “critical ontology,”¹¹⁴ albeit with the key difference of the substitution of the transcendental by the historical in furtherance of a transgressive limit-attitude. Given this consistent concern for the subject that is developed through a critical history of who we are, we might reconsider the question of why Foucault's foes deny such an *œuvre*.

Perhaps the reasons for which he has been vilified in Anglo-Saxon political philosophy are twofold. Firstly, because Foucault's critique is initially negative, in the sense of a clearing away of the dogmatism associated with a philosophy of the subject, and only subsequently positive in terms of a reconceptualisation of subjectivity through its articulation by apparatuses of power/knowledge, his critics read the former as a wayward deviation from their idea of what it is to do philosophy, while the latter is taken as a sign that he suddenly sees the light towards the end of his life and, jettisoning a “great deal of (mostly French) [Continental] humbug,”¹¹⁵ adopts a more analytic theoretical posture. Secondly, Foucault's tendency to grate is no doubt due to critical history's top-down approach to the subject, which is anathema to the bottom-up foundational approach of his critics. Here, the issue is primarily one of methodological priority between structure and agency, but it is also a fundamentally political question of how to conceptualise who we are as modern subjects, or what Allen calls a “politics of our selves” in which processes of self-formation that gesture at autonomy are articulated through power, which harbours the potential to undermine it.¹¹⁶

In other words, is it the case, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously proclaimed, that “[m]an is born free; and everywhere he is in chains,”¹¹⁷ such that freedom is always being taken away from us by power, with critique sandwiched in between to arbitrate a David versus Goliath zero-sum game? Or is it rather the case, as Foucault sees it, that “man does not begin with liberty, but with limits and insuperable horizons,”¹¹⁸ such that freedom only comes into existence through power? In this case, critique is a “patient labour giving form to our impatience for liberty,” which because its perspective is also internal to apparatuses of power/knowledge, is nothing less, and can certainly be nothing more, than a toolkit for transformation.¹¹⁹

If the latter, then in reply to Habermas and Taylor a critical history of thought is a deliberately foundationless project that discloses apparatuses of power/knowledge in their capacity as the midwife that gives birth to freedom. Resistance is not about reclaiming freedom that is stolen by power, but of revealing the strategies of power that articulate freedom. The lacuna of Foucault's critics is their inability to entertain any notion of power other than in its sovereign form, which is construed as a Leviathan that upholds the conditions for autonomy at the same time as it threatens to dispossess individuals of their freedom. Similarly, their blind spot

CRITICAL HISTORY

is the underside of juridical power, or the microphysics of disciplinary bio-power that envelopes subjects and transforms them into docile bodies. It is for this reason that power must be conceived as “a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”¹²⁰ Of course, this is never to deny the existence of bureaucratic institutions, structures of inequality or state violence, which is the exercise of power without any recourse to resistance. Instead, it is to argue that power or, more accurately, relations of bio-power are, like the air we breathe, everywhere. Without it, life is impossible. Similarly, life worth living is only possible in power relations, which are co-existent with, as well as productive of, freedom. In fact, freedom is nothing other than the effect of power, for at “the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom.”¹²¹

Finally, therefore, it is important to resist the efforts of Foucault’s detractors “to impose closure” on the form of critique and to once again “re-open the question.”¹²² From its location in the space between history and philosophy, which makes Foucault at one and the same time a historical philosopher and a philosophical historian, critical history can be seen as a vital resource for critique today,¹²³ especially against the backdrop of globalisation and its extra-territorial rearticulation of locally situated strategies of power, which though they have always been everywhere, really now come from everywhere, too.

BREGHAM DALGLIESH is associate professor at the University of Tokyo, Japan, and research associate of the Laboratoire sens et compréhension du monde contemporain (LASCO) at the Institut Mines-Télécom/Université Paris Descartes, France. His work focuses on the task of philosophical critique in respect of globalisation, technoscience and power, which paradoxically both construct and limit the human condition.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Use of Pleasure*. Trans. R. Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992, 11.
2. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*, 11. Also see Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988, Tome IV: 1980-1988*. Dir. D. Defert et F. Ewald. Collaboration J. Lagrange. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994, 545 (hereafter *DEIV*). Unless otherwise stated, all French and German translations are my own.
3. Michel Foucault, "On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, With an Afterword by Michel Foucault*. Eds Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982, 262.
4. Because I argue that Foucault produces a Kantian derived and Nietzschean inspired *œuvre* of critical history, some chronology to lend support to this claim is necessary. Foucault (*DEIV*, 439), for instance, says he was already using Friedrich Nietzsche as early as 1953 to think beyond phenomenology and Marxism. Of course, Foucault [*DEIV*, 703 and 780] also admits that "if I had not read Heidegger [in 1951 or 1952], I would not have read Nietzsche;" nevertheless, even if Heidegger "for me [was] the essential philosopher ... Nietzsche outweighed him" and "transformed my life." (Although some commentators prioritise the influence of Heidegger on Foucault, notably Stuart Elden, *Mapping the present: Heidegger, Foucault, and the mapping of spatial history*. London: Continuum, 2001, and Hubert L. Dreyfus, "On the Ordering of Things: Being and Power in Heidegger and Foucault." *Michel Foucault Philosopher*. Ed. T. K. Armstrong. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, in this article I assume, along with Gilles Deleuze, that Foucault could only appreciate Heidegger "by way of Nietzsche and alongside Nietzsche [and not the other way round]." Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*. Trans. Seán Hand. London: Athlone Press, 1988, 113. Others who share Deleuze's opinion include Thomas Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996, and Charles E. Scott, *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.) Similarly, Foucault's early engagement with Immanuel Kant was actually as a lecturer in 1953-54, when he taught a course on the transcendental subject and Kant's *Anthropology* at the *École Normale Supérieure* (Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988, Tome I: 1954-1969*. Dir. D. Defert et F. Ewald. Collaboration J. Lagrange. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994, 14-23 [hereafter *DEI*]). Finally, one of the first places Foucault runs Kant and Nietzsche together is the preface to *Naissance de la Clinique*, where he paraphrases the former and claims we "belong to an age of criticism". Foucault then mentions Kant's attempt to link criticism to metaphysics, before bringing in Nietzsche and his account of language, which reveals how believing we can tie criticism to (a subject of) knowledge is merely a ruse of language. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la Clinique*. Paris: PUF, 1963, xi.
5. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Foucault pursued "a history of the different modes [of objectification, namely, knowledge, power and ethics] by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects." "The Subject and Power." *Michel Foucault*. Eds Dreyfus and Rabinow, 208. Also see Foucault, *DEIV*, 631-632 and 442-443.
6. Making a case for a Foucauldian *œuvre* serves as a conduit for resistance beyond the academy, too. See Jean-Marc Leveratto, "L'œuvre de Michel Foucault et la sociologie de la réception." *Le Portique* 13-14 (2004).
7. John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992; Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Eds), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, With an Afterword by Michel Foucault*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982; Elden, *Mapping the present*; Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1980.
8. Todd May, "Foucault Now?" *Foucault Studies* 3 (2005), 70.
9. Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean genealogy: truth, power and the subject*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 1992.
10. Matthew Sharpe, "'Critique' as Technology of the Self." *Foucault Studies* 2 (2005), 97-116.
11. Stuart Dalton, "Beyond Intellectual Blackmail: Foucault and Habermas on Reason, Truth, and Enlightenment." *E-Logos, Electronic Journal for Philosophy* (2008), 1-16.
12. Johanna Oksala, "Foucault's politicization of ontology." *Continental Philosophy Review* 43 (2010), 453.
13. According to Seán Burke, Foucault is part of the French "anti-authorialism" of the 1960s. Upon the death of man, the theme of the death of the author emerged in reaction against the "Author-God," or "the unitary cause, source and master to whom the chain of textual effects must be traced, and in whom they find their genesis, meaning, goal and justification." Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (2nd Edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, 16 and 23.
14. Jean-Marie Benoist, *The Structural Revolution*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978, 13.

CRITICAL HISTORY

15. Indeed, only the moral majority's representatives, the "bureaucrats and police," would dismiss the episteme and impose unity and coherence on Foucault's writings. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Routledge, 1994, 18.
16. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault (1926-1984)*. Paris: Flammarion, 1991, 271-285.
17. Eleanor Kaufmann, *The Delirium of Praise: Bataille, Blanchot, Deleuze, Foucault, Klossowski*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001, 77.
18. Roger Deacon, "An analytics of power relations: Foucault on the history of discipline." *History of the Human Sciences* 15:1 (2002), 89-77.
19. Michel Foucault, "Les confessions de Michel Foucault: Un entretien inédit avec l'un des grands penseurs du XXème siècle (propos recueillis par Roger Pol-Droit en juin 1975)." *Le Point* 1659 (2004), 82-93.
20. In Foucault's well known metaphor, a text is a "toolbox" to rummage through, with the screwdriver or hammer serving to "short-circuit [and] discredit systems of power." Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988, Tome II: 1970-1975*. Dir. D. Defert et F. Ewald. Collaboration J. Lagrange. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994, 523 (hereafter *DEII*); Foucault, "Les confessions de Michel Foucault."
21. Foucault, *DEII*, 785.
22. Foucault, *DEIV*, 777.
23. Even Foucault's biographers resist tying him to his work. With the exception of James Miller, who reads his *œuvre* as a mirror of his personality, the biographies of David Macey and Didier Eribon interpret Foucault against the background of developments in twentieth century French politics and philosophy, respectively. See James Miller, *La Passion Foucault*. Trad. H. Leroy. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1995; David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993; and Eribon, *Michel Foucault*.
24. Edward Saïd, "An Ethics of Language: *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *The Discourse on Language* by Michel Foucault: Review by Edward Saïd." *Diacritics* 4:2 (Summer 1974), 28-37.
25. Roland Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*. Trans. Richard Miller. London: Cape, 1977, 3.
26. Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*, 140.
27. Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 107.
28. Foucault, *DEII*, 791.
29. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ed. Josué Harari. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970, 153-154; Foucault, *DEI*, 564-579.
30. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 157.
31. For Rabinow, Foucault is a founder of discursivity in that his work centralises "social discourses." Like Max Weber, Foucault's *œuvre* has forged intellectual tools "for the analysis of modern rationality, social and economic organization, and subjectivity." Similarly, Saïd suggests that Foucault establishes a new "field of research," with his interpretation of the archive so unusual as to have "created for his evidence a new mental domain." Paul Rabinow, "Introduction." *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, 26 and 27; Edward Saïd, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975, 191.
32. Michel Foucault, "Techniques of Parrhesia." *Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia*. Ed. Joseph Pearson. Digital Archive: Foucault.info, 1999. <http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/foucault.dt5.techniquesparrhesia.en.html>. Accessed 17 September 2013.
33. I borrow the idea of "co-construction" from a collection of essays that deploy this concept in respect of technology and modernity, technology and culture, or technology and subjectivity. Co-construction suggests the relationship between these pairs is that of "mutual influence, substantial uncertainty, and historical ambiguity." T. J. Misa, "The Compelling Tangle of Modernity and Technology." *Modernity and Technology*. Eds Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey and Andrew Feenberg. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003, 3. As Andrew Feenberg sees it, while "the evolution of technologies [by analogy, the episteme] depends on the interpretative practices of their users[,] ... human beings [by analogy, the author] are essentially interpreters shaped by world-disclosing technologies." "Modernity Theory and Technology Studies: Reflections on Bridging the Gap." *Modernity and Technology*. Eds Misa, Brey and Feenberg, 95.
34. Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 32.
35. Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 20.
36. T. J. Armstrong (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992; Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002; Barry Smart,

Michel Foucault. London and New York: Ellis Horwood Limited and Tavistock Publications, 1985; A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds.), *Foucault and political reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. London: UCL Press, 1996; Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, respectively.

37. J. Goldstein (ed.), *Foucault and the Writing of History*. Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1994; D. C. Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986; M. Gane and T. Johnson (eds.), *Foucault's New Domains*. London: Routledge, 1993; M. Lloyd and A. Thacker (eds.), *The Impact of Michel Foucault on the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997.

38. Foucault claimed that he was neither a philosopher nor a writer, but someone who does historical and political research. He thus had no need for an overarching theory or methodology. Rather, he operated across various fields of (politico-personal) interest, out of and in respect of which he developed relevant analytical tools. See Foucault *DEII*, 156-158; *DEIII*, 404-405. However, if we put aside these elusive musings so beloved of philosophers in Paris, we can note that as part of the application for election to a chair at the *Collège de France* candidates are invited to define the academic domain to which they seek nomination. To this end—and no doubt in tribute to Jean Hyppolite, who had held a chair in the “history of philosophical thought” (1962-1968)—Foucault designated the “history of systems of thought” as the title of the professorship that he was eventually elected to in 1970.

39. Foucault, *DEII*, 412-420.

40. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 131.

41. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Trans. F. Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, 294-295. For Habermas, genealogy is presentistic, in that every time it tries to undertake an objective analysis of the past it originates from a hermeneutic point of departure in the present; secondly, in its reduction of normative judgements to the effects of power, Foucault's criticism is relativistic; and, thirdly, genealogy mirrors the cryptonormative perspective of the human sciences by substituting their drive for objectivism with a naïve subjectivism. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 242-256 and 276-284.

42. Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An incomplete project.” *Postmodern Culture*. Ed. Hal Foster. London: Pluto Press, 1985, 3-15; Jürgen Habermas, “Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present.” *Foucault*. Ed. Hoy, 103-108.

43. Some commentators argue the Habermas–Foucault debate results from the former's inability to distinguish archaeology from genealogy and their opposing interpretations of Nietzsche. Thomas Biebricher, “Habermas, Foucault and Nietzsche: A Double Misunderstanding.” *Foucault Studies* 3 (2005), 1-26. Others are more hostile towards Habermas and his refusal to accept interpretations of Kant and the task of critique other than his own. See the essays in Samantha Ashenden and David Owen (eds), *Foucault contra Habermas*. London: Sage; David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the ambivalence of reason*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

44. Charles Taylor, “Foucault on freedom and truth.” *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 174.

45. Michael Walzer, *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century*. London: Peter Halban, 1989, 206-229.

46. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, 99-102 and 487-489.

47. Taylor, “Foucault on freedom and truth,” 177. A sustained defence of Foucault from Taylor's criticisms is provided by Paul Patton, “Taylor and Foucault on Power and Freedom.” *Political Studies* XXXVI (1989), 260-276.

48. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 247.

49. Taylor, “Foucault on freedom and truth,” 177.

50. Amy Allen argues that, once we understand the common concern of Habermas and Foucault with critique, the differences in their projects appear “seriously overstated.” However, it might be said that once we understand the divergence in their respective modes of critique—and given Habermas (and Taylor) cannot entertain alternatives that do not demarcate truth from power—the differences should not be understated, as Thomas McCarthy argues. Amy Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 42; Thomas McCarthy, “The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School.” *Political Theory* 18:3 (1990), 441-442.

51. On how differences in perspective, conceptual language and philosophical traditions foster cross-purposes between Foucault and his Anglo-Saxon critics, see Devereaux Kennedy, “Michel Foucault: The Archaeology and Sociology of Knowledge.” *Theory and Society* 8:2 (1979), 269-290; Colin Gordon, “Foucault in Britain.” *Foucault and political reason*.

CRITICAL HISTORY

Eds Barry, Osborne and Rose, 253-270; B. Isenberg, "Die kritischen Bemerkungen von Jürgen Habermas zu Michel Foucault." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 39:12 (1991), 1386-1399; Foucault, *DEIV*, 72-73.

52. Recently, some commentators have sought to situate Foucault within a tradition of philosophical phenomenology. However, as Colin Koopman argues, this endeavour turns a blind eye to the explicit influence of Kant (and, as I argue here, Nietzsche, which Koopman in turn is silent about) and hence is highly questionable. Colin Koopman, "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages." *Foucault Studies* 8 (2010), 100-121.

53. See, *inter alia*, Foucault (*DEI*, 779-785; *DEIV*, 764-769); J. Benrubi, *Les Sources et Les Courants de La Philosophie Contemporaine en France, Tome I et II*. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1933, 286-296 and 1037f; J. Chiari, *Twentieth-Century French Thought: From Bergson to Lévi-Strauss*. London: Paul Elek, 1975, pp. 60-76; S. Clarke, *The Foundations of Structuralism: A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement*. Brighton: The Harvester Press Clark, 1981, 9-24; V. Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*. Trans: L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 9-35; M. Kelly, *Hegel in France*. Birmingham: Birmingham Modern Languages Publications, 1992, 11-36; M. Poster, *Existential Marxism and Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1975, 18-35.

54. James Bohman, "Two Versions of the Linguistic Turn: Habermas and Poststructuralism." *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Eds Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, 197-220.

55. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 7.

56. John Rajchman, "Habermas' Complaint." *Philosophical Events: Essays of the '80s*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 26-28.

57. It is useful to distinguish *savoir* from *connaissance*, both of which translate as knowledge. Ian Hacking calls the former depth knowledge, while Macey describes *connaissance* as scientific knowledge. These interpretations tally with what Foucault has in mind: "By *connaissance* I mean the relation of the subject to the object and the formal rules that govern it. *Savoir* refers to the conditions that are necessary in a particular period for this or that type of object to be given to *connaissance* and for this or that enunciation to be formulated." *Savoir* is then the background which frames *connaissance*, with Kant having oriented Foucault to the former and Nietzsche to the question of power within the Heideggerian act of the framing of *connaissance*. Ian Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault." *Foucault*, ed. Hoy, 27-40; Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*; Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 15.

58. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 4; Foucault, *DEII*, 28. For a discussion of epistemological history and its influence on Foucault, see Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 188-190; F. Delaporte, "The History of Medicine according to Foucault." *Foucault and the Writing of History*, ed. Goldstein, 137-149; Mary Tiles, "Epistemological History: The Legacy of Bachelard and Canguilhem." *Contemporary French Philosophy*. Ed. A. P. Griffiths. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 141-156; P. Major-Poetzl, *Michel Foucault's archaeology of Western Culture: Toward a New Science of History*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1983, 78-83.

59. Marc Djaballah, *Kant, Foucault, and Forms of Experience*. New York and London: Routledge, 2008, 1-3.

60. Leon Brunschvicg, "L'idée critique et le système kantien." Quoted in Djaballah, *Kant, Foucault, and Forms of Experience*, 2.

61. Foucault submitted *Histoire de la Folie* as his *thèse d'état* in 1960, which was accompanied by an obligatory *petite thèse* of a translation and extended introduction of Kant's *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*. Upon publication of the *thèse d'état* and his successful defence of it before a jury, Foucault was awarded the title of *doctorats ès lettres* in 1961. Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 103-104 and 233-236.

62. Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*. Ed. and Afterword Roberto Nigro. Trans. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008, 19. For an overview of the importance of Foucault's commentary on Kant's *Anthropology* and the controversy surrounding its post-humous publication, see Jörg Volbers, "Michel Foucault, philosophe de la liberté? Sur sa lecture de Kant dans l'*Introduction à l'Anthropologie*." *Rue Descartes* 3:75 (2012), 6-20; Colin McQuillan, "Review of Michel Foucault: *Introduction to Kant's anthropology*. Semiotext(e), translated by Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs." *Continental Philosophy Review* 45 (2012), 579-585.

63. Of secondary importance is the date—1960-61—which undermines Habermas' (and Dew's) claim that Foucault only turned to Nietzsche after 1968 (from the 1980s) as a means to escape the cul-de-sac of both *Histoire de la folie* (1961) and *Les mots et les choses* (1966). See James Schmidt, "Habermas and Foucault." *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Eds Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, 154-155; Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory*. London: Verso, 1988, xiii.

64. Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, 125.
65. Kant, quoted in Foucault, *DEIV*, 221.
66. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans. Anonymous. London: Tavistock Publications, 1970, 342.
67. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*. Trans. R. Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990, 203.
68. For Kant, the common thread in these questions is that they reveal who we are as human beings, for while the "first question is answered by Metaphysics, the second by Morals, the third by Religion, and the fourth by Anthropology... [, they all] might be reckoned under anthropology, since the first three questions refer to the last." Immanuel Kant, *Introduction to Logic*, Trans. T. Kingsmill Abbot. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1963, 15.
69. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Introd. D. F. Bouchard and trans. S. Simon. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, 36-38; Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 340ff..
70. Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*. Ed. and Introd. L. D. Kritzman and Trans. A. Sheridan et al.. New York and London: Routledge, 1980, 250.
71. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. C. Gordon. Trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham and K. Soper. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980, 194-195.
72. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 104.
73. The *événement* is indicative of the actual in the present that develops out of the struggle of difference in the relation of force. Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988, Tome III: 1976-1979*. Dir. D. Defert et F. Ewald. Collaboration J. Lagrange. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994, 145 (hereafter *DEIII*) and Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 194-195.
74. Rajchman, *Michel Foucault*, 114-116.
75. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, 6.
76. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 121.
77. Oksala, "Foucault's politicization of ontology," 450.
78. Foucault quoted in Michael Mahon, "Michel Foucault's archaeology, enlightenment, and critique." *Human Studies* 16 (1993), 129-141.
79. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason And Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*. Ed., Introd. and Trans. L. W. Beck. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, 195-201.
80. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, 66.
81. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" *Kant's Political Writings*. Ed. H. Reiss. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 54-60.
82. Foucault, *The Order of Thing*, 342-343. On Foucault's interpretation of Kant's questions, see James Bernauer, "Michel Foucault's Ecstatic Thinking." *The Final Foucault*. Eds J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1991, 45-82.
83. Foucault, *DEIV*, 631. Also see Colin Gordon, "Man of action in a world of thought." *Times Literary Supplement* 21 (June 1996), 9-10; Béatrice Han, "Reply to Gary Gutting's review of *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*." http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~beatrice/Gutting%20_answer_%202003-05.pdf. Accessed 21 July 2012.
84. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 34.
85. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 41.
86. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Ed. Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage, 1974, 181.
87. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 42.
88. Michel Foucault, *Qu'est-ce que la critique? [Critique et Aufklärung]*. *Bulletin de la Société Française de la Philosophie* LXXXIV (1990).
89. Frédéric Gros, "Foucault et la leçon kantienne des Lumières." *Lumières (Foucault et les Lumières)* 8 (2006), 159-167.
90. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, 1.
91. See Maurice Blanchot, *Les intellectuels en question: Ebauche d'une réflexion*. Paris: Fourbis, 1996; Loïc Wacquant, "Critical Thought as Solvent of Doxa." *Constellations* 11:1 (2004), 97-101.
92. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 25-28.
93. McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason," 441.
94. Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves*, 148.
95. Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics." *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Autumn 1993), 1-9.

CRITICAL HISTORY

96. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Volume I, A Genealogy of Morals, Poems*. Trans. W. A. Hausmann and J. Gray. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899, 220.
97. Foucault, *DEIV*, 279.
98. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 154.
99. Wacquant, "Critical Thought as Solvent of Doxa," 98.
100. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 154.
101. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 43.
102. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929, 57-59. On the legacy of Kant's critique today, see Kimberly Hutchings, *Kant, Critique and Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 1-57.
103. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 45-47.
104. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*. New York: Seabury Press, 1982, 250; Also see Max Horkheimer, "The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research." *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*. Eds S. E. Bronner and D. Kellner. New York: Routledge, 1989, 25-36.
105. G. Rockhill and A. Gomez-Muller, "La théorie critique aujourd'hui: politique, éthique, culture." *Critique et subversion dans la pensée contemporaine américaine*. Eds G. Rockhill and A. Gomez-Muller. Paris: Editions du Félin, 2010, 13-16.
106. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 121.
107. On Foucault's nominalism, see Pascal Pasquino, "Michel Foucault (1926-84): The Will to Knowledge." *Foucault's New Domains*, eds. Gane and Johnson, 36-48; Rajchman, *Michel Foucault*, 54-59; Oksala, "Foucault's politicization of ontology."
108. Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 253. Also see Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 334 and 388-389.
109. Foucault, *DEIV*, 37. A note on Foucault's notion of modernity is in order here. In *Madness and Civilization* he speaks of the renaissance epoch, which follows mediæval Christianity and runs to the mid-seventeenth century, as well as the classical (1656-1789) and post-1789 epochs. Similarly, in *The Order of Things* Foucault refers to renaissance humanism, classical rationalism and the post-kantian epoch, which he defines by their episteme. He largely maintains this chronology in *Discipline and Punish*, albeit in terms of the technologies of monarchical power (renaissance epoch), juridico-sovereign power (classical epoch of 1760-1840) and disciplinary bio-power (the epoch after the mid-nineteenth century). The one inconsistency is the divide between the renaissance and classical epochs. In *Discipline and Punish*, it is the mid-eighteenth (1760), rather than the mid-seventeenth (1656), century that one finds in *Madness and Civilization*.
110. Foucault, *DEIV*, 632. Also see Foucault, *DEIV*, 781 and 566-568; Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 34-35.
111. Foucault cited in Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics," 3.
112. Foucault, *DEIV*, 634-636 and 782-783.
113. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 53.
114. Martin Heidegger, "Kant's Thesis about Being." *Pathmarks*. Ed. W. McNeill. Trans. T. E. Klein Jr. and W. E. Pohl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 337-363; Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 47.
115. Julian Young, "Continental and Analytic Philosophy." *The Times Literary Supplement* (10 July 1998), 17.
116. Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves*, ch. 1.
117. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*. Trans. G. D. H. Cole. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1988, 101.
118. Foucault, *DEIV*, 415.
119. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 50; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 145.
120. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, 93.
121. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 222.
122. Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, 3.
123. Foucault, *DEIV*, 778. As Todd May perceptively notes: "If Foucault is a philosopher, it is because he is a historian [for whom] the question of who we are is ... historical ... rather [than] transcendental.... If Foucault is a historian, it is because he is a philosopher [whose] studies are reflections on who we are, even as they shift the ground for asking that question from the realm of the eternal and immutable to that of the contingent and changeable." May, "Foucault Now?," 69.

AT FIRST BLUSH: THE POLITICS OF GUILT AND SHAME¹

Marguerite La Caze

This paper focuses on the ways in which perceptions and experiences of guilt and shame are shaped by political conceptions of who belongs to the more guilty and shameful parties. Guilt is ambiguous between guilt as the fact of having done something wrong, and guilt as a felt experience. Likewise shame can be felt even when there is nothing to be ashamed of. I will examine guilt and shame and the apparent expectation and need to take these emotions on when one is not directly implicated. This phenomenon is the converse of the refusal to accept guilt when one is actually culpable, a danger with the concept of collective guilt that Hannah Arendt points out.² I use the debate between Karl Jaspers and Arendt over guilt and responsibility, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre's and Giorgio Agamben's work on shame, to develop an account of the political aspects of perceived and felt guilt and shame in people who are oppressed.

First, I articulate the nature of guilt and shame, then discuss how philosophers have, in some cases, argued that the oppressed should accept the burdens of guilt and shame expected of them because of the social nature of our ethical experience; and then show how that view can be questioned. For instance, Cheshire Calhoun argues that it makes ethical sense for members of racially oppressed groups, for example, to accept the shaming of the oppressor since we share a moral world with them.³ One instance Calhoun discusses is Adrian Piper's professor insinuating that Piper has presented herself as black when, in his view, she is not. She writes "I think that vulnerability to feeling ashamed before those with whom one shares a moral practice, *even when one disagrees with their moral criticisms*, is often a mark of moral maturity."⁴ While experiences of both guilt and shame have a social element, as Calhoun maintains, and social relationships are essential to ethics, I argue that the view that members of oppressed groups should experience the guilt and shame expected of them by dominant groups ought to be challenged.

In discussing shame, I am focusing on moral shame, rather than the kind of shame associated with modesty and desire for privacy, although there are connections between the two.⁵ For much of the twentieth century shame was not considered to be a particularly useful affect morally but in recent decades shame has come to

AT FIRST BLUSH

be thought of as more morally important than guilt.⁶ Furthermore, either guilt or shame has been thought of as the basic mood or emotion of the human being, for instance, in the work of Martin Heidegger and Agamben.⁷ Even more recently, the focus on shame to the exclusion of emotions that are not those of self-assessment, such as humiliation, has itself begun to be criticised, for example by Lisa Guenther.⁸ In this paper, I would like to take that development further by showing how the debate concerning shame and guilt in philosophy and everyday life has obscured emotions that are responses to the actions of others, such as humiliating treatment, thus leading to an inappropriate focus in philosophical discourses on the victims of wrongdoing rather than the perpetrators. This focus implicitly supports the dynamics of humiliation, as I will show. The paper examines three examples of this phenomenon: Calhoun's analysis of Adrian Piper's shame at being accused of "passing" as black that I mentioned, Agamben's reading of a young man's shame on a death march at the end of World War II, and contemporary shaming practices in punishment. First, allow me to explore two accounts of guilt that focus on guilt as response to wrongs.

GUILT AND SHAME IN JASPERS AND ARENDT

Two of the most important articulations of the nature of guilt are found in the work of Jaspers and Arendt. Both are strongly centred on perpetrators of offences, rather than much of the later philosophical work, which focuses on survivor guilt and shame. I discuss their ideas first to highlight how perceptions of guilt and shame have shifted from perpetrators to victims. In *The Question of German Guilt* (1947/2001), Jaspers considers whether, in the wake of the Second World War and the Shoah, there is a special kind of German guilt.⁹ He defines guilt as a feeling of culpability, in other words, as a felt recognition and concern that we have done something wrong. For him, guilt involves accepting the consequences of our choices to act or not act in relation to an ethically significant event.¹⁰ Jaspers believes it is important that we *feel* guilt: "The question is in what sense each of us must feel co-responsible."¹¹ In addition to acknowledging the affective aspect of guilt, Jaspers argues that feelings have to be subjected to reflection before we can speak of our *true* feelings. He states:

Though immediacy is the true reality, the presence of our soul and feelings are not simply there like given facts of life. Rather they are communicated by our inner activities, our thoughts, our knowledge. ... Feeling as such is unreliable. To plead feelings means to evade naively the objectivity of what we can know and think. It is only after we have thought a thing through and visualised it from all sides, constantly surrounded, led and disturbed by feelings, that we arrive at a true feeling that in its time can be trusted to support our life.¹²

Feelings must be subjected to individual phenomenological reflection. They have to be assessed through that reflection so that they are sincere, authentic, not "raw" feelings, and Jaspers aims at providing the tools for that reflection through his own discussion of the issue.¹³

To enable understanding of the nature of guilt Jaspers famously devises a scheme of distinctions. Briefly, there are four kinds or concepts of guilt: criminal guilt, where crimes can be proven and judged in a court of law; political guilt, where leaders and citizens have to be held guilty for the actions of a state, because they are co-responsible for those actions;¹⁴ moral guilt, in that every person has responsibility for all their actions and can be judged morally, including following military commands, even though there may extenuating factors, such as risk of life, extortion, and intimidation; and metaphysical guilt: human beings live in a relation of solidarity that makes everyone co-responsible for all the wrongs and injustices that occur, especially for crimes witnessed and known about that we do not try to thwart. This last feeling of guilt cannot be conceived legally, politically, or morally. The guilt comes from not extending the capacity to only live if the other is not harmed to a sufficiently wide circle; we do not love others enough. Only God can judge this guilt, he claims.¹⁵ Furthermore, there are consequences of each of the kinds of guilt, according to Jaspers: "The consequences of guilt affect real life, whether or not the person affected realises it, and they affect my self-esteem if I perceive my guilt."¹⁶ Each form of guilt has to be dealt with in a different way; for example, crime is punished. These consequences have to be addressed through a range of thought and actions. I will focus primarily on moral and metaphysical guilt here,

as they are the most relevant to the issue of the expectation of guilt feelings in victims.

Moral guilt can only be discussed between friends and metaphysical guilt is probably not discussed at all, Jaspers argues. Moral failings create the conditions for crime and political guilt, by ignoring events, such as the wrongs of others, by justifying their behaviour, and promoting wrong in one's own case and that of others. Interestingly, Jaspers refers to metaphysical guilt as a kind of shame, writing, "There remains shame for something that is always present, that may be discussed in general terms, if at all, but can never be concretely revealed."¹⁷ Perhaps what he means is that because this guilt must remain hidden it becomes a kind of shame, something that we live with and that is not attached to a specific action. Jaspers says that "If human beings were able to free themselves from metaphysical guilt, they would be angels, and all the other three concepts of guilt would become immaterial."¹⁸ In other words, if we really extended our concern for others to everyone, we would not need to be guilty of anything. Yet we are not angels, and so all the kinds of guilt are significant for us.

For Jaspers, moral guilt exists for everyone who allows conscience and repentance to function. Guilt may occur due to conforming with an immoral system out of self-interest, showing indifference to the suffering of others, failing to resist, accepting the Nazi regime's values, giving tacit support (for example, by saluting or signing an oath), trying to see something "good" in the regime, or deceiving oneself that one could change the system from within.¹⁹ He says that "Although this always burdens only the individual who must get along with himself, there is still a sort of collective morality contained in the ways of life and feeling, from which no individual can altogether escape and which have political significance as well. Here is the key to self-improvement; its use is up to us."²⁰ Through sympathetic identification with others, I can come to feel co-responsible for wrongs I did not commit or support. This identification is precisely what concerns Arendt, as we shall see, who argues that we should judge others rather than feel such sympathy. Nevertheless, to be fair, Jaspers also notes that there are risks in acknowledging guilt: we may make false confessions of guilt feelings that are really a desire to feel superior to others: "His confession of guilt wants to force others to confess. There is a touch of aggressiveness in such confessions. Moralism as a phenomenon of the will to power fosters both sensitivity to blame and confessions of guilt, both reproach and self-reproach, and psychologically it causes each of these to rebound into each other."²¹ This problem implies another sense in which we have to try to ensure that our feelings are pure; we have to be sure that we do not inauthentically profess guilt.

Jaspers argues that a feeling of guilt throughout the community helps to purify everyone. People have to realise their guilt in order to transform themselves and to develop morally. He says that "By our feeling of collective guilt we feel the entire task of renewing human existence from its origin—the task which is given to all men on earth but which appears more urgently, more perceptibly, as decisively as all existence, when its own guilt brings a people face to face with nothingness."²² Furthermore, the moral change comes through individuals who inspire each other, by "restitution, atonement, by inner renewal and metamorphosis."²³ Jaspers' view reflects the idea that moral guilt produces insight and leads to confessions and attempts to make up for the harm caused, or in other words, moral improvement. He argues that penitence and moral renewal can only arise within ourselves, unlike in relation to criminal and political guilt, so cannot be demanded by others.²⁴ Also in a quite positive vein, Jaspers suggests that metaphysical guilt can end in a transformation of human self-consciousness before God, and there pride is given up.²⁵

According to Jaspers, the accused may be charged by the world in the case of crimes and political guilt or by their own soul when they are charged with moral failure and metaphysical weakness. He claims that "Morally, man can condemn only himself, not another—or, if another, then only in the solidarity of charitable struggle. No one can morally judge another"²⁶ except perhaps where we are very close, in friendship where we can freely communicate.²⁷ But shouldn't we judge and discuss the nature of moral wrongs? Aren't such wrongs connected to the other kinds of guilt? Jaspers' assertion about moral guilt is one that can be challenged.

Thus Arendt is concerned about this aspect of Jaspers' views, arguing that we must be able to make moral judgments at the same time as searching for understanding of crimes and perpetrators. She criticises his idea of

AT FIRST BLUSH

collective political guilt on a number of different bases and contends that responsibility is a more appropriate term in the political context. Jaspers was concerned that innocent people would be swept up in guilt, whereas Arendt is apprehensive that guilty people will be overlooked. In her essay “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship” (1964/2005) Arendt insists that we can and should judge others morally and opposes Jaspers’ view that there can be collective political guilt on the grounds that it is a way of evading genuine guilt, which is always individual.²⁸ I agree with Arendt that responsibility is the more appropriate concept for collective liability.²⁹ It makes sense to hold a collective responsible for past actions in a way it does not to hold that a collective is guilty of past actions. Arendt explains how political responsibility can be collective, in that it is appropriate for governments to assume responsibility for what previous governments have done, and for nations to take responsibility for their past.³⁰ Communities can take on responsibility for what an individual has done or be held responsible for what has been done in its name.³¹ When we are held responsible or assume responsibility for past wrongs, we may not feel personal guilt, but nevertheless we are connected to those wrongs because we are part of the group that committed them.

Guilt is strictly personal or individual, on Arendt’s account, since “Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not intentions or potentialities. It is only in a metaphorical sense that we can say we *feel* guilty for the sins of our fathers or our people or mankind, in short, for deeds we have not done, although the course of events may well make us pay for them.”³² Guilt refers personally both to the wrong-doer and the person who is harmed and has to refer to something objective, a particular act that has been committed. Professed guilt for the acts of others is self-indulgent or it can be a kind of sentimentality, Arendt argues: “Those young German men and women who every once in a while ... treat us to hysterical outbreaks of guilt feelings are not staggering under the burden of the past, their father’s guilt; rather they are trying to escape from the pressure of very present and actual problems into a cheap sentimentality.”³³ The sincerity and authenticity of the professions of guilt are questioned and in addition, sincerity should not have a place in politics, as what matters is action. Political life concerns speech and actions that convey a meaning to those who experience them, rather than the internal mental states of politicians, for example.³⁴ Arendt argues that professing guilt feelings for the acts of others, in contrast to recognising individual criminal guilt, becomes a vice in politics, because felt guilt is only appropriate in the private sphere and is essentially self-regarding. She does not believe that felt passions such as guilt should play a role in political life because they are private experiences that distort the public space of the political sphere.³⁵ It brings people in the public sphere too close together, whereas we should maintain a distance or in between space. It also leads to moral confusion, she claims, as the innocent declare their guilt, whereas “very few of the criminals were prepared to admit even the slightest guilt.”³⁶ For Arendt, assertions of collective guilt unwittingly “whitewash” true guilt.

More importantly for my discussion here, a related phenomenon that is the converse of Arendt’s critique of professed guilt for others’ deeds is that individuals, especially if they are oppressed, are prone to assume guilt when they have *not* done anything wrong.³⁷ Survivor guilt or shame after atrocities is one of the most striking examples. So the articulation of guilt—especially as it relates to responsibility—has to take into account that guilt is distributed, so to speak, in differential and unjust ways. In cases of collective responsibility, we may be more likely to feel shame, rather than guilt or remorse, Arendt argues. She writes that “For the idea of humanity, when purged of all sentimentality, has the very serious consequence that in one form or another men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men and that all nations share the onus of evil committed by all others. Shame at being a human being is the purely individual and still non-political expression of this insight.”³⁸ Shame, then, for Arendt, is an acknowledgement of shared responsibility for misconduct, a different concept from Jaspers’ notion of metaphysical guilt or shame due to limiting our love for others. If we take Arendt’s idea seriously, survivor shame does not concern specific acts but a strong acknowledgement of shared responsibility, a feeling that is relevant to all human beings, not just survivors. Her suggestion is that shame is collective in a way that guilt is not. Thus it is useful to consider how shame is different from guilt and how it may relate to our membership in a specific group before considering how the oppressed are expected to bear the burdens of guilt and shame, according to much contemporary philosophical literature.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SHAME

There are two senses of shame that are relevant here. One is a pervasive sense of shame that feminists and antiracist thinkers have argued that women and others in an oppressive culture are more likely to experience than the non-oppressed. The other sense of shame, alluded to by Arendt, is the particular moral shame that someone may feel in relation to a wrong they or others have done. Perpetrators of crimes and abuse may feel shame and find that they can no longer respect themselves. Writing on the relation between shame and the self, Dan Zahavi calls this sort of shame “repenting, self-reflective shame,” felt, for example, by a man for committing atrocities in the Rwandan genocide.³⁹ Such shame correlates to personal guilt for such crimes, as well as a sense of how one must be seen by others, at least those whose judgments one takes to be important. Zahavi stresses the felt need to hide oneself in both types of shame. To some extent these two sorts of moral shame are conflated. However, I wish to focus on the first type of shame, which we feel in relation to others’ perception of us. Both these kinds of shame undermine our sense of self, confidence and openness. Shame is generally distinguished from guilt in a number of ways, including through its close connection to the perception of others⁴⁰ and sometimes by it concerning the self as a whole, or character overall, rather than a particular action.⁴¹ What is of interest to me here is how both guilt and shame are differentially attributed and experienced. Perhaps the most famous discussion of shame occurs in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, where he discusses shame as a phenomenon that reveals the mode of Being-for-Others, in contrast to Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself. He provides a lively description of a person who staring through the keyhole of a door and suddenly feels observed by another: “But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure.”⁴² They experience shame through this look or gaze of the other seeing them as a voyeur or jealous spy. Sartre’s argument is that we feel shame and other emotions only in the face of others. While shame is reflexive in that it is “an intimate relation of myself to myself ... it is in its primary structure shame *before somebody*.”⁴³ His elucidation of shame as in its essence relational is widely accepted.⁴⁴ Shame is where we experience ourselves as others see us; pride and other emotions have a similarly reflective quality. As Sartre writes “Shame—like pride—is the apprehension of myself as a nature although that very nature escapes me and is unknowable as such.”⁴⁵ Shame and pride give us a kind of being, a sense that we really *are* as we are perceived.⁴⁶ That makes it different from guilt felt as a response to our responsibility for a particular wrong. Sartre does not posit either guilt or shame as primordial; they are both experiences of the presence of the Other in our lives. The Other does not actually have to be there; perhaps the footsteps were not human steps. It is enough that they are experienced as being there. Sartre’s example shows that it is our internalised sense of the look of other people that matters.

Other authors have connected the experience of shame to that of oppression, and I would like to take the ideas in this work further and show that oppression alters and broadens the experience of shame. Oppression means that the Other’s look is even more important. Feminist phenomenologist Sandra Bartky, for example, accepts that shame “requires if not an actual audience before whom my deficiencies are paraded, then an internalized audience with the capacity to judge me, hence internalized standards of judgment.”⁴⁷ She argues that we become or experience ourselves as we are seen by others, even if that judgment is unjust. Perhaps we were not really peeping through the keyhole; we were trying to fix the lock (although in Sartre’s version of the example he says we are “moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice”).⁴⁸ Shame may involve the recognition that we have failed in some way but it may also be a result of how we are viewed and treated by others, and that is my focus here. Bartky understands a pervasive sense of shame as a mode of attunement for women and even more so for women of colour, but not for human beings as such.⁴⁹ In the case of the oppressed person who is subject to domestic violence, for example, their feelings of self-worth would always be experienced in this context. Bartky’s point is that shame in this sense is not an opportunity for assessing oneself and becoming a better person, as moral shame may sometimes be, but is more likely to lead to self-obsession, self-destructive rage and in general disempowerment. It is shame, but not a positive, potentially improving shame.⁵⁰ Being and feeling oneself a victim of unjust treatment may be a cause of shame, a shame that one has been so badly dealt with, and that shame can be before the world and before oneself.

AT FIRST BLUSH

However, my argument is that the other point that can be drawn from the experiences Bartky refers to is that abusive treatment is shaming and humiliating, yet because the victim of this kind of treatment is unable to feel that they are not at fault, although they may know that quite well, such treatment is transformed into an experience of shame. We may even feel ashamed of feeling ashamed, knowing that there is not a good reason for feeling ashamed. Being subject to abuse makes one feel low and small, it debases and demeans us, but not because of our self, our actions, or our character, but because of the actions of others. This is the fundamental distinction between humiliation and shame. While shame involves an internalised audience that is seen to judge us as deserving to feel ashamed, humiliation involves an actual other acting to make us feel mortification.⁵¹ A complication in our moral lives I wish to explore here is that oppression creates a structural context where humiliation is assumed, taken in, and focused on the self and so experienced as shame.

One of the characteristics of oppression is that the other's negative or judgemental view is internalised in a heightened way. Almost everyone is capable of feeling shame, perhaps even undeserved shame, yet the situation of oppression makes that a persistent occurrence. One is always at fault. Beauvoir argues of women in *The Second Sex*, "the Other has to submit to this foreign point of view" and in so doing absorbs that view and trains it on the self.⁵² For women are the Other not only for men but for themselves. For oppressed people, the injustice of domination is almost always accompanied by an internalised audience judging one as the Other. Humiliation then is experienced in that context. Consistent or regular humiliating treatment often makes us feel that we are somehow deserving of that treatment or responsible for it, as we are denied the respect and esteem that we need to repel that demeaning view of us. Such feelings can coexist with a degree of self-respect and confidence. It is this aspect of shame that is often overlooked in philosophical discussions of shame. The guilt of the abuser identified by Jaspers and Arendt becomes the shame of the victims of abuse and the socially marginal. In the next section I consider how shame is inappropriately expected of victims of oppression in much philosophical discussion by considering three examples of shame.

FEELING MORAL SHAME

The first example I consider is one discussed by Cheshire Calhoun in her paper "An Apology for Moral Shame." Her paper is a response to earlier work that took shame to be a primitive emotion of limited moral import, and addresses the idea that shame is more centred on how we are perceived by others than on our judgement of wrongdoing. Calhoun argues that feeling ashamed before other's shaming contempt can be a sign of moral maturity.⁵³ It is precisely the distinction between properly attributed shame and improperly attributed shame that Calhoun refuses in stressing the social nature of shame and arguing that it at least makes sense for us to feel shame even when we have not done anything wrong. Part of her motivation is that dismissals of the shame of subordinated peoples "encourage us to find fault with ashamed people" and that is incorrect and uncharitable.⁵⁴ Rather than suggesting that shame is a result of low self-esteem, Calhoun argues that shame at insults can co-exist with confidence and outrage at the demeaning behaviour. She cites the philosopher Adrian Piper's example of ticking the box for "black" when applying for graduate school. At the welcome for postgraduate students, Piper is greeted by the most well-known and respected professor's remark "Miss Piper, you're about as black as I am" — that is, not black at all.⁵⁵ He is deciding what category she belongs to, in some sense taking away her own power of self-definition. Piper wrote about her groundless shame, stating "Their ridicule and accusations then function to both disown and degrade you from their status, to mark you as not having *done* wrong but as *being* wrong."⁵⁶ Calhoun explains the feeling of shame here as a sign of taking the other seriously, although in other ways Piper was very self-confident.⁵⁷ In sum, Calhoun argues that the professor's view and others like it, even though wrong, have a practical weight for us because we share some moral social practices with them.⁵⁸ For her, moral practices are fundamentally social and so must involve these anomalous experiences.

The grain of truth in Calhoun's view may be that in feeling shame that is unmerited we respect the other; we take them seriously as moral beings even though they are mistaken and unfair. However, this way of understanding shame implies that shame in an inverted or perverted world like that of the concentration camp,

which I will soon discuss, is unintelligible. How can we feel shame when we have no respect for the other and share no social moral practices with them? Furthermore, even in this case, the responsibility and the emphasis are shifted from the unpleasant sarcastic professor, who presumably forgot the remark by his next conversation, to Adrian Piper and what she should or should not feel. Calhoun concludes that we have to take these “deformed identities” seriously and at the same time try to reform and challenge the defective moral practices of contempt.⁵⁹ So in that sense we should not dismiss the feelings of shame of the oppressed, as they point to problematic moral perceptions and judgements. Calhoun makes a significant point in the sense that these experiences alert us to subtle structural features of oppression that are reflected in theories of shame. It is on this point that I think attention should focus—on the practical and philosophical conceptions that put the onus on the oppressed to feel shame or guilt and not on the behaviour of the dominant group. The philosophical concern centring on the feelings of guilt and shame in the oppressed reinforces the dynamics of oppression that expect those feelings in the oppressed and ignore the lack of those feelings in the oppressors.

An important distinction here is between shame as felt response to others’ perception of one as lacking in moral worth or as having done something unacceptable, and practices of shaming and humiliation. In contrast to Calhoun’s view, David Velleman argues that “The shame induced by racism is a case of utterly inchoate shame, whose subject is successfully shamed without being ashamed of anything in particular. Inchoate shame typically results, as in this case, from deliberate acts of shaming.”⁶⁰ He affirms the point that one can be shamed even if one is not ashamed and do not feel self-hatred. Velleman sees this shame as brought about by feeling vulnerable because exposed as not in control of one’s own self-definition, a good way of describing an aspect of shame in Piper’s experience. And this is part of the complication of shame—that others can force shame on us in a range of ways, even when we repudiate the view they have of us.⁶¹ Deliberate acts of shaming come closer to humiliation because it is the actions of others that induce the shame rather than the subject’s own actions. Furthermore, humiliation itself becomes experienced as shame in cases of oppression.

In a recent article, Lisa Guenther stresses the ambivalent nature of shame in both being used against members of oppressed groups to exclude and control them and having an important ethical function in evoking a moral response to the Other. She articulates shame as not only concerned with particular acts but with our “very existence”—a kind of ontological shame.⁶² Yet this concept of ontological shame also obscures shame’s link with humiliation, as I will show here. The concept of ontological shame is associated with the work of Agamben, who draws on Primo Levi’s description of the reaction of the first Russian soldiers to liberate Auschwitz:

It was that shame that we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage: the shame the Germans did not know, that the just man experiences at another man’s crime, at the fact that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should prove too weak or null, and should not have availed in defence.⁶³

Many of the complexities of shame are introduced in this quotation: that shame can be felt not only for oneself but on behalf of others, that some do not, perhaps cannot feel shame, and that we can feel shame at the existence of wrongs and of not being able to prevent them. The just person feels shame at the actions of others, whereas the ones who have committed the crimes are shameless; they are not concerned with justice or how they appear in the eyes of the world. The gap left by their shamelessness is filled by the shame of the victims and witnesses.

In his discussion of the work of survivors of the Shoah, Agamben generally addresses shame rather than guilt as he sees shame as the more fundamental affect. Levi articulates the feeling or at least the suspicion as one of being a traitor, of having taken someone else’s place, the fundamentals of survivor guilt, in a poem “The Survivor” (1984) and in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989). Agamben’s account of survivor guilt turns toward dissatisfaction with Levi’s later discussion of shame in these texts. This lack of satisfaction is because Levi links guilt and shame and because Agamben believes Levi cannot “master” his shame since Levi links it to small “excusable” incidents in the camp he deeply regrets.⁶⁴ The fixation on specific events is a way that a

AT FIRST BLUSH

survivor's distress is experienced as guilt for specific actions, which Agamben does not acknowledge is a common phenomenon in everyday life. Moreover, Agamben himself seems to be linking or fusing guilt and shame when he describes mastering shame as separating innocence and guilt.⁶⁵ Other thinkers who survived the camps, such as Bruno Bettelheim, Elie Wiesel, and Ella Lingens, express feelings of guilt for not having helped others, for surviving, and for being glad to be alive.⁶⁶ Bettelheim states in an essay in the *New Yorker* that "Only the ability to feel guilty makes us human, particularly if, objectively seen, one is not guilty."⁶⁷

According to Agamben, Bettelheim's expectation of the feeling of guilt from the innocent survivor is suspicious. He links his suspicion to Arendt's criticisms of collective guilt discussed earlier, and claims that such guilt is a sign of an inability to handle an ethical problem. Agamben accepts that the assumption of collective guilt is often used as a way to avoid specific responsibility and punishment. Levi concurs, saying (as Arendt does) that guilt could only be inherited in a metaphorical sense, and that the only collective guilt of Germans at the time of the holocaust is connected with not testifying to what they "could not have seen" (Agamben's words) but must have known. He also is not sure that the survivor feels guilt for having taken the place of another, for it makes their shame a kind of Hegelian tragic conflict. The Hegelian tragic model concerns the conflict between a seemingly innocent subject such as Oedipus and the objective guilt of their deeds.⁶⁸ However, Agamben argues that this model is far from being true of Auschwitz, for example, as the survivors feel the reverse: innocent of any objective guilt, and guilty of subjective guilt.⁶⁹ His suggestion is that Primo Levi suffers "a shame that is not only without guilt but even without time."⁷⁰ There is no deed to attach shame to and there is no time when the shame began or when it can end; that is what makes it ontological shame.

Agamben also quotes Robert Antelme's first-hand account in *The Human Race* (1998) of the flush of a young Italian man when he is picked out to be killed, at random, during a death march between Buchenwald and Dachau. In this case, the shame is not for surviving, but for having to die, Agamben argues.⁷¹ This is clearly a very different kind of shame, and he wishes to link such shame with human existence in general, describing shame as "both subjectification and desubjectification."⁷² The desubjectification is the collapse, the disorder, the oblivion, of fleeing, but the subjectification is the realisation of our presence to ourselves. Agamben likens shame to the abjection of disgust, and concludes that shame "is nothing less than the fundamental sentiment of being a *subject*, in the two apparently opposed senses of this phrase: to be subjected and to be sovereign."⁷³ He claims that shame is the hidden structure of consciousness and means "being consigned to a passivity that cannot be assumed."⁷⁴ That is, we cannot assume our identity or express that identity.⁷⁵ In saying 'I', the subject does not coincide with their experiences.

In concluding his discussion, Agamben finds that subjectification and desubjectification are basic to subjectivity, meaning that subjectivity is really shame: "Flush is the remainder that, in every subjectification, betrays a desubjectification and that in every desubjectification, bears witness to a subject."⁷⁶ The blush shows the paradoxical nature of subjectivity and language, according to Agamben: that when I try to speak I reveal there is no solid subject, but at the same time attempts to prevent speech or to dehumanise a human being reveal the subject. Agamben argues that the subject cannot speak, as they are identified with the event of discourse rather than their subjectivity. Thus shame is articulated by Agamben as the human being's basic mode of attunement because it reveals our condition in relation to subjectivity and speech.

There have been a number of criticisms of Agamben's interpretation of Antelme's account, which note his selective quotation and interested reading of the text. In her characterisation of shame, Claudia Welz criticises Agamben's description of the Italian student's blush, quoting more of Antelme's account, and arguing that what the student most likely expresses is surprise.⁷⁷ She cites Antelme as stating: "Ready to die — that, I think, we are, ready to be chosen at random for death—no. If the finger designates me, it shall come as a surprise, and my face will become pink, like the Italian's."⁷⁸ In addition, Welz notes that Antelme links the pink flush of the student with the pink face of a small child, concluding that we cannot deduce one specific emotion from a flushed face. Ultimately her account is critical of Agamben's broadening of the concept of shame. Of course, we cannot know what the student felt. Yet I would argue that what most accounts so far have left out is the

phenomenon of humiliation, both in this example and more generally. It is the behaviour of the Nazi guard that makes the student blush, not his feeling about himself as such. He has been singled out in front of his comrades for a senseless, arbitrary killing. The humiliation is experienced as shame, as if he were at fault or as if someone must feel shame in such a situation.

On a more general note, the literature in this field focuses on either guilt or shame and does not consider humiliation as a possibility, with the exception of Lisa Guenther's paper "Resisting Agamben", where she argues that he conflates humiliation and shame in his interpretation of the young student's blush, ignoring the specific context provided by Antelme's testimony. She rightly notes that Agamben identifies "subjectivity with the empty individuation of humiliation rather than the ambiguous relationality of shame, as if political oppression were the fundamental human condition."⁷⁹ Guenther's contextualization of Antelme's work is a useful corrective to Agamben's discussion, as is her observation that Agamben's reduction of shame leaves it as an empty concept. Her view is that shame represents the structure of intersubjectivity, not subjectivity.

However, I argue that Agamben has, perhaps unwittingly, revealed an important point about the nature of shame and its experience by members of subordinated groups. While the situation is one of humiliation—it is the behaviour of one person demeaning, degrading and menacing another—when the person is a member of an oppressed group, they are likely to transform that experience into one of guilt or shame, to direct the pain that might otherwise be felt as indignation or anger against themselves.⁸⁰ The reasons for this are multiple. It can be a result of the internalisation of the Other's view. In contrast, suppressing or redirecting anger could be necessary for survival or a level of flourishing. Another reason could be a more or less deliberate decision not to risk the corrosive effects of unexpressed anger.⁸¹ The survivor guilt or shame felt by Levi and others is neither a proper felt response to wrongs done nor a mark of our shared human situation; it is an expression of a profound experience of oppression, violence, abuse, and humiliation.

I will end with a slightly different set of examples, concerning punishment, to highlight what I mean. Some of the recent literature on punishment, such as the work of John Deigh, has shown how shaming practices are used in conservative forms of punishment that aim to make the punished person an object of public contempt and disdain.⁸² Like the Scarlet Letter 'A' of Nathaniel Hawthorne's story that betokens Hester Prynne's act of "adultery" (1981), the crime is advertised through the newspaper, on TV, or by making the person hold a sign or wear something like a T-shirt signifying the crime. These are sometimes known as shaming penalties⁸³ and may be (although they may not be) designed to evoke shame, and sometimes guilt, in the offender. Deigh, commenting on these phenomena, notes that one of the main motivations of these punishments is saving the cost of imprisonment.

Yet these practices also involve shaming more than shame, the practice of humiliation and demeaning behaviour on others, and so can shed light on the differences between experiences of humiliation and shame. In her book, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*, Martha Nussbaum argues that shaming practices are used against those who disturb conventional sensibilities or disrupt conventional norms, such as members of minority groups and the homeless.⁸⁴ She sees this as a kind of social pathology that tries to put others down; it means "a fragile ego that finds affirmation of its own precarious sense of worth in the humiliation and dehumanization of others."⁸⁵ Legal sanctions used to publicly humiliate or shame others manifest a similar impulse, Nussbaum claims.⁸⁶

These forms of punishment can be criticised for their attempt to humiliate, shame and degrade their objects, even if they may not be successful in getting them to feel shame. Nussbaum distinguishes humiliation from shame on the grounds that humiliation involves something being done to the person who feels it.⁸⁷ We can talk about acts of humiliation and shaming as well as experiences of humiliation and shame. Deigh argues further that humiliation involves being treated with disrespect but that may not mean one feels unworthy of respect. Shame, in contrast, involves a recognition that one is unworthy in some way.⁸⁸ Nussbaum and others note that humiliation leads to anger and bitterness rather than an attempt to rejoin the group and affirm its standards, as

AT FIRST BLUSH

shame may occasionally lead to, although as I noted shaming of the oppressed may not have that effect.

Likewise, legal philosopher Raffaele Rodogno contends that humiliation is a more likely consequence of humiliating and shaming practices of punishment than a productive shame that made an offender keen to improve themselves in order to become a respected member of society.⁸⁹ He cites psychological studies that suggest shame and humiliation differ in a number of ways, including these: humiliation is more painful, humiliation is more closely linked to public exposure, and humiliation is more likely to lead to anger and vengeful feelings directed against others.⁹⁰ Shame, in contrast, focuses on the self and directs negative emotions against the self. He argues that shaming penalties closely fit the structure of humiliation.⁹¹ If the psychological research on the likely effects of humiliation is correct, that is at least one reason to be deeply concerned about their use. In addition, the so-called shaming penalties have a different structure from what I argue is the case for many examples of oppressed groups subjected to humiliating treatment. They are likely to lead to an infuriated response. In these cases, humiliation can be rejected; humiliation can make us angry and fail of its end. Of course, some offenders may similarly internalise shaming treatment into guilt or shame, since they will be members of oppressed and marginalised groups.⁹² In either case, these punishments are unlikely to be either ethical or productive.

My point is that an act of humiliation may anger or it may shame. Humiliation is a kind of assault that touches the person but it may touch them in such a way that while it is painful, there is still a kind of rejection of the view that the humiliation is presenting and potentially retaliation against it. However, in shame, that view is somehow experienced as deserved or warranted, due to a feeling of fault in the victim and in that sense internalised. Shame exhibits that feature and transforms humiliation and other acts of domination into self-condemnation. An important aspect of responding to oppression on a personal level is overcoming self-blame for the behaviour of others. Moreover, there can be cases where direct action to stop humiliation may be taken. How we should respond to humiliation is a large subject that I cannot deal with here. Yet as I noted earlier, there can be many good reasons for not becoming enraged by humiliating treatment or not expressing that rage directly. In extreme situations, containing or subduing anger may be necessary. In less extreme situations, other forms of response to oppression may be more productive. What writing on these issues can contribute is calling humiliation for what it is, rather than presenting it as the victim's shame or the shame of all humanity.

CONCLUSION

The three examples show how oppression and subordination make us less resistant to humiliation, and liable to experience humiliation as shame. To return to Calhoun, perhaps Adrian Piper's response to her lecturer's unpleasant comment is also better described as humiliation, rather than shame or guilt. The lecturer has disrespected her and tried to shame her and she feels bad but she may not and I would argue should not, feel unworthy. Calhoun and others connect the experience of shame with the contempt of others⁹³ but contempt does not properly delineate the attitude of the murderous Nazi Agamben discusses and may not help us to understand cases of humiliation. Perhaps in general we are too quick to call something an emotion of self-assessment like shame, rather than a response to the actions of others. What we can say is that while it may not be wrong to feel shame, when shamed or humiliated, that it definitely appears churlish and unkind to criticise survivors of trauma and genocide for their feelings of guilt and shame or not to acknowledge they can have confidence in other ways, what's more important is that it is wrong for members of dominant groups to shame and humiliate others.⁹⁴ That issue seems to be treated as tangential in many discussions of guilt and shame.

Furthermore, one feature of the structure of oppression, in addition to systematic injustice and domination, where the oppressed internalise the negative views of others, implies that members of oppressed groups are likely to experience shaming and humiliation as shame, for they turn the negative view and censure of others onto themselves. This seems true in Adrian Piper's experience and in the case of the Italian student, although we cannot be sure what they felt. In that sense, Agamben could be right that the student *felt* shame even though what was going on was a humiliating and murderous act. The examples of punishment could be slightly

different, as offenders subject to humiliating and shaming punishments may be able to reject the design of the punishments and find that they become angry. In many cases, in life as in philosophy, both victor and victim blame the victim. Our focus in philosophical discussions needs to shift from the victims to the perpetrators and members of dominant groups, or at least to realise that we should be suspicious of attributions of guilt and shame and sensitive to the structure of humiliation.⁹⁵ The oppressor might not feel that what they are doing is humiliation, and so that needs to be exposed and articulated. We need to remember both that we may claim guilt and shame unrealistically and self-indulgently, as Jaspers and Arendt were concerned about, and that guilt and shame may be inappropriately expected of, attributed to, actively brought about through humiliation, and experienced by those in the most vulnerable groups.

MARGUERITE LA CAZE is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Queensland.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank UQ for supporting this research through a UQ-UWA Bilateral Research Collaboration Award, and my collaborators Michael Levine and Terrilyn Sweep, audiences at the UQ-UWA workshop and at the ASCP in 2012, two anonymous reviewers for *Parrhesia*, and Christine Daigle for helpful feedback on earlier versions of the paper.
2. Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*. Ed. Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken, 2003.
3. Cheshire Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12:2 (2004): 127-46.
4. *Ibid.*, 129.
5. See for a discussion of this type of shame J. David Velleman, "The Genesis of Shame." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 30:1 (2001): 27-52; and for a link between the two Claudia Welz, "Shame and the Hiding Self." *Passions in Context* No.2. On-line (2011). Accessed 1.10.13.
6. See for examples of the first tendency Roger Lamb, "Guilt, Shame, and Morality." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43:3 (1983): 329-46; Jessica L. Tracey, Richard W. Robins and June Price Tangney, eds., *Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment and Pride*. New York: Guilford Press, 1995. Lamb argues that shame is morally different from guilt because it can be brought on us by others (339). See Leys for a historical account of that shift, beginning with Tomkins in the 60s, and growing apace from the 80s onwards; Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, esp. 7. See as examples of proponents of shame Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999, Chapter 3, "Shame, or On the Subject"; Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno, and Fabrice Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, who argue that shame can improve our moral sensitivity. For a critique of a politics of shame, see Jill Locke, "Shame and the Future of Feminism." *Hypatia* 22:4 (2007): 146-62.
7. For example, guilt is taken to be basic in Heidegger's case, and shame in Agamben's. The problem with this way of viewing both shame and guilt, as occurs with Jaspers' view of metaphysical guilt, is that it makes it difficult to distinguish where guilt and shame are appropriate.
8. Lisa Guenther, "Resisting Agamben: The biopolitics of shame and humiliation." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 38:1 (2012): 59-79.
9. Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001, 22.
10. As Smith notes, we may properly feel guilty about feelings, attitudes, or thoughts that we have not expressed. Angela A. Smith, "Guilty Thoughts." *Morality and the Emotions*. Ed. Carla Bagnoli. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 235-58.
11. Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 55.
12. *Ibid.*, 23.
13. Cordner distinguishes remorse from guilt as involving an authentic concern with others, rather than simply related to an offense against our conscience. Christopher Cordner, "Guilt, Remorse and Victims." *Philosophical Investigations* 30:4 (2007): 337-62.
14. This is judged by the victor in accordance with prudence and norms of national and international law, since the Germans waged an unjust war. Jaspers clarifies the point that political guilt implies the liability of all citizens for the consequences of actions of their state, but it does not mean that every single citizen has criminal and moral guilt for all crimes committed in the name of the state.
15. Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 25-26. This theological concept of guilt has also been taken up in secular discussions of guilt. B. van Roermund, "Rubbing Off and Rubbing On: The Grammar of Reconciliation" in *Lethe's Law: Justice, Law and Ethics in Reconciliation*. Eds. Emiliios Christodoulidis and Scott Veitch. Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2001, 175-90.
16. Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 30.
17. *Ibid.*, 27.
18. *Ibid.* Another suggestion Jaspers makes is that there may be a guilt that we all suffer from regardless of our involvement in particular forms of wrongdoing, due to the fact that we are all enmeshed in power relations: "This is the inevitable guilt of all, the guilt of human existence" (*ibid.*, 28). Here Jaspers seems to be referring to something like original sin, but he does not pursue the point. We can counteract this guilt by supporting moves toward human rights.
19. *Ibid.*, 57-64.
20. *Ibid.*, 73.
21. *Ibid.*, 101.
22. *Ibid.*, 75.
23. *Ibid.*, 98.
24. *Ibid.*, 39.
25. Jaspers outlines a number of ways of responding to guilt, both by others and by the guilty. First, what he calls "force" decides conflicts, unless people reach an agreement. Once war begins right of justice ends and is replaced with force, although international law is an attempt to regulate it. He argues that the victor can decide what to do with the vanquished when the

vanquished are in the wrong, as in Germany's case. However, the victor's mercy is likely temper the effect of strict justice and destructive force. (Ibid., 31-2.)

26. Ibid., 33.

27. There are also ways to defend against guilt: The accused can insist on differentiation from the guilty in order to avoid feeling guilty, they can compare facts and they can appeal to natural law, human rights and international law. But if a state has violated natural law and human rights it cannot claim recognition of them in their favour, Jaspers argues. (Ibid., 38.)

28. Arendt is writing after the publication of her book on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961. Eichmann was chief of operations in the deportation of three million Jewish people and tens of thousands of Roma to extermination camps, and was tried, sentenced to death and executed in Israel in 1962. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Penguin, 1992.

29. See the paper "The asymmetry between apology and forgiveness" *Contemporary Political Theory* 5:4 (2006): 447-468, for my argument that the concept of collective responsibility is better than collective guilt to understand our responses to historical and group injustices.

30. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 27.

31. Ibid., 149.

32. Ibid., 147.

33. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 251.

34. Schaap argues that the Arendtian approach offers a better form of reconciliation as the performance is significant rather than a sincere feeling of an emotion. Andrew Schaap, "Guilty Subjects and Political Responsibility: Arendt, Jaspers and the Resonance of the German Question in Politics of Reconciliation." *Political Studies* 49:4 (2001): 762-3.

35. This aspect of Arendt's thought could be challenged; however, I do not have the space to do so here.

36. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 28.

37. Tessman also observes that for the oppressed there is a tendency to feel guilt rather than anger when one has been wronged because of a kind of psychic or moral harm. Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 37.

38. Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Harcourt Brace, 2005, 131.

39. Dan Zahavi, "Shame and the Exposed Self." *Reading Sartre: on Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Ed. Jonathan Webber. London: Routledge, 2010, 219.

40. Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. London: Routledge, 1990, 87; Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 89; Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, 105; Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, 184.

41. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Chapter 3, "Shame, or On the Subject"; Raffaele Rodogno, "Shame, Guilt, and Punishment." *Law and Philosophy* 28 (2009): 429-464; Welz, "Shame and the Hiding Self." Abramson questions what she calls the global nature of contempt and shame, arguing that in many cases shame can be localized. Kate Abramson, "A Sentimentalists' Defense of Contempt, Shame, and Disdain." *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*. Ed. Peter Goldie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 200. Another feature is wanting to hide due to shame rather than compensate because of guilt. Stocker questions Williams' approach to making the distinction between the two, and suggests that it is often difficult to distinguish between them. Michael Stocker, "Shame, Guilt, and Pathological Guilt." *Bernard Williams*. Ed. Alan Thomas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 146-53.

42. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. London: Routledge, 2003, 284. [*L'Être et le néant*, Paris: Gallimard, 1943.]

43. Ibid., 245.

44. See Deonna et. al., *In Defense of Shame*. However, see Zahavi, "Shame and the Exposed Self," 217, for a discussion of philosophers, such as Scheler and Taylor, who argue that shame is not at base a social emotion. Max Scheler, *Persons and Self-Value: Three Essays*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987, 37-38; Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 68. Wollheim argues that guilt is also before others. Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 153.

45. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 286.

46. Sartre examines guilt in a rarely-discussed section of *Being and Nothingness*, clearly responding to Heidegger's claims in *Being and Time* concerning guilt as a mood that is proper to Dasein. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper, 2008, 325-35.

47. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 86.

48. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 282.

49. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 85.

50. Judith Boss sees this shame as a misdirection of anger and resentment that should be felt towards the abuser. Judith Boss, "Throwing Pearls to the Swine: Women, Forgiveness, and the Unrepentant Abuser." *Philosophical Perspectives on Power*

AT FIRST BLUSH

and Domination. Ed. Laura Duhan Kaplan and Laurence F. Bove. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997, 235-247. She also mentions that victims of abuse may blame themselves and others may blame them for the abuse. Furthermore, victims of shaming and humiliating violence and abuse often repeat the abuse they have suffered. See Wendy C. Hamblet, *Punishment and Shame: A Philosophical Study*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011, 189.

51. As Roberts suggests, humiliation flows from "having been *shown to be* or having been *made to appear* to be unrespectable (unworthy) by some action or event that puts one's real or apparent unworthiness on display for others." Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 233.

52. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Knopf, 2010, 7. [*Le deuxième sexe*. 2 Vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.]

53. Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame," 129.

54. Ibid., 137.

55. Adrian Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black." *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*. Ed. Elaine Ginsberg. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, 234.

56. Ibid., 235.

57. Ibid., 137-8. Adrian Piper is also a conceptual artist; see for a discussion of the way she uses shame in her work for anti-racist purposes Alexis Shotwell, "Shame in Alterities: Adrian Piper, Intersubjectivity, and the Racial Formation of Identity," in *The Shock of the Other: Situating Alterities*. Eds Silke Horstkotte and Ester Peeren. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007, 127-36.

58. Silvan Tomkins explains the importance of shame in terms of interest, a term which appears too broad to capture what is unique about shame as response to a perception of lack of worth by others. He connects shame and humiliation very closely, along with shyness and guilt, and claims that they are the one affect. Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. Ed. Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, 135.

59. Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame," 146.

60. Velleman, "The Genesis of Shame," 47.

61. Another example of the artist's model who feels shame when she realises that the artist is viewing her sexually appears in Scheler, *Persons and Self-Value*, 15-16; Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 60-61; and Wollheim, *On the Emotions*, 159-63. This is a good example of humiliating treatment being converted to shame.

62. Lisa Guenther, "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life." *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011): 24.

63. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and The Rewakening: Two Memoirs*. Trans. Stewart Woolf. New York: Summit Books, 1986, 181-2.

64. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 88.

65. Ibid., 94.

66. Ibid., 89-94.

67. Quoted in *ibid.*, 93.

68. Ibid., 96.

69. The executioners used the tragic model, in invoking the "just following orders" defense (*ibid.*, 97).

70. Ibid., 103.

71. Ibid., 104.

72. Ibid., 106.

73. Ibid., 107. See Foucault's distinction: "There are two meanings of the word subject: [1] subject to someone else by control and dependence, and [2] tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to." Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 212.

74. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 110.

75. Ibid., 130.

76. Ibid., 112.

77. Welz, "Shame and the Hiding Self." Leys argues that the pink flush most likely signifies "*threatened aliveness or vitality*" and that Antelme is more concerned with human interconnectedness. Leys, *From Guilt to Shame*, 174-9.

78. Robert Antelme, *The Human Race*. Trans. Jeffrey Haight and Annie Mahler. Evanston: The Marlboro Press, 1998, 232. Phil Hutchinson argues that Agamben has conflated shame and embarrassment. Phil Hutchinson, *Shame and Philosophy: An Investigation in the Philosophy of Emotions and Ethics*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 60; 74.

79. Guenther, "Resisting Agamben," 67.

80. For example, Simone de Beauvoir notes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that Nazi humiliation of their victims lead to the victims' feeling disgust at themselves. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. Secaucus: Citadel, 1997, 101. [*Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*. Paris: Gallimard, 1947]. Similarly, Frantz Fanon describes a moral splitting in the self due to anti-black racism: "Moral consciousness implies a kind of split, a fracture of consciousness between a dark and a light side. Moral standards require the black, the dark, and the black man to be eliminated from this consciousness. A black man, therefore, is constantly struggling against his own image." Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard

Philcox. New York: Grove Press. 2008, 170.

81. As Tessman notes, tremendous anger may be “ultimately unhealthy or corrosive for its bearer” (*Burdened Virtues*, 124).

82. John Deigh, “The Politics of Disgust and Shame,” *The Journal of Ethics* 10 (2006): 410.

83. Rodogno, “Shame, Guilt, and Punishment,” 431.

84. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, 230-33.

85. Deigh, “The Politics of Disgust and Shame,” 411. Nussbaum sees this as a primitive shame that is not related to ideals, but more to a sense of helplessness (391).

86. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, 230-36. Deigh argues it is conservative theories of punishment that are Nussbaum’s true target here. Deigh, “The Politics of Disgust and Shame,” 413.

87. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, 203-4.

88. Deigh, “The Politics of Disgust and Shame,” 415.

89. Rodogno, “Shame, Guilt, and Punishment,” 429-464.

90. *Ibid.*, 433-4.

91. *Ibid.*, 449. “Guilt” punishments are centered on coming to recognize the harm that has been caused to others, rather than publicizing the offence (453-550).

92. Statman argues that humiliation concerns a loss of self-respect rather than dignity. Daniel Statman, “Humiliation, dignity and self-respect,” *Philosophical Psychology* 13:4 (2000): 523-540.

93. Calhoun, “An Apology for Moral Shame,” 131; Tomkins, *Shame and its Sisters*, 139.

94. Similarly, the focus of moral concern should be the perpetration of the bizarre punishments and torture carried out in Abu Graib rather than assuming that there is a “shame culture”, or concern with averting dishonour, among the victims, as Leys notes in her book (*From Guilt to Shame*, 3-4).

95. One difficulty here may be that perpetrators rarely feel guilt or shame, so there is not enough material for thinkers to work with.

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

Philipa Rothfield

Change involves carrying out an activity against the habit of life.
F.M. Alexander¹

INTRODUCTION

According to Aristotle, habits are a kind of second nature—nature because, once formed, habits retain their shape, but secondary because habits are an acquired *modus operandi*. Habits are not inevitable nor do they remain so as a matter of inevitability. That said, the dispositional tendencies of habit serve us well, allowing us to multi-task without a second thought. Habits are a form of corporeal scriptwriting, a shorthand for the body. They are dependable, not because they are instinctual or mechanistic, but because they function “as if” they were.² The formation of habit inaugurates a mode of organization in the subject which frees subjectivity at the same time as establishing for it a routine.³ Habit’s ability to function smoothly according to routine allows the individual to focus more fully on other matters.

Once acquired, habits are a tendency in the individual towards continuity or repetition. It is this ‘towards’ and the question of its reorientation which is the subject of this paper. Habits are good insofar as they are of value to the one who has them. A habit which *loses* value however is a force to be reckoned with. Its manner of persistence (a quality which goes with the territory) is now an obstacle with its own stake in the future. If, as Ravaissou claims, habits lie deep within the individual, beneath conscious will, how are they to be changed? Ravaissou ventures that a habit “born from custom” may wither once custom’s circumstance no longer holds.⁴ The problem is that habit can itself be constitutive of custom. Getting rid of habit is no mean feat then, requiring a battle of wits between two kinds of force: the voluntary and involuntary. The difference between these forces may be one reason why habits are so hard to shift. If Ravaissou is right to discern habit-formation as the imperceptible contraction of change into a deep-seated disposition, where is the common ground between a

will which wishes to resist and a habit that prefers to remain? On what turf is this battle to be staged?

This paper is an attempt to think through the relation between habit and its overcoming. It begins with Ravaissou's account of habit formation, which examines the progressive changes at work in the one who forms a habit. According to Ravaissou, habit arises because change to an individual becomes a change for the individual. The character of the change implicit in the process of habit formation alters as habit takes shape; that which began as something outside and apart from the individual becomes an element of its internal make-up. While the development of habit is empowering (capacity-building), its tendency to remain is not always a good thing.⁵ One of Ravaissou's earliest examples of habit is illness, portrayed as a kind of habit taken up and resident in the body.⁶ Addiction can also be seen as a form of habit gone wrong. The following discussion takes as its point of departure the problematical potential of habit. It arises from a field of movement techniques which adopt a critical perspective towards habit. Taken together, they espouse the pursuit of corporeal change through attempting to undo habit. Their pragmatic goal, expressed through the formulation and execution of dedicated movement strategies, is to promote difference in the body, against the force of habit. Such a goal could be formulated in relation to Spinozan thought, as the pursuit of greater corporeal capacity. Spinozan philosophy gives an ethical inflexion to the question of changing corporeal capacity. Spinozan ethics concerns itself with the changing qualities of agency and power manifest within corporeal activity. According to Spinoza, a body which becomes more capable—in action—becomes better in an ethical sense.⁷ A movement technique which aims to enhance corporeal capacity through fostering corporeal difference in the body (beyond habit) thus constitutes an ethical project within this conceptual frame.

Alexander technique represents one such ethical undertaking. Posed in its own distinctive terms, Alexander technique aims to create "the space for something different to occur."⁸ Predicated upon a particular diagnosis of what is bad about habit (its tendency to promote postural contraction), Alexander technique offers a strategic response so as to make way for something else: the possibility of moving otherwise. While it acknowledges that we are all wedded to the habits of subjectivity, that we are inevitably creatures of habit, Alexander technique aims to take on habit, to loosen its iron grip so as to enable the body to *become better* in the Spinozan sense. To become better in movement is to become more capable, more powerful and thereby available to a greater range of potential movement. Alexander technique adds something to the Spinozan mix however by outlining a practice which aims to *inhibit* what he sees as our habitual subjectivity. Why? To pave the way for another kind of corporeal agency, unfettered by the habits of a lifetime. Alexander spoke of 'non-doing' in relation to his technique. Although this may suggest a *lack* of subjective agency, the technique actually requires a very particular kind of engagement on the part of its subject. There are two moments in Alexander work: one, a certain way of dealing with subjectivity (*qua* habit), and two, the generation of movement beyond the habitual everyday. The first moment (subjective engagement) is a condition of possibility for the second (creating difference beyond the habitual body). I am interested in the creation of this space of difference. What does it mean to make space for something new to occur in the body, beyond habit? What does the notion of non-doing say about that which is cultivated through habit? What follows is a discussion of Ravaissou's conception of habit formation, an outline of three movement techniques which problematize the role of habit, and some concluding remarks regarding the relation between habit, subjectivity and the provocation of corporeal difference.

HABIT FORMATION

According to Felix Ravaissou, habit is not exclusively human but characterizes all of life: "Habit, in the widest sense, is a general and permanent way of being."⁹ Ravaissou is careful to point out that habit belongs to *a* life, that is, habit can only take root in a being, able to adopt, and adapt itself to, change. Habit is an acquired state of affairs, the contraction of a change, a manner of creation. Habit is not mere change in the organism, rather a mode of change which is oriented towards the future: "habit remains for a possible change".¹⁰ In other words, habits are something more than a form of repetition instituted from the outside. A stone thrown up thousands of times will not develop the habit of throwing itself up.¹¹ Habit is the way in which a being takes up change and, in so doing, creates something of itself, a pathway, capacity or facility which owes its existence to the past, yet

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

persists beyond it. The durability of habit, its ability to repeat or sustain itself, signifies a modification of the being in whom habit emerges. Ravaissou calls this “a change in the disposition, in the potential, in the internal virtue” of the one who acquires the habit.¹² Thus, while the habitual domain may arise in response to external stimuli, the development of habit represents the formation of a certain kind of agency within.¹³

The fact that habit “remains for a possible change” signals that something has been taken up by (or in) the individual to create a newly formed nature.¹⁴ To that extent, habit represents the ‘naturing’ of nature, the cultivation of a difference which persists as the potential for a particular activity.¹⁵ So, habit is the product of difference but also the way in which a being produces something of its identity in the form of skill or capacity. As Catherine Malabou writes:

Certainly, change generates habit, but in return habit is actualized as a habit of changing. Being is thus habituated to its future. It *has* a future.¹⁶

To have a future is to have adopted something of the outside to create an “internal virtue”.

Habituation produces a kind of power, the power to recreate or reproduce through repetition. The establishment of habitual behaviours allows for the inauguration of corporeal style on the part of its subject. The ballet dancer who practises pirouettes on a daily basis is able to perform these intricate turns with grace if not strictly ease. Prolonged training instils a kind of shorthand in the ballet dancer’s body, the ability to perform ballet’s lexicon of moves upon the right kind of signal. This is made quite explicit within the pirouette which has a set preparation, a ‘wind-up’ movement that triggers its turning motion. A corollary of the power to pull together complex movements is the location of habit beyond conscious will. This is not cause for concern. The existence of potential actions whose minutiae do not require conscious selection and execution are a boon for the individual, who is freed up to focus on other matters. Although the nuances of the pirouette are established and maintained by the ballet dancer’s daily *barre*, there are many other performance variables with which the dancer needs to deal, such as the rake (tilt) of the stage, its surface texture, music, lighting, temperature, the particular arrangement of steps, and the presence of other dancers. The habits formed through such dedicated practice enter into this complex mixture of deliberative choice and given movement.

The power of habit, together with its ready to hand givenness, can be construed as a mixture of active and passive components. Ravaissou’s analysis of human habit shows how habits occupy a shifting middle ground between activity and passivity, polar opposites which are inversely variable. Ravaissou writes of habit’s “double law”, which observes that passive sensations felt over time will recede, whereas action initiated on the part of its subject will strengthen through practice.¹⁷ The double law of habit formation states that passivity dwindles as activity grows. This can be seen in the transition between conscious effort and spontaneous ease. As movement becomes habitual, the passive quality of conscious effort (felt in the form of resistance) diminishes while the activity of movement strengthens. This in turn produces spontaneity, a ready to hand ease of activity that no longer requires conscious effort:

...as effort fades away in movement and as action becomes freer and swifter, the action itself becomes more of a tendency, an inclination that no longer awaits the commandments of the will but rather anticipates them, and which even escapes entirely and irremediably both will and consciousness.¹⁸

Habit thereby establishes itself beneath consciousness, “further down into the organism” so to speak.¹⁹ This is an effect of habit, that habitual disposition no longer requires conscious effort in order to initiate activity. Ravaissou writes that the actions established by habit are the result of a “fusion” between the idea and its performance, so that ultimately “nothing separates the subject and object of thought”.²⁰

Ravaissou is careful to point out that habit does not leave the sphere of intelligence, that it is not a “foreign force” directing movement.²¹ It is just that habit works beneath consciousness. Bergson explains:

When we mechanically perform an habitual action, when the somnambulist automatically acts his dream, unconsciousness may be absolute; but this is merely due to the fact that the representation of the act is held in check by the performance of the act itself, which resembles the idea so perfectly, and fits it so exactly, that consciousness is unable to find room between them.²²

The unconscious performance of habitual action is a skill, a form of bodily intelligence integrated within the self, ‘ready to go’. It is the body’s achievement to have developed the ability to gracefully glide through the templates of habit. As Bergson and Ravaissou both indicate, habitual action does not lack thought but rather represents a certain kind of thinking in action. Grosz calls it a non-Cartesian consciousness, according to which the individual is “prone to act”.²³

According to Ravaissou, the progressive development of habit through the erosion of effort does not occur consciously but arises in practice, through persistence. The conversion of effort into spontaneity is both incremental and imperceptible. By the same token, the dissolution of habit is equally subtle. Ravaissou writes that habits “often decline” if the conditions which originally produced the habit disappear.²⁴ Ravaissou does not detail the withering of habit in the absence of its customary milieu. How does a habit become otherwise? Does habit’s double law move into reverse, from ease towards effort? What lures the degradation of habit? If habit has become part of the very being of the one to whom it belongs, surely a change in external environment will not suffice to bring about a corresponding change in habit?

I. ON NOT-DOING IT

Alexander technique is based upon a broad critique of the habitual everyday. According to Alexander, we tend to shrink (or contract) in the course of daily life. Contraction arises from the tendency to fixate upon our (movement) goals. The tendency to contract into action is well ensconced and clearly embedded within action *per se*. It forms the subject’s habitual *modus operandi*, and functions as a feature of our habitual, motor intentionality. According to Alexander, contraction is the result of human “end gaining”, that is, the tendency to focus on the goal or ends of an action.²⁵ The claim that we typically and chronically focus on our goals and projects rather than their manner of achievement resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s depiction of the body within perception. For Merleau-Ponty, our practical orientation (towards the perceptual object) typically eclipses any awareness of the part the body plays at an everyday level.²⁶ The subject has no need to focus on how movement is achieved because, mostly, the world is within our grasp. Hubert Dreyfus defines motor intentionality as “the way the body tends towards an optimal grip on its object”, an exhibition of what he terms “absorbed coping”.²⁷ The general point is that our everyday movement habits serve our purposes well, so well that they merge with our very projects. Many phenomenologists give expression to the seamless immersion of the lived body in its situation, and indeed, Alexander would probably agree with all that they would say. The difference lies in Alexander’s critical diagnosis of immersion (absorbed coping) and the pragmatic implications of his response. The Alexander technique aims to resist immersion. Alexander is more interested in loosening than maintaining grip. The technique aims to convert the subject’s immersion in the perceptual scene into another *modus operandi* altogether, namely “the means whereby”.²⁸

Although contraction is endemic, it is not unavoidable. Alexander developed a strategic means by which to defuse the habitual everyday—through inhibition. Alexander technique proposes a two-fold progression:

1. Inhibition of the intention to act, and
2. Invocation of the Alexander directions.

The idea behind inhibition is to acknowledge that all intentional action (motor intentionality) is liable to the forces of habit. Alexander technique thus asks the subject to *stop* before moving (1), so as to enable the directions to take hold of the body (2). It cultivates a distinction between ‘end gaining’ (habitual motor intentionality) and ‘the means whereby’ (activation of the Alexander directions in action). The Alexander directions are a

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

mode of thought in the body. They lie outside the subject's habitual domain of movement. The directions are a set of interdependent, movement-vectors formulated to counteract the foreshortening inherent in everyday movement. Put into words the directions are: *free the neck, so that the head can move forwards and up, so that the back can lengthen and widen.*

Freeing the neck is a matter of undoing muscular tension. It involves softening and releasing muscular control so that the head is able to take up the direction of 'forwards and up'. The Alexander directions are not actions to be undertaken, merely images to be thought. In fact, the Alexander technique specifically calls for 'non-doing' on the part of its student. In practice, this means a finely-tuned letting go of muscular control, alongside a process of thinking without explicitly doing. In a sense, the directions 'act' the body.

The work has its own challenges, and students may spend years grappling with its demands: How to think the directions without doing them? How to allow the body to move without being the one who initiates movement? Since students of the technique may not have a sensory appreciation of the directions, Alexander technique requires the assistance of a teacher who works through touch to give a sense of their feeling in action. The quality and character of the Alexander teacher's touch is complex and dynamic. It depends upon the porosity of corporeal boundaries, and aspires towards a flow of insight from one body to another.²⁹ And yet, teachers are not supposed to 'will' their students towards a particular end. The point is rather to 'share' the insights of an informed Alexander body with a less informed one. Teachers activate the technique in themselves, as they connect with the body of the student. In Nietzschean terms, we might say that the performance of touch within Alexander technique is not a one-way flow of information from the body of the master to the student but an availability of corporeal forces, a proximal staging of the teacher's own practice spilling over into the body of another. The efficacy of the communication, its transitivity, is not guaranteed but enters the complex dynamic of learning itself.

Perhaps thinking the directions interferes with our habitual subjectivity. If stopping creates a gap, between intention and action, the subsequent thought of the directions insinuates itself into that gap, keeping habit at bay through their expansive remit. Students are asked to renew the directions time and again, to repeatedly think them in the body. It is as if the directions keep the body in a state of dynamic readiness, towards a wide spectrum of possibility at each and every moment of renewal. If habit contracts into goal-directed action, then the Alexander directions keep the body alive to the wider possibilities that encompass the moment. It could be suggested that the practice of expansion is a means to keep alive the virtual (and shifting) field of possibility underlying the dynamic body. Once an action takes on a goal-directed character, the virtual field of possibility is liable to shrink towards the subject's habitual means of movement and the teleological ends of motor intentionality. The Alexander body is not committed to the performance of any particular act but is *a body available to movement*.³⁰ The Alexander subject refuses to enter the absorbed coping characterised by Dreyfus, aiming instead to defuse the habits of a lifetime towards a different kind of becoming.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze makes a distinction between two types of becoming; becoming-reactive and becoming-active. Becoming-reactive characterizes the variety of modes of human becoming, including consciousness, experience and habit.³¹ Deleuze raises the possibility of becoming-active, which requires a change in the reactive forces that constitutes the human type. The problem with this scenario is that reactive forces lack "the power of affirming which constitutes their becoming-active".³² In short, reactive forces "lack a will which goes beyond them".³³ It is not that such a will cannot be (come) effective, just that it must leave the domain of the human in order to do so. A "superhuman element" is needed to shift the quality of negation into affirmation, an element which has the potential to transform the reactive apparatus.³⁴ This is key to the defeat of reactive force and the affirmative movement of becoming-active. Deleuze characterizes the shift from the reactive apparatus to the Overman as requiring a process of *active destruction*. Active destruction represents the explicit demise of subjectivity towards another mode of becoming.³⁵ Deleuze writes:

Zarathustra praises the man of active destruction: he wants to be overcome, he goes beyond the human already on the path of the overman...*And thus he wills his own downfall.*³⁶

If Alexander technique were to be viewed as a strategy of Deleuzian ‘active destruction’, its potency would lie in its conjunction of non-doing with directional thought in the body. Although the student must commit to thinking the Alexander directions, she/he must equally commit to not ‘doing’ them. In this context, non-doing could be thought of as the will to be overcome, and the directions a potency that lies beyond subjectivity (the reactive apparatus). Thought within the terms of this discussion, one might suggest that the efficacy of inhibition extends to the limits of subjective agency but no further, while the directions take up where inhibition leaves off. Inhibition is an antidote oriented towards a subjectivity which hopefully never succeeds, thus allowing the directions to take hold of the body. The shift from one domain to another is a kind of baton passing between ‘types’. The work of the Alexander teacher is to facilitate the potency of the Alexander directions. In this setting, it could be thought of as a lure from one domain towards another, formulated to “inspire a new inclination for destroying himself...actively”.³⁷

Deleuze describes thought in Nietzsche as a journey made by an arrow. The arrow is not a property of the thinker but a projectile:

He [Nietzsche] compares the thinker to an arrow shot by Nature that another thinker picks up where it has fallen so that he can shoot it somewhere else.³⁸

The movement from inhibition to the Alexander directions could be thought in projectile terms, as a shift from one mode of thought (the reactive apparatus) to another (corporeal becoming). The concept and practice of non-doing could likewise be seen as an effort to displace traditional notions of the thinker (as knowing subject), towards a transitional, dynamic image of thought in the body. It is one which plays the relation between the virtual and the actual, aiming to enhance the virtual field of possibility through attenuating the ‘descent’ into activity.³⁹ Expansion is an impetus destined to go beyond the thinker as knower towards a body unhinged from the end-gains inherent in motor intentionality. Practising the technique is clearly complex, and whether the student can ever get it right is beside the point. Eva Karçzag refers to her Alexander teacher, Bill Williams, who “would repeat, over and over again, ‘Nothing to get right...If it feels wrong, let it be wrong, if it feels strange, let it be strange’.”⁴⁰ Strangeness as a generator of corporeal difference.

II. POTENCY OF THE IMAGE

Although different in an important number of respects — most notably through its use of the image — ideokinesis is similarly oriented towards change, beyond the level of the habitual everyday.⁴¹ Elizabeth Dempster discusses the characteristic posture of ideokinetic learning, which she calls “the horizontal plane of instruction”, also termed the constructive rest or semi-supine position.⁴² Students of ideokinesis lie down in the constructive rest position in order to facilitate the work of the image. Dempster argues that the semi-supine posture “suspends the operation of the everyday habitus”, thereby allowing the body to take up other movement possibilities.⁴³ The shift onto a horizontal domain away from the vertical everyday can be likened to the notion of inhibition in Alexander technique inasmuch as it is a strategic means of disruption which undermines the subject’s recourse to his/her habitual *modus operandi*.

The horizontal plane of instruction replaces the subject’s usual motor intentionality with the image. Like Alexander, ideokinesis depends upon the subject’s not ‘doing’ the image. Anne Thompson writes:

If an individual actively works to achieve physical change, through willing it, habitual patterns of body use will be activated and the process of ideokinesis will be obstructed.⁴⁴

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

Dempster draws out the dual aspects of ideokinesis which decentres subjectivity through horizontal displacement on the one hand, and provokes change ('nervous repatterning') on the other.⁴⁵ If the mark of success is a change in the body's abilities, then ideokinesis calls for a shift in the body's *modus operandi*. This form of change is subtle and may well require an ongoing commitment over time.⁴⁶

Ideokinesis is a performative strategy that takes the subject beyond those habitual dispositions embedded in the neuromuscular everyday. Its efficacy rests upon the potency of the image. André Bernard speaks of the image as "the facilitator of movement".⁴⁷ Images, for Bernard, have a life of their own. From a strategic point of view, the image is the means of change in the body. According to Barnard, the image is active, "it is happening", whereas the subject is in the position of observer.⁴⁸ Although ideokinesis does not call for inhibition as such, it flips the domain of the everyday (vertical plane) onto the horizontal plane of instruction. This shift is neither conceptual, nor a 90-degree transposition of Cartesian coordinates, but institutes a different set of gravitational forces beyond the realm of the everyday.⁴⁹ Along with the image, the shift aims to promote the release (disruption) of habitual holding patterns, in order to make room for neuromuscular repatterning. Lying down amid an altered field of gravitational forces opens the body to change, first through release then through activation.

The notion of release could be framed as a mode of active destruction, giving up the body's neuromuscular habits so as to repattern. The image thus works in conjunction with horizontal disorientation to enable a new set of corporeal forces to emerge. Following the logic of overcoming, we might construe lying down in constructive rest as a mode of habitual inhibition or overcoming (active destruction), and the image as Nietzsche's arrow. The image is a transformative device. It originates in the subject, over time moving into the domain of dynamic, corporeal change. Bernard exhorts the student to *become the image*.⁵⁰ In Deleuzian terms, we might explore this sense of becoming as a transition, between habitual subjectivity (thought in terms of the reactive apparatus) and the body's movement towards the new. Becoming-image (as corporeal activation) is facilitated by the potency of the image itself, manifest in "the transition from imaging to moving".⁵¹ The shift occurs at two levels then, one, the displacement of the vertical everyday (habitual subjectivity) and two, the passage of the image from the domain of subjectivity to that of new modes of corporeal organization.

III. POSTMODERN 'TECHNIQUES' OF DECOMPOSITION AND RECOMPOSITION

There are many ways to make new choreographic material. Choreographers often select material through improvising. The problem with this approach is that the body tends to move in familiar ways so that, ironically, improvisation can lead to more of the same. Of course, improvisers are well aware of this problem and have many ways of dealing with it. But the tendency to reproduce what the body already knows is nonetheless palpable. There are good reasons for this. If training is a mode of habit formation, then its very efficacy depends upon the cultivation of given kinaesthetic pathways which incline towards reiteration. This may be expressed through the dancer's dispositions, movement tendencies, kinaesthetic sensibility, preferences and pleasures.⁵² To what extent does the dancer's skill rely upon established habits? Is there any tension between the dancer's habitual repertoire and preferences and the adoption of new movement practices? In a sense, this is a problem which faces any body that wants to develop. But the challenge is intensified in situations that valorise the production of new choreographic material and therefore require the selection of new corporeal forces. The dancer's challenge in this milieu is to remain open to the new despite the pull of old habits (expertise).

This tension is not felt in the same way in the field of classical ballet, because ballet consists of a fixed movement vocabulary. While ballet training is complex and difficult, its focus is to maintain and/or develop skill rather than move between styles of movement.⁵³ Modern dance broke with ballet's lexicon, replacing it with the generative body of the choreographer. For example, Martha Graham's modern dance emerged from a choreographic repertoire, which (much) later came to be codified as Graham technique. Although Graham's oeuvre developed over the years, Graham's dancers nonetheless worked according to a certain identifiable style, famously comprising the Graham contraction and release.⁵⁴ Postmodern dance differs in a number of important respects, particularly in regards to its attitudes towards habit and training. According to Elizabeth Dempster:

The postmodern is not a newly defined dance language but a strategy and a method of enquiry which challenge and interrogate the process of representation itself...Analysis, questioning and manipulation of the codes and conventions which inscribe the body in dance are distinguishing features of the postmodern mode.⁵⁵

This last example is less homogeneous than the first two. It does not represent a single strategy but rather ensues from a shared heritage that broke with the kinaesthetic values of modern dance, while instituting its own modes of choreographic invention. One of the features of postmodern dance is its challenge to the dancer's embodied heritage or provenance. Postmodern dance does not espouse the knowing subject, which is always already trained and ready to exhibit that knowledge. Yvonne Rainer's "'No' to Spectacle" is often cited in relation to the shift in postmodern dance away from spectacular (knowing) display towards another kind of dancing.⁵⁶ Her *Trio A*, for example, does not present the dancer displaying what he/she already knows but rather shows a performer at work in relation to the choreographic demands of the piece. According to Sarah Rudner, who famously performed *Trio A*: "When it came right down to it, and you were there to do the dance, the best thing that happened was the body took over and the dance happened".⁵⁷ Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor* (1978) similarly calls for something other than knowing subjectivity on the part of the dancer. Brown claims that, once she started talking in performance, she couldn't keep track of her dancing while talking and *vice-versa*.

The same could be said of the retrograde and cut and paste compositional strategies often associated with Twyla Tharp. Rendering movement in reverse has little to do with what feels right or with what felt right in the original development of movement material. The retrograde problematic fosters a break with the habitual tendencies of normalised movement, requiring a body to embark upon a project of serial reinvention. If Spinoza is right that we don't know what a body can do, retrograde pragmatics assist in the enhancement of corporeal capacity, beyond the body's corporeal present and outside the dancer's habitual sensibility. Cut and paste strategies likewise operate independently of what feels right or familiar. Indeed, strategies of reconstitution offer new movement pathways, sutured movements, whose ultimate flow calls for foreign capabilities. Although the temptation is (inevitably) to form new habits/familiar pathways, the originating dislocation inherent in these strategies represents a notion of kinaesthetic value beyond the business as usual of the already trained body.⁵⁸ The choreographic concerns embedded in these strategies are time-consuming and challenging just because they go against the grain of habit, *beyond* the sensibility and dispositions of the dancer. Their manipulation of movement material, through modes of decomposition and recomposition, take the practice beyond the familiar, calling instead for a kind of corporeal adaptation on the part of the dancer.

This example is selected for discussion because it challenges the dancer's embedded movement subjectivity. It requires a kinaesthetic openness to change, towards what the postmodern choreographer, Russell Dumas, calls a 'body available to movement'. The imposition of external demands embodied in retrograde and cut and paste modes of recomposition represents an appeal to a non-subjective sensibility as a matter of aesthetic preference. The dancer or choreographer places him/herself within a problematic that lures the dancer beyond his/her given understanding towards the enhancement of corporeal capacity. This is not to say that all postmodern choreographers work in this way, but to indicate certain tendencies that lie outside the embodiment of habitual subjectivity according to embedded technique.

The tension inherent in this setting is that the dancer has to find a way to open the body to the unknown. Nancy Stark Smith refers to something she calls 'the Gap', a space that opens up once the dancer gives up his/her habitual modes of orientation.⁵⁹ This is difficult for the trained dancer. Russell Dumas writes of a process he calls 'slow rendering'.⁶⁰ Like 'the Gap' in Stark Smith's work, slow rendering does not depend upon the dancer's knowing what to do. Indeed, it requires a similar suspension of knowing for the body to take on new movement skills. Slow rendering aims to resist habit formation. Once a habit is formed, then the dancer has a 'solution' which tends to foreclose the body's adaptation to further (future) movement possibilities. Dumas' strategy of slow rendering is an explicit attempt to block or at least slow down the formation of spontaneous ease. As a

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

result, rehearsing his material is demanding. The dancer, for his/her part cannot rely upon what she/he already knows, while Dumas' challenge as a choreographer is to keep the choreography provisional. According to Dumas, subjectivity stands in the way of corporeal development, and must be strategically redeployed (employed) while the body learns:

This practice of 'slow rendering' involves distracting the conscious mind with detailed complex physical activities. In the best scenario, the mind abdicates control over how these tasks are achieved within the body...⁶¹

Occupying the dancer's subjectivity with a changing set of choreographic demands is about the process of learning but also about performance. There is a sense in which the dancing itself takes priority. This has almost become an aesthetic value within postmodern dance, away from spectacular display towards the notion of choreography as a problematic to be actively engaged in performance. It differs from the quality of virtuosic display associated with classical ballet.⁶² If Alexander technique poses inhibition, and ideokinesis posits the image, this family of examples asks the dancer to find a way to give over his/her knowing subjectivity, in favour of allowing the work itself to become visible, for audience and dancer alike. There is no single methodology of overcoming habit here, but a sense in which the complexity of the work calls forth a certain kind of abdication on the part of the knowing subject. In some cases, the actual choreography is so complex that the dancer cannot keep up. Something else has to happen for the work to flow.

CONCLUSION

Ravaissou offers a penetrating analysis of the way in which habit comes into being. His account of habit formation follows the emergence and incorporation of an inclination which comes to form part of the subject's "very being".⁶³ Ravaissou shows how, in the realm of human movement, wilful effort translates into spontaneous ease. In such cases, persistent effort pays off, producing a bodily intelligence ready and able to act. The benefit of such training and selection is to enjoy greater ease of execution, plus a certain reliability whereby thought and action become one. What if *another* thought comes along, however, one which aims to prise open habit's fusion of thought and action? How is that thought to exert itself? However valued, the core feature of habit—to collapse the interval between an idea and its performance—tends to fix movement, rendering it remote from conscious choice. If habit, once acquired, becomes an internal virtue, then the task of its overcoming requires a change to a part of the self. It is not so easy to 'give up' one's habits, just because they represent our day to day, practical competence. Hence the ingenuity of the various movement techniques under discussion.

Alexander technique and ideokinesis, each in their own way, attempt to outflank the spontaneity of habit, through inhibition, non-doing and displacement. Postmodern choreography tends to overwhelm the dancer with complex tasks, while embracing a process of changing demands. Postmodern dance is less organised around a singular method but its destabilised choreographic vocabulary nonetheless requires ongoing habit modification. If Alexander and ideokinesis attempt to break with habit, Dumas' slow rendering attenuates its formation. Inasmuch as our habits become us, forming a disposition which belongs to the self, these techniques could be viewed in terms of Nietzschean overcoming or Deleuzian active destruction. Inhibition and non-doing are potential candidates for a 'will to be overcome'. The milieu of postmodern dance similarly calls forth a movement beyond the givenness of training and technique. The postmodern dancer has to get out of the way so that the body can take up new movement possibilities.

It is worth noting the role of the other in each of these movement practices. Touch is a powerful device, able to stage and transmit a variety of corporeal forces and/or suggestions. The very difference of the other functions as a lure beyond habit.⁶⁴ It is moot, however, whether subjectivity can be actually overcome, in practice, or whether these strategies merely aim towards overcoming. Although each of these techniques aims to deconstruct habit, were it not for habit, none of their good work could stick. Even Alexander technique, which resists habit (re)formation, relies upon the habit of practice. Perhaps Bergson is correct to suggest that

what we can do is oppose one habit with another, in which case, it is more a question of one habit superseding another. Bergson writes of the human ability to stage such a transition:

But man not only maintains his machine, he succeeds in using it as he pleases. Doubtless he owes this to the superiority of his brain, which enables him to build an unlimited number of motor mechanisms, to oppose new habits to the old ones unceasingly, and, by dividing automatism against itself, to rule it.⁶⁵

The ideokinetic notion of muscular repatterning represents the movement from one set of habits to another. Although Alexander technique does not advocate the formation of new habits, Edward Owen refers to Alexander as the one who “mastered habit”.⁶⁶ If Alexander, Ideokinesis and postmodern dance are any indication, such mastery does not come easily, calling for a nuanced approach by which to move beyond habit’s familiar terrain. These strategies are not so much the exertion of will against habit but the attempt to defuse the spontaneity of habitual patterns so that the body can embrace and once again adapt itself to the new.

PHILIPA ROTHFIELD is a Melbourne-based philosopher and dancer

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

NOTES

Acknowledgements. The discussion of movement practices in this paper is informed by the understanding and generosity of those artists and practitioners with whom I have worked over many years. This is difficult to make visible according to the conventions of academic acknowledgement but is key to my having anything to say about dance. In this respect I would therefore like to acknowledge and thank Margaret Lasica (Dir. Modern Dance Ensemble) and Russell Dumas (Dir. Dance Exchange). I would also like to thank Sally Gardner, Julia Scoglio and Anneke Hansen, Eva Karczag, Pam Matt, Lisa Nelson, Deborah Hay and Joan Skinner for their kinaesthetic insights given over many years. In the context of this discussion, I would in particular like to thank my Alexander teachers, Shona Innes, Shelley Senter and David Moore. Thanks also to Elizabeth Grosz for her scholarly advice and support.

1. F.M. Alexander, *The Alexander Technique*. New York: University Books, 1989, 3.
2. See Elizabeth Grosz, "Habit Today, Ravaissou, Bergson, Deleuze and Us." *Body and Society* 19 (2013): 221.
3. Grosz writes: "Without habits and their tendency to automatism, living beings would not have the energy and singularity of purpose that enables them to survive and to create, to produce the new, to live artistically." Grosz, "Habit Today", 225.
4. Felix Ravaissou, *Of Habit*. Trans. C. Carlisle and M. Sinclair. London: Continuum books, 2008, 57.
5. William James writes: "...the fact is that our virtues are habits as much as our vices. All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits,—practical, emotional, and intellectual,—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever the latter may be." William James, "Talks to Teachers," <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16287/16287-h/16287-h.htm>, accessed 20th September, 2013.
6. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 63.
7. Cf. Baruch Spinoza *Ethics*, Book III. Trans. E. Curley. London: Penguin Books, 1996. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988, esp. ch. 2.
8. Rebecca Nettle-Fiol, "First it was dancing, Reflections on teaching and Alexander technique", in *The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training*. Ed. Bales and Nettle-Fiol. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008, 105.
9. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 25.
10. Ibid.
11. As Aristotle observes, "a stone, which has a natural tendency downwards, cannot be habituated to rise, however often you try to train it by throwing it into the air..." *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Trans. J.A.K. Thompson. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976, 91.
12. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 25.
13. Ravaissou notes that, as habit forms, it becomes increasingly "proper" to its subject (ibid., 31). Grosz writes of this as a means of identity: "habit is an anchor, the rock to which the possibilities of personal identity and freedom are tethered, the condition under which learning is possible, the creation of a direction, a 'second nature', an identity." Ibid., 219.
14. Ravaissou writes: "From the lowest level of life, it seems that the continuity or repetition of a change modifies, relative to this change itself, the disposition of the being, and in this way modifies nature." Ibid., 31.
15. "It is, finally, a *natured* nature, the product and successive revelation of *naturing* nature." Ibid., 59.
16. Catherine Malabou, "Addiction and Grace, Preface to Felix Ravaissou's *Of Habit*", in Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, viii.
17. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 49.
18. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 51.
19. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 53.
20. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 55.
21. Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 57.
22. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. Trans. A. Mitchell. London: Macmillan and co., 1911, 151.
23. Grosz, "Habit Today", 223.
24. "...it is by a succession of imperceptible degrees that inclinations take over from acts of will. It is also by an imperceptible degradation that these inclinations, born from custom, often decline if custom comes to be interrupted". Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 57.
25. Alexander, *The Alexander Technique*, 58.
26. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes of a subject typically oriented towards the object. He also uses terms such as "bodily purpose" (99) and "motor intentionality" (137-8) in order to describe the sense in which the body comprises "an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task" (100). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. C. Smith. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. Ravaissou would put the matter thus, that through habit: "It is the final cause that increasingly predominates over efficient causality and which absorbs the latter into itself." Ravaissou, *Of Habit*, 57. In other words, the end becomes the means.
27. Hubert Dreyfus, "Reply to Romdenh-Romluc", in *Reading Merleau-Ponty, On Phenomenology of Perception*. Ed. T. Baldwin. London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 63ff.

28. See Alexander, *The Alexander Technique*, 14.
29. Elizabeth Dempster writes about the flow of insight through touch as the “transmission of precise kinaesthetic experience”, *Writings on Dance* 22 (Summer 2003/2004): 38. She writes: “In the Alexander context, touch is both diagnostic and a means of instruction. As Carrington suggests... touching is sensing the state of the other” (ibid.).
30. This turn of phrase is often cited by Russell Dumas to signify a body unbound by or exceeding classical (fixed modes of) movement vocabulary. For Dumas, a body available to movement is able to take up new choreographic material (new movement). The phrase is also used by Alexander teacher, Shona Innes, to describe the sense in which a body can be open to a range of movement possibilities in the moment. It is a way of capturing the role of the virtual within the Alexander technique.
31. Deleuze writes: “Consciousness is essentially reactive; this is why we do not know what a body can do, or what activity it is capable of (GS 354). And what is said of consciousness must also be said of memory and habit.” Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. H. Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, 41.
32. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 169.
33. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 169.
34. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 170.
35. It is contrasted with the last man who is “passively extinguished”. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 174.
36. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 174.
37. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 174.
38. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, ix.
39. For a philosophical elaboration of attenuation in relation to movement, see Erin Manning, *Relationships, Movement, Art, Philosophy*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2009.
40. Quoted in Elizabeth Dempster, “Some notes on the staging of ideokinesis”, *Writings on Dance* 22 (Summer 2003/2004): 45.
41. André Bernard speaks of “neuromuscular re-education – that is, we’re trying to change muscle patterns”. André Barnard, “Class 1 semester 1 New York University 29.9.80”, *Writings on Dance* 22 (Summer 2003/2004): 6.
42. Elizabeth Dempster, “Some notes on the staging of ideokinesis”, *Writings on Dance* 22 (Summer 2003/2004): 44.
43. Ibid., 44. The constructive rest position involves lying down with parallel legs bent at the knees.
44. Anne Thompson, “A position at a point in time”, *Writings on Dance* 1 (1985): 6.
45. Dempster, “Some notes”, 46.
46. Thompson, “A position at a point in time”, 8.
47. Barnard, “Class 1 semester 1 New York University 29.9.80”, 6.
48. Ibid.
49. Klossowski writes of the order of subjective understanding (in relation to the body) which both leads to the head and depends upon a habitually upright position. Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. D. Smith. London and New York: Continuum Books, 1997, 21.
50. Barnard, “Class 1 semester 1 New York University 29.9.80”, 47.
51. Elizabeth Dempster, “A conversation with Shona Innes”, *Writings on Dance* 22 (Summer 2003/2004), 55.
52. I have elsewhere argued that dance practice produces a mode of movement subjectivity and kinaesthetic sensibility in the dancer, and that this is expressed at the level of the dancer’s perception, taste and dispositions. See Philipa Rothfield, “Philosophy and the Bodily Arts”, *Parallax* 46 (January–March 2008): 24–35; “Differentiating Phenomenology and Dance”, in *Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, 2nd Edition. Eds. Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea. London and New York: Routledge Books, 2010, 303–318.
53. In “Something old, Something new”, Joshua Monten writes of the difference between “modernist stylistic consistency” and the virtuosic eclecticism involved in the need to “negotiate physical imperatives that often seem mutually exclusive”, in Bales and Netti-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic*, 56 & 60 respectively.
54. Graham’s performed work involved a great many other features than the practice of contraction and release (staging, design, music, subject matter) but Graham technique is nonetheless very much centred on these signature movements.
55. Elizabeth Dempster, “Women writing the body, Let’s watch a little how she dances”, in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, 2nd Edition, 232.
56. Yvonne Rainer, “‘No’ to spectacle”, in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. Ed. A. Carter. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 35.
57. Sara Rudner in *Post-modern Dance: Judson Theatre and the Grand Union*, dir. Richard Sheridan. New York: ARC on Videodance, 1990.
58. Training can only go so far here because, as both Shelley Washington and Irene Hultman note, technique belongs to the material itself. It does not lie outside or prior to it. See “Training stories”, in Bales and Netti-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic*, 214 & 248.
59. Nancy Stark Smith, “Dedication to the moment”, *Contact Quarterly* 12 (1987): 3.
60. Russell Dumas, “Dance for the time being”, in *Dancehouse Diary #1*. Melbourne: Dancehouse, 2012, 10.

BEYOND HABIT, THE CULTIVATION OF CORPOREAL DIFFERENCE

61. Ibid.

62. Dumas often remarks that the virtuosity of his work means that an incredibly difficult movement well done will look simple, nothing special. This is different from ballet which virtually announces its virtuosity.

63. Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, 57.

64. Feldenkrais practitioner, Leonie Hearn, speaks of touch as ensuing from “someone with not your habits”. The fact that Hearn does not carry the same habits as her students means that her touch is able to inaugurate different impulses, suggestive of new movement possibilities.

65. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 279.

66. Edward Owen, *The Man who Mastered Habit*. London: Sheildrake Press, 1956.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH: DELEUZE AND MERLEAU-PONTY

Daniela Voss

Deleuze's book on Francis Bacon remains his largest and most profound study of pictorial art. However, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981) is more than that: it elaborates on a series of philosophical concepts, such as the "body without organs" or the "diagram", and invents a metaphysics of forces. In this article, we want to focus on Deleuze's notion of meat (*viande*), which figures in his discussion of Francis Bacon's paintings, and show that it is also a notion of crucial philosophical importance. As its phenomenological counterpart, we will then take up Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh (*chair*), which is central to his late ontology of the visible and the invisible. The notion of flesh emerges as the result of a long and intensive engagement with modern art. We will refer to two essays in particular: "Cézanne's Doubt" (1945) and "Eye and Mind" (1964).

Although "meat" and "flesh" are both metaphysical concepts and created under the influence of pictorial art, they are signs of two very different modes of thinking. Deleuze's metaphysics of becoming calls for resistance toward the intolerable in the present. It assigns to philosophy the task to create concepts or ideas that enable us to think differently and engage in political action. Virtual ideas are supposed to liberate us from the rule of actual facts, opinions or clichés, and to effectuate a movement of becoming beyond the actual toward the virtual. This movement of becoming—or process of "counter-actualisation", as Deleuze also calls it in the *Logic of Sense*—has a clear utopian aim, namely that of calling forth a new earth, a new people. In this context, Deleuze's notion of meat, that is the virtual Idea of "universal meat", puts a great challenge to the phenomenological notion of flesh.

The radical nature of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh lies above all in its emphasis on relationality, ambiguity and multifacetedness. He opens up a new view of the world and its different layers of sense; he makes us feel our embeddedness within it. However, while it can also be said that Merleau-Ponty questions the rule of simple facts, opinions or clichés, it seems that his way of thinking is much less radical than Deleuze's. Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh presents a comprehensive and conciliatory "Weltanschauung", a theatre of the visible and the invisible, which puts us at peace with the world and our fellow beings. This is, perhaps,

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

why reading Merleau-Ponty is such a joy, while Deleuze does not cease to puzzle and disturb us.

In taking up and comparing these two philosophical notions of “meat” and “flesh”, we do not simply want to state the affinities or divergences we find between the two concepts. Rather, by following the genesis of Deleuze’s and Merleau-Ponty’s thought, we would like to give a sense of the particular “line of flight” that their thinking takes respectively. If the thought of a philosopher is like an arrow shot through our minds, the question is: Where does it take us? Although this article in no way intends to answer this question, it at least aims to open up a field for questioning the effectivity and radicality of their different styles of thought.

1. PITY THE MEAT!—DELEUZE AND FRANCIS BACON

In their co-authored book, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari declare that both philosophy and works of art have the important task to strengthen the power of resistance, that is, “resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present”.¹ In the case of philosophy, they regard the creation of concepts as the enabling conditions of resistance against the intolerable; in the arts, it is the construction of blocks of affects and percepts that can induce intensive processes of becoming. Resistance is not to be conceived as a negative or destructive attitude toward the present, but as a positive act of creation and transformation.

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), Deleuze presents us with an example of how art can have an impact on the way we see, feel and act. Deleuze detects in Bacon’s paintings “a kind of declaration of faith in life”,² a claim that might surprise at first, because in these paintings we find scenes of terror, crucifixions, mutilated and deformed bodies. But according to Deleuze, the violence that is involved is of a very special kind: it is not the representation of something horrible happening. Bacon’s paintings are not narrative; he paints seated or crouching “Figures” isolated from any context of a story. Bacon wants to paint another violence, a “violence of sensation” that consists of the effects of colour and line more than anything else. This violence of sensation dissolves clichés of representation and instead releases intensive forces that immediately attack our nervous system. As Deleuze says: “The violence of sensation is opposed to the violence of the represented (the sensational, the cliché)” (FB 39). Sensation, according to Deleuze, has an intensive reality of its own: what Bacon aims to capture in his paintings are the *invisible and intensive forces*, those that act upon the body and climb through its flesh. The way that Deleuze describes the relation between the invisible, intensive forces and sensation is that of a transcendental conditional: The forces act as transcendental conditions to the effect that sensation would be impossible, if not for these forces. Invisible and intensive forces are the necessary and genetic conditions for the “givenness” of sensation. The problem that needs to be solved by the artist is the question how he can make these invisible forces visible. As Deleuze says in his book on *Francis Bacon*:

if force is the condition of sensation, it is nonetheless not the force that is sensed, since the sensation “gives” something completely different from the forces that condition it. How will sensation be able to sufficiently turn in on itself, relax or contract itself, so as to capture the nongiven forces in what it gives us, to make us sense these insensible forces, and raise itself to its own conditions? (FB 56-7)

The artist needs to find a way for sensation, e.g. the sensation of colour, to extricate the pure and excessive presence of forces beyond representation. He needs to make visible what lies beneath the organism with its fixed organization of organs, he needs to release the *body without organs*, that is, the reality of an “intense and intensive body” (FB 44). “Bacon has not ceased to paint bodies without organs, the intensive fact of the body” (FB 45-6).

Deleuze borrows the concept of the body without organs from the French poet and writer Antonin Artaud, who first used it in his text, “To have done with the judgment of God”, which was written as a radio play in 1948. Artaud created this concept as a means of resistance against politics and culture of oppression, against American imperialism and the judgement of God. The body without organs is the idea of a body that rejects any kind of pre-determined organization imposed upon the body by organic functions, political inscriptions

and societal codes. In Deleuze's reading, the body without organs is a plane of immanence, a field of intensive forces that express "a more profound and almost unlivable Power [*Puissance*]" (FB 44). This unlivable Power is to be conceived as the *excessive, intensive and indeterminate life* that subsists prior to its incarnation in fixed and organized forms. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze spoke of it in terms of the *virtual Idea of vitality*, the transcendent object of which would also include monstrosity.³ With the example of Bacon's contorted figures, this monstrous vitality, that is the powerful nonorganic life beyond the organism, is rendered visible. One characteristic of Bacon's figures is the animal traits that they invoke. Frequently, we find that the human head is replaced by that of an animal. Bacon's figures are drawn into a movement of becoming, of becoming animal. The technique that Bacon applies to make these metamorphoses visible does not simply consist of a combination of forms. Instead, Bacon's techniques involve a wiping or scrubbing of parts of the canvas, so that a "zone of indiscernibility" emerges, that is a disorganized zone, which is common to several forms and irreducible to any of them. As Deleuze states: "In place of formal correspondences, what Bacon's painting constitutes is a *zone of indiscernibility or undecidability* between man and animal" (FB 21). The human face as a signifying and spatial structure gives way to the head which incarnates an animal spirit: "It is the animal spirit of man: a pig-spirit, a buffalo-spirit, a dog-spirit, a bat-spirit ..." (FB 20).

In his crouching and deformed bodies, Bacon depicts the combat between the invisible forces of becoming. It needs to be stressed that this combat takes place entirely within the visible; it is revealed in the meat (*viande*), which appears in splendid colours (pinks, reds and blues, and broken tones).

Deleuze emphasizes that meat (*viande*) is not flesh (*chair*). As he says in *What is Philosophy?*, flesh is 'too tender' to support the invisible forces of becoming;⁴ there needs to be a second element, the bones: "the bones are like a trapeze apparatus (the carcass), upon which the flesh is the acrobat" (FB 23). Although Bacon's depiction of meat and bones might make us feel a bit uncomfortable, Deleuze assures us that it has nothing to do with sadism or a taste for horror. On the contrary, if there is a feeling in Bacon, it is an intense pity for the meat, including the meat of dead animals:

Pity the meat [*viande*]! Meat is undoubtedly the chief object of Bacon's pity [...]. Meat is not dead flesh [*chair*]; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, 'Pity the beasts,' but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is a common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility. (FB 23)

Perhaps we might say that Bacon is a painter of the "universal meat". Here we have to invent a new universality, a concrete universality, which has to be distinguished from generality, as Deleuze suggests. We do not achieve this universality by observing and contemplating specimens of animal and man, and then forming a general concept that determines a common structure "meat". Such a concept would necessarily remain a mere abstract, nominal definition and impose a formal identity. We also do not want to define the universal as a kind of general element or substance that exists before objects are individuated. Rather, in the Deleuzian usage, the universal is something to come, something to be created, a utopian aim. In *Critique and Clinique*, Deleuze considers literature under this utopian aspect: The task of writers is not to express their personal memories or lived experience, or to speak in behalf of an already existing people, but rather "to write for this people who are missing".⁵ Writers—and here Deleuze refers particularly to American writers such as Thomas Wolfe and Herman Melville—call forth a "universal people composed of immigrants from all countries",⁶ "a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary",⁷ a people that does not yet exist because it is "always in becoming, always incomplete".⁸ This "universal people" is the object of an Idea, a virtual Idea as Deleuze would say. The virtual Idea does not designate an imaginary projection of the mind, the image of an ideal abstract unity. It also stands opposed to a concept of the understanding that extrapolates a conceptual identity for distinct empirical objects. According to Deleuze, the virtual Idea is "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (DR: 208). It is a "concrete universal" (DR: 173), ideal no less than real, which can only become determined in empirical circumstances. It poses a permanent task: The Idea of a universal people calls for a new subjectivity, a new people to be created or invented under conditions of combat and struggle. It is an

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

experiment, a challenge to political practice, but nothing that can be translated into general propositions of a party directive or explicated in particular propositions of a political programme. The virtual Idea of a universal people is a *u-topos*, a reality which has no place *hic et nunc* and which cannot *be* but only *become*.⁹

To become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule—neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form.¹⁰

The indefinite article designates “the power of an impersonal”: “literature begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’”.¹¹ Thus, according to Deleuze, the “noble” criterion of literature is, whether it carries author and reader to this state of an impersonal power, the power of intensive and indeterminate life.

Let us briefly recall what Nietzsche means by “noble”: Noble designates “the superior form of everything that ‘is’”—in the language of energy physics “that energy which is capable of transforming itself” (DR: 41). Transformations, metamorphoses, eternal formlessness and becoming are the highest form of being and the highest thought. According to Deleuze, “the thinker of eternal return ... can rightly say that he is burdened with the superior form of everything that is, like the poet ‘burdened with humanity, even that of the animals’” (DR: 67). “The thinker, undoubtedly the thinker of the eternal return, is ... the universal individual” (DR: 254). What Deleuze means by “universal individual” becomes explicit in his reference to Pierre Klossowski. The thought of eternal return, its selective and creative power, “allows only the plebeian to return, the man without a name” (DR: 91), or as Deleuze explicates: “The man without a name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the ‘plebeian’ guardian of a secret, the already-Overman” (DR: 90). Deleuze links Nietzsche’s utopian vision of the “noble” or the “superhuman” with the “universal individual” that strips off particular properties, escapes general categories and instead invokes all possibilities of becoming, becoming man, becoming animal. The “universal individual” or the “universal people” indicate a concrete universality (not a generality), a multiple becoming, which is always incomplete. This incompleteness or indefiniteness is its strength, because it cannot be blocked by formal (conceptual) identity or real identity (the Same, *hic et nunc*). We find that this utopian dimension of Deleuze’s thinking also appears in his book on Francis Bacon: it is the “universal meat” (instead of the universal people) that Bacon summons forth. He is not simply offering an empirical observation and depiction of the contortions and convulsive pain common to both man and animal. Instead, he creates a virtual Idea of universal meat, based on affects and percepts that exercise a violent effect on our cherished identities and destroy our power to say “I”. But virtual Ideas not only have a destructive impact, they also elicit creative processes of becoming, a movement of counter-actualization or counter-effectuation. In Bacon’s paintings, we can see this movement of counter-actualization to all the suffering, gaping wounds and spasms, in the inventive play of colours and “acrobatics”: the acrobatics of the flesh on the trapeze apparatus of bones. The destructive play of forces is counter-actualized by the creation of new forces that emerge within the visual but reach beyond it (in the intensive sphere of nonorganic life). As Deleuze says, “When the visual confronts the invisible force that conditions it, it releases a force that is capable of vanquishing the invisible force, or even befriending it” (FB 62).

Bacon’s paintings visualize an ontology of forces that we know from Deleuze’s books on Nietzsche and Spinoza. Bacon reveals the hidden forces that act upon the meat: forces of isolation, of deformation and of dissipation, forces of expansion and of contraction, forces of coupling and of disjunction. The combat of these intensive forces affect the meat, but the meat is not simply to be pitied as a passive bearer of contortions and spasms. Instead, we have to see its capacity of being affected as active to the extent that it affirms life with all its colours, it releases the vital power of rhythm and engages in new possibilities of becoming. In other words, the meat has the capacity to render the invisible and intensive forces fruitful, to experiment with new compounds or alliances between forces, to open up new ways of becoming and forms of existence.

What makes Bacon a political artist in the sense that we indicated above is his rejection of representation and the creation of intensive compounds of colours and lines eliciting a shock of sensation. His paintings do not address a subject, the viewer or art critic, but—in Deleuze’s words—they affect “a primary sensibility that we *are*” (DR: 73). They establish a common plane of sensibility or affectivity, which allows for “another sensibility, another way of feeling” that can be shared by both man and animal.¹² They establish “a zone of indiscernibility more profound than any sentimental identification: the man who suffers is a beast, the beast that suffers is a man. This is the reality of becoming” (FB 25). This plane or zone of indiscernibility finds its expression in the “universal meat”, which is not something actual that can be located and fixed in time, but a virtual Idea or event yet to come. Bacon’s paintings reach for this utopian aim by inducing processes of becoming that violently change the way we are, think, act and feel. Only by subjecting ourselves to this violent effect of the virtual Idea or event, can we open up to the possibilities and metamorphoses of life, can we establish this zone of indiscernibility, “a common zone of man and the beast” (FB 23).

2. MERLEAU-PONTY’S ONTOLOGY OF THE FLESH

It is striking that Deleuze prefers the notion of meat (*viande*) to that of flesh (*chair*). What immediately comes to mind is Merleau-Ponty’s metaphysical notion of flesh (*chair*) that he develops in his late ontology of the visible and the invisible. Deleuze’s rejection of Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of the flesh of the world is well-known: “A curious Fleshism [*Carnisme*] inspires this final avatar of phenomenology and plunges it into the mystery of the incarnation. It is both a pious and a sensual notion, a mixture of sensuality and religion, without which, perhaps, flesh could not stand up by itself.”¹³ Deleuze charges that the notion of flesh is too much bound to subjectivity, that is the incarnated subject of phenomenology, and borrows too much from Christianity. It is also obvious that Deleuze would reject the whole set of terms that Merleau-Ponty uses in order to characterize his ontology of the flesh.

Despite Deleuze’s reservations against Merleau-Ponty, an encounter between the two notions of “meat” and “flesh” is attractive, all the more as Merleau-Ponty develops his ontology of the flesh under the influence of his engagement with modern painting, in particular that of Cézanne, Matisse and Klee. The painter, says Merleau-Ponty, teaches us to see. He discovers the latency and depth of things, their polymorphous being or hidden flesh. Seeing in this sense is not to be understood as an intentional act or act of cognition but rather as “a delirium which is vision itself”.¹⁴

According to Merleau-Ponty, science and philosophy have both been unable to discover this delirium of vision. Science is not interested in *seeing* but in *explaining* the world. It creates models that represent states of affairs in general, disregarding the particularity of things and the differences of the situational context. Science is “a thinking which looks on from above (*pensée du survol*), and thinks of the object-in-general” (EM 122). Science is essentially “a construction”, inasmuch as by means of its experiments it yields primarily only “the most ‘worked-up’ phenomena, more likely produced by the apparatus than recorded by it” (ibid.). “Thinking ‘operationally’” the way that science does, is predominantly an activity of the mind, not of the eye (ibid.).

Philosophy as well treats seeing as “a mode or a variant of thinking” (EM 132), a fact which is particularly notorious in Descartes. For Descartes, only the faculty of thought can grasp the essence of things behind their various sensuous appearances. It grasps the extensive and mathematically describable form of things. The eye is an inferior, though necessary function of cognition. In his essay *Dioptric*, published in 1637 as one of three lengthy essays prefaced by a brief *Discourse on Method* (which has become his most famous and widely read work), Descartes elaborated his theory of vision by virtue of a dynamic model of light rays. He defines seeing as an effect of light rays that are reflected by the things in the world and impress their images on the back part of the human eye. Seeing in this sense operates according to the model of touch, and in fact Descartes compares seeing to the mode of perception of blind persons “who see with their hands”: The blind man’s cane serves him as a “sixth sense”.¹⁵ The resistance of things that meets with the top of the cane is transferred to the blind person’s hand and via the nerves to his brain.¹⁶ In a similar way, light rays hit the human eye and cause our

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

vision. Seeing is explained here as a merely external and causal relation.

Already Descartes notices that such an objective model of seeing forces us to assume a “little man inside the man”:¹⁷ a man which looks at the representation yielded by the eye and interprets it, identifying the objects and analysing their relations. Accordingly, Descartes’ numerous drawings of the refraction of light rays culminating in the eye frequently also portray the head of a little man looking at the eye. Descartes’ objective model of seeing induces us to “seek *still further inside* that *seeing man* we thought we had under our eyes” (VI 210). The physical activity of seeing needs to be accompanied by a “thought of seeing”: Seeing is dependent on thought, which deciphers the given impressions.

In *Dioptric*, Descartes addresses, albeit briefly, the art of engravings. He remarks that those landscapes represented by a copper engraving are not “similar” to nature as we see it.¹⁸ “And thus it comes about that often, precisely in order to be more perfect in their quality as images, i.e., the better to represent an object, they ought not to resemble it [nature].”¹⁹ The representation given by the engraving follows the rules of perspective, which for Descartes (and for Renaissance painters, more broadly) were those of geometry. The linear perspective was a technique which dealt with the problem of depth by subjecting geometrical forms to a perspectival deformation: “the square becomes a lozenge, the circle an oval” (EM 131) in perspectival projection. The engraving does not resemble the things it represents. Instead, it excites thought, which performs the act of cognition: it reads the engraving just like a text; the assemblage of lines are means or signs to be deciphered by thought, “as for instance, signs and words, which have no manner of resemblance to the things they signify.”²⁰ For Descartes, there is no “power of images”, that is, seeing does not have the power to overwhelm us and take from us the faculty of judgement (or of “objective thought” as Merleau-Ponty also calls it). At all times, thought has to inspect the image (the depicted as well as the retinal image) and to “read” the signs. Between the depicted and the real object, there is no hidden analogy, no internal relation—solely an external relation of representation, which is to be interpreted by thought. A Cartesian, says Merleau-Ponty, does not see *himself* in the mirror (EM 131). He sees the image of a body caused by reflection that can be identified by a thinking subject, a cogito. For Descartes, reflexivity is a function of thought, while for Merleau-Ponty it is a metaphysical structure of the flesh: “The mirror emerges [as a cultural device] because I am a visible see-er, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity” (EM 129). And in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty states: “The flesh is a mirror phenomenon and the mirror is an extension of my relation with my body” (VI 255).

When I touch or look at myself, Merleau-Ponty explains, I receive a “specular extract” (VI 256) of myself. The “fission of appearance and Being” is an inherent structure of my body, just as there is an irreducible “duality of the touching and the touched”, of which the mirror is only an extension (ibid.). Merleau-Ponty borrows his famous example of one hand touching the other from Husserl, in order to explain this “dehiscence (*déhiscence*)” as the ontological condition of a kind of “corporeal reflexivity” or “reversibility”:

My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of the two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it*—my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its outer covering. (VI 147-8)

Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, there is a reversibility between the touching hand and the hand being touched that is “always imminent and never realized in fact” (VI 147). There is no coincidence but always a minimal delay or “hiatus” (VI 148).

If I see myself in the mirror, I am also confronted with this hiatus, which however does not separate me completely from my mirror image but rather grounds a necessary “deferred reversibility”. The touching hand is only able to touch, because it can be touched itself; it is part of the same flesh. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty

wants to say that I am only able to see because I am part of the visible and can be seen: “my body sees only because it is a part of the visible in which it opens forth” (VI 153-4). My activity of seeing is at the same time a passivity of being seen. This intertwining of activity and passivity reveals the secret of “narcissism”. Seeing is essentially narcissistic: “since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision” (VI 139). Immersed in the visible, the see-er is also seen: by himself in the mirror, by the gaze of the other, and by the things surrounding him. However, it is not sufficient to be visible, one must become visible for oneself. This is the essential function of the gaze of the other but also of the surface of things around me: they act like a mirror, which reflects my image and thereby makes me complete and visible to myself. The quasi-vision that arises within things adds to my picture that what things could see of myself, thereby creating a theatre of visibility, a “total or absolute vision” (EM 130). According to Merleau-Ponty, there is

a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, which belongs properly neither to the body qua fact nor to the world qua fact—as upon two mirrors facing one another where two indefinite series of images set in one another arise which belong really to neither of the two surfaces, since each is only the rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them. (VI 139)

The dehiscence between my touching hand and the hand being touched, between myself and the mirror image, between myself and the other, between myself and things is an essential ontological feature. However, it does not divide what exists into separate worlds (those of the subjective and the objective, of being and appearance), but rather creates a common world of simulacra, a visibility in itself or “specular being”. This is what Merleau-Ponty calls “flesh”. He emphasizes that it is not an anthropological term, but rather a metaphysical or ontological category of an “element” or “*general thing*” (VI 139) prior to the differentiation into subjects and objects.

When we speak of the flesh of the visible, we do not mean to do anthropology ... Rather, we mean that carnal being, as a being of depths, of several leaves and several faces, a being in latency, and a presentation of a certain absence, is a prototype of Being, of which our body, the sensible sentient, is a very remarkable variant, but whose constitutive paradox already lies in every visible. (VI 136)

His interest in art, especially in painting, is what carries Merleau-Ponty all the way from a Husserlian phenomenology of the body to an ontology of the flesh of the visible. Through art he attempts to understand the magic of seeing, which connects seeing and being seen in a carnal relation of reversibility. The essential structure of the flesh is reversibility, a “chiasm” of seeing and being seen, a “promiscuity between the seeing and the seen” (EM 132).

3. MERLEAU-PONTY AND ART

“Every theory of painting is a metaphysics” (EM 132), says Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind*. Referring to modern painting, to Cézanne, Klee and others, he sketches his own philosophy of vision, of the visible and the invisible, that is, his ontology of the flesh. “Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible—painting scrambles all our categories, spreading before us its oneiric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings” (EM 130).

According to Merleau-Ponty, the painter surrenders his body to the world, and by doing this he transforms the world into a painting, into “a ‘visible’ to the second power, a carnal essence or icon of the first” (EM 126). We need to understand the way in which these metamorphoses or “transubstantiations” (124) occur.

The central fact is our openness onto the world, of which our body is a part. The metamorphosis happens in our body, insofar as the visibility of the world is duplicated by “a secret visibility” (EM 125). Things evoke an “echo” (125) in our bodies, “a carnal formula of their presence” (126), which is an “internal equivalent” to their public appearance. For instance, the vibration and rhythm of colours awaken a resonance in our bodies. There is

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

an internal affinity, a relation of “sympathy”: Our bodies admit that the vibrations of the sensible pass into him and prolong themselves into a rhythm of existence. The painter, says Paul Valéry, “takes his body with him” (123). Madame Cézanne describes how her husband could completely immerse himself into the spectacle of a landscape: “He would halt and look at everything with widened eyes, ‘germinating’ with the countryside.”²¹ “‘The landscape thinks itself within me’, he would say, ‘and I am its consciousness’.”²² Cézanne’s words recall Arthur Rimbaud’s famous formula “I is an Other”, in which he expresses the experience of being formed by thought rather than being the originator. Capitalizing on this affinity, Max Ernst remarks: “Just as the role of the poet since [Rimbaud’s] famous *Lettre du voyant* consists in writing under the dictation of what is being thought, of what articulates itself in him, the painter’s role is to circumscribe and project what is making itself seen within himself.”²³

The visible world, which makes itself seen, takes over the painter’s eyes and his body. It is as if a fire were lit on the ground of the sensible world, as if the spark of the sensible had seized the body of the painter. The gesture of his arm and his hand, the movements of the brush respond to this ignition and leave some tracing on the canvas, which blend with the spectacle of the visible again. In this way, Paul Klee described the crossover of the seeing and the seen: “A certain fire wills to live; it wakes. Working its way along the hand’s conductor, it reaches the canvas and invades it; then, a leaping spark, it arcs the gap in the circle it was to trace: the return to the eye, and beyond.”²⁴

The world of the sensible, the body of the painter and the work of art merge into a “circuit”, which has no break and of which it is “impossible to say that here nature ends and the human being or expression begins. It is, then, silent Being that itself comes to show forth its own meaning” (EM 147). Merleau-Ponty also speaks of a “coming-to-itself of the visible” (141).

However, this “coming-to-itself of the visible” should not be understood as a blind process that unfolds with its own internal dynamics throughout all phases of history and nature. The painter is not simply a tool, a passive medium, he actively takes part in this metamorphosis of being into vision. He renders visible what profane vision believes to be invisible. As Merleau-Ponty declares: “This voracious vision, reaching beyond the ‘visual givens’, opens upon a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesura” (EM 127). Different from ordinary vision, the vision of the painter, which is learned by exercise, gives visible existence to fleeting phenomena such as light reflexes, varying shades, the radiation of colours, the veil of morning mist and the fuzziness of the horizon. He is able to give clouds a heavy and sculptural or light and airy appearance, he conveys the soft gleaming of silk, he bestows eyes with a glance. The painter captures the becoming of things, their becoming visible. According to Merleau-Ponty, he breaks “the ‘skin of things’ to show how the things become things, how the world becomes world” (141).²⁵ In his famous still life paintings, Cézanne shows how things become visible to our spontaneous and wandering gaze: The surface of the table stretches into a two-dimensional plane and is pulled down to the lower part of the painting. It presents itself to a searching gaze, which changes its visual angle constantly and causes a large table surface to warp. The distortion also becomes manifest in the white and bluish plates that are elongated to ellipses, while the two ends of the ellipses are swollen and expanded. The ellipses are never ellipses but forms that oscillate around the mathematical ellipse. Cézanne knew that “that shell of space must be shattered—the fruit bowl must be broken” (140), in order to capture the things in their genesis, “as if they had come from a pre-spatial world behind the scenes” (143). The external form of things, their “envelope” or “shell”, is only “secondary and derived” (140). The contour of the apple is not outlined by a continuous line—an exact and closed line would make the contour a positive “thing”, yet it “is rather the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede in depth”.²⁶ Cézanne’s problem was: not to lose the depth and solidity of things, while remaining faithful to the sensuous surface of reality. “Not to indicate any shape would be to deprive the objects of their identity. To trace just a single outline sacrifices depth—that is, the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as an inexhaustible reality full of reserves.”²⁷

Cézanne's solution was to modulate the colours towards the edges and to generate the contour out of multiple blue lines. He showed a contour in *statu nascendi*, that is he sought to convey the "impression of an emerging order, an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes".²⁸ He tried to capture things by means of a multiplicity of lines and colours. As the impressionists already knew, in order to represent the colour of objects, it is not sufficient to put "on the canvas their local tone, that is, the colour they take on isolated from their surroundings".²⁹ The painter has to consider the atmospheric conditions (the lighting, shadows and reflections), the phenomena of contrast and the reciprocally heightening effect of complementary colours—all of these effects modify local colours in nature. However, Cézanne did not stop here. For him, colour not only describes the instantaneous and sensuous surface of things but also crystallizes their Being, that is the solidity and material substance of things. In other words, colour implies the form and depth of things, their materiality, their texture, their odour, the sound they make if you tap on their surface. As Merleau-Ponty says, colour is more than a property of the thing, a "*certain being*" (VI 218); it is "*a dimension, the expression of every possible being*" (218). "Thus we must seek space and its content *together*. The problem [of depth] becomes generalized; it is no longer solely that of distance, line, and form; it is also, and equally, the problem of colour" (140f.).

With the example of Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty shows that, more than anything else, modern painting seeks to sever its "adherence to the envelope of things" (EM 142). It undertook a new approach to the use of line and colour. Colour is no longer a positive attribute of things, just as the line is no visible line of the figure. This does not mean that the line would be dispelled from painting altogether; rather, it was liberated from the conception of the line as an exact contour encircling the object.

It is simply a matter of freeing the line, of revivifying its constituting power; and we are not faced with a contradiction when we see it reappear and triumph in painters like Klee or Matisse, who more than anyone believed in colour. For henceforth, as Klee said, the line no longer imitates the visible; it "renders visible"; it is the blueprint of a genesis of things. Perhaps no one before Klee had "let a line muse". (EM 143)

The use of lines in modern painting has a constituting effect: lines let things arise. Thus a painter gives a vivid expression to a person moving in space, for instance a dancer, by capturing several impossible moments of movement at once. His painting works differently from photography, which simply isolates and fixes a single instant. A single instant is a photographic absurdity, a mathematical artifice: things do not move in an instant. In order to give visible expression to a dancer, to let him arise on the canvas, the painter needs to capture the impossibles, that is, to render the invisible visible. Lines are no determinable, physical-optical things, but axes of movement, lines of force, structural filaments (*des nervures*), folds or vectors.

For Merleau-Ponty, modern painting visualizes the depth of things and their becoming. It is therefore equivalent to a philosophy of the visible and the invisible, which abandons the ideology of identifiable things, that is, "the *skin* of things, but giving their *flesh*" (VI 218).

4. CONCLUSION: DELEUZE AND MERLEAU-PONTY

It is tempting to equate Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh "as a being of depths, of several leaves and several faces" (VI 136) with Deleuze's plane of immanence, which he describes as "interleaved"³⁰: it has multiple dimensions, different layers and folds. Both thinkers characterize this milieu of being as endowed with a genetic potential, as a field of pre-quantitative and pre-qualitative processes, a field of individuation, and as the genetic condition of experience and thought. However, we want to point to some decisive differences in their thought and way of thinking. Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh remains on the surface of sense-experience, in particular that of vision. Deleuze would utterly reject Merleau-Ponty's terminology of reversibility, of doubling, of mirror-image and of narcissism. It is a theatre of images, of visibility and tangibility, of simulacra, while Deleuze favours an ontology of forces, of intensity, of affectivity and of becoming. Deleuze's ontology seeks to capture

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

real processes, intensive movements “in-place”, the connecting, coupling and disjunction of forces, which are essentially a-subjective. In fact, Deleuze describes those forces and intensities as too “strong” for any individual to bear. Those terrible movements are almost unlivable and “can only be sustained under the condition of a larval subject”.³¹ Comparing Deleuze’s philosophy of genesis or becoming with Merleau-Ponty’s, it is obvious that the notion of flesh of the latter is indeed too “tender”. The flesh is a very reconciliatory notion according to which the sentient being is embedded within an indivisible whole, an unsurpassable specular being, a visibility and tangible in itself. Merleau-Ponty challenges the traditional dichotomies such as that of the soul and the body, the subject and the object, or the world and its beyond. The notion of flesh entails no promise of a transcendent world (like the promise of the Christian notion of flesh, that is Jesus’ sacrifice through which we gain access to a transcendent world), Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh constitutes a plane of immanence, which is already there (*il y a*) and of which we are all part. By contrast, Deleuze’s plane of immanence has a utopian character: it has to be created, be it in art, in philosophy or in politics. Equally, the “universal meat” cannot be taken for granted. Deleuze’s notion of meat is supposed to act as a weapon of resistance against the multiple sufferings and the intolerable of the present. It is supposed to draw individuals and groups into a movement of becoming (becoming-animal), to establish new alliances (man and animal) and induce new processes of subjectification (the result of which cannot be foreseen). The “universal meat” is, like Deleuze’s conjuration of a new earth and a new people, a utopian aim, a micro-political agenda, and therefore differs radically from Merleau-Ponty’s mystical and contemplative notion of flesh. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy involves the danger of a good will that reconciles Being, experience and thought on a surface of the visible and the invisible, with the ontology of the flesh. Deleuze, on the contrary, follows Nietzsche in calling for a philosopher of “bad will”, who is suspicious against bourgeois life and values, and for a philosophy the use of which is “to *sadden*”: “A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not a philosophy.”³² Deleuze’s thinking favours difference, the disparate, “disjunctive syntheses”, the coexistence of “impossibilities”. The dimension of utopia in his thought certainly is a *u-topos*, a place that cannot *be*, at most, it can *become*. It is a critique of the world as it *is*, a critique of the present. Philosophy has to be “untimely”, to say it with a Nietzschean term,³³ and act against the reactive forces of the present world, which are a hindrance to life and its excessive, intensive and indeterminate power of becoming. As Deleuze says, “it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point.”³⁴ There is no comfort or consolation in his words, but only a call to think, “to follow the witch’s flight”,³⁵ to transgress the boundaries of the subjective and to act under the violent constraint of virtual Ideas.

DANIELA VOSS works in Berlin as a freelance copy-editor, specialising in the social sciences and humanities.

NOTES

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 110.
2. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. London: Continuum, 2004, 61. Henceforth this edition will be referred to as *FB* within the text.
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 143. Henceforth this edition will be referred to as *DR* within the text.
4. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 179.
5. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. London, New York: Verso, 1998, 4.
6. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 4.
7. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 4.
8. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 4.
9. In their late work *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari state that “utopia is not a good concept because even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an ideal or motivation” (110). The concept of utopia carries a historical or temporal taste with it: it relates to something that ought to occur in future, which is still part of our history. In this sense, utopian thinking conjures a vision or projects an ideal into the future that should motivate us to act and to create the conditions of possibility. For Deleuze and Guattari by contrast, genuine utopia operates by virtual Ideas that elicit processes of becoming in the intensive, indeterminate and impersonal sphere of life. When we continue to use the concept of utopia in want of a better term, we use it in this latter sense suggested by Deleuze and Guattari. Cf. also Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 112.
10. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1.
11. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 3.
12. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Athlone Press, 1983, 64.
13. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 178.
14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind” in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Ed. Galen A. Johnson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993, 127. Henceforth this edition will be referred to as *EM* within the text.
15. René Descartes, “Dioptrique” *Oeuvres. Discours de la méthode & Essais*, vol. VI. Eds. Adam and Tannery. Paris: 1973, 84 (my translation, D.V.).
16. Cf. Descartes, “Dioptrique”, 113-14 [in English, Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. and ed. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: The Modern Library, 147: “For just as when the blind man, of whom we have spoken above, touches this and that body with his staff, it is certain that these bodies do not transmit anything to him save only this, that in making his staff move diversely according to the diverse qualities that are in them, they thereby move the nerves of his hand, and in sequence thereupon the points in his brain from which those nerves come. This gives occasion to his soul to sense as many different qualities in these bodies as there are varieties in the movements which are caused by them in his brain.”].
17. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968, 208. Henceforth this edition will be referred to as *VI* within the text.
18. Cf. Descartes, “Dioptrique”, 112-14 [in English, Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 146-7: “Thus, in the case of engravings, made up of a little ink disposed here and there on the paper, we see how they represent forests, towns, men and even battles and tempests, while yet of the infinity of diverse qualities which they make us conceive in these objects, the only one of these qualities to which they bear any proper resemblance is the quality of shape; and even this is a very imperfect resemblance, since it is on a completely flat surface that they represent bodies diverse in height and distance, and further that in accordance with the rules of perspective they often represent circles better by ovals than by other circles, and squares by four-sided figures which are not squares, and similarly in the case of all other shapes.”].
19. Descartes, “Dioptrique”, 113 [in English, Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 147].
20. Descartes, “Dioptrique”, 112 [in English, Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 146].
21. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt” in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Ed. Galen A. Johnson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993, 67.
22. Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, 67.
23. Georges Charbonnier, *Le monologue du peintre*. Paris: R. Julliard, 1959, 34. Cited in Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, 128-9.
24. Cited in Will Grohmann, *Paul Klee*. Paris: Librairie Flinker, 1954 [New York 1956], 99. We take this quotation from Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, 147.
25. Merleau-Ponty refers here to Henri Michaux, *Aventures de lignes*. Paris: Librairie Flinker, 1954.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS OF MEAT AND FLESH

26. Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, 65.
27. Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, 65.
28. Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, 65.
29. Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, 62.
30. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 50.
31. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 118, see also 215.
32. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 106.
33. As Nietzsche puts it, untimely thought means “acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come”, cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 60. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 112, where they cite Nietzsche and explain the utopian future as “the Intensive or Untimely, not an instant but a becoming”.
34. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 99.
35. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 41.

“THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE”: INTERPRETING §9 OF KANT’S *CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT*¹

Daniel Wilson

Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former.

*The solution of this problem is the key to critique of taste, and hence worthy of full attention.*²

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

In this paper I aim to defend a consistent interpretation of §9 of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this section, Kant describes the relation between pleasure in the beautiful and the judgment of taste. I present my case in three parts. In the first section, I provide some background to Kant’s aesthetic theory and introduce the interpretative issue that is central to this paper. In part two, I defend the “sensation-precedes-pleasure” interpretation of §9 that explicates Kant’s claim that the judging of the object precedes the pleasure proper in a judgment of taste. In the third part, I show how the interpretation I proffer can be employed in justifying Kant’s further claim that pleasure in the judgment of taste is experienced as an ennobled and elevated pleasure.

THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE IN THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE

A reflective judgment, according to Kant, is the process of trying to locate a given particular object under some universal that is not given.³ According to Kant, aesthetic reflective judgments, in contrast to reflective judgments grounded on concepts, are determined by reference only to subjective grounds, for example, by reference to feelings in the subject. As aesthetic judgments in general are based on subjective feeling, they do not typically involve the further requirement that others should assent to that judgment.⁴ Judgments of the pleasure of sense sensation (i.e., taste, touch, sight, smell, hearing), which Kant calls pleasure in the agreeable, are aesthetic judgments that do not demand the assent of other judges. But Kant argues in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that one species of aesthetic judgments, named judgments of pure beauty or judgments of taste, qualify as aesthetic by having a subjective determining ground, but also have a universal validity that requires the assent

'THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE'

of everyone.⁵ When we assert that something is beautiful, we claim that everyone else, if judging correctly, ought to judge that object to be beautiful.

The subjective basis for judgments of taste is the conscious recognition of feeling a certain mental state caused as an effect of the beautiful object on the cognitive faculties. Kant describes the relevant mental state as the free play of the imagination and the understanding. As everyone's cognitive faculties are constituted according to the same principles, Kant argues that he is justified in claiming the universal validity of judgments based on sensation of this effect, just so long as we have excluded all sources of preference particular to the individual judge. He describes the free play of the cognitive faculties as follows:

The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation [of a beautiful object] are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular cognition. Thus the state of mind in this representation [that is, the mental representation of the beautiful object] must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general. Now there belongs to a representation by which an object is given, in order for there to be a cognition of it in general, imagination for the composition of the manifold of intuition and understanding for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations.⁶

Kant describes the relation between judgments of beauty and the pleasure involved with them in §9 of the third *Critique*. This section is important enough for Kant to label it as "the key to the critique of taste."⁷ Unfortunately, there is a current lack of consensus regarding the correct way to interpret Kant's following statement from §9.3.1: "Thus it is the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must serve as its ground and have the pleasure in the object as a consequence."⁸

Kant's claim generates the following interpretative issue that must be resolved: If the determining ground of a judgment of pure beauty is a feeling of pleasure then there is apparent circularity in the claim that the same pleasure is a consequence of such a ground.⁹

Before presenting my interpretation, I will briefly review a number of interpretations of §9 in order to highlight concerns regarding these accounts.

Paul Guyer claims that in Kant's theory the pleasure in a judgment of taste is caused by the harmonious free play of the faculties of the imagination and the understanding. He says "simple reflection or estimation of an object produces the harmony of imagination and understanding, thereby producing pleasure."¹⁰ Guyer acknowledges Kant's explicit claim that it is the universal communicability of the mental state that is fundamental and that the pleasure of the judgment of taste is a consequence¹¹ but he insists that references to the theory of pleasure due to the universal communicability of a mental state "must be rejected, for they imply a theory of aesthetic response which is different from that to which everything else in the third *Critique* points."¹²

Guyer offers two hypotheses to explain what he takes to be a confused passage. First, that Kant was not clear about his own theory.¹³ This first hypothesis, which Guyer calls the historical explanation, is that the theory of pleasure derived from the universal communicability of the mental state may be a hangover from one of Kant's earlier anthropological views on the beautiful. In earlier writings, Kant developed a theory of the beautiful that "took the fact of the communicability of a 'perfection' to be the cause of pleasure."¹⁴ Guyer argues that, since Kant held this theory for so long, it may have still influenced his thoughts on the beautiful and so became manifest in the problematic passage §9.3.1. Guyer notes that this view is supported by Kant's continued insistence in the third *Critique* that judgments of beauty are not compatible with social isolation. But Guyer's first hypothesis seems quite unlikely. The suggestion that such oversights by Kant survived multiple editions of the text in a section that he considers important enough to describe as "the key to the critique of taste, and hence worthy of full attention" seems implausible.¹⁵

Guyer's second hypothesis is that Kant conflates two different acts of reflection: one usage of reflection being "the source of pleasure" and the second usage of reflection being "the condition of the judgment of taste."¹⁶ Guyer conjectures that in order to interpret §9 a distinction should be made between "simple reflection" (which, he says, relates to the "estimation of an object" in §9) and "reflective judgment" (which is responsible for the "judgment of taste"). He suggests that this distinction is indicated by Kant in the first Introduction to the third *Critique*. Guyer argues that when Kant asks whether the pleasure in a judgment of taste comes before or after the judging he is referring to simple reflection. As the act of simple reflection causes the pleasure, this pleasure must come afterwards. There is then the act of reflective judgment on that pleasure which results in the judgment of its being universally communicable. Kant's theory of judgments of taste therefore only looks contradictory because he shifts between two different kinds of reflection in the same section:

Kant does not use these distinctions consistently. Perhaps this fact reflects an inadequate understanding of the difference between the two aspects of reflection which his theory entails. If this is so, then the confusions of §9 might be explained as due to Kant's failure to differentiate clearly between reflection as leading to pleasure, to which the fact of communicability is irrelevant, and reflection on pleasure as leading to the judgment of taste, to which the communicability of the first form of reflection is relevant indeed.¹⁷

The plausibility of this second hypothesis depends on the likelihood that Kant was not aware that he was confusing two distinct kinds of reflection. The claim that Kant had an inadequate understanding of the difference between two different sorts of reflection seems to me to be unlikely, in part for the same reason for doubting Guyer's first hypothesis. Further, Guyer introduces distinctions that are not explicitly recognised within Kant's theoretical framework. And, given that Kant viewed his three critiques as forming a coherent philosophical system, a consistent reading of the text that employs distinctions that are justified by explicit references in the text should be preferred. Hannah Ginsborg also objects that Guyer's theory of pleasure relies on Kant's statements that pleasure accompanies the achievement of every aim but that Kant states repeatedly that the harmonious play of the cognitive faculties has no aim. Ginsborg also notes that the second act of reflection, on Guyer's account, requires reflection on the causal origin of the first act.¹⁸ If this causal reflection requires concepts then this goes against Kant's explicit claims that judgments of taste are in no way grounded on concepts.¹⁹

Henry Allison offers an alternative interpretation of §9.3.1. He claims that the passage is unclear because Kant has attempted to express the following two distinct claims in one sentence:

1. that the (subjective) universality of the liking affirmed in a judgment of beauty must be based on the universal communicability of the mental state; and
2. that the latter derives its universal communicability from its connection with a universally communicable act of judging or reflection, which, in turn, explains why this judging must (logically) precede the pleasure.²⁰

In order to resolve the problem, Allison proposes to resolve the interpretative issue by rewording the problem sentence from "it must be the universal communicability of the mental state, in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence" to "it must be *a universally communicable* mental state, in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence."²¹ This interpretation, says Allison, both allows for the possibility of negative judgments of taste and provides a smooth fit with the rest of the section.

I agree that Allison's revised sentence does not conflict with what Kant says in the remainder of the paragraph because there is certainly a universally communicable mental state that is a constituent part of a judgment of taste. But it does raise a question regarding the unity of §9. Allison's textual revision leaves unexplained

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

Kant’s motivation for considering in §9.7 the adequacy of empirical demonstration of pleasure in the ability to communicate one’s state of mind. Kant clearly takes this sort of pleasure to be empirically and psychologically demonstrable, but argues that this is not enough to justify the pleasure as a necessary satisfaction. In order to achieve this, such a pleasure needs to be demonstrated as being possible *a priori*. It is not the pleasure of universal communicability that is being denied by Kant in §9.7, but the use of empirical and psychological demonstrations in justifying a necessary satisfaction. And again, Allison’s reworking of the text commits Kant to having made a careless communicative error in this important section. If it is possible to interpret the third paragraph without having to revise Kant’s text then this should surely be the preferred option.

Hannah Ginsborg argues that a single act of judgment is responsible for both the pleasure and the claim that the pleasure is universally valid. She defends Kant’s claim in §9.3.1 that pleasure in the judgment of taste is the result of the universal communicability of the mental state. Ginsborg also claims to interpret Kant in a way that is not viciously circular. She argues that a judgment of taste is self-referential and “claims nothing but its own universal validity.”²² This is described as follows:

I take my mental state in perceiving an object to be universally communicable, where my mental state is nothing other than the mental state of performing that very act of judgment, that is, of taking my mental state in the object to be universally communicable. And in addition, let us suppose that, in performing this act of judgment, I am not explicitly aware of its self-referential structure, but that my act of judgment is instead manifest to consciousness through a certain experience of pleasure. In other words, the act of self-referentially taking my mental state to be universally communicable with respect to a given object consists, phenomenologically, in a feeling of pleasure in that object.²³

Moreover, I suggest, this self-referential act of judging is the same activity which Kant describes as the free and harmonious play of imagination and understanding.²⁴

Ginsborg notes that one consequence of her interpretation is that “any object is equally suitable as a candidate for such a judgment [of taste], since the judgment does not say anything about the object which might turn out to be false.”²⁵ But if we can provide an interpretation consistent with Kant’s text that explains what is distinctive about an object judged as beautiful then this would provide an explanatory advantage over Ginsborg’s account. In the next section I will offer an interpretation that has this advantage. It differs from Ginsborg by maintaining Kant’s distinction between the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties and the judgment of the universal validity of a mental state in a judgment of taste. I argue that a *sensation* brings the mental state in the given representation to our conscious awareness and that Kant identifies this sensation as distinct from the feeling of *pleasure* in a judgment of taste.

THE “SENSATION-PRECEDES-PLEASURE” INTERPRETATION

In this section I suggest that we can make sense of §9.3.1 if we see §9 in its totality as a description of how we can proceed to judge that an object is beautiful in the course of successive stages of subjective experience. In this section of the paper I describe a single act of judging through a series of stages each of which indicate consciousness of different relations and states of affairs, up to the instant where we are conscious that an object is beautiful. At that instant we have all of the components necessary for consciousness of pleasure in the beautiful, on Kant’s definition of pleasure, and this distinctive pleasure temporally follows that instant.

I divide exposition of the judgment of taste into four temporal stages. The first stage is that of the *disinterested reflective perception* of an object. Kant distinguishes a judgment of taste from other aesthetic judgments as being disinterested, by which he means that such judgments are not in any way connected with desire for the existence of the object. In judgments of taste, “one only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me.”²⁶ Desiring the object for the pleasure it brings to the senses needs to be excluded from consideration in a judgment of taste because such desire causes a satisfaction that is

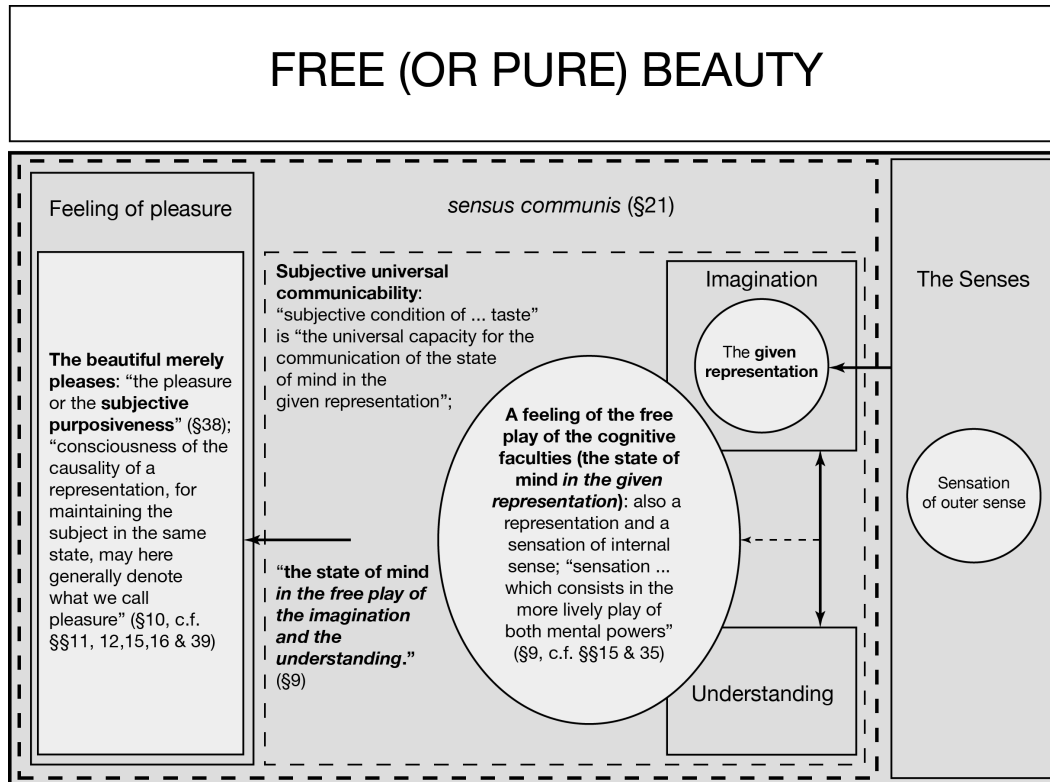


Diagram 1

not guaranteed to apply to all judges. Disinterestedness brackets out all desires related to our personal circumstances that could affect the way we feel toward the object we are judging.

In apprehending the beautiful object, desire for its goodness should be excluded from consideration as judgments of the good are based on concepts, with reference to some determinate end or purpose, and so are not aesthetic.²⁷ External sense perceptions, such as the sensing of colour, may vary from person to person and so they too are not suitable data for a universally valid judgment.

The points to note at this stage are, first, that we form a mental representation of the object in a disinterested manner in order to remove any conditions that are specific to an individual. Additionally, we also bracket out any concept of the purpose of the object to retain the subjective basis required for an aesthetic judgment.

The second stage in a judgment of taste is that of “a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition with each other.”²⁸ Kant also refers to this in §9.3.1 as the “state of mind in the given representation.” If the given representation is of a beautiful object then it will excite the faculties of the imagination and the understanding in the act of a disinterested reflective judgment to a mutual correspondence with each other. This activity, which was described in the introductory section of this paper, Kant calls the free play of the faculties of cognition.²⁹ Kant explains that we become conscious of the free play through sensation of that activity. In §9.9 he explains that “no other consciousness of it [that is, of the free play of the cognitive faculties] is possible except through sensation of the effect that consists in the facilitated play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened through mutual agreement.”³⁰ This sensation is constituted by awareness of

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

the animation of the imagination and the understanding,³¹ a feeling of inner sense,³² which Kant also describes as the subject’s “feeling of life.”³³

The third stage of the judgment of taste is awareness of the “subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste” which Kant calls the “state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding.”³⁴ This stage is important because it is the point at which the judge becomes consciously aware that they are in a state of mind that can be thought as the basis for a universally valid judgment.

Let us take stock of what we are currently conscious of. First, we are aware that we have the given representation of an object in our imagination. Second, we have intentionally excluded all sources of individual variation from our judgment through an act of disinterestedness. And third, we are aware that when we reflect on the object under these conditions we can sense an associated effect on our cognitive faculties. But consciousness of this free play of the cognitive powers, given the background presupposition that the cognitive faculties of humankind in general are each constituted according to the same principles, means that we are further justified in claiming that these conditions of judging the object ought to result in the same response in everyone.³⁵ So, in sensing the free play of the cognitive faculties, we are consequently conscious of “the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation.”³⁶ We are conscious of the universal communicability of the sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties as caused by a mental representation of the form of a beautiful object because, Kant says, “we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition.”³⁷ If this is true then we have found a ground for claiming universal validity in judgments of taste.³⁸

The universal validity of the free play of the cognitive faculties explains Kant’s usage of certain terms throughout §9. We should note that Kant refers to the *feeling* of the free play of the cognitive faculties, as well as the *sensation* of it. The significance of Kant’s use of the term “sensation” (*Empfindung*) of the free play indicates that it is a state that is an *objective* representation of the senses.³⁹ This is contrasted with his use of the term “feeling” (*Gefühl*) which, he says, at least for representations of external sense sensation, must always remain merely subjective. Sensation of the free play is not a sensation of the outer senses, however, but is instead a sensation of inner sense.⁴⁰ (Another example of inner sense sensation is the experience of time passing.) Sensation of the free play can be regarded as objective because it is a representation that belongs to cognition.⁴¹ Regarding the sensation of the free play, Kant says “Of course, an objective relation can only be thought, but insofar as it is subjective as far as its conditions are concerned it can still be sensed in its effect on the mind.”⁴² So, the free play of the cognitive faculties is brought to our awareness by a subjective feeling of the kind that has grounds for universal communicability.

The fourth stage is the pleasure proper in a judgment of taste, or *subjective purposiveness*.⁴³ In §9.7, Kant states that we need to explain how aesthetic judgments *a priori* are possible, before we can explain the demand made by a judgment of taste that everyone ought to feel pleasure in a beautiful object. This is explained in passages after §9, but I will provide an overview here for completeness and in order to distinguish differences between the “sensation-precedes-pleasure” interpretation and other putative interpretations.

Some interpretative strategies that advocate for a consistent reading of §9 identify pleasure in the beautiful either with the free play of the cognitive faculties or with consciousness thereof.⁴⁴ Robert Wicks, for example, claims that the sensation of a high degree of harmony in the free play of the cognitive powers is the same as pleasure, or satisfaction, in the beautiful. He says “one could say that the satisfaction related to pure beauty is the manifestation of the harmony of the cognitive faculties at a certain level of intensity, rather than the effect of it.”⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Donald Crawford construes the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful as consciousness of the harmony of the cognitive faculties.⁴⁶ I will argue against these positions by showing that, given Kant’s definition of pleasure, Kant identifies the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful as distinct both from the sensation of the free play of the cognitive powers and from mere consciousness of this sensation.

In the sections that directly follow §9, Kant introduces the principle of purposiveness. According to Kant, concepts of things also have ends or purposes associated with them. Kant claims that the very possibility of an object can only be explained and conceived of by reference to some end, even when no such end exists.⁴⁷ Further, Kant defines a principle of purposiveness as “the causality of a concept with regard to its object.”⁴⁸ We view objects as purposive, as being designed for some end, and the purposiveness of an object, the designedness of an object, is posited even in the absence of a determinate end. The principle of purposiveness is the special principle of reflective judgment that guides us to expect a purpose for an object in order for us to form a sound understanding of whatever object we are judging.⁴⁹

Kant uses the term “pleasure” in an idiosyncratic and technical sense. He defines pleasure as follows: “The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, *for maintaining* the subject in the same state, may here generally denote what we call pleasure.”⁵⁰ We should note that this is quite similar in form to Kant’s definition of purposiveness with the modification that pleasure in the beautiful involves purposiveness without a definite purpose (i.e., no concept of an end is employed in a judgment of taste). In the context of beauty, the representation referred to in Kant’s definition of pleasure is that of the beautiful object. The state of the subject is that of the state of mind in the free play of cognitive faculties. By substitution into Kant’s definition of pleasure, pleasure in the beautiful is consciousness that the representation of the beautiful object is responsible for maintaining the subject in the state of mind in the free play of the cognitive faculties. (This latter state of mind needs only to be consciously sensed and not explicitly conceptualised.) The object that we call beautiful is suited to engaging our cognitive faculties in a state of free play, a state that causes a conscious sensation in us, even though we know that this is not the purpose of such an object. In the case of a judgment of taste, Kant also calls the consciousness of this causality “subjective purposiveness” and describes this as synonymous with pleasure in the object.⁵¹ Subjective purposiveness is consciousness of what Kant calls the form of purposiveness in the given representation.⁵² Further, Kant says that we linger on the beautiful object because “this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself.”⁵³

Now, if we consider Kant’s definition of pleasure again, it can be seen that conscious experience of a universally valid pleasure requires recognition of the universal communicability of the sensed state of mind (i.e., the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding). This is because the subject needs to be conscious of sensing the relevant state of mind *before* she can be conscious that a representation of a given object is the cause of maintaining her in that state. This is consistent with and explains why Kant says in §9.3.1 that experience of the pleasure in a judgment of taste is a consequence of subjective universal communicability of the free play of the cognitive faculties.⁵⁴

The principle of purposiveness makes us aware that the form of the beautiful object is suited to maintaining the sensed state of mind that Kant explains by reference to the free play of our cognitive faculties. And this cognitive activity constitutes the feeling of curiosity and exploration of the object, of lingering for its own sake.

The interpretation of pleasure that I am advocating differs from that of Beatrice Longuenesse, who identifies two sources of pleasure. She says

The agreement of imagination and understanding, unbound by a determinate concept, is a free play where each enhances the activity of the other. The consciousness of that agreement is a source of pleasure, and the consciousness of the universal communicability of the free play and of the pleasure derived from it is *itself* a source of pleasure.⁵⁵

Longuenesse justifies her claim that the free play of the cognitive faculties is a pleasure by identifying the sensation of satisfaction in a judgment of taste with a “feeling of life” in the subject.⁵⁶ She presents the following quote by Kant in support of her claim:

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one’s faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.⁵⁷

Contra Longuenesse’s interpretation of this passage, if we consider Kant’s definition of pleasure as “consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, *for maintaining* the subject in the same state” then it seems quite clear that the “name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure” in the quotation above applies to consciousness of the *relation* between the given representation of a beautiful object and its effect on the subject (their “feeling of life”). This interpretation is still consistent with Kant’s description of aesthetic judgments as “being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction.” Moreover, Kant does not mention a plurality of pleasures involved in a judgment of taste and so this interpretation is also consistent with a natural reading of Kant’s text. Finally, in discussing the difference between *the* pleasure in the beautiful and that of the sublime, Kant says that pleasure in the beautiful “directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life.”⁵⁸ This quote supports the idea that the “feeling of life” is a constituent part of feeling pleasure in the beautiful instead of being identical with it.

The “sensation-precedes-pleasure” interpretation is also distinct from future-directed interpretations of pleasure as proposed and endorsed by Rachel Zuckert and Ian P. D. Morrisson. Zuckert argues that a consequence of Kant’s definition of pleasure is that “all pleasures... have ‘motivational’ power” and so “are (in some sense) future-directed.”⁵⁹ Consequently, her gloss on Kant’s definition is that pleasure is “the desire to maintain the same state.”⁶⁰ Similarly, Morrisson considers desire to be a constitutive part of pleasure when he states that “desires are the vehicle for a causality that tends to maintain a particular state of mind.”⁶¹ The faculty of desire, according to Kant, is “the faculty for being through one’s representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations.”⁶² But Kant distinguishes pleasure in judgments of taste from satisfactions that are combined with representations of the existence of an object (which Kant calls interest). The title of §2 is “the satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste is without any interest”⁶³ and the definition derived from the first moment is quite explicit when it states that “Taste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest.”⁶⁴ It may be responded that Kant is only considering an interest in the existence or non-existence of the beautiful object in these quotes, while the interpretations under consideration are instead concerned with a necessarily connected desire in the continued existence of a mental state. Such an objection would have difficulty being squared with Kant’s comments on beauty as the symbol of the morally good, however. Here Kant says that the beautiful “pleases without any interest (the morally good is of course necessarily connected with an interest, but not one that precedes the judgment on the satisfaction, but rather with one that is thereby first produced).”⁶⁵ While Kant provides the clarification that moral judgments are necessarily connected with an interest, he offers no similar statement regarding pleasure in the beautiful. My account, by comparison, involves conscious awareness of the suitability of a representation for maintaining a mental state that does not involve the faculty of desire. Thus pleasure in the beautiful, on my account, is present-oriented and not future-directed.

I have broken this exposition into four temporal stages (see Diagram 1 above): (1) disinterested reflective perception, (2) a feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties, (3) subjective universal communicability and (4) pleasure proper (or subjective purposiveness). But it should be recognised that the transition from stage one to stage four would be quite swift in practice. Consider a similar example of driving along a road and then experiencing the road dip sharply. We start to feel something like the pit of our stomachs rising up inside of us. Consciousness of the cause of this feeling is more or less instantaneous. And, I claim, the same is true of recognising the connection between the representation of a beautiful object and the universally communicable feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties, once we have consciously excluded all other sources of plea-

surable feeling.

I will finish this section with two points of clarification regarding the apparent paradox that we started with in §9.3.1. First, I should note here that it is entirely possible that the judge was already experiencing some sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties prior to her attempt at disinterestedness. In such a case, the feeling of the free play would have been conflated with any applicable pleasures due to sense sensations and desire for the object's existence that would make such a fused pleasure useless as the basis of a judgment of taste. Through the act of disinterested reflection, the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties is isolated from other merely subjective factors.

Second, recognition of a pure feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties is required for a universally valid judgment of taste. The judgement of taste is the determination that "the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me."⁶⁶ The experience of pleasure in pure beauty thus requires the conscious filtering of the felt subjective experience to eliminate any reference to any pleasurable influences that are particular only to the individual. Consequently, when we experience the pleasure of pure beauty we will be consciously aware that attending to the mere form of the object is the cause of maintaining us in a universally communicable mental state. Pleasure in the beautiful arises in the course of a judgment of taste, and is a consequence of that judging process.

The "sensation-precedes-pleasure" interpretation is consistent with Kant's description of taste as "the faculty for judging a priori the communicability of the feelings that are combined with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept)."⁶⁷

BEAUTY: AN ENNOBLED AND ELEVATED EXPERIENCE

In this final section I consider another important feature of the pleasure in a judgment of taste: an accompanying awareness of "a certain ennoblement and elevation."⁶⁸ If the previous section is correct, then pleasure in the judgment of taste is correctly regarded as a universally valid pleasure. I will explain how Kant then uses consciousness of this to explain the experience of a connection between pleasure in the beautiful and morality. These final addenda to the interpretation will show that this account is consistent with Kant's characterisation of the pleasure in a judgment of taste as that of both a *universally valid* and *ennobled* pleasure in the apprehension of a beautiful object.

Kant claims that in experiencing the beautiful in a judgment of taste we attempt to make our current state of mind intelligible. This process is accompanied by awareness of a connection of beauty to the supersensible. Kant explains it thus:

In this faculty the power of judgment ... sees itself, both on account of this inner possibility in the subject as well as on account of the outer possibility of a nature that corresponds to it, as related to something in the subject itself and outside of it, which is neither nature nor freedom, but which is connected with the ground of the latter, namely the supersensible, in which the theoretical faculty is combined with the practical, in a mutual and unknown way, to form a unity.⁶⁹

An experience of a connection to the supersensible coupled with awareness of certain similarities between judgments of taste and moral judgments makes the experience of a beautiful object amenable to consideration as, what Kant calls, a symbol of morality. A symbol is a kind of representation that indirectly presents a concept by means of analogy. Kant lists four relevant analogous aspects of judgments of pure beauty to moral judgments. These are, first, that it pleases *immediately*; second, that it pleases the subject without any personal *interest* in the existence of the object; third, that the judgment involves the *freedom* of the imagination in its determination; and fourth, that the subjective principle for judging of the beautiful is *universal*.⁷⁰ Of the analogy of the beautiful as a symbol of morality, Kant says that

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

only in this respect (that of a relation that is natural to everyone, and that is also expected of everyone else as a duty) does it please with a claim to the assent of everyone else, in which the mind is at the same time aware of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for a pleasure from sensible impressions, and also esteems the value of others in accordance with a similar maxim of their power of judgment.⁷¹

Kant is not saying that the analogy is a requirement for experiencing pleasure in the judgment of taste, but instead that such an analogy provides an explanation for the experience of the pleasure in objects of pure beauty as ennobled and elevated. In §42 Kant makes the claim that someone who has a habitual interest in the beautiful form of natural objects would exhibit “a disposition of the mind that is favourable to the moral feeling.”⁷² This, presumably, is because the characteristics that make pleasure in the beautiful significant to this sort of person above other pleasures are those features that make it such a suitable symbol of morality. Kant also suggests that this analogy is supported by the common use of certain predicates of beautiful objects, examples of which include majestic, magnificent, smiling, joyful, innocent, modest, and tender.⁷³ Kant’s explanation by analogy justifies the value of pleasure in the beautiful as higher than pleasures of sense sensation.

In the previous section I argued that consciousness of the sensation of the state of free play of the cognitive faculties when reflecting on the form of a beautiful object is necessary in order to feel the pleasure in a judgment of taste. The explanation by analogy of the ennobled experience of pleasure in the beautiful also counts against interpretations of Kant that claim the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties constitutes the pleasure itself. The mere feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties could not constitute the *ennobled* pleasure felt in a judgment of taste. It is only when we recognise what we take to be a universally communicable sensation that we can make the analogy with morality that justifies the nobleness of that pleasure. Without this, the subjective feeling of that activity could only have a value on a par with pleasure in the agreeable.

I will finish by considering one final issue. Judgments of taste involve pleasure, but seeking pleasure is not something that Kant sees as morally valuable. Indeed, in Kant’s description of a valuable life, he says “only through that which he does without regard to enjoyment, in full freedom and independently of that which nature could passively provide for him, does he give his being as the existence of a person an absolute value.”⁷⁴ The free play of the imagination and understanding can account for the condition of the subject acting freely. The act of disinterested perception and the activity of the free play of the cognitive powers are also far from passive. But Kant claims that the aesthetic judging of an object is for “the sake of perceiving the suitability of the representation for the harmonious (subjectively purposive) occupation of both cognitive faculties in their freedom, i.e., to sense the representational state with pleasure.”⁷⁵ How can we reconcile pleasure in the beautiful with a valuable existence?

We may observe that the pleasure taken in consciousness of the purposiveness of the beautiful object will depend on the extent to which one has cultivated one’s judgment to take pleasure in that which is communicable to all rational beings. Judgments of taste require the bracketing out of all personal interest while contemplating the form of the object and in doing so the judge sacrifices pleasure in any agreeable or desirable aspects of the object. The agreeable characteristics of an object might have been potential sources of intense pleasure. Kant asserts that pleasure in the beautiful is a pleasure of mere reflection that is distinct from a pleasure of enjoyment.⁷⁶ An ennobled pleasure in the beautiful is the payoff for having cultivated something analogous to a moral feeling, which is not motivated by pleasure. Indeed, Kant himself says that the true propaedeutic for taste is the cultivation of moral feeling through the development of moral ideas.⁷⁷

In conclusion, I have argued that a consistent and plausible reading of section nine of Kant’s third *Critique* is possible if we note the distinction, on the one hand, between the subjective universal communicability of the sensation of the free play of the imagination and the understanding, and, on the other hand, the subjective purposiveness that is consciousness of the suitability of an object for maintaining a subject in the state of mind of the free play of the cognitive faculties. The former, which is described in stage three of my exposition, involves

the conscious recognition of the universal communicability of a mental state, the latter, described in stage four, is the pleasure in the beautiful object itself. Consciousness of the universal communicability of a sensation (of the free play) when reflecting on the form of a beautiful object is necessary for two reasons: first, it provides us with universally valid grounds for a judgment of taste, and second, it puts us in a position to feel an elevated and ennobled pleasure in the judgment of taste through recognising it as a symbol of morality.

DANIEL WILSON is a PhD candidate at the University of Auckland. His dissertation is on the nature of artistic appreciation and the definition of art.

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Robert Wicks for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §9, 102.
3. Ibid., Introduction IV.1, 66-67.
4. Ibid., §1.1, 89.
5. Ibid., Introduction VII.3, 76. Also §8.2, 99.
6. Ibid., §9.4, 102.
7. Ibid., §9.1, 102.
8. Ibid., §9.3, 102. Kant's exact words are "Also ist es die allgemeine Mittheilungsfähigkeit des Gemüthszustandes in der gegebenen Vorstellung, welche, als subjective Bedingung des Geschmacksurtheils, demselben zum Grunde liegen und die Lust an dem Gegenstande zur Folge haben muss." (Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1867, 221.) J. H. Bernard translates this sentence as "Hence, it is the universal capability of communication of the mental state in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must be fundamental and must have the pleasure in the object as its consequent." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. New York, Hafner Publishing Company, 1951, 51.) James Creed Meredith says "Hence it is the universal capacity for being communicated incident to the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgement of taste, must underlie the latter, with the pleasure in the object as its consequence." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 48.) And Werner S. Pluhar translates this section as "Hence it must be the universal communicability of the mental state, in the given presentation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, 61.)
9. Donald Crawford notes that Walter Cerf takes Kant to hold the paradoxical view that the judgment of taste has pleasure as a consequence. Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 70. See translator's Introduction and Translator's Comments to Immanuel Kant, *Analytic of the Beautiful*. Trans. Walter Cerf. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, 84, 95, 105.
10. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 136.
11. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Note 20, 368.
12. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 139.
13. Ibid., 140: "Kant may never have become completely clear about the difference between the theory on which communicability is a necessary condition of aesthetic judgment, and that on which it is a necessary condition not only for aesthetic judgment but for the occurrence of aesthetic response pleasure in the beautiful itself."
14. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 139.
15. Henry Allison argues against Guyer's first hypothesis by stating that Kant has not simply amalgamated the two differing theories of pleasure because later, in section §9.7, Kant explicitly denies that the pleasure as the result of the ability to communicate a state of mind could account for the judgment of taste because the judgment of taste must be based on *a priori* and not *a posteriori* grounds. See Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 112. But, *pace* Allison, what Kant actually says in the passage referred to is that an empirical *demonstration* of pleasure accompanying the fact of being able to communicate a state of mind is not satisfactory because his goal is to demonstrate that judgments of taste are possible *a priori*. I suggest that what Kant means in §9.7 is that a further *a priori* principle is required to justify the claim of subjective universal communicability, namely the heretofore undescribed principle of purposiveness, which is introduced by Kant in the subsequent §10. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §12, 106-107. Kant issues a caveat in a similar form to this in the Introduction section V.2-3 (p. 69). Here he claims that a transcendental principle, namely the principle of purposiveness, is required for the logical necessity of a judgment of taste.
16. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 140-141.
17. Ibid., 140.
18. Hannah Ginsborg, "On the Key to Kant's Critique of Taste" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 293-294.
19. Ibid., 295.
20. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 115.
21. Ibid., 115.
22. Ginsborg, "On the Key to Kant's Critique of Taste," 300.
23. Ibid., 299.
24. Ibid., 300.
25. Ibid., 309.
26. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §2, 90-91.
27. Ibid., §4, 92-94.

28. Ibid., §9.8, 103.
29. Exact description of the activity of the free play of the cognitive faculties is the subject of contentious debate. Fortunately, for the purposes of our undertaking, we can bracket out this question. All that needs to be accepted for the interpretation of §9 that I defend is that, according to Kant, the conditions for such activity, presuming it is possible, are universal.
30. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §9.9, 104.
31. Ibid., §9.9.5, 104.
32. Ibid., §15.4.4, 113.
33. Ibid., §1.2.2, 90.
34. Ibid., §9.5, 103.
35. Kant notes the requirement of the presupposition of a common sense in the judgment of taste. See *ibid.*, §22, 123-124.
36. Ibid., §9.3.1, 102.
37. Ibid., §9.5, 103.
38. Note that in practice a judgment of taste involves the claim that everyone *should* agree with it, not that everyone will. See *ibid.*, §22.1, 123-124.
39. Ibid., §3.3, 92.
40. Ibid., §9.8, 103.
41. Ibid., §9.3.2-3, 102.
42. Ibid., §9.9, 103.
43. Cf. Ibid., §39, 173: "one who judges with taste (as long as he does not err in this consciousness, and does not take the matter for the form, the charm for beauty) may also require the subjective purposiveness, i.e., his satisfaction in the object, of everyone else, and may assume his feeling to be universally communicable, even without the mediation of concepts."
44. Note that other interpreters also hold this view. Of theorists already mentioned, Paul Guyer argues that the feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste is the sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 141. c.f. 74-75.). Similarly, Henry Allison argues specifically for pleasure as sensation of the "harmonious" free play. (See Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 115-118, 54).
45. Wicks, Robert, *Kant on Judgment*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2007, 44-45.
46. Crawford, Donald W. *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, 73-74.
47. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §10, 105.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., First Introduction, V, 19.
50. Ibid., §10, 105. C.f. §11, 106: "nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective), consequently the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is given to us, insofar as we are conscious of it, can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept, to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste."
51. Ibid., §39: 'subjective purposiveness, i.e. his pleasure in the object'; also §38: "the pleasure or the subjective purposiveness."
52. Ibid., §11.2, 106: "...it is the mere form of purposiveness in the representation by which an object is *given* to us, so far as we are conscious of it, which constitutes the satisfaction that we without a concept judge to be universally communicable; and, consequently, this is the determining ground of the judgment of taste."; see also §12.2, 107: "The consciousness of the merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers of the subject in the case of a representation through which an object is given is the pleasure itself."
53. Ibid., §12, 107.
54. Accordingly, *pace* Wicks and Crawford, sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties must occur prior to the pleasure in the beautiful.
55. Beatrice Longuenesse, "Kant's Leading Thread in the Analytic of the Beautiful" *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*. Ed. Rebecca Kukla. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 208.
56. Ibid., 197-198.
57. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §1, 89-90.
58. Ibid., §23, 128-129.
59. Rachel Zuckert, "A New Look at Kant's Theory of Pleasure" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60:3 (Summer, 2002): 242.
60. Ibid., 246.
61. Ian P. D. Morrisson, *Kant and the Role of Pleasure in Moral Action*. Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2008, 76.
62. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Introduction, III, 65.
63. Ibid., §2, 90.
64. Ibid., §5, 96.
65. Ibid., §59, 227-228.

‘THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE’

- 66. Ibid., §2, 90-91.
- 67. Ibid., §40, 176.
- 68. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 69. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 70. Ibid., §59, 227-228.
- 71. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 72. Ibid., §42, 178-179.
- 73. Ibid., §59, 228.
- 74. Ibid., §4, 94.
- 75. Ibid., §39, 172.
- 76. Ibid., §39, 172.
- 77. Ibid., §60, 230.

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE MATERIAL:
 A REVIEW OF JACQUES RANCIÈRE'S *AISTHESIS: SCENES
 FROM THE AESTHETIC REGIME OF ART* (VERSO 2013)
 Jean-Philippe Deranty

*Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*¹ is one of Rancière's most substantive works, to be ranked alongside *Nights of Labour*, *Disagreement* and *Mute Speech* in terms of the breadth and significance of its analyses. The book consists of a series of fourteen chapters, analysing as many "scenes from the aesthetic regime of the arts", all structured according to methodological principles Rancière describes and explains in the following terms:

Each one of these scenes presents a singular event, and explores the interpretive network that gives it its meaning around an emblematic text. The event can be a performance, a lecture, an exhibition, a visit to a museum or to a studio, a book, or a film release. The networks built around it shows how a performance or an object is felt and thought not only as art, but also as a singular artistic proposition and a source of artistic emotion, as novelty and revolution in art - even as a means for art to find a way out of itself. Thus it inscribes them into a moving constellation in which modes of perception and affect, and forms of interpretation defining a paradigm of art, take shape. (xi)

The inaugural scene is located in Dresden, 1764, and stages a passage from Winkelmann's newly published *History of Art in Antiquity*, which thus marks one of the possible beginnings of the "aesthetic regime". It is followed by an extract from Hegel's 1828 lectures on aesthetics focusing on a detail in a Murillo painting the philosopher would have noticed whilst visiting the art galleries in Berlin and Munich. Following it are chapters on the critical reception in 1830 of Stendhal's *Scarlet and Black*, pointing to the novel's end as its true "scandal"; the text of an 1844 conference by Emerson; a representation in Paris in 1879 by the English clowns, the Hanlon Lee Brothers, as described by the French poet Théodore de Banville; the review published by Mallarmé in the *National Observer* in 1893 of a performance by Loie Fuller; an article by Maeterlinck published in 1894, reviewing a new production of Ibsen's *Solness* by Lugné-Poe; an 1910 conference by Roger Marx dedicated to the designing work of Emile Gallé, pronounced in front of a collective of workers; a 1902 text by Rainer Maria Rilke on the work of Rodin; a 1908 article by Edward Gordon Craig on the principles

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE MATERIAL: JACQUES RANCIÈRE'S *AISTHESIS*

of modern theatre; a 1916 review of Chaplin by Viktor Chklovski; a 1921 article by Paul Rosenfeld on the photography of Alfred Stieglitz; a 1926 review of Dziga Vertov's *The Sixth Part of the World* following its initial release; and finally, an extract from James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, published in 1936. Simply listing the chapter contents already gives a sense of how rich and detailed the book is, and of the general impression it might make on the reader. Even though Rancière explicitly rejects any claim to systematicity, the chronological progression and the level of historical detail make it clear that he has conceived this book as a fresh, major substantiation of his attempt, waged for more than two decades now, to establish a counter-history and a counter-theory of aesthetic modernity.

The book's method and its overall theoretical effect are reminiscent of the early political studies. It shares a comparable mode of archival-philosophical exegesis, the method that was devised to conduct the *Logical Revolts* project,² which led to the publication of the *Nights of Labour*. In *Aisthesis* as in the early studies in the "proletarian dream", the "emblematic text" around which the reconstruction is developed is systematically situated within the discourses to which it responded at the time and which responded to it in turn. The historical and conceptual hermeneutic is conducted through Rancière's typical mode of free indirect style. The purpose of this strategy, then and now, is to reduce the distance between conceptual elaboration and the object analysed, to transform the object of analysis into the subject of its own conceptuality, to let the subjects of practice unveil the conceptual knots at the heart of their practices. The counter-historical dimension of such a method stems from the fact that it brings back to life forgotten moments, crucial episodes whose memories have been repressed by the official histories. In *Aisthesis*, this is for instance the genealogy of influential grotesque characters linking the figures of Pierrot, Arlequin, the Hanlon Lee Brothers,³ all the way to Chaplin and the other greats of early slapstick comedy.⁴ These figures of the mechanical body, Rancière shows, exert a powerful aesthetic influence on many of the 20th avant-gardes even though they do not register as worthy reference points in scholarly narratives. Historical corrections such as these also have direct counter-theoretical import. The practices are no longer observed from an external position that would thereby constitute a position of authority. The historical scene studied is not just an example or an episode in a larger narrative. Rather, it appears as a specific, local configuration in which acts and discourses create a specific context of sense in which they agentially intervene. In the political field, the point of this is to return political agency to the actors and their movements. In the aesthetic field, it is to do justice not just to individual creativity, but also to the conceptual depth of practices that mobilise the opportunities and face the contradictions of the aesthetic regime. The agency thereby unveiled operates not just at the level of content, but also performs an inversion of the usual relationship between learned discourse and the objects of study. However erudite and detailed the analyses in *Aisthesis* might be, they continue to operate on the logic of the ignorant schoolmaster whereby the master's mastery consists in the capacity to ask questions to which the subjects themselves provide the answers. The inversion of the relation of authority goes together with the dissolution of the boundaries between high art and popular art, between the noble, well-established and the new, minor art forms, like Loie Fuller's serpentine dance,⁵ the art of scenography,⁶ the pantomime, or slapstick comedy.

The emphasis on the hermeneutic and the agential seems at odds with Rancière's explicit rejection of phenomenological themes and methods, and his undeniable indebtedness to a structuralist sensitivity. It is however one of the main features of the notion of "regime of the arts" to marry those seemingly antagonistic dimensions. The irruption of the principle of equality in modern societies does not simply operate on the institutional level. More deeply it alters the very conditions of experience and thought and thereby exerts a direct aesthetic effect. Equality, by collapsing the hierarchies of genres, propriety and styles, reshapes the very modes of perception and thought. It opens the entire field of *aisthesis*, the world itself as something to be sensed, perceived and thought, for modes of expression to be reinvented. Such a view of aesthetic modernity remains structuralist in some respect, because it describes the world as overall *sensorium* by specifying the functional relations linking its constitutive elements (affect, perception, thought, word, sense and the community of sense), and defines the meaning of each element in terms of the place it takes in the field in relation to the others. The opportunities and difficulties inherent in this new regime stem from the fact that it is now up for grabs to show how, using what expressive tools, with which material, in which genre and through which medium,

there is “logos and pathos”, that is, how sense and sense-making articulations and practices mobilise and take hold of “mute things”.⁷ On the other hand, as in every structural field, this new regime has its own specific contradictions, its defining blind spot, linked to the fact that there is also “pathos in logos”, that sense itself runs the risk of collapsing into “muteness”, the absurd, the dead.

The explicit aim of *Aisthesis* is to pursue the defence and illustration of the aesthetic regime hypothesis. As a counter-narrative to other theories of aesthetic modernity the book might appear puzzling in terms of its overall effect. The narrative is highly fragmented. Even though some loose thematic threads appear after a while, the links between “scenes” remain implicit, each scene is relatively self-enclosed. However, readers tempted to jump to conclusions about a possible exhaustion of Rancière’s analytical powers should remind themselves that this effect was already the one produced by the succession of scenes in *Nights of Labour* in relation to another problem, that of the contradictory relations between labour and emancipation. In fact, just as the fragmented, aporetic narrative presented in *The Nights of Labour* prepared the way for the full presentation of Rancière’s political apparatus in *Disagreement*, similarly, if less visibly, *Aisthesis* also proposes significant conceptual innovations in relation to aesthetics. The book significantly extends and renews Rancière’s characterisation of the conceptual knots structuring the aesthetic regime. This renewed understanding appears notably in the constellation of interlinked formal concepts and thematic threads being woven throughout the fourteen chapters.

One of those conceptual threads is Rancière’s paradoxical, symbolic materialism. Materiality, the “prose of the world”, the shine, texture, and the sheer weight of objects, the specific qualities of the natural elements, the evolutions of light, or simply the profusion of things in the world, in other words, what the French term “*le sensible*” properly refers to in what one is tempted to call its intrinsic Merleau-Pontian sense, this materiality takes central importance in the aesthetic regime since the latter is defined as the opening of the world as a general *sensorium*. Materiality is the only possible place of sense in a regime that emerges from the dissolution of ontological boundaries. It is one of the most striking paradoxes of Rancière’s thought, that it is able to accommodate a never reneged upon structuralist impetus with such strong emphasis on the sensuousness of world experience. In *Aisthesis* Rancière’s paradoxical materialism expresses itself firstly in some astonishing pages, notably in chapters on Emerson and Whitman and the later chapter on James Agee, in which the philosopher relishes in the sheer poetic pleasure of parataxis, the infinite richness of the “prose of the world”.⁸ However, the knot at the heart of *aisthesis* is that there is logos in pathos, sense and expressivity are nowhere to be found but in the “sensible” itself. In this new book, the exploration of the potentialities and paradoxes entailed in this univocal nature of the prose of the world leads to a reappropriation of the early-Romantic notion of symbol, interpreted in a literal, materialist way, that is, “not (as) the figural expression of abstract thought”, but as “the fragment detached from the whole that carries the power (puissance) of the whole” (64).⁹ This definition of the symbol fits well with the intimate logic of Rancière’s thought, as the symbol becomes a figure of thought that is indistinctly semantic and material, semantic in its very materiality. This logic of material symbolism runs through the book. It receives a most striking expression in the following passage dedicated to James Agee’s attempt to capture the “cruelty of what there is”, in this particular case, the enigmatic messages hidden in the everyday objects found in an old chest of drawers:

the ‘frivolous’ inventory of the drawers only fully renders a minute portion of the elements that are gathered in the infinite and unrepeatable intertwining relations between human beings, an environment, events, and things, that produced the actuality of these few lives. It is possible to account for these lives and their place in the world, however slightly, only by going beyond the significant relation between the particular and the general and by reaching for the symbolic relation of the part to the unpresentable whole that expresses itself in the part’s actuality. (250)

Aisthesis also focuses specifically on the dynamism of the material and expressive forces that meet and produce their effects at these “sensible” loci Rancière calls “scenes”. As we saw, a “scene” names a local configuration of matter, objects, perception, poetic action and thought. A key associated notion is that of the “figure”, which denotes first the specific expressive formation emerging at the point of the scene, but also encompasses the

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE MATERIAL: JACQUES RANCIÈRE'S *AISTHESIS*

contradictory nature of these configurations in which thought is materialized and matter made expressive. The impasses, paradoxes and contradictions of aesthetic expression mean that neither pole ever finds its appropriate counterpart in the other pole, there is no expressive transparency or material adequacy in the aesthetic regime. The figure is thus "sensible presence that embodies the power that forged it, but also a differal of this presence" (18); "the literal, material presence of a body as well as the poetic operation of metaphorical condensation and metonymic displacement" (99). Rancière also emphasizes the closeness between the figure and the scene, since the figure is itself "an act instituting a place, a singular theatre of operations" (ibid.). This exploration of the dynamic powers at the core of expressive formations explains the importance taken by the arts of the stage and performance in *Aisthesis*. Whilst Rancière defined the basic coordinates of the aesthetic regime through the study of modern literature in *Mute Speech*, it is now the many forms of expressive performance that become paradigmatic for his aesthetic theory. The Scene was already a key concept of his political theory; it now receives its full conceptual treatment as the central category of Rancière's ontology of modern sensibility.

The Figure and the Scene specify the topological and dynamic conditions under which a Symbol can emerge. These formal categories are aptly complemented by another theme that also takes spectacular prominence in *Aisthesis*, namely the Body and the Life that traverses it. At the heart of the representative regime features a normative conception of action and expression that implies a conception of the body, of the way in which it is mobilized by the subject in modes of affection, expression and action. Without providing any systematic treatment of the question, *Aisthesis* distils a thorough analysis of the rules underpinning the representation and place of bodies within the classical, representative regime. Five norms come to the fore: the positive norm of activity which makes passivity a sign of low status or pathological state; second, the body as means and medium of action, a functional body caught up internally and externally in the logic of means and ends, cause and effect; third, the body as organism, obeying the laws of good proportions between the parts, a principle defining beauty as harmony; fourth the body as one, fully articulated and integrated entity; and finally, the body as unitary, expressive centre of affect, perception and thought. The dismantling of the rules and norms of the representative regime impacts directly upon the underlying image of the body. In place of the ideal of the harmonious body as expression of the will and medium of action, new figures arise: the body as fragmented, mechanical, indifferent, passive, suffering, acrobatic, dynamic, energetic, and so on. However, these new bodily modes of the aesthetic regime are only possibilities; the rules of the representative regime continue to operate in the reign of the Spectacle. The aesthetic "fable" is only a virtuality repressed by the continued dominance of old poetics caught up in the old rules of heroic status, cause-effect and means-ends connections, the hierarchy of values, and so on.

Beyond their heterogeneity, these figures of the body of aesthetic modernity all share in Rancière's own version of the dissolution of the sensory-motor schema. The unity, harmony and sense-directedness of the classical body is challenged by deep, amorphous life forces that provide the new bodies of the aesthetic regime with their energy at the same time as they also undermine their organicism. A distinctive Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean strand has consistently gained momentum in Rancière's recent writings. It comes to the fore quite spectacularly in his latest magnum opus, in passages featuring explicit vitalistic arguments. Underneath the meaningful actions and movements of representative bodies the powers of life operate with no regard for the categories of perception or the understanding. This occurs emblematically with the Belvedere Torso, the Figure that opens the book. The consideration of the life forces that get hold of the body of art make it, now more eminently than the canvas or the page, the ultimate "surface of conversion". The body that is indifferent, impassible, inexpressive or immobile becomes the eminent receptacle for movements and forces that shatter the illusions of controlled, willful individual and social action: "the free movement, the movement that is the same as rest, only liberates its powers when the bonds are loosened that forced the positions of the body to signify specific emotions" (10). This modern trope of the fragmented body finds a most eminent echo in Rodin (chapter 9), in whose sculpture, as Rilke shows, "bodies do not act; from now on, actions constitute bodies" (157). With Rodin, we discover the need "to renounce using the organic body as a motor for action; better yet, to undo this body, to dismantle it into multiple unities identical to multiple gestures or scenes" (160).

In the mechanical body in turn can be witnessed the paradox of a body that is causalistically delivered over to unrelenting stimuli but keeps producing contingent effects, thereby undermining mechanistic causality and the integration of percept and output. In the energetic bodies of the Hanlon Lee Brothers for instance, as Théophile Gautier writes, “everything comes together and falls apart with an admirable insouciance: effects have no cause at all and causes have no effects whatsoever... This apparent helter-skelter and disorder, finally, depicts real life in its capricious aspect more accurately than the most intricate moral drama” (83). This, Rancière argues, directly anticipates Meyerhold’s biomechanics and constructivist scenography. The slapstick body caught up in the gags of early cinema thereby becomes a most illustrious representative of the deeper truth of the aesthetic regime. As Rancière suggests provocatively, “through Chaplinesque pantomime, cinema expresses the secret nihilism that accompanies the great mechanical faith, likening the demiurgical potential of machines to the shadow play on the walls of the cave, at the cost perhaps that these shadows turn out to be more exact and clearer than the plans of the engineers of the future” (206).

To act without plan, to act whilst not wanting anything, to refrain from acting altogether, to express by not meaning or intending anything, these paradoxical figures of being (a body) in the world constitute for Rancière the deepest layer of modern experience. This is the null point where sense and non-sense fuse and become the flipside of each other, the central knot at the heart of the aesthetic regime to which so many modern philosophers and writers have been sensitive. This trope appeared for the first time in *The Aesthetic Unconscious*. It explains Rancière’s paradoxical emphasis on inaction, passivity, inertia and apathy, and the hedonistic giving over to the movement of the world underneath the agitation of the human world, as the ultimate gestures of resistance. These figures of renouncement and abandonment appear in the first three chapters and punctuate the book at regular intervals. They connect directly with the heightened attention to the materiality of everyday objects and the sensuous qualities of the world. What does Rancière mean when he translates his central political concept, equality, in the aesthetics of material symbolism, speaking of the “pure equality of an emotion”, the “equality of pure sensation” and the “sharing without calculation of the sensible moment”?¹⁰ Is there any other way of reading passages like this but as the sign of a late defeatism or pessimistic abdication by a once radical philosopher?¹¹ In fact, it should be obvious that the philosopher’s apparent embrace of apathy and abandonment can only be misconstrued as anti-political gestures if one makes the mistake of seeking an explicit political theory in a book of aesthetics. At the very least, one ought to grant Rancière the right to rely upon all of his past, substantive work in the forms and potentials of radical equality, and not have to keep repeating it today. In highlighting the prevalence of the figures of non-sense and anti-action in modern aesthetics, Rancière is making a double ontological point, which does apply to politics, but only as an external caveat: “Literary fiction (does not) enjoy contradicting the socialist science. Rather, it might well unveil its flipside: the science of society, bearing a future freedom in its womb and the philosophy of the will-to-live that wants nothing were born on the same ground: the site where old hierarchies of social and narrative order break down” (52). With his latest major book *Aisthesis*, Rancière reminds us critically that politics, like art, is only episodic. And he wants to make the point that works of art can be the accurate witnesses to the conditions in which any and all human action take place.

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE MATERIAL: JACQUES RANCIÈRE'S *AISTHESIS*

NOTES

1. Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*. Trans. Zakir Paul. London: Verso, 2013; *Aisthesis: Scènes du régime esthétique de l'art*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 2011. Page numbers in parentheses refer to the English edition.
2. The articles Rancière wrote for this project are now available in English in *Staging the People*, London: Verso, 2011, and *The Intellectual and His People*, London: Verso, 2012. For a summary of the aims and outputs of the collective project, see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 126-130, and J.-P. Deranty, "Logical Revolts", in *Jacques Rancière. Key Concepts*. Ed. J.-P. Deranty. Acumen, 2010, 17-24.
3. Chapter 5: "The Gymnasts of the Impossible (Paris, 1879)," 75-92.
4. Chapter 11: "The Machine and Its Shadow (Hollywood, 1916)," 191-206.
5. Chapter 6: "The Dance of Light (Paris, Folies Bergères, 1893)," 93-110.
6. Chapter 7: "The Immobile Theatre (Paris, 1894-1895)," 111-132; and chapter 10: "The Temple Staircase (Moscow-Dresden, 1912)," 171-190.
7. The short text of *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, which articulates this dual relationship most clearly (logos in pathos/pathos in logos, in other words, the possibility of sense in mute things and the existence of spots of senselessness at the heart of sense), is an important stage in Rancière's thinking in this respect.
8. Chapter 14: "The Cruel Radiance of What Is (Hale County, 1936-New York, 1941)," 245-262.
9. See also p. 101. I have used the available English translation but altered it in some passages.
10. See Chapter 3: "Plebeian Heaven (Paris, 1830)," 39-55.
11. As does Nicolas Vieillescazes in his review of the book in *Radical Philosophy* 177 (2013): 26-31.