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special re-launch issue

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studies in social and political thought

Studies in Social and Political Thought is a journal produced by postgraduate students, many of whom are based at the University of Sussex. The journal seeks to foster and promote interdisciplinarity in social and political thought, in addition to providing a publishing platform to junior academics.

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> The bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape.
> Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge.
> (Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*)

Welcome to the re-launch of *Studies in Social and Political Thought*. Our last
issue reflected on critique and crisis in the context of the global financial
crisis. The current issue is, in some sense, a product of the aftermath of the
financial crisis: as the financial crisis begat the sovereign debt crisis, the
sovereign debt crisis begat the budget crisis, and the budget crisis begat the
cuts. This regrettable trajectory gave plausibility to vulgar Marxism's
contention that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for
managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". It also set the stage
for an unwholesome synthesis with the centralized 'marketization'
imperatives of New Labour's higher education policy. This culminated in
the intransigent, unfortunate and wholly misguided management of the
university *nomenklutura,* who proceeded to treat as the criterion for Higher

Education funding a principle identified by Adorno's scathing remark: "Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted or measured, ceases to exist". As a result, we have the ushering in of severe cuts and a "war against the humanities" (see http://defendsussex.wordpress.com). Of course, we are not alone in facing these regressive moves (see http://savemdx.wordpress.com). The shape of the coalition government's much vaunted *"new politics"* looks undefined. So far we have seen an emergency budget laying out "once in a generation cuts" and a new Business Secretary saying that "the future of the universities will be one of three priorities for the business department in the next three months". This is chilling stuff. For even if there may be some hope that the Lib-Cons will de-instrumentalize higher education, we have to hope that this move will not be undermined by financial disembowelment.

Yet, despite these pressures – which led to many tedious bureaucratic manoeuvres, concerns and delays – *SSPT* still exists and resists such myopic imperatives. We re-launch with a new editorial board and a renewed awareness of the importance of social and political thought. To this end we have brought together an international advisory board of esteemed scholars and supporters. We have also decided to reorient the journal, opening it up to critically minded students and academics from across the globe.

In this our re-launch issue we look to the past and to the future. For the past we consider the work of Theodor W. Adorno with a report and selected papers from the *Adorno: 40 Years On* conference from August 2009. For the future we present a series of compelling and thought-provoking articles and reviews that showcase the significance, relevance and diversity of social and political thought.

In the next few months we plan to implement a number of planned improvements, including a redesign and expansion of our online presence, as well as increasing our involvement with the Centre for Social and Political Thought at Sussex and postgraduates at other universities. These changes will serve to support the political and intellectual goals of the journal and supplement its bi-yearly publication.

As a final note, we would like to invite anyone who is interested in contributing towards the running of *SSPT* to get in touch and get involved.

Thank you.

– The Editors of SSPT

SPT Conference on Theodor W. Adorno: 40 Years On

Conference Report

by Simon Mussell

On the sixth day of August 1969, critical theorists across the world experienced a devastating and monumental loss. After an ill-advised mountain hike during one of his annual retreats to Switzerland, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno suffered a heart attack that proved fatal. Throughout the preceding eighteen months or so,[1] Adorno had endured numerous classroom disruptions and occupations, in addition to widespread animosity among members of the large student protest movement, whose growing militancy had left the Frankfurt thinker profoundly concerned and in a state of "extreme depression".[2] While other key theorists – most notably Herbert Marcuse but also younger members of the Institute such as Oskar Negt and, at first, Jürgen Habermas – endorsed the students' actions, Adorno's initial support soon receded as he came to view the protests as succumbing to increasingly regressive, barbaric and fascistic methods, representing a complete subordination of theory to blind practice. For his steadfast refusal to be "terrorized into action" (2001: 202), Adorno has been often portrayed unsympathetically by many as politically ineffectual, an elitist, a mandarin, an aesthete, and other all-too-familiar caricatures. Such dismissive approaches to his work are strangely reminiscent of the taunts of many members of the student protests, who would regularly display banners expressing sentiments such as: "Berlin's left-wing fascists greet Teddy the Classicist" (cited in Müller-Doohm, 2009: 454), ironically and purposefully invoking the infamous turn of phrase attributed to Habermas (i.e. 'left fascism'). It is my view, and – it would seem, thankfully – that of others, that such outright rejections do a great disservice to one of the most productive and critical minds of the twentieth century.

In the current context rife as it is with unrelenting impositions of brute quantification, planned financial cuts to education, endless performance and 'impact' measurement exercises, and so on, it is somewhat disheartening to note the similarities between the impatient and myopic demands of the students in the late 1960s and those of today's administrators, managers,

bureaucrats, and – not to be forgotten – politicians. One gets the distinct impression that the "prohibition on thinking" (Adorno, 2001: 199) brought about by the actionism of student movements in the past, finds its contemporary corollary in the excessive demands that every person and every activity be *calculable,* their effects and relevance immediately discernible, lest their value be deemed negligible. In light of these challenges, a return to Adorno may prove timely and invaluable to those individuals with an undiminishable wish to resist the powerful currents of society's foreboding tide.

To commemorate the fortieth year since Adorno's passing, I – with the support of my friends and colleagues at the University of Sussex – organised a conference dedicated to the man, his life and works, and to reflect on his lasting and varied legacy in the academic world and beyond. Students and faculty from a range of institutions were in attendance, all with an active interest in assessing the value and continuing relevance of Adorno's substantial output. As someone who is frequently impressed, frustrated, provoked, moved, amused (and bemused) by Adorno's texts, the fact that his work still has marked appeal to a number of people – often working in divergent subject areas – does not surprise me in the least. For the past few decades now, particularly following the proliferation of new or improved English translations of key texts, a diverse range of theorists have keenly contested Adorno's legacy. Leading contemporary thinkers whom one could justly expect to be sympathetic to his work – on account of their critical-theoretical credentials, personal connection and institutional affiliation[3] – have, since the so-called 'linguistic turn', become largely hostile and dismissive of what is perceived as Adorno's unmitigated 'pessimism', staunch negativity, aestheticism, and apparent aversion to political praxis. At the same time, and from a different angle, poststructuralists have actively tried to appropriate some of Adorno's most notable ideas as important precursors to their own critical projects.[4] In addition to these developments, there are numerous literary critics, musicologists, sociologists, cultural theorists, political theorists, and others, who continue to engage with Adorno's thought in diverse ways.

There are good reasons as to why such a variety of theorists appear to return to Adorno time and again. For starters, the Frankfurter steadfastly refuted the imposition of rigid disciplinary boundaries, seeing in this a replication (and infiltration) of the pervasive division of labour into what should be an autonomous academic realm.[5] This interdisciplinarity *avant la lettre* is reflected in his writings, which slide effortlessly from literature to music,

from psychology to philosophy, from sociology to language, among countless other areas, exhibiting often a startling depth and breadth of knowledge. On Adorno's watch, nothing should be considered beyond question or off-limits for social critique, and one sees this omni-critical eye consistently at work in his texts. In the inimitable *Minima Moralia* one finds critical interpretations of not only capitalist forms of society, technological domination, instrumental reason, works of art, positivism, and other such 'usual suspects', but also of nursery rhymes, forms of housing, techniques of door-closing, sash windows, slippers, the dialectics of tact, the use of dictation machines, marriage and divorce, the writing process, happiness, and so it goes on. Adorno's thinking is social through and through, and as such refuses to isolate phenomena from its wider context. This is because the 'objects' of study do not neatly fit into the framework of 'this' particular discipline or 'that' analytical lexicon; rather, they are thoroughly *socially mediated* and therefore require a method of analysis which is reflexive and non-reductive in nature. This, then, might hint at the kind of *dialectical* thinking that Adorno advocates; namely, thought that pushes beyond itself by virtue of its contradictions and extant inadequacy to represent reality, acknowledging the fact that all concepts fail to fully capture the object under their heading.

Such key themes in Adorno's thought were well explicated and developed by many of the speakers at the conference. There were two concurrent sessions in the morning. I was present at the first where Philip Hogh (aptly enough from the Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main) began proceedings with an excellent account of Adorno's philosophy of language. For Adorno, language starts out as a kind of second nature, coming into existence at the point in history where human subjects distinguish themselves from nature. Yet language is not only a means of striving for intersubjective communication. It also transforms the subject's inner nature, thereby refuting any naturalist reduction of subjectivity. From this initial point of departure, Hogh goes on to highlight the ways in which, for Adorno, language is also a tool of social domination, particularly within late capitalist society, where certain patterns of communication and uses of language ('discourses', we would say today) set parameters of action and thought. The final part of Hogh's presentation developed the ever intriguing and somewhat elastic concept of 'constellation' in relation to Adorno's critique of language. For Hogh, language represents a 'force-field' [*Kraftfeld*], a locus of tension and energy, in which subject and object, history and nature, and body and mind overlap, and where subjective expression can occur along with social acknowledgement. The paper appears in this volume and is a

welcome addition to the literature on the subject.

Richard Stopford (Durham) gave an interesting paper on Adorno and rhetoric, which drew upon and critiqued elements of J. M. Bernstein's analysis of the issue. For Adorno, the expressive and performative aspects of rhetoric bring attention to the *material content* of subjective experience, and are thus much more than mere stylistic concerns. Stopford argues that the continued use of rhetoric in philosophical enquiry guards against theoretical systematizing and/or dialectical stagnation; in other words, rhetoric has an essential part to play in maintaining a *negative* dialectics. Such anti-systematic philosophical work is a recurrent manifestation throughout Adorno's critical thinking.

Laura Finch (Sussex) expertly drew attention to the importance of Adorno's prose style, which (even through problematic translations) renders form and content absolutely inseparable. This is most clearly exhibited in Adorno's provocative and purposely unsettling use of exaggeration, repetition and the aphoristic form. Finch provides some excellent examples of such techniques at work through close readings of key texts, particularly *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia.* She argues that Adorno employs a 'homeopathic logic' in his social critique. This logic is neatly captured in the line Adorno cites from Wagner's *Parsifal:* "Only the spear that smote you can heal your wound". Through ingesting the reification inflicted upon the subject – the damaged form of life is after all inescapable – and replicating it within his unpredictable and 'damaged' prose, Adorno attempts to redeem some kind of meaning, value and possibility out of the existing (reified and inadequate) forms of language, and put it to work in the guise of social critique.

James Rodwell (Essex) maintained the high quality of research being presented with his paper looking at Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard's 'ethics of love'. Rodwell sought to revisit Adorno's criticisms in order to provoke a fuller response from Kierkegaardian scholars, whom he feels to date have only superficially dismissed the criticisms. Adorno not only criticizes the abstract inwardness of Kierkegaard's ethics, but he also finds such an ethics of love to be inadequate in light of the social conditions of which Kierkegaard is otherwise acutely aware and largely critical. Thus, what is required, according to Rodwell's account, is a more robust reply to Adorno-inspired criticisms; namely, that the discrepancy between Kierkegaard's abstract ethics, on the one hand, and his material social critique, on the other, be properly addressed.

In the first of the extended sessions, Nicholas Joll (Open University) presented a collection of ideas that represent a self-proclaimed 'work-in-progress'. Joll's interest is in trying to understand the notions of *determination* and *deformation* at work in Adorno. There are many places in Adorno's writing where he speaks of subjects and objects being determined or deformed. Joll provides numerous citations which nicely illustrate this point. However, the main concern for Joll is that if Adorno holds certain things to be in some way determined or deformed, then under what conditions can such claims be made? Or, put differently, if we accept the conclusion that *x* is deformed, then what would an un-deformed *x* look like? These are clearly complex issues and, indeed, the discussion that followed the presentation was lively. An augmented version of this excellent paper appears after this report.

Professor Max Paddison (Durham) gave an interesting and thoughtful perspective on some of Adorno's key writings, particularly in relation to the troubled biographical context in which they were written. For Paddison, after the rise of fascism in Germany one can see the condition of exile as ever-present in Adorno's thinking. This exilic condition brings a strong sense of materialism to the otherwise abstract concept of the non-identical, which became so central to Adorno's later philosophy which culminated in *Negative Dialectics.*

Professor Alexander Garçía Düttmann (Goldsmiths) presented a provocative paper which drew upon some of Adorno's notes on Kafka in order to explore the difficulties that accompany attempts at representing or interpreting Kafka's texts. For Adorno, the text itself is integral to the overall disquieting effects one often feels upon encountering Kafka's work. Any attempt to render Kafka's works in visual or figural representations is, on Adorno's account, a sign of 'illiteracy'. Düttmann argues against such a prohibitive view, and examines Orson Welles' film version of *The Trial.* While Welles is to be credited for resisting the urge to slavishly duplicate what the literal words on the page convey, his filmic technique and virtuosity ultimately serve to relegate the text's literal meaning to a secondary role. This subordination of the literal is also to be found in philosophical interpretations of the text, inasmuch as they make use of the existing sentences merely as a means of attaining metaphorical insights – that is to say, they transpose the literal meaning into a figurative meaning. As readers of the text, we cannot ignore the literalness of the letter (lest we risk getting utterly lost), yet at the same time we do not simply rest content once the literal meaning of the sentences has been comprehended. For Düttmann,

even the opening sentence of *The Trial* is already enough in itself to provoke reflection on the part of the reader: the lies being told about Joseph K., the protagonist's apparent innocence, the anonymity/uncertainty of the narrator's identity, all serve to make us question the sentence's literal meaning, truth and accuracy. The life of the letter in Kafka destabilizes the reader's position, through the letter's eerie sense of familiarity and its irreducible literalness that demands further interrogation and reflection, yet without promise of a single deep meaning awaiting textual excavation and philosophical explication.

In the final keynote presentation, Drew Milne (Cambridge) gave an impressive and original exposition on Adorno's use of grammar in argument. Through a close reading of a few notable passages in Adorno's writing, Milne dissected the complicated lexical uses and grammatical structures employed by Adorno. Such complex structures and fragmented sentences often forgoing extensive punctuation, in addition to widespread use of chiasmus and parataxis, serve to create the image of a singular, self-sustaining, autonomous textual object. On account of these mutually supportive and self-perpetuating flows and structures, Adorno's texts can be said to aim towards achieving the kind of absolute commodification that he praised in genuine works of art. The grammatical forms through which Adorno's ideas are presented become themselves an invaluable part of the philosophical argument.

At the present time, in relation to a whole host of proposed financial cuts and restructuring in higher education, there is again great unrest and protest among students across the globe who rightly perceive the short-sightedness of such proposals. Yet, while voicing concerns directly and forging a physical presence in front of those responsible for the cuts is undeniably necessary, it is also likely that no method of protest will be effective on its own, that is, in isolation from others. Business ideologues will often give instructions to tackle a problem 'head on', but the more canny approach needed in response to the present threats will consist of many different confrontations approaching from multiple angles: a *'constellation'* of critical interventions, one might say. Unflinching criticism and rigorous theory will play an essential role in resisting the regressive slide into brute quantification.

One of the great successes of the conference was that it effectively and performatively displayed that critical theory, by its very nature – its 'criticalness' – always points beyond itself. The negativity of thinking is

restless, partial and never satisfactory, and as such thought forever challenges that which would try to stifle, dominate or eradicate it. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno wrote that "True thoughts are those alone which do not understand themselves" (2005 [1951]: §122). This alludes to, of course, the duty of not 'fitting in' with the demands of a bad society, not adjusting or reducing oneself and one's thought to the dominant status quo. But crucially it also testifies to the indefatigability of thought itself. Amid the unsettling conditions we presently find ourselves in, Adorno's thinking remains as invigorating, prescient and provocative as ever.[6]

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Endnotes

[1] The history of student animosity towards Adorno actually extends even further back. In May 1964, students distributed a 'Wanted' poster that featured a montage of Adorno quotes as a way of registering their disapproval of what they saw as the "discrepancy between analysis and action". Just months before his death in 1969, a student had written on the board in one of Adorno's lecture theatres: "Wer nur den lieben Adorno läßt walten, der wird den Kapitalismus sein Leben lang bewalten" [Whoever gives dear Adorno control will preserve capitalism for the rest of his life] (Leslie, 1999: 121).

[2] Letter from Adorno to Marcuse dated 19 June 1969 (reproduced in Leslie, 1999).

[3] For instance, Jürgen Habermas, Albrecht Wellmer and Axel Honneth.

[4] On 22 September 2001, upon receiving the prestigious Adorno prize from Frankfurt, Jacques Derrida said the following in his acceptance speech: "I hear voices, as in a dream [. . .] They all seem to say to me: why don't you recognise, clearly and publicly, once and for all, the affinities of your work with that of Adorno, in truth your debt towards Adorno?" (2002: 43). Later in the same speech, Derrida refers to Adorno (affectionately) as his "*père d'adoption*" (ibid.: 36). One also recalls Michel Foucault's admission, to wit: "[I]f I had been familiar with the Frankfurt School [. . .] I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say and I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path" (Foucault & Kritzman, 1990: 26).

[5] Of course, the term 'discipline' itself – in addition to its meaning as a branch of knowledge – has alternative connotations that (perhaps somewhat tellingly) invoke power, commandment, punishment, chastisement, the imposition of order,

obedience, and so on. Deriving from the Latin *disciplina* (referring to the instruction of disciples by elders), one of its earliest uses in this hierarchical and instructional context came after the Protestant Reformation in the form of the 'Discipline of the Secret', which described how the early Christian Church rigidly taught principles of faith to converts while denying these teachings to the uninitiated/heathens. Along Hadrian's Wall there exists an altar to the Roman goddess *Disciplina*, the personification of discipline. Perhaps other 'altars to discipline' might be found near funding panels for research councils.

[6] I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended the Adorno conference and helped to make the event such a success. I am particularly grateful to those who presented on the day, many of whom travelled from far afield and at their own expense in order to contribute. Thank you to Alex Düttmann, Max Paddison, Drew Milne, Chris Cutrone, Nicholas Joll, Josh Robinson, Philip Hogh, Richard Stopford, Laura Finch, Chris O'Kane, Daniel Kuchler, James Rodwell, Chris Allsobrook, Gordon Finlayson, Keston Sutherland, Charles Masquelier and Doug Haynes.

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Gaps: An Inquiry into Determination and Deformation in Adorno

by Nicholas Joll

Abstract

This article proposes and explores a hypothesis about some claims made by Adorno. The claims at issue appear to allege, in a way that is hard to understand, that beings in modernity are deformed. The hypothesis is that Adorno's conception of mediation illuminates that idea. For Adornian mediation seems to bode an account of the determination of beings – of how beings are as they are – that will explicate his claims about beings' deformation. Acting on that hypothesis, the paper explores Adorno's views about conceptual mediation (and thereby that which Adorno calls 'the priority of the object') and his views about social mediation. I find that those views do not in fact explain the type of deformation at issue. But I argue that there is more than one way in which one might interpret that negative result.

Introduction

This paper is about a puzzle within Adorno's work. The puzzle concerns the interpretation of certain claims about deformation. I begin (§1) by presenting the puzzle and by outlining a possible solution to it. That solution turns upon that which I shall call 'determination'. I proceed (§2) to try to make good upon the solution. Finally (§3) I reflect upon what has been achieved. That reflection will explain the presence of the word 'gaps' in my title.[1]

1. Adorno and deformation: a puzzle and a hypothesis

1.1 The puzzle

My point of departure is a collection of claims made by Adorno.[2] What the claims are about is, in a sense, the very question I shall be asking. I note at

the outset, though, that they are claims about modernity. 'Modernity' in the relevant sense includes, though is not limited to, much of the twentieth century industrialised Western world to which Adorno was contemporary.[3]

I have a dozen claims in mind (although a range of other claims in Adorno are, in various ways, comparable). Those twelve claims, which owe mostly to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and to *Negative Dialectics*, are as follows:[4]

1. "[N]ature [becomes] mere objectivity [*bloße Objektivität*]" (DE: 6 / GS 3: 25)

2. "Abstraction, the instrument of enlightenment, treats its objects as did fate, the notion of which it eradicates: it liquidates them" (DE: 9 / GS 3: 29)[5]

3. "The demonically distorted form [*Dämonenhaft verzerrte Gestalt*] which things and human beings have taken on in the clear light of unprejudiced knowledge [. . .]" (DE: 22 / GS 3: 45)

4. There is a "subjection of reality to logical formalism" (DE: 26 / GS 3: 43)[6]

5. "Being is apprehended in terms of manipulation and administration. Everything—including the individual human being, not to mention the animal—becomes a repeatable, replaceable process, a mere example of the conceptual models of the system" (DE: 65 / GS 3: 103)[7]

6. "[T]he exchange relation [. . .] equally deforms [*deformiert*] men and things" (MM: 228 / GS 4: 260)

7. "[O]bjects have frozen in the cold light of reason" (MM: 239 / GS 4: 274)

8. Any ontology, today, must be an "ontology of the wrong state of things [*die Ontologie des falschen Zustandes*]" (ND: 11 / GS 6: 22)

9. "What is, is more than it is. This 'more' is not imposed upon it but remains immanent to it, as that which has been pushed out of it" (ND: 161 / GS 6: 164)[8]

10.   "The universal domination of mankind by exchange value – a domination which a priori keeps the subjects from being subjects and degrades subjectivity itself to a mere object [. . .]" (ND: 178 / GS 6: 180)[9]

11.   "Things congeal as fragments of that which was subjugated" (ND: 191 / GS 6: 191)

12.   "[A]n identity that in empirical reality is violently forced on all objects as identity with the [human] subject and thus travestied" (AT: 4 / GS 7: 14)

The claims assert a deformation. More accurately: at least many of the claims assert either something like deformation or something that in some way would warrant the term 'deformation'. True, only one claim (the sixth) speaks directly of deformation.[10] But the other claims make mention of distortion, of degradation, of 'freezing', and of other similar terms or ideas. So there is sufficient justification, I submit, for my statement that the claims assert a deformation (and I shall write, henceforth, of 'the deformation claims'). As to the *sort* of deformation that the claims allege, I propose the following. The claims, or at least some of them, allege a deformation that is (1) *ontic*, (2) *very general*, and (3) *deep*.

The claims are *ontic* to the extent that they allege a deformation not of, or not merely of, the apprehension of entities, but of entities themselves. True, some of the claims (and especially the first part of the fifth claim) do seem to be about apprehension (or experience, or knowledge). But some of the claims (namely the third, sixth, tenth, and maybe the fifth) impute a deformation of persons; and the remainder of the claims impute a deformation of nature or objects. So the claims – some of them, anyway – are ontic in this sense: they pertain not to, or not merely to, the apprehension of entities, but to entities (persons and/or objects) themselves. The claims are *very general* in that they assert a very widespread deformation of beings. The claims present that which is deformed as, variously, 'nature', 'mankind', 'things and human beings', 'reality', 'Being', 'everything', 'objects' and 'all objects'. Can one make sense of the idea of such a widespread deformation? Perhaps one can. One might try to do so by combining two thoughts: that of a very widespread deformation of environments (built and natural); and that of a pervasive deformation of people. Certainly Adorno was much exercised by the second of those thoughts. Nonetheless, the conjunction of those two thoughts does not seem to be the primary import of the deformation claims. This is where the *depth* of the claims enters, or discloses

itself. Let me explain.

The claims attribute the work of deformation not only to 'the exchange relation' but also to reason (or a form of reason) and an imposition of identity. But how can reason, or some sort of imposition of identity, deform? One might think that Adorno has in mind some sort(s) of distorting outlook. However, the deformation claims have ontic import. Nor is it, seemingly, that an outlook is at issue in the following indirectly ontic way: an outlook plays a role in a causal chain that leads to the deformation of actual beings. For little in the claims indicates that idea. So: what seems to be at issue is, to put matters slightly paradoxically, some sort of non-causal effect. That is why I write of 'deep deformation'.[11] It is this depth that makes the deformation claims into a puzzle. The puzzle is to explicate the depth at issue.[12]

I do not think that existing work on Adorno solves the puzzle of his deformation claims. Rather it avoids or misses the puzzle. For the literature construes Adorno's deformation claims as merely to do with *experience,* or, where the claims are construed as *ontic,* as pertaining to only a *limited* range of entities. Or so I have gone some way towards arguing elsewhere.[13] The remainder of the present paper explores a way in which the puzzle might be solved.

1.2   A hypothesis

One way to solve the puzzle, or rather to *dissolve* it, would be to conclude as follows. Adorno's claims about deformation represent "merely tendentious redescription [. . .] a redescription of rhetorical power but no analytic significance" (Ashcroft, 2001: 241).[14] But that answer is dubious in the following sense. Surely Adorno means to trade upon some unusual – some *philosophical* – conception of deformation. For what else could a deep notion of deformation be? So our question becomes: where or how in Adorno should one seek such a philosophical conception?

I aim to explicate Adorno's deformation claims by placing them within a wider framework. The framework I have in mind is an account of *the determination of beings*. By an account of the determination of beings I understand a philosophical (and so 'deep') account of how it is that beings as such, whether deformed or not, and whether in modernity or not, are as they are. Were such an account present within Adorno, then the deformation claims would be merely a special case of it. So my hypothesis may be stated, in short, as follows: *An Adornian account of determination might make sense of*

his claims about deformation. The next section argues that material in Adorno does seem to comprise an account of determination, and investigates what light that material throws upon the puzzle about deformation.

2.   Investigating the hypothesis

2.1   Mediation as determination

Mediation [*Vermittlung*] is one of Adorno's central notions (cf. O'Connor, 1999: 91). One of Adorno's most general statements of mediation runs as follows.

> Every entity is more than it is [. . . .] Since there is no entity that, in being determined and in itself determining, does not need another, something other than itself – for it could never *be* determined solely in terms of itself – it must point beyond itself. 'Mediation' is simply another word for this (ND: 102).[15]

The passage gives grounds for thinking that mediation comprises an account of beings' determination in the sense that I have given the latter phrase. Here is why. In asserting that every entity is mediated (cf. ND: 171), the passage claims that mediation is universal; mediation pertains to beings *as such*. Moreover, the passage reveals that mediation is *ontic*, for it is *beings* that mediate and are mediated. Further, the passage asserts that mediation is some sort of determination. Finally, the notion of mediation looks like a *philosophical* conception. Thus, the following statement is surely at least roughly correct. The concept of mediation answers "Adorno's need to give conceptual expression to the relationship between transcendental and empirical phenomena" (Rosen, 1982: 175).[16]

The remainder of this section investigates whether the promise is borne out. I will investigate, that is, whether Adornian mediation really is an account of determination that makes sense of the deformation claims. In so doing, I take as a cue something else that is imparted, or at least suggested, by the passage quoted above[17] – and which in any case is true. Adornian mediation takes several forms or varieties. I begin (§2.2) with Adorno's account of *conceptual* mediation. Then (§2.3) I will examine, though more briefly, his account of *social* mediation. We shall see that both versions of mediation accommodate some internal variety.

2.2   *Conceptual mediation*

2.2.1   *The conceptuality of thought and of experience*

Adorno's work contains many references to "the mediatory role" of the concept (1968: 1), to "mediating conceptuality" (S&ER: 185) and similar. Such phrases intend a view that Adorno asserts repeatedly and explicitly. *All thinking involves concepts* (IS: 79, ND: 5, ND: 98, KCPR: 143). Yet Adorno's talk of mediating conceptuality intends several further things. One of them is that all *perception* – or, slightly more generally, all *experience* (ME: 46, ME: 119f.) – involves concepts. Following a convention in Analytical philosophy, I call that thesis about perception (or experience) 'conceptualism'. This conceptualism is more important (that is, more philosophically controversial and more important for Adorno) than the thesis about thought. Adorno's most extended case for conceptualism occurs within his *Metacritique of Epistemology*. Let us consider that case.

The *Metacritique* argues that, in order to have even so sensory a perception as that of colour, one requires something "beyond sheer present experience" (ME: 102). Why? In order to see that a thing is, say, red, two things – beyond a bare pattern on one's retina – are necessary. (1) The thing's redness must be *distinguished* from the other features – for instance, the shape – of the phenomenon perceived (ME: 102). (2) The red thing, and thereby its redness, must be known to be *spatial and temporal*, for the redness is in the thing and the thing has a location and some degree of permanence (ME: 101). Now, one might grant those two points for coloured *objects*, but deny that they apply to mere *sensations* of redness. Adorno counters thus: "No sheer sensation can be detached from perception in the real life of consciousness" (ME: 157). Wilfrid Sellars – who, like Adorno, is inspired in this area by Hegel – provides a way of glossing and defending the claim. To have a sensation of redness is for something to *look* red, and something can look red only to a creature that has the concept of an *object* being red (Sellars, 1956: §20).[18] At any rate – that is, whether or not Adorno shares that thought – he concludes thus: "the cognitive subject must always know more and have experienced more than just the phenomenon" (ME: 115f.), where the 'more', the presuppositional knowledge of colour, resides in the *concept* of colour (ME: 102).

Still, there is a way in which all these considerations seem beside the point. Adorno's deformation claims extend beyond experience to the things experienced – whereas the foregoing is not ontic but experiential or epistemic. But there is reason to think that Adorno augments his

conceptualism with, or develops it into, something less epistemic.

2.2.2 *The conceptuality of things*

The following Adornian dicta impute a conceptuality to beings. "Subjectivity pervades the object" (ME: 156). "Objectivity is not left over as a remainder after the subject is subtracted" (P: 144). "[W]hat is is not immediate [but] [. . .] arises through the concept" (ND: 153 / GS 6: 156).[19] "[O]bjectivity presupposes the subject" (ND: 141). "[S]ubjectivity is [. . .] the object's form" (SO: 504). "If the object lacked the moment of subjectivity, its own objectivity would become nonsensical" (SO: 509). "[T]o the thing the concept is not contingent and external"; "Rather, in Hegelian language, the concept articulates the life of the thing itself" (ME: 115 / GS 5: 121).[20]

One might suppose that Adorno's view is that of those who have been called 'conceptual schemers'.[21] To wit: concepts – conceptual repertoires or languages, or parts of such repertoires or languages – have ontological import in that, or insofar as, they organise an inherently unorganised reality. Adorno does hold both that (1) there is something independent of, and given to, human experience (see KCPR: 233), and that (2) this given is in some important way not directly accessible (idem; cf. ND: 140). Yet, *additionally*, Adorno complains that Kant – with reference to whom Adorno asserts 1 and 2 – "degrad[es] [. . .] the thing to a chaotic abstraction" (ND: 139).[22] Indeed, Adorno characterises, and rejects, much Western metaphysics as a "peephole metaphysics", whereby great epistemological or metaphysical power is attributed to the subject, and yet wherein that subject is held to have only a very impoverished access to reality proper (ND: 139f.). So in fact Adorno cannot be a conceptual schemer. How then *does* he think that concepts determine – and, yet, in some sense or to some degree do *not* determine – the world?

The dictum that the concept articulates the life of the thing itself is, as Adorno himself says, Hegelian. Hegel writes: "thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things form one and the same content" (1989: 45). But what does *that* mean? Sometimes, the idea can seem to be this: things receive their nature from thought. Thus, one might think, this line: "Thinking constitutes the substance of external things" (Hegel, 1991: 57; cf. §42 therein). But this idealistic reading has been contested by other readers of Hegel who take the idea to be, instead, the following more 'realistic' one. We can make sense of our access to an independent world only by holding that "there is no distance from the world implicit in the very idea of thought" (McDowell, 1994: 27; cf. Bernstein, 2010: 99-102). In this

and other ways Hegel's idealism remains an involved and highly contested enterprise (see Stern, 2008.) Still, what matters for our purposes is how *Adorno* understands (and appraises) Hegel. That understanding melds the two interpretations just intimated (or something like them).

Adorno teaches that Hegel has two rather different faces (cf. Hammer, 2006: 99ff.). On the one hand, Adorno finds in Hegel the sort of 'thought-led' position just intimated. "Hegel's philosophy, a philosophy of spirit, held fast to idealism [. . .] [to] the doctrine of the identity of subject and object" (H: 10). "[T]he thing itself and its concept are one and the same [in Hegel]" (H: 69). "[A]bsolute idealism [. . .] permits nothing to remain outside the subject" (H: 5; cf. LND: 67). However, Adorno also thinks that Hegel has aspects that pull in a contrary direction. Hegel's dialectic is driven by thought's finding itself inadequate to that which it seeks to grasp (H: 9f.; H: 80). Moreover, Hegel "would have vehemently repudiated the idea of spirit as a free-floating thing distinct from its opposite, the material life of mankind" (HF: 15). In a word, there is a *materialist* side of Hegel (H: 67f.; see also especially H: 45 and H: 63). Now, Adorno believes that once Hegel's face has fully assembled itself, as it were, the idealistic face is the one that stares out. In the final analysis, Hegel propounds an "extreme" (KCPR: 163) idealism whereby the world is made much too dependent upon subjects (cf. ND: xx on "the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity").

Whatever the exact details of Adorno's critique of Hegel, it is clear that Adorno does not want simply to dispense with him. Rather, Adorno believes that one should try to make good on the synthesis that he thinks Hegel botched: a synthesis between idealism and materialism. "[I]dealistic and materialistic dialectics intersect" (ND: 52).[23] So the situation is this. Adorno's dicta – about subjectivity pervading the object, and so forth – are *Hegelian* dicta. Better yet, they express – up to a point, *avow* – the idealistic side of Hegel. 'Up to a point' because Adorno thinks that this idealism must be counterbalanced, or transformed, by a materialism. So we must consider just how Adorno figures that synthesis (if 'synthesis' is not too Hegelian a word).

At this point one might consider some suggestive remarks in Adorno's lectures on Aristotle. I am thinking of the moment where Adorno highly commends the idea, which he associates with Aristotle and German Idealism, that predicates expressing genus do not so much denote the essence of a thing as *comprise* that essence (M: 49 and ff.).[24] But Adorno does not expand on that idea. However, hope remains, for Adorno is more forthcoming when he takes his lead from the role played in conceptual

mediation not by concepts but by the thing or object. For here we find Adorno's doctrine of 'the priority of the object' [*Vorrang des Objekts*].

I begin upon the priority doctrine with this line: "Due to the inequality inherent in the concept of mediation, the subject enters into the object altogether differently from the way the object enters into the subject" (ND: 183). How so? "An object can be conceived [*gedacht*] only by a subject but always remains something other than the subject, whereas a subject by its very nature is from the outset an object as well" (idem). Such is the "difference in weighting" (KCPR: 223) between the subject's mediation of an object, on the one hand, and an object's mediation of a subject, on the other. The difference in weighting is in the object's favour; the object has a priority (or preponderance or primacy – *Vorrang*) over the subject. Here is why. The very nature or being of subjects depends upon objects (upon the objects that the subjects are), whereas the converse is not the case. Still, just what is the mediation by the subject that is at issue? Merely that subjects are required if any object is to be conceived, apprehended? That, again, would be merely epistemic.

Adorno does gloss the priority thesis. He does so, first, in these formulations: thought "heeds a potential in the object" (ND: 19); "The subject is the object's agent, not its constituent" (SO: 506). These formulations are suggestive. They suggest that, without subjects, objects could not enjoy their full objectivity. Does this mean simply that, without the concept of some feature, one could not apprehend the feature? No. For we have seen (§2.2.1) that, according to Adorno, the "subject must always know more and have experienced more than just the phenomenon" (ME: 115). As Adorno puts it elsewhere: "Between the true object and the indubitable object of the senses, between within and without, there is a gulf [. . .]. In order to reflect the thing as it is, the subject must return to it more than he receives from it" (DE: 188). So: every object has features which require for their expression concepts that are not derivable solely from the object itself. This is interesting – but, so far as I can tell, unelaborated. There is another gloss of the priority thesis (and/or perhaps of the idea just presented). But, so far as I can see, that gloss itself adds little. I am thinking of Adorno's call for "a second Copernican turn" (SO: 507; see also ND: 136-140). The proposed turn is a philosophical reorientation, within a fundamentally Kantian, or Hegelian, orientation; an "axial turn" towards the object (ND: xx).[25]

2.3   *Social mediation*

Adorno envisages a social form of mediation in at least the following way.

He maintains that all concepts are social. This form of mediation is *transitive*, in that it takes place *via* the mediation worked by concepts. Thus, these lines: there is a "societal moment of the synthesis of thought" (ME: 66); "there is nothing under the sun, and I mean absolutely nothing, which, in being mediated by human intelligence and human thought, is not also socially mediated" (IS: 15f.; cf. IS: 120, KCPR: 166 and H: 63). The thesis, roughly, is that all concepts are influenced by their social context; hence society influences the (epistemic and/or ontic) determination that concepts perform. I will not further investigate that thesis here.[26] Instead I shall restrict attention to another part of Adorno's thinking on social mediation; one that is more separable than the 'transitive' form from the conceptual form of mediation.

I say '*more* separable' advisedly. The idea which I wish to focus upon can be put this way: society mediates *as* concept, or *analogously* to concepts. Consider once again some claims from Adorno:

> [S]omething like a 'concept' is implicit in society in its objective form [. . .] this objectivity of the concept [is] inherent in the subject matter itself (IS: 32; cf. S&ER: 185)

> [S]ociety can be perceived, almost physiognomically, in individual phenomena (IS: 49)

> [T]o use Hegel's expression which Marx took over from him[:] society is a concretely general concept; that means that while all particulars depend on it, it cannot be logically abstracted from them (IS: 59)

> [T]he social universal [. . .] manifests itself through the individual (IS: 74f.)

> The conflicts that tear society apart resemble the distinction between the concept and the particular facts subordinated to it (LND: 169)

Lastly, and more lengthily:

> Society is allotted precisely what Hegel reserves for spirit as opposed to all the isolated individual moments of the empirical. Those moments are mediated by society, constituted the way things are constituted by spirit for an idealist, prior to any particular influence exerted by society on phenomena: society is manifested in phenomena the way, for Hegel, essence is manifested in them. Society is essentially concept, just as spirit is. As the unity of human subjects who

> reproduce the life of the species through their labor, things come into
> being within society objectively, independent of reflection, without
> regard to the specific qualities of those who labor or of the products of
> labor (H: 19-20 / GS 5: 267)

These claims may assert the aforementioned sociality of ('mediating')
concepts. They may also assert the existence of, or some sort of irreducibility
to, social structures or social laws.[27] But the claims – at least some of them,
and certainly the whole ensemble – intend more. Some sort of *direct* and *deep*
form of social mediation seems to be at issue (where 'direct' means not via
concepts, and where 'deep' means philosophical). So much is suggested not
only by the claims themselves but also by the aforementioned idea of an
intersection between "idealistic and materialistic dialectics", and perhaps by
Adorno's writing that "tradition" is "quasi-transcendental" (ND: 54).[28]

Yet I find nothing in Adorno that explicates the stronger form of social
mediation. Adorno's sociology lectures do give two examples of mediation
by society. The one example is that social factors may be impeding the
discovery of a cure for cancer (IS: 16).[29] The other is that social factors operate
even in the practice of dentistry (IS: 102). These examples are, indeed,
sociological. They do not enlighten as to how society is a "category of
mediation" and thereby "conceptual" (IS: 37). They are not deep – not to do
with beings at some unusual, philosophical level. Perhaps one can find, in
various thinkers that Adorno discusses, and by whom he was influenced,
some conception(s) answering to the type sought. For it may be that some
or all of Hegel, Marx, Durkheim and Simmel offer such conceptions.
However, if Adorno does mean to be enlisting or appropriating one of these
conceptions, or something like one of these conceptions, it is unclear, at least
pending considerable further investigation, how he does so.

3.   What has been achieved?

My hypothesis was this: The notion of mediation would comprise an account
of beings' determination that could explain Adorno's claims about beings'
deformation. More particularly, I had the following idea. The deformation
claims might be explained by an account of deformation that, like the
deformation claims, was both ontic (that is, about beings themselves) and
deep (that is, philosophical or pertaining to beings at some fundamental or
special level). That hypothesis has been no obvious success. I looked to
conceptual and social mediation to supply some model(s) of a determination
that is (or is in each case) both ontic and deep. But Adorno's account of ontic,
as against experiential, conceptual mediation – or the way that the one is

meant to segue into the other – seems very sketchy. And his account of social
mediation (so far as it was separable from conceptual mediation) seemed
ontic but, because merely sociological, not deep. Clearly, then, in some sense
my hypothesis has failed. There is a lack of fit between what I have made of
Adornian determination and what I have made of Adornian deformation.
But there are three ways of interpreting this result. In presenting the three
alternatives, I shall employ the notion or trope of a 'gap', thereby alluding,
perhaps a little superciliously, to the section of *Minima Moralia* called
"Gaps".[30]

(1) *There is a merely apparent gap in Adorno*. On this construal of my results,
Adorno's deformation claims are hyperbolic. They are never both ontic and
deep, although sometimes they *appear* to be so. That construal would make
my hypothesis a failure, but a mitigated one. The blame for the failure would
be mitigated by the hyperbole which, on this construal, Adorno perpetrates.[31]

(2) *There is an actual gap in Adorno.* On this construal, the deformation claims
are not hyperbolic. They do intend, at least sometimes, to assert a
deformation that is both ontic and deep. *But* there is no good explanation
to be found of *how* that is so. On this interpretation, something that should
be present in Adorno is missing. I have been seeking something that one
should look for, in the sense that one has a right to expect its presence. But
equally my strategy will have been an exercise in hunting the Woozle, as it
were, except insofar as it is worth showing that something is missing from
Adorno – and, surely, that would be worth showing.

(3) *There is a gap in my interpretation*. The idea here is this: The deformation
claims are (as in 2) not hyperbolic, and Adorno explains how that is so (or,
at least, one can discover an explanation of how that is so), but I have *not
found* that explanation. On this construal, my hypothesis is correct in
principle but flawed in its execution.

I will not quite try to decide which of the alternatives is correct. But I will
say something that supports, or at least elaborates upon, the third alternative.
I have been brief about, or wholly neglected, some important topics. I am
thinking especially of the following somewhat overlapping areas:
(1) Adorno's relations to Kant, Hegel, and indeed Marx; (2) Adorno's
relationships to ontology and to transcendental philosophy; (3) the causes
that Adorno identifies for the deformation he alleges, causes that are
somewhat visible in the deformation claims themselves and which include
identity thinking [*Identitätsdenken*], exchange [*Tausch*], and reification
[*Verdinglichung*]. We may add (4) Adorno's conceptualism. For it may be

that further investigation of the role that concepts play in experience will illuminate his less epistemic ideas about conceptual determination. Other work of mine does address much within 1-4. But it does so in a manner with which I am somewhat unsatisfied.[32]

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Endnotes

[1] This paper developed from my talk at "Adorno: No Man's Land - 40 Years On", held at the University of Sussex on August 6th 2009. I thank the organisers of the conference for inviting me, and thank my audience for their questions. My paper draws upon Joll (2005) and Joll (2009b). The latter is in part a summary and reworking of the (unpublished) 2005 piece. The same holds of the present paper, though its focus is not that of Joll (2009b). All three pieces represent unfinished business. I hope to take that business further in a forthcoming book that will treat Heidegger as well as Adorno.

[2] I will abbreviate works by Adorno as follows. DE – *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-written with Max Horkheimer; Jephcott translation). GS – *Gesammelte Schriften* (references by volume and then page number). H – *Hegel. Three Studies*. IS – *Introduction to Sociology*. KCPR – *Kant's **Critique of Pure Reason.** * LND – *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*. ME – *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*. MM – *Minima Moralia* (references by item number, denoted '§', or page number). ND – *Negative Dialectics*. P – *Prisms.* S&ER – "Sociology and Empirical Research". SO – "Subject and Object". Interpolations and abridgements are all mine unless indicated otherwise. The converse holds for emphasis in quotations. Page numbers immediately follow abbreviations except where contra-indicated in the list above. I have amended some translations. I mark an amendment only when the amendment owes something to a third party. Still, where I do amend a translation – but also in some other cases – I will refer to the original German with a virgule, e.g. DE: 6 / GS 3: 25.

[3] The remainder of this paper will rather neglect the notion of modernity (but see Joll, 2005: 2.2.1). Moreover, I shall skim over Adorno's account of the *causes* of the situation that he means to diagnose. My closing section weighs the import of that neglect.

[4] I group the claims by text, and the texts themselves by order of composition. Note here that I share the common view of Adorno that his development contains few if any fundamental changes of mind. Note further that the dates given in my

bibliography are often *not* the dates of the *first* publication of the text in question.

[5] I have modified the translation in such a way as to bring it very close to the older translation by Cumming (see 1979: 13).

[6] "[D]ie Unterwerfung alles Seienden unter den logischen Formalismus".

[7] "Das Sein wird unter dem Aspekt der Verarbeitung und Verwaltung angeschaut. Alles wird zum wiederholbaren, ersetzbaren Prozeß, zum bloßen Beispiel für die begrifflichen Modelle des Systems, auch der einzeln Mensch, vom Tier zu schweigen".

[8] "Was ist, ist mehr, als es ist. Dies Mehr wird ihm nicht oktroyiert, sondern bleibt, als das aus ihm Verdrängte, ihm immanent".

[9] "[. . .] die den Subjekten a priori versagt, Subjekte zu sein, Subjektivität selber zum bloßen Objekt erniedrigt".

[10] By 'speaks directly of deformation' I mean: uses a German word translatable with a cognate of the English word 'deformation'. Moreover, such terms – *Deformation* and *Deformiert*, and *Mißbildung* – are rare in Adorno's corpus as a whole.

[11] Compare the following gloss by Andrew Feenberg of Heidegger's critique of modernity. What Heidegger is alleging is a violation of "both humanity and nature at a far deeper level than war and environmental destruction" (1999: 185). Here one glimpses the prospects for a wider project of the type that I mention in my first note.

[12] Or at least that is the largest, or most distinctive, puzzle the deformation claims pose. For the very notion of deformation involves (partly or wholly via the idea of form) the notion of identity; and that notion has, of course, greatly vexed philosophers. The ideas of a change in something's identity, and of a normative identity – ideas that seem also to be at issue with deformation – these ideas are thorny too. I consider Adorno's ideas on normative identity at various places in Joll (2005) and in §3 of Joll (2009b).

[13] Joll (2005: §1.3.2).

[14] I mark that Ashcroft himself, who is considering both Adorno and Heidegger, merely entertains – remains agnostic about – that conclusion.

[15] "Ein jegliches Seiendes ist mehr, als es ist; Sein, in Kontrast zum Seienden, mahnt daran. Weil nichts Seiendes ist, das nicht, indem es bestimmt wird und sich selbst

bestimmt, eines anderen bedürfte, das nicht es selber ist – denn durch es selbst allein wäre es nicht zu bestimmen – weist es über sich hinaus. Vermittlung ist dafür lediglich ein anderes Wort" (GS 6: 109). I have modified the translation of this passage with help from Mr Nicholas Walker.

[16] Rosen's book does not much gloss that statement.

[17] Compare also, perhaps, this: mediation is "entanglement in context" (ND: 106; translation amended with Jarvis, 1998: 205).

[18] Sellars presents his *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* as "incipient *Meditations Hegeliènnes*" (see therein p. 45 and cf. also therein p. 13). One might note further that, coincidentally, Sellars' book appeared in the same year as Adorno's *Metacritique*.

[19] "[D]as Seiende nicht unmittelbar sondern nur durch den Begriff anzuheben".

[20] "[D]er Begriff nichts der Sache Äußerliches und Zufälliges sei [. . .] sondern daß der Begriff, Hegelisch gesprochen, das Leben der Sache selber ausdrückt".

[21] Loux discusses Hilary Putnam and W. v. O. Quine under that heading (see Loux, 2002: chapter 7).

[22] KCPR most fully displays Adorno's interpretation, appraisal, and partial appropriation of Kant.

[23] Translation modified with Pickford (2002: 323).

[24] Here Adorno is giving a rather Hegelian reading of Aristotle. For a comparable account, in the form of an Aristotelian reading of Hegel, see chapters 3 and 5 of Stern (1990).

[25] Adorno presents this turn towards the object in another way too: as a turn to "nonidentity" (see ND: 24). But again – and despite the interest of Adorno's notion(s) of nonidentity – I cannot see that it much helps in the present context. I treat the conception of nonidentity in Joll (2009b: §2).

[26] Joll (2005: §4.3; especially §4.3.2) investigates the idea of social mediation via concepts.

[27] Adorno was keen to press that point (see IS: 22, 29-31, 49; Adorno, 1989: 269-270; and Adorno, 1968). So, too, it seems, was Hegel (see Stern, 2008).

[28] A fuller investigation of that phrase of Adorno's would need to look, at least, at how he understood the relation between history and society, and how he held that – as he puts it at one point – truth has a "temporal core" (Adorno, 2002b: 45).

[29] Here is the text: "I think we need to convince ourselves of this [namely, that 'there is [. . .] absolutely nothing, which [. . .] is not also socially mediated']. It also applies to natural science and technology. Please excuse me if I give a crude example, which I choose only to make clear to you something which easily escapes our awareness. It is that decisive discoveries in medicine, such as that of the cause of cancer and therefore a possible cure for cancer, would probably have been made long ago had not a wholly excessive amount of the social product been spent, for social reasons, on armaments or the exploration of empty stars [. . .] in all parts of the world [. . . .] At any rate, you can see from this crude example how problems that have nothing directly to do with society are nevertheless socially mediated, as we put it; and how far something which, in terms of its content, as a part of nature, seems to have no connection with society is in fact imbued with it".

[30] "Gaps" (MM: §50) begins with, and largely concerns, the following idea: "The writer is urged to show explicitly all the steps that have led him to his conclusion, so enabling every reader to follow the process through and, where possible – in the academic industry – to duplicate it" (MM: 80). Adorno goes on strongly to denounce that urge. He might have regarded what I have done in this paper as an attempt to subject him to the academic industry. I argue back – argue against the relevant parts of Adorno's metaphilosophy – in an earlier article (Joll, 2009a).

[31] Adorno tells us himself that he exaggerates (see Rose, 1978: 12f.). But that candour is not itself mitigating, I think. Joll (2009a) argues – in effect and among other things – that exaggeration has little place in philosophy.

[32] Note 1 above lists that other work. A notable contribution to 1 is O'Connor (2004). A notable contribution to 4 is Bernstein (2001) which, like Hammer (2006) and Finke (2001), examines points of identity and difference between Adorno and John McDowell.

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A Forcefield between Nature, Society and Reason: Approaching Adorno's Philosophy of Language

by Philip Hogh

In the early 1980s, Jürgen Habermas contended, in his seminal *Theory of Communicative Action,* that Adorno's philosophy "represents the exhaustion of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness" (1984: 386). From this point on, Adorno's aesthetics and his philosophy of music received greater attention in philosophical discussions. His epistemology and social philosophy seemed as outdated as his historico-philosophical considerations. I think there are two main reasons for the marginalization of Adorno's philosophy: Firstly, no 'linguistic turn' can be found in his philosophy, or at least no linguistic turn as it has been carried out by the mainstream of philosophy; and, secondly, Adorno's negative critique of society lost its persuasive power and made it apparently impossible to work with his thoughts in a fertile way, especially after 1989. But saying goodbye to Adorno as an exponent of consciousness philosophy had a presupposition: namely, ignoring his own linguistic-philosophical works.[1] Thus, Habermas' influential critique – i.e. that Adorno's philosophy marks the ultimate failure of the philosophy of consciousness paradigm, and does not offer any linguistic-philosophical opportunities – in the end falls short because Habermas did not examine Adorno's linguistic-philosophical works. I do not want to criticize Habermas' argument by only presenting Adorno's philosophy of language. Rather, the adoption of the philosophy of consciousness itself is a problem, as Habermas seems to identify consciousness philosophy as such with its idealistic version mainly represented by Descartes and German Idealism. Although Adorno holds on to a modified concept of metaphysics, his work can by no means be declared idealistic. Most of his epistemological works aim to encircle materialistically altered concepts of consciousness and subjectivity that integrate the Marxian and the Freudian critique of idealism. So even if Habermas is right in declaring Adorno a representative of consciousness philosophy, he still would have to proof that Adorno makes the same mistakes in carrying out his consciousness philosophy as his idealistic ancestors. As Habermas cannot supply the evidence of this argument it can be doubted whether this

part of his critique strikes Adorno's philosophy at all.[2] It would become even more difficult to hold on to Habermas' critique if it can be shown that Adorno's concepts of consciousness and subjectivity are deeply connected with his conception of language, and that the thought behind a sentence such as "The subject becomes a subject only through language" (1992: 137) is crucial for Adorno's philosophy. With the adoption of consciousness philosophy something else was neglected: the reference to the unconscious, to the instincts and drives and to what still can be called human nature, despite all critique of essentialism that has been formulated by poststructuralist philosophy and social sciences. In contrast to Habermas, it is an advantage in Adorno's philosophy of language that language is situated and determined in a forcefield [*Kraftfeld*] between inner and external nature, reason and society, respectively.[3]

In what follows I will pursue this determination by discussing three points. Firstly, by referring to psychoanalysis I will try to outline Adorno's theory of the genesis of language that can be found mainly in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In doing so I will try to demonstrate that the genesis of the subject cannot be understood without the genesis of language and that freedom is connected with language. Secondly, I will examine the role language plays in Adorno's social theory. Thirdly, I will conclude with an attempt to outline Adorno's materialist theory of meaning by referring to his concept of 'constellation'. As I will argue, this theory of meaning is the foundation for Adorno's critique of language and for his critical theory of society.

1.   On the Genesis of Language and Subjectivity

One of the central thoughts in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that the subject became a subject by distancing itself from external nature and by controlling its inner nature in the same process does not leave any other possibility but to situate the genesis of language in that process of emancipation. The historical phenomenon Adorno and Horkheimer use to illustrate the genesis of language is the magic ritual. If, for early human beings, nature basically was a frightening and terrifying power, then magic rituals are to be understood as a method of handling the terrors arising from brute nature. By enacting such rituals, early human beings tried to ease their over-stimulated nervous systems. According to Freud, all nervous systems attempt to keep themselves in an unstimulated condition. A stimulus that is applied to the nervous system from the outside can be discharged by action to the outside (see Freud, 2001: 118). Thus, a stimulus from the outside

does not put the nervous system under constant pressure. A stimulus from within the organism, an instinctual or drive stimulus [*Triebreiz*], or as Freud calls it too, a need [*Bedürfnis*], cannot be discharged by a single action to the outside as it is a constant impact that forces the nervous system to undertake more complex actions "by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation" (ibid: 120). But if the stimuli from the outside are as powerful, omnipresent and permanent as must be pre-supposed of natural threats, and if the shock that is caused by these stimuli on the nervous system is so vast that escaping it is not enough to master these stimuli, the nervous system then has to develop certain techniques that promise temporary and relative rest. In magic rituals, techniques and types of behaviour were developed and established that cannot be explained as more or less immediate reactions to internal and external stimuli that we can find in the animal world. This is what makes magic rituals specifically human. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, language played a crucial role in the evolutionary process in which human life evolved out of mere animalistic life. To demonstrate this point, they illustrate the difference between man and animal by explaining the function of language:

> The animal's world is devoid of concept. It lacks any word to seize the identical in the flux of phenomena, to isolate the same species in the alternation of specimens, or the same thing in altered situations. Even though the possibility of recognition is not lacking, identification is limited to what has been already established. There is nothing in the flux of things that could be labelled as permanent. Yet everything remains one and the same for the lack of any certain knowledge of the past and of any clear expectation of the future [. . .] The life of an animal, unrelieved by the liberating influence of thought, is dreary and harsh. Escape from the dismal emptiness of existence calls for resistance, and for this, speech is essential (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008: 246-247)

This means animalistic life is an example of what Adorno calls the state of undifferentiatedness (see Adorno, 2005: 246). The processes through which early human beings differentiated themselves from mere nature are closely connected with the ability to identify certain experiences as such, to keep them in mind through time, to come back to them, recalling them, and distinguishing them from others. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, human beings have these abilities only when they are able to use *language.* Only when a certain experience is named and identified with a certain word can the experience be remembered and called by its name consciously

without being forcibly repeated in the present. According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, it was nature's predominance, the unknown and the terror it imposed, that made early human beings develop these abilities as they had to handle their terrifying experiences. This happened in magic rituals in which natural terror was honoured in order to master it.[4]

> Everything unknown and alien is primary and undifferentiated: that which transcends the confines of experience; whatever in things is more than their previously known reality. What the primitive experiences in this regard is not a spiritual as opposed to a material substance, but the intricacy of the Natural in contrast to the individual. The cry of terror which accompanies the experience of the unusual becomes its name. It fixes the transcendence of the unknown in relation to the known, and therefore terror as sacredness (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008: 15)

The cry of terror is expressed more or less unwillingly while the natural terror itself is experienced. This is why it is difficult to distinguish it from a mere reflex. By expressing the terror the highly stimulated nervous system discharges itself. But this cry of terror as it is expressed in immediate experience of the natural terror is not yet the name of the deity, which is imagined as being the responsible cause for the terror and gets honoured in the magic ritual. A vocal expression can only become the name of a certain thing if there is a conscious subject that intends to name an object, from which it differs. In a situation in which the natural terror is experienced and the cry of terror is expressed, this necessary difference does not yet exist. Only when the experienced terror is honoured later in the magic ritual and the cry with which the terror was experienced is expressed again does the cry of terror as part of a consciously planned and carried out action start to become a name.

A natural phenomenon causes an extreme terror that has to be dealt with afterwards again and again. The memory of the experienced terror haunts the terrorized. The terror itself was accompanied by the expression of the cry of terror. Both the terror itself and the cry leave an impression in the nervous system. Freud called this impression 'memory trace'. The terror experience gets connected with a certain vocal expression. As the terror was vast, a single vocal expression did not suffice to control it, which is why a subsequent and repeated adaptation was necessary. This adaptation took place in the magic ritual by honouring the natural terror as deity, which should save the archaic collective. To honour the deity it had to be present. Thus, the experienced terror had to be represented, which was done by

expressing the cry that accompanied the terror experience. Through the cry, the memory trace that was left in the nervous system as an impression of the terror experience gets actualized. The original experience is remembered and represented through the act of naming. Additionally, the named itself is also believed to be present when calling it by its name.

Although this supposition is irrational and pure lingual magic, a crucial advantage can be found in it: namely, the imagined presence of the terror that was caused by different magical practices, in which language was only one practice amongst others, made a conscious adaptation possible. While terror is still intense in the ritual, it has no immediate presence. The presence it does have is a product of practical mimetic behaviour (imitation) and conscious imagination. But this difference is highly important. In contrast to the immediate terror experience, the magic ritual's limited area offers possibilities to try out different methods of dealing with the terror. The direct and immediate terror experience leads to panic, dreadful crying and escape, whereas in the magic ritual there already is some kind of distance between the involved persons and the terror they face and honour. The distance that exists in this subsequent adaptation is a first step towards freedom that is immediately connected with language. An experience is kept in mind through time by connecting it with a lingual expression, that is to say, by naming it. As remembered experience the terror can be adapted and new forms of adaptation can be tried out. Now there is an opportunity to refer to the experienced terror in different ways because, as named and identified with a certain word, the experience can be imagined in a conscious act. If the conscious reference to something is possible, then one can refer to that particular thing, but one need not do so. Distanced from the real experience of something, other ways of acting can be attempted, which is why early human beings no longer had to face the real natural terror unprepared. They were no longer defenceless, subject to only their own nervous reactions and to the frightening nature without any possibility for interventions.

The element of freedom that is given by language then is also an element of domination or control.   This is so because if through identifying remembrance of an experience that is only possible through language, other ways of acting can be tried out, the evolving subject thereby gains the opportunity to consciously align its actions. Thus, it is not at the mercy of its own bodily reactions. To the same extent in which phenomena in external nature are determined and named (this means the identical is seized in the flux of phenomena), the subject's inner nature is determined or formed by

aligning its actions to certain objects adequately. It is crucial in the
determination of this element of domination to bear in mind that no subject
makes these experiences as an atomized individual, but rather as a member
of an archaic collective with certain laws and rules to which individual
actions should adhere. The control over external nature has always been
organized collectively. The subject's control over its own inner nature is
neither temporally nor logically earlier (or later) than its control over external
nature.   Both forms of domination and control are equiprimordial
[*gleichursprünglich*].[5] One should not forget that magic rituals themselves
were a part of taming external nature. Praying to the gods was (held to be)
just as much a part of supplying food as sowing and harvesting (Türcke,
1989: 24). The conscious alignment of actions that was presupposed by the
linguistic identification of the actual situation happened under collective
control. How certain situations were identified with words, how these
words were linked with experiences, the way the subjects learned to control
their inner nature, were socially determined. Although understanding and
using linguistic forms correctly is the *conditio sine qua non* for liberating
human beings from the "natural thraldom"(Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008:
13), even in the earliest historical forms of social life language is also an
instrument of control and domination. "When language enters history its
masters are priests and sorcerers. Whoever harms the symbols is, in the
name of the supernatural powers, subject to their earthly counterparts,
whose representatives are those chosen organs of society" (ibid: 20). In this
perspective, according to *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* language is the condition
of the possibility of freedom and domination. In other words, the use of
linguistic signs by human beings is a sign of freedom and domination. Just
as the subject would be unable to control its inner nature according to the
social requirements that are linguistically applied to it without language, so
too would it be unable to achieve freedom from external nature and social
requirements.   Regarding language, the key thought of *Dialectic of
Enlightenment* is that language breaks "natural thraldom" and leads to social
coercion, yet without language the possibility of social liberation would
cease.[6]

2.   Language and Society

Having examined the genesis of language and its relation to the dialectic of
subjective freedom/domination, what then may be said of the relations
between language, freedom and domination within society, more
specifically, *capitalist* society? Adorno argues that language in capitalism is
a sign system, although he adds that language does not merge in this

function. This should always be kept in mind. How best can we understand the assertion that language is a sign system? It is difficult to clarify which linguistic theories Adorno refers to in this assertion, but it is unlikely to be others than those most prevalent during his lifetime.   Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics must be mentioned here, but also different kinds of analytic philosophy (especially the early Wittgenstein). To demonstrate the problem Adorno faced in the relation between language and capitalism, I will briefly refer to Saussure's theory.

In his *Course in General Linguistics,* Saussure argues that, above all, signs are arbitrary (see Saussure, 1967: 85). This means that the meaning of signs is not designated once and for all but is determined by language as a systematic whole – Saussure calls it *langue* – in and through which all signs are in clearly defined relations to one another. Their meaning is not presupposed as a positive determination but is constituted negatively in language as a whole. The age-old controversy, that is carried out in Plato between Kratylos and Hermogenes – namely, whether the meaning of linguistic expressions is defined naturally or conventionally – Saussure judges in favour of conventionalism. Admittedly, the meaning of signs is not constituted by mere accident as it depends on the relations between the signs in the *langue*, but there are no criteria outside language that prescribe stringently what a sign actually means. So the meaning of signs is not completely accidental but it is open to change. If the language as a whole changes then the meanings of the single signs change as well, as their relations will alter (ibid: 88).

What can be said then about the relationship between the system language – *langue* – and certain linguistic acts, specifically speech acts – which Saussure calls *parole*? If the meaning of a sign is merely defined by its differential relations to other signs, speaking has nothing to do with the constitution of meaning. The individual speaker can only choose between different meanings that are already fixed in the objectively given language system and decide which meaning fits best the intention he or she wants to express. In contrast, speech has no influence on the expressed meanings that are already immanently defined by the system language. Only those things can be said or linguistically expressed that the language system allows. At this point, Saussure arrives at a partial agreement with Wittgenstein, but probably in a manner that differs from how either of them would have expected: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 1951: 5-6) and if something cannot be expressed in language it will not earn any social or intersubjective attention.

Having noticed this, Marx's critique of political economy brings about an enlightening analogy. Capital as the social and economic process of production and reproduction is preordinated to every single subjective thought and action, respectively; every action is carried out within it. The processes of Capital appear to be completely independent from individual action(s). Yet, in reality, the social whole only exists *as a result of* all individual actions. The former depends upon the latter and is therefore potentially changeable, even while it appears to the subjects as being unalterable. In this regard, Saussure's theory that language is preordinated to every individual speech act (and cannot be influenced by it) is a linguistic reflexion of capitalist society. The subject's submission under the social whole is represented as language's independence or autonomy from speech. Although language does not exist without the speech acts every subject carries out daily, language seems to be an autonomous system under which the subjects are subordinate. This is why Adorno draws the following negative conclusion: "The sign system of language, by its mere existence, takes everything, to begin with, into something that is held in readiness by society; and it defends this society in its own form prior to all content" (1986: 33). And once again: "[L]anguage imprisons those who speak it, [. . .] as a medium of their own it has essentially failed" (Adorno, 1991: 189). Instead of developing and expressing their thoughts on an individual basis, subjects adapt to the social whole in their linguistic expressions. If language is reduced to a medium of intersubjective communication it becomes an instrument whose main function is the preservation of the social process of production and domination. The subjects take part in social communication, but the latter through this very process is deformed. The connection between language and what the subjects think, want and desire is severed. The subjects lose the ability to express their experiences linguistically. Moreover, as an instrument of communication, language ensures that subjective needs are channelled according to what is socially demanded. Thus, the subjective needs are restricted and moulded by communicative language. "The layer of experience which created the words for their speakers has been removed; in this swift appropriation language acquires the coldness which until now it had only on billboards and in the advertisement columns of newspapers" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008: 165-166). "The universal system of communication, which on the face of it brings human beings together and which allegedly exists for their sake, is forced upon them" (Adorno, 1991: 191).

As a system of mere signs, language's primary purpose is aligning the subject's thoughts and actions so that they do not interfere with the value

utilization of Capital. Language decays to a system of instructions for practical purposes. The subject no longer has to reflect upon the (mutable) meaning of words; instead, their meanings are reduced to what they mean here and now.

> The more completely language is lost in the announcement, the more words are debased as substantial vehicles of meaning and become signs devoid of quality; the more purely and transparently words communicate what is intended, the more impenetrable they become. The demythologization of language, taken as an element of the whole process of enlightenment, is a relapse into magic (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008: 164)

Opposed to this re-mythologization, Adorno argues for recovering language as a medium of expressing experiences.

3. Language as a Forcefield

If language would merge completely in its communicative function, critique of language and society would not be possible. As Adorno retains this possibility, the question arises: how must language be conceptualized, if not as a sign system? Against this concept of language, Adorno always emphasizes language's *historicity.* He grasps language in a similar way as musical material, which is characterized by a historical process of decay. "Today the philosopher confronts a decayed language. His materials are the ruins of words, to which history binds him" (Adorno, 1998: 368-369). The decay is to be understood as the reification of linguistic forms, especially the form of judgment, which prevents subjective experiences of the objective world from being expressed. The linguistic forms have become useless for their purpose of expressing experiences. The problem with the linguistic form of judgment is the problem of identification. Every concept's meaning is restricted in its use within the judgment. As a tendency of false immediacy, meaning is reduced to what the concept says here and now. This is the reason for the emerging delusion of the meaning of a concept being fixed before it is used in a judgment. Opposed to this, Adorno argues that no concept would be without the "more" of language. In every use of a concept its entire history is resonating – i.e. the many different usages of the concept scattered over history. These usages are hidden by the actual usage and by the form of the judgment. The history resonating in every concept is not merely etymological. It also encapsulates the *social* history inscribed in the history of meaning through the linguistic practices of the subjects living in societies. Thus, language is connected with the subjects' bodily and spiritual

life, as well as with the ways in which subjects are socially related to each other.

The forcefield of language consisting of the relations between the subject's bodily, spiritual [*geistigen*] and social life can be better grasped by using Adorno's concept of *constellation.* Adorno assumes that as much as concepts are involved in language as a whole, they are always referred to non-conceptualities.

> In truth, all concepts, even the philosophical ones, refer to nonconceptualities, because concepts on their part are moments of the reality that requires their formation, primarily the control of nature. What conceptualization appears to be from within, to one engaged in it – the predominance of its sphere, without which nothing is known – must not be mistaken for what it is in itself (Adorno, 1973: 11)

Thus, the meaning of a concept or the meaning of linguistic expressions is not only constituted by the immanency of language itself, by the way signs are related to each other, but also by the concept's reference to the non-linguistic and non-conceptual world.

Within the non-linguistic and non-conceptual world, it is necessary to distinguish between subjective and objective elements. On the one hand, subjective experiences are expressed in language, but, on the other, these experiences are always experiences of the objective social world. In language the subject expresses how it experiences the objective world. In doing so, it uses words and concepts whose content is historically determined. The words are not linked with completely new meanings but the subject attempts to objectify its experiences of the objective world in its individual expression. The subject thereby has to face the objective world and the contents language turns toward it. Thus, Adorno's speaking subject is no autocratic or absolute subject that searches and chooses among arbitrary and removable linguistic dresses for fixed thoughts and contents. On the contrary, Adorno argues: "Without externalizing itself in language, subjective intention would not exist at all. The subject becomes a subject only through language" (1992: 136-137). The meaning of linguistic expressions is constituted in linguistic practice, in which the subject has to draw on the traditional content of the used words, where the reference to the traditional contents is a definite denial or determinate negation [*bestimmte Negation*]. This is why, according to Adorno, the meanings of concepts and words do not exist as fixed entities. Instead, meaning must be determined within history, in the spatio-temporal realm in which subjectivity and objectivity are interwoven without being

identified in immediate unity. The meaning of linguistic expressions is
constituted *constellationally.* In every linguistic expression, subjective and
objective, bodily and spiritual, individual and social, elements crystallize.
What an expression means cannot be pre-determined and then expressed
through the utilization of arbitrary words. How something is said defines
the intended meaning that changes when it is expressed. So acts the dialectic
of expression and thought:

> Expression is relieved of its accidental character by thought, on which
> it toils as thought toils on expression. Only an expressed thought is
> succinct, rendered succinct by its presentation in language; what is
> vaguely put is poorly thought. Expression compels stringency in what
> it expresses (Adorno, 1973: 18)

It is the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, nature and history, body
and mind, that defines language not as a sign system but as a *forcefield,* which
makes critique of linguistic reification possible. If language is conceptualized
as the social arena in which every subject searches for an individual
expression that is socially acknowledged and not repressed, then it becomes
an arena where traces of a different social order may be sought. Perhaps
Adorno's own technically complex use of language contains within it the
notion that every single word may be significant for bringing about
reconciliation.

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Endnotes

[1] For a more exact analysis of this problem, see Christoph Demmerling's important
work on language and reification (Demmerling, 1994: 148).

[2] The question whether Habermas is right in accusing Adorno of not having revealed
the normative foundations of his critique of reason is different from the question of
whether it is correct to regard Adorno's philosophy as consciousness philosophy in
such a negative way. Although these questions are connected, for my purposes here
I will focus on the second one.

[3] The expression "language as a forcefield" cannot be found in Adorno's published
work but in his preliminary work for the "Jargon of Authenticity" (Typoskript, 10070)
that can be studied in the Theodor W. Adorno-Archive at the Akademie der Künste,
Berlin.

4 For a deeper analysis of this matter, see Türcke (2005; 2008).

5 At this point, Michael Tomasello's groundbreaking anthropological theory on the origins of human cognition and communication could be connected with Dialectic of Enlightenment and the materialistic psychoanalytic theory by Christoph Türcke and Alfred Lorenzer. Where Tomasello's work lacks an analysis of archaic collective's social practices, Adorno and Horkheimer, and Türcke, stress the violence evident in these collectives. Where Adorno and Horkheimer, and Türcke, forget to analyze the role communication played in these collectives, Tomasello offers a broad examination of primate and infant language. As a result, it is likely that these theories could be used to mutually illuminate their respective blind spots. See Tomasello (1999; 2008), Türcke (2005) and Lorenzer (2002).

6 It is this thought that connects Adorno's and Horkheimer's theory of language with the early works of Jürgen Habermas. In "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" Habermas says that with language the idea of a "herrschaftsfreien" consensus is given. But, as an idea, this promise of freedom still has to be realized in social practices, which is prevented by present capitalism. For both Adorno and the young Habermas, language is the condition of the possibility of freedom, but it does not guarantee freedom's social realization. See Habermas (1976: 163).

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Aesthetic Praxis

by Josh Robinson

Contemporary actionism also represses the fact that the longing for freedom is closely related to the aversion to praxis. Praxis was a reflex in response to mortal danger; it still misrepresents this, where it wants to abolish mortal danger. It is to this extent that art is the critique of praxis as unfreedom; in this way its truth increases (Adorno, 1977a: 762)

There is a tendency in some of the few explicitly 'political' readings of Adorno to argue against 'prioritizing his writings on aesthetics'. Against such readings, I would like to insist on the centrality of these very writings to any understanding of praxis that could be reasonably be thought of as being informed by Adorno's thought. I am not, however, going to make any claim for their priority above all else, and I certainly will not be arguing in favour of an apolitical or depoliticised aestheticism. Indeed, to the extent that such an aestheticism is the object of such critiques, I agree with it entirely. However, both the reduction of Adorno's aesthetics to such an aestheticism – and correspondingly, any attempt to let the critique of this reduction stand for a critique of Adorno's aesthetics as a whole, or even of a focus on them – are abbreviated.

In the appropriately titled aphorism from *Minima Moralia*, 'Baby with the bathwater', Adorno insists, in relation to the claim that culture has become ideology, that "this very thought, equivalent to all ranting against the lie, has itself a suspicious tendency to become ideology" (1980: 49). That is, while there is truth in the observation that culture is complicit in the degradation of damaged life, it does not follow that all culture can be rejected as tainted by the administered world that has resulted from the dialectic of Enlightenment. My claim, more specifically, is twofold: firstly, that Adorno's writings on aesthetics are central to his understanding of anything we might think of as emancipatory praxis; secondly, and reciprocally, that such an emancipatory praxis is central to understanding Adorno's aesthetics.

I am hesitant to refer to what I have termed 'emancipatory praxis' as political praxis. This is not out of a desire to deny its political characteristics – quite the opposite, in fact – but in an attempt to avoid restricting the concept of emancipatory praxis to the field of what we are currently able to think of as

'politics'.   The terms 'politics' and, to an even greater extent, 'political activism', are overdetermined in relation to the praxis under discussion in this paper.   What I refer to here as emancipatory praxis – or more simply, praxis – should be understood as something that not only offers a critique of all forms of domination, but also constitutes moments that point to forms of life that are free from domination.

Artworks are "less than praxis, and more", Adorno insists in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970: 358).   *Less,* because as artworks, they shy away from politics as we understand it, and thus do not constitute interventions in the political sphere. This is all the more true of committed artworks, which only succeed in demonstrating this very limitation through their failure to become praxis. At the same time, artworks are *more* than praxis because, by claiming to exist only for their own sake, they stand outside the system of social relations in which something's value is determined solely according to the dominant principle of exchange.   Unlike the restricted view of political practice tacitly endorsed by the committed work – endorsed insofar as it accepts not only the reality of the political situation it aims to change, but also the restricted field of politics in which it operates – the aestheticist ideal of art for its own sake points to the possibility of life beyond this restriction.

Art, that is, represents, "by virtue of its turn away from praxis, the denunciation of the narrow-minded untruth of practical being" (Adorno, 1970: 358).   Art constitutes the critique of "activity as the cryptogram of domination" (ibid: 358-359).   The critique, that is, of activity mediated through capital, through the production of exchange-value – that is to say, the making of things for the sake of what they are not.   To this extent, I am wary of arguing for a programmatic unity of aesthetics and politics, or even for their closer co-implication.   This is because the particular form of their separation is an epiphenomenon of bourgeois culture, which must be overcome rather than reinscribed.   As such, this paper does not call for the application of aesthetics to the political sphere, a manoeuvre which would presuppose the limits imposed on it by bourgeois society, but the rejection of and movement beyond these limits.   My aim is not the unity of aesthetics and politics, but rather the abolition of both through a solidarity, as it were, with aesthetics that works towards the moment of its fall.

In the rest of this paper, I will first discuss Adorno's configuration of the relationship between theory and praxis, focusing primarily on what the 'Marginalia to Theory and Praxis' reveal about the status of Adorno's mainly theoretical oeuvre.   I will then, as it were, *invert* the manoeuvre, and consider

the reciprocal implications of one explicitly theoretical work – *Aesthetic Theory* – for Adorno's concept of praxis. My aim is not so much to develop a concept of an aesthetically reflected political praxis, but rather to call into question the social reality that enables us to think the possibility that aesthetics might inform politics, and to suggest – following the model of Adorno's aesthetic theory – some ways of responding to the impasse posed by their actually existing separation.

Reflecting in 1969 on the relationship between *Negative Dialectics* and the German manifestation of the movements of 1968, Adorno was critical of what he saw as a hostility to theory within the student movement, warning that insisting on the unity of theory and praxis often results in effect with the subordination of theory to praxis, or even in the deletion of theory altogether:

> The much-invoked unity of theory and praxis tends to cross over into
> the predominance of praxis. Many tendencies defame theory itself
> as a form of oppression; as if praxis didn't immediately depend on
> theory (Adorno, 1977b: 795)

I am not going to address here the question of the extent to which this criticism applies to the events of 1968, in Frankfurt and elsewhere. Significant here are the consequences for the way in which Adorno thinks the relationship between theory and praxis is – and, importantly, should be – configured.

Indeed, returning to the 'Baby with the bathwater' aphorism of *Minima Moralia*, it is clear that, even twenty years earlier, Adorno was already wary of the insistence on the unity of theory and praxis, when he argues:

> Ever since all talk of utopia was shelved, for as long as the unity of
> theory and praxis has been being demanded, we have become all too
> practical. Fear of the impotence of theory brings about the pretence
> of committing oneself to the omnipotent process of production, thus
> thoroughly conceding the impotence of theory (1980: 49)

Adorno's claim is that the demand for the almost mythical unity of theory and praxis has become some sort of figure of reconciliation on which dialectical thought has come to depend. However, it has done so at the expense of the utopian moment in dialectical thought – the insistence on the unity of theory and praxis has become an inadequate substitute for the utopian reconciliation that emancipatory thought takes as its goal. That is,

as a guiding principle of thought, the unity of theory and praxis is anything but a utopian moment, representing rather a false reconciliation with and accommodation to the administered world.

It is in this context that praxis can so easily be reduced to the mere semblance of praxis, which for Adorno "bequeaths its semblance-character to all the actions which inherit unbroken the old violent *gestus* of praxis" (1977a: 759). Praxis cannot exist independently of theory: any praxis that attempts to ignore or subordinate theory is no praxis at all. However, praxis contains within itself a resistance to its dependence on theory, the desire to exist independently of theory, which conversely destroys it. This corresponds to theory's aversion to praxis, an aversion which it takes from its longing for freedom – given the tendency of praxis to reaffirm rather than challenge the limits of actually existing politics, the emancipatory moment in theory is necessarily opposed to this restricted view of praxis.

Theory has by its nature emancipatory aspirations. Yet on its own it is unable to fulfil them. This constitutes the limit of dialectical thinking: the speculative moment in thought can point to utopia, even if only as a negative image, but it is unable to succeed in attaining it. But it would be wrong to think that theory needs in some way to be 'completed' by a praxis that is imagined as complimentary to it, less still by a praxis that has divorced itself from theory. At its best, praxis can illustrate what theory is itself unable to be, but only when praxis does not attempt to free itself from theory's constraints. In relation to such a praxis, Adorno insists that a "concept of praxis that is not narrow-minded can now only refer to politics, to social relations, which to a great extent condemn the praxis of each individual to irrelevance" (1977a: 764).

In play here is a concept of politics well beyond the limits of the bourgeois political sphere, a concept of praxis which instead aims at the foundation of politics as we understand it, at the configuration of social relations. Moreover, this understanding of politics condemns to irrelevance the praxis of the individual activist, who by definition can only act within the bounds imposed by the current limits on politics. Indeed, Adorno insists that the emancipatory moment is best represented not by praxis, but by theory, arguing that "Theory stands for what is not narrow-minded. Despite all its unfreedom, it is the bearer of freedom in what is not free" (1977a: 763). This brings theory up against its own limits, the limits of thought, an impasse that Adorno presents in the following terms:

> While thinking restricts itself to subjective, practically valorisable
> reason, its other, of which it loses control, is correspondingly ascribed
> to an increasingly non-conceptual praxis, which recognises no
> measure other than itself. The bourgeois spirit unites autonomy and
> practical hostility to theory just as antinomically as the society that
> bears this spirit (1977a: 761)

Adorno is describing what might be termed the false reconciliation between
theory and praxis that consists in bourgeois society, 'false' not because it
preserves the contradictions, but rather because theory and praxis are unable
to confront each other except as deformed shadows of what they might be.
The contradictions, that is, while obviously present, do not emerge in
confrontation with one another on their own terms. This is the tendency of
bourgeois society to elide the distinction between things as they are and
things as they ought to be, to reduce the yearning for reconciliation to the
false reconciliation with bourgeois society.

I will now begin to address how we might, within these bourgeois social
relations that permeate our thought, move towards an understanding of a
praxis that does not reaffirm the constraints of this society, but rather works
towards a future beyond them. This involves two questions, the relationship
between which is not clear at first sight – that of (1) what this praxis might
look like, and (2) how we are able to conceive of it in this state of unfreedom.
At first glance, it would appear that the second question – how we can
conceive of such a praxis – is a prerequisite to answering the first, and will
indeed lead us to an answer. However, this would be to remain within the
constraints of the very enlightenment-reason from which emancipatory
praxis aspires to escape. As such, there is no answer to the question 'how
can we know?' beyond the attempt itself to know.

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno claims that there exists within art the trace of a
praxis that is in a radical sense yet-to-come: "Artworks draw credit on a
praxis which has not yet begun, and of which no one can say whether it will
honour its exchange" (1970: 129). That is to say, there is something
necessarily unknowable about this praxis – it has elements which ensure that
it cannot, under existing social relations, be known in its totality. This is
bound up with the fact that such a praxis, like artworks themselves, must be
understood as being far removed from empirical reality.

> The relationship of aesthetic purposiveness to real purposiveness was
> historical: artworks' immanent purposiveness came to them from
> outside. Collectively honed aesthetic forms are in many ways

> purposive forms that have become purposeless, such as ornaments,
> which not without reason drew on mathematics and astronomy. This
> path is mapped out by the magical origin of artworks: they were
> elements of a praxis which wanted to influence nature, separated
> themselves from it in the beginnings of rationality, and gave up the
> deception of real influence (Adorno, 1970: 210)

Artworks, that is, carry within themselves the trace of the historical and pre-
historical mystical praxis in which they have their origins. It is through the
rejection of this praxis – the rejection, that is, of the attempt to influence via
ritual the reality in which they exist – that artworks come to stand outside
the means-ends rationality that characterises bourgeois (if not only
bourgeois) society. This is what Adorno describes, in relation to Beckett, as
art's distance from praxis:

> Endgame is neither a play about the atom bomb nor without content:
> the determinate negation of its content becomes a formal principle
> and the negation of content as such. Beckett's oeuvre issues the
> terrible answer to the art which through its beginnings, its distance
> from any praxis, in the face of the threat of death, became ideology
> through the harmlessness of its mere form (1970: 371)

This is the significance of Adorno's claim that what artworks say "is not what
their words say" (1970: 274). Any attempt to reduce an artwork to its
paraphrasable content (and, indeed, any artwork that makes the claim to be
identical with this propositional content) will lapse into the promotion of
ideology. It is to this extent that artistic praxis, technical praxis, is closely
related to emancipatory praxis. While artistic technique might at first glance
appear not to have a great deal to do with a work's political and social
significance, Adorno is adamant that there is in fact a fundamental
relationship between the two: it is at least in part through artistic praxis –
technique – that artworks are able to remove themselves from the context of
means-ends rationality.

The dominant social sphere, in which this rationality is most visibly present,
is that of capitalist production, to which art has an ambiguous relationship.
The procedures of artistic technique are closely related to the forces of
production at their most developed, but relate to their material rather
differently than in the capitalist mode of production:

> The aesthetic name for the mastery of material – technique, borrowed
> from the ancient usage that counted the arts among the artisanal

> activities – is in its current meaning relatively new. It bears the traces
> of a phase in which, analogously to science, method appeared to be
> independent of its object. All artistic procedures that form the
> material and allow themselves to be directed by it converge
> retrospectively under the technological aspect, even those which have
> not yet divorced themselves from the artisanal axis of the medieval
> production of goods, with which art, in resistance to capitalist
> integration, never fully broke (Adorno, 1970: 316)

Artistic technique, that is, preserves historically outdated productive
methods, even in works that make use of features of capitalist production at
its most advanced. It is clear from this passage that what Adorno refers to
as technique is constrained not only by the state of development of the forces
of production, but also by the material itself that is being worked. It is
significant that Adorno refers to the production of the middle ages as
'artisanal praxis' – it is scarcely imaginable that he would use the term
'praxis' to refer to the production of exchange-values under capitalist social
relations, a form of production which art categorically rejects. As Adorno
writes, "What is social about art is its immanent movement against society,
not its obvious assumption of a position. Its historical *gestus* pushes
empirical reality away from itself, of which artworks as things are
themselves a part" (1970: 336).

In other words, artworks reject both the social relations under which they
are created and most of that which calls itself political praxis within and
against these social relations. But their rejection of praxis is neither
unequivocal nor static. "The more deeply artworks are deciphered, the less
their opposition to praxis remains absolute; even artworks are something
other than what they are at first, their basis, namely that opposition, and
artworks expose its mediation" (1970: 358). To claim that artworks are
opposed to praxis is an oversimplification. Rather, they are opposed to the
reduced view of praxis, according to which it only represents that which
theory cannot be, and is to this extent opposed to theory. Adorno sets out
in the same paragraph how he thinks the relationship between art and praxis
should be configured:

> Art's dialectical relation to praxis is that of its social effect. That
> artworks intervene politically is worthy of doubt; if it happens on
> occasion, it is usually peripheral to them; if they strive towards it,
> they tend to undermine their concept. Their true social effect is highly
> mediated, a stake in the spirit which in subterranean processes
> contributes to changing society, and which is concentrated in

> artworks; they attain such a stake only through their objectivation. The effect of artworks is that of a reminder which they cite through their existence, and hardly that a manifest praxis responds to their latent praxis; its autonomy has moved itself too far away from its immediacy (1970: 359)

It would be wrong to see artworks as any sort of immediate representation of utopia, for this would not only predetermine and thus block off the way to utopia, but also ignore the fact that artworks are themselves in no way free from mediation. The social effect of artworks must be distinguished not only from the aim of their makers, but also from their own intention. Artworks are by their nature unable to be what they want to be, which in turn frees them to do what only they can do: namely, point to a world that is not mediated through the commodity form.

This is the significance of Adorno's claim that "art and theory have the same intention", that art "repeats in itself, modifies and so to say neutralises praxis, and so takes up positions" (1970: 358). Both art and theory, that is, criticize praxis in the name of its own aspirations. It is in this respect that the Marxist idea of the unity of theory and praxis represents a false understanding of the relationship between the two. Theory and praxis cannot be added together to complete one another. The relationship between them rather shows what is lacking in both, but which the other cannot fully provide. The simple unity of theory and praxis requires an abstract concept of subjectivity, in which, for Adorno, "the process of rationalisation comes to an end", and which he insists in the 'Marginalia to Theory and Praxis' can "in the strong sense no more do anything than the spontaneity which is attested to it can be imagined of the transcendental subject" (1977a: 760). Against this empty, abstract subjectivity, I would like to close by suggesting that Adorno's understanding of art points towards ways in which we might begin to conceive of a praxis that is not opposed either to art or to theory, but rather responds to them. In the 'Paralipomena' to *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno claims that "in the concept of art, play is the moment through which art raises itself immediately beyond the immediacy of praxis and its ends" (1970: 469). He goes on to allude to a praxis that is not restricted by the requirements of political activism, based on the means of satisfying the needs of life – enjoyment, pleasure, autonomy (Adorno, 1970: 472-473). This would be a praxis that does not depend on abstract, means-ends rationality, but which rather starts from the moments in which this reality is challenged. It is in this respect that Adorno can assert in *Aesthetic Theory* that "Praxis is not the effect of works, but encapsulated in their truth-content" (1970: 367). This is not to claim that there exists in the experience of artworks – less still in the

enjoyment of them – some sort of experience of heaven on earth, of utopia within damaged life, but that within artworks is encoded, in Adorno's terms, liberated society beyond both irrationality and the instrumental rationality of means and ends (1970: 338).

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Theses Against Occultism **Today: Towards Capitalism as Occultism?**

by Chris O'Kane

This paper[1] looks at aspects of Adorno's writings on occultism, as found in §151 of *Minima Moralia* entitled 'Theses Against Occultism', and in the text *The Stars Down to Earth.* These writings have received relatively little attention in existing literature, even in theorizations that look specifically at the intersection of capitalism and religion. In this speculative (and, hopefully, suggestive) paper, my aims are twofold. Firstly, I hope to provide a reading of Adorno's theorization of the intersection of occultism and capitalism that potentially rivals readings of capitalism as religion. Secondly, I aim to demonstrate what I take to be the most prescient elements of Adorno's theorization of occultism for analyzing capitalist culture today. I will begin with a short section that draws a contrast between Adorno's notion of occultism and Benjamin's *Capitalism as Religion.* I try to show that, as suggestive as Benjamin's fragment is, it is also insubstantial, inasmuch as it fails to address aspects of capitalism that do no gibe with the religious comparisons Benjamin wants to establish. In focusing on the most prescient parts of Adorno's writings on occultism, I then try to argue that Adorno's writings address these comparisons in a fruitful manner.

If time permits, I will also give some consideration as to what place Adorno's theorization of occultism has in the contemporary cultural context. While it is true that Adorno ties occultist practices to capitalist culture of his time, the popularity of occultism in the form of the 'new age' movement, and its dissemination into popular culture, has dramatically expanded in the intervening years. This leads me to argue that Adornian occultism is now more insidious and widespread. This is because many non-occultist aspects of neo-liberal capitalist culture have taken on the characteristics Adorno uses in his writings on occultism. Roughly speaking, I think Adorno's description of occultism as a system of beliefs that purportedly provide access to a good life through individual adherence to the irrational/rational practices of occultism in a chaotic, potentially apocalyptic world, capture something of the prevalent objective and subjective attitudes towards capitalism and life under capitalism in our time.

1.   Benjamin: Capitalism as Religion

Capitalism as Religion is a compelling fragment that presents Benjamin at his most gnomic. In the text, Benjamin states that "Capitalism essentially serves to satisfy the same worries, anguish, and disquiet formerly answered by so-called religion. Capitalism is an essentially religious phenomenon". He goes on to say that capitalism is a "pure religious cult, perhaps the most extreme there ever was" and draws four parallels between capitalism and religion. Yet, for all its suggestiveness, the fragment is lacking in detail (although this has not prevented Giorgio Agamben from assimilating its ideas into his own work, perhaps even encouraging it; see Agamben, 2007).

Benjamin's and Agamben's influential works, respectively, compare capitalism and religion in, what I will term, a *formal functional* sense. That is to say, both argue that capitalism has broadly similar characteristics to religion to the extent that people's attitudes towards religion formally resemble their attitude towards capitalism, and that what they describe as their attitude, or perhaps the act of worship towards capitalism, resembles cultic or sacred attitudes of worship.

Yet despite the scintillating picture we get of capitalism as a religion, one cannot help but notice at least four major differences between the depictions of religion and capitalism, respectively. These may be summarized as follows:

(1) Capitalism is premised upon the atomized individual, whereas religion is greatly focused on 'the flock' – that is, *groups* of believers rather than *individual* believers.

(2) Religions have universal-moral commandments that must be followed if a person is to be deemed good and attain a religious conception of the good life. In contrast, capitalism does not contain any such universal-moral commandments in its corporeal vision of the good life, concomitant as it is with financial success, luxury, abundance, leisure, ever-increasing consumer choice, and so on.

(3) In religion, God is the ultimate explanation that provides order to the universe, through which everything that happens is (usually) ultimately seen as the result of a pure, good, all-knowing intelligence that is beyond human comprehension. Although this is similar in many ways to an irrational faith in the 'market', the latter – particularly nowadays – is not seen as infallible.

The economic crisis, while depicted by many as the natural downside to capitalism, has not – with the possible exception of some whackos – been perceived to have happened as part of a wiser, preordained, grand and good plan.

(4) Redemption, even in the afterlife, is an inherent part of religious belief, while any type of redemption that occurs in capitalism happens during this lifetime. Moreover, redemption in capitalism is not linked to an adherence to universal morals, but rather to the achievement of individual happiness and/or success.

What Adorno describes as occultism, in contrast, does seem to resemble capitalism on these four major points. Regarding the first, occultism is premised upon the atomized individual. Its morality and ethics is premised upon idiosyncratic individual behaviour leading to a good life that resembles success and happiness. Occultism has a chaotic metaphysics where 'shit happens', which is somewhat akin to the 'natural downside' of the free market. Occultism also entails a notion of redemption that is corporeal and achieved through the individual following these idiosyncratic edicts.

In turning to Adorno's writings on occultism, I will focus on these prescient aspects, which I take to have accrued increasing relevance since their initial publication.

2.   Adorno: Theses Against Occultism

In many ways, the theorizations contained in 'Theses Against Occultism' represent a kind of 'greatest hits' of Adorno's critical social theory, with the nine theses providing a sort of case study of some of Adorno's most utilized concepts. Oddly enough, occultism itself is never defined. But Adorno's caustic descriptions of it cover a number of practices from astrology to fortune-telling and mysticism, all of which are based on irrational systems of thought that purportedly provide people with esoteric knowledge meant to be utilized to achieve some form of happiness, success or well-being. Adorno, in contrast, argues that occultism is a form of (ir)rationality that is ultimately social ideology because the occultist system of beliefs that purportedly provide access to a means of ascertaining a good life through individual adherence to esoteric knowledge is actually mediated by and reflects the late capitalist social totality. Adorno's explanation of why this is the case begins with the *fetish.* Here, Adorno's Lukácsian inspired use of Marx's fetish-character of commodities is re-assimilated to its religious and

superstitious etymology. But, importantly, its use for Adorno retains its
Marxian – that is to say, *social* – basis. As Adorno states:

> The occultist draws the ultimate conclusion from the fetish-character
> of commodities; menacingly objectified labour assails him on all sides
> from demonically grimacing objects. What has been forgotten in a
> world congealed into products, the fact that it has been produced by
> men, is split off and misremembered as a being-in-itself added to that
> of the objects and equivalent to them. Because objects have frozen in
> the cold light of reason, lost their illusory animation, the social quality
> that now animates them is given an independent existence both
> natural and supernatural, a thing among things (2005: 239)

The social basis of occultism is then produced (and reproduced) by the
following: the underlying social paradox of the unconscious creation of an
alienated world – i.e. late capitalism – that dominates its creators. Crucially,
this objective socio-natural world of reified things possesses a fetish-
character, which in the case of occultism gives occultist things a "natural and
supernatural" quality (Adorno, 2005: 239). This occultist quality, of course,
veils the true socially alienated conditions that construct these supernatural
things by displacing the power and potential of the social into the false
surrogate of occultism upon which human needs and desires are projected.
These false surrogates are the occultist bases for esoteric knowledge – such
as astrological signs, and so forth – which, as Adorno argues, deny the
alienation of which it is itself proof and product, and concocts surrogates for
non-existent experience.

There is, then, also a psychological element to occultism. The latter is also a
psychologically fetishized object of consciousness. It is a form of regression
conforming to the social fetish, the supposedly objective and naturalized
world of late capitalism. In Adorno's words, "By its regression to magic
under late capitalism, thought is assimilated to late capitalist forms" (2005:
239). This is because, again, in Adorno's own words:

> Occultism is a reflex-action to the subjectification of all meaning, the
> complement of reification. If, to the living, objective reality seems deaf
> as never before, they try to elicit meaning from it by saying
> abracadabra (2005: 240)

Abracadabra, as an attempt at ascertaining meaning from objective reality,
is where the irrational/rational aspect of occultism comes in. Because socially
constructed objective reality has turned against its creators and is deaf to

their needs, and because consciousness has regressed, occultism becomes the outlet for rational needs displaced onto irrational objects. This displacement, however, is ultimately ideological because this displacement is not only focused on the wrong objects – the stars instead of society – but also because the occultist readings of the stars and other phenomena harmonize with prevailing interests and serve to reinforce the *status quo.*

> [Occultism] offers the advantage of veiling all deeper-lying causes of distress and thus promoting acceptance of the given. Moreover, by strengthening the sense of fatality, dependence and obedience, it paralyzes the will to change objective conditions in any respect and relegates all worries to a private plane promising a cure – all by the very same compliance which prevents a change of conditions. It can easily be seen how well this suits the over-all purpose of the prevailing ideology of today's culture industry; to reproduce the status quo within the mind of the people (Adorno, 2002: 164)

This is, then, a brief outline of Adorno's position on the conditions of occultism and of what occultism in the form of astrology consists. As we have seen, occultism is a form of rationality/irrationality that functions as a social ideology. As a set of practices, occultism is based on Marxian-Lukácsian and Freudian conceptions of the fetish-character that project rational needs onto the irrational. These factors are objectively and subjectively intertwined. *Objectively* they mediate occultism by naturalizing the system which it takes as a given, embedding the individual in the chaotic and perilous capitalist world. Meanwhile, *subjectively* they conjure a form of reflection that promotes a notion of the good life that is solely the province of individual actions, perfectly in accordance with the pre-dominant capitalist hegemony.

Now, let us turn to examining the four similarities between capitalism and occultism, where the Marxian-Lukácsian social basis and fetish character of occultism are more effectively put to work by Adorno. The Marxian-Lukácsian notion of fetishism highlights the naturalizing and objectivizing of the capitalist world that occultism and capitalism take for granted. This is why Adorno argues that the metaphysics of occultism naturalize late capitalism. The astrological column contains all elements of fetishized reality, somehow capturing the actual state of affairs in the process, but nevertheless constructing a distorted picture of the objective forces beyond the range of individual psychology. As a result of this misconception or oversight, individual behaviours become exempt from further scrutiny as they are endowed with metaphysical dignity in the protean lingo of quasi-

autonomy, coping mechanisms, self-determination, self-help, self-development, and so on.

Furthermore, Adorno argues that these very same occultist metaphysics naturalize the individual as the centre of action. Within the framework of astrological columns, individuals are given numerous yet vague edicts that advise idiosyncratic and various forms of action, which are meant to deliver some manner of wellbeing, success, happiness, etc. Here we see the crisis-ridden, authoritarian and socially atomized late capitalist world naturalized and turned into the metaphysical basis of occultism, wherein individuals pursue happiness through occultist and esoteric knowledge. But, as social ideology, the underlying authoritarian structure of late capitalism frames the forms of conduct this knowledge directs. This can be seen in three of the authoritarian and conformist aspects of the astrological columns Adorno outlines, where apparent freedom and right action rebound back into conformity with capitalism.

(1) The paradox of freedom to conform. Here, astrology "attempts to get away from crude and unpopular fatalism by establishing outward forces operating on the individual decision, including the individual's own character, but leaves the ultimate choice to him" (Adorno, 2002: 60).

(2) Making best of what your astrological sign dictates. Here, freedom consists of the individual taking upon herself merely that which is inevitable in any case. The empty shell of liberty is solicitously kept intact. If the individual acts according to given conjunctions, everything will be right; if she does not, everything will go wrong.

(3) The fact that it is often frankly stated that the individual should adjust to certain constellations. As Adorno argues, "One might say that there is in astrology an implicit metaphysics of adjustment behind the concretistic advice of adjustment in everyday life" (2002: 61). These instances – three out of many – serve to demonstrate both the similarity of capitalist and occultist notions of action leading to success, reward, happiness, and so forth, as well as their ultimate ideological character.

Returning to the four points of disparity between religion and capitalism that I mentioned towards the start of the paper, I believe that Adorno's writings on occultism give an indication that the latter, more so than Benjamin's take on religion, can be said to resemble capitalism. As we have seen, occultism as system of practices purportedly based on esoteric

knowledge meant to lead to some form of wellbeing, happiness or good life, is actually based on the fetishized naturalization of the individual embedded in a crisis-ridden, chaotic world that renders the conditions of late capitalism into metaphysics. Within this world, individual action is the only basis for some notion of happiness or success, which must be arrived at through actions that – as, ultimately, social ideology – serve to reinforce late capitalism. It therefore appears that Adorno's writings on occultism provide a nuanced description of the entwinement of irrationality and capitalism that Benjamin's fragment on capitalism as religions lacks.

3.   Occultism Today

If this is the case, then what is the current status of occultism and its relation to capitalism over half a century after Adorno published his writings? I think we can only say that it is much more pronounced because both capitalism and occultism are more pronounced. Not only were Adorno's writings previous to the 'new age' movement and its dissemination into popular culture, but they were also previous to the neo-liberal privatization and fetishization of the market. Let me then suggest a number of phenomena that seem to resemble occultism.

To begin with, popular culture is rife with products that resemble the Adornian occult. First, there is the explosion in popularity of the occult itself. Second, there is the ubiquity of the self-help industry and advice books on anything from wellbeing to achieving your business goals in so many easy steps. Third, there is the prevalence of pop-psychology, to which Adorno had already described as a social drug similar to astrology. One could only imagine what his reaction would be to happiness consultants and the newest pop-psychology – so-called *'positive psychology'* – which treats happiness as the sole province of your actions. This particularly egregious form of pop-psychology even has several MA programmes, a *Journal of Happiness Studies*, and boasts works such as Martin Seligman's *Authentic Happiness: Using New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Last Fulfilment*. These and others seem to resemble Adornian occultism in taking the now neo-liberal world as a given and promoting an irrational/rational ethics of personal action to cultivate success or fulfilment, all while reinforcing the very conditions that are naturalized as a given in the first place. In addition, it seems that an argument might also be made that a dialectical reversal of sorts has occurred in terms of neo-liberalism possessing an occult attitude towards capitalism or the free market, privatization and politics, whereby such entities are fetishized as possessing a sort of supernatural power that acts as

a standard with which irrational/rational actions must be in accordance.

Here, in terms of attitudes towards capitalism itself, crisis and meltdown resemble the chaos of occult metaphysics. They are not examined as an inherent part of unfettered capitalism that can be changed, but instead are treated as a sort of natural tribulation that is par for the course. As such, it must simply be endured and fixed or adjusted, in order to return things to their normal neo-liberal glory. Many of the bailout plans themselves seem to resemble the picture Adorno paints of occultist practice as a combination of blind belief and panic where reasonable policies are taboo and superstitious edicts that preserve the market must be kept in place.

Privatization is another one of these supernatural policies which is naturally assumed to provide the best outcome, but is implemented solely on the basis of this superstition. As we all know, this leads to the creation of absurd documents that resemble Adorno's take on astrology through the invention of preposterous language and schema to supposedly explain but to really justify or preserve their status within privatization (see, for instance, the latest Arts & Humanities Research Council document which provides a schematic ordering of disciplines – where 'critical theory' is arbitrarily positioned to overlap something like 'medieval literature' – with newly invented market-friendly qualities).

Neo-liberal and post-modern identity politics also pose some interesting resemblances to occultism. To begin with, both tend to naturalize capitalism and individualism. Additionally, politics – or at least political identity – is not seen as part of a mass movement towards some sort of utopia. Instead it is seen as something that is inherently political; a kind of moral-supernatural category where the individual's identity – be it Christian, Muslim, green, liberal, etc. – is tied in with an avowed political notion of the good life that often entirely disregards politics. In the end, as Brennan (2006) has well shown, this merely reinforces the neo-liberal system. With such things in mind, perhaps we can move towards an understanding of capitalism in our time as, in many ways, occultist.

Conclusion

This highly speculative paper examined Adorno's writings on occultism from several viewpoints. In terms of examining the theological aspects of capitalism, I argued that Adornian occultism dealt with four important intersections between capitalism and occultism that both Benjamin's and

Agamben's writings ignore. Focusing on these aspects of Adorno's writings brought out these missing elements, while also highlighting their prescience. In providing a sketch of how they may relate to our contemporary context, I argued for Adorno's increasing relevance. While this paper admittedly has much lacking in terms of rigor and focus, it is my hope that, in following a stylistic tradition of which Adorno was an undisputed master, the exaggerations and speculations herein provoke thought and debate.

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Endnotes

[1] This paper, composed specifically for the Adorno conference, marks an attempt to adapt his ideas on occultism to the initial phases of the financial crisis in order to generate speculation, reflection and debate on the objective and subjective status of contemporary capitalist society. It has not been modified for publication, for while revision could have ironed out the many kinks, expanded the compressions, and offered more bases for the speculations, this would have also undermined the paper's intent. Now, in the later phases of the financial crisis, I remain intrigued by the notion of describing capitalism as occultist, and am reasonably pleased with some of the analyses of neo-liberal occultist practices. Should you be intrigued by the speculations herein, I would happily discuss them via email.

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Meadian Reflections on the Existential Ambivalence of Human Selfhood

by Simon Susen

Introduction

This paper examines the existential ambivalence of human selfhood by drawing upon George Herbert Mead's influential distinction between the 'I' and the 'me'. The centrality of this distinction to Mead's analysis of the self is reflected not only in the numerous references to these two pivotal categories in Mead's writings[1] but also in the fact that it is widely recognised as one of Mead's core conceptual tools in the literature on symbolic interactionism[2]. Although the distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' has been extensively discussed in the literature and studied from different theoretical angles, neither advocates nor critics of Mead's symbolic interactionism have provided a comprehensive and systematic account of the variety of meanings which the notions of the 'I' and the 'me' are given in Mead's analysis of the self. The standard interpretation of the distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' identifies the former with the idiosyncratic and innovative aspects of the self, whilst associating the latter with the social and conservative components of the self.[3] Without seeking to demonstrate that this view is mistaken, this paper offers a detailed analysis of the multifaceted theoretical and practical implications of Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me'. As we shall see, the conceptual complexity of Mead's analytical separation between the 'I' and the 'me' is indicative of the existential ambivalence of the human self, that is, of the coexistence of various opposing forces which pervade every ordinary subject's relation to the world.

Given that Mead conceives of the 'I' and the 'me' as two constitutive components of the self, it is important to clarify the meaning of the notion of the self within the Meadian framework of social analysis. Hence, before embarking upon the examination of Mead's central distinction between the 'I' and the 'me', it is essential to consider three key presuppositions that underlie Mead's theory of the self.

First, according to Mead, the self is a defining feature of human beings. In other words, the self represents a *human specificity*.[4] To assume that the self

is a feature of human beings – and of human beings alone – means to suggest that human beings are the only entities capable of developing a notion of personhood. In fact, what raises us out of nature is our 'self-based' nature: human beings have a deep-seated need to construct their own world beyond the natural world because their existence is permeated by the existence of selfhood. People are different from animals in that they have both the capacity and the need to create a sense of who they are as individuals. The existence of selfhood grants every ordinary subject the privilege of being both a member of society and a member of humanity.

Second, according to Mead, the self is always and unavoidably social. Put differently, the self is the subjectively developed expression of *human sociality*.[5] To recognise that the self is an indispensable part of human society – and of human society alone – means to acknowledge that human societies are the only collective entities capable of producing subjects with a sense of personhood. Indeed, what distinguishes the social world from the natural world is the 'self-based' constitution of the former as opposed to the 'self-less' constitution of the latter: human societies have an inherent need to create subjects capable of acquiring a sense of selfhood, for the emergence of human societies is inconceivable without the development of human personalities. The human world is different from the physical world in that it has both the capacity and the necessity to generate social selves whose interconnectedness constitutes the ontological cornerstone of human coexistence.

Third, according to Mead, the self is linguistically structured. Hence, the self is both the creator and the carrier of *human linguisticality*.[6] To accept that the self is at the same time a producer and a product of a linguistically mediated relation to the world means to understand that language is an empowering symbolic vehicle which allows for the possibility of reflectively guided interaction between social actors. To be sure, what elevates the symbolic world of human beings from the symbolic world of animals is the linguistic nature of the human universe: human subjects have a deep-rooted need to convert the givenness of their immersion in the world into the meaningfulness of their encounter with the world because, for human beings, the world of physical and social objectivity is always a world of linguistic signifiability. The human universe is part of, yet also different from, the physical world in that it is composed of reflective selves whose daily search for meaning is embedded in their linguistically mediated relation to the world.

These are three fundamental presuppositions underlying Mead's theory of the self.[7] The question remains, however, how both the 'I' and the 'me' are embedded in the self and to what extent they allow us to grasp the complexity of selfhood. It is the task of the following analysis to shed light on the complexity of the self by exploring the various meanings of Mead's fundamental distinction between the 'I' and the 'me'. When having a closer look at Mead's study of the self in terms of the 'I' and the 'me', it becomes clear that, in his writings, these two concepts are given a variety of meanings which are symptomatic not only of the complexity of the self but also of what might be described as 'the condition of human ambivalence'. In essence, what manifests itself in the condition of human ambivalence is the fact that we, as entities capable of developing different identities, are caught up in a permanent struggle between the 'individual selves' and the 'social selves' which inhabit our personalities. Stating this problem is simple; grasping its complexity could hardly be more difficult.

I.   Individual and Society

The most obvious meaning of the Meadian distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' is perhaps also the most essential source of existential ambivalence in the formation of human selfhood: the relationship between *individual and society*. One fundamental – if not, *the* most fundamental – question in social theory is the following: what is the relationship between individual and society? From the point of view of Mead's symbolic interactionism, the straightforward answer to this question is that, by definition, human selves are both individual and social selves. In other words, just as there are no individuals without society, there is no society without individuals. To the extent that individuals depend on their immersion and participation in society, society depends on the creation and reproduction of individuals. Rather than conceiving of the relationship between individual and society as an existential antinomy, we need to recognise that individual and society stand both in an interdependent and in an interpenetrative relationship: they are interdependent insofar as one cannot exist without the other, and they are interpenetrative insofar as they cannot but permeate one another. Thus, not only do individual and society depend on each other, but they are also impregnated with each other. On the face of it, the individual represents the inner reality of a single entity, and society designates the outer reality of a collective entity. Yet, the single entity called individual and the collective entity called society cannot be divorced from one another, since the presence of the former presupposes the presence of the latter, and *vice versa.* The existence of individuals is inconceivable without the existence of society, just

as the existence of society is unthinkable without the existence of individuals.

One of the main analytical advantages of the conceptual distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' is that it permits us to account for the fact that both human individuality and human society are located within the human self. According to Mead, every human subject is composed of both the 'I' and the 'me', and the combination of these two core components of human subjectivity is precisely what makes one a person: "Both aspects of the 'I' and 'me' are essential to the self in its full expression"[8], that is, every self is composed of an 'I' and a 'me', both of which can be regarded as two competing yet complementary cornerstones of the human subject.

Mead's ontology of the human subject is based on the assumption that "[t]he separation of the 'I' and the 'me' is not fictitious. [. . .] Taken together they constitute a personality as it appears in social experience."[9] Given Mead's emphasis on the complementary coexistence of the 'I' and the 'me', his conception of the self is founded on both a differentialist and a holistic view of human nature. On the one hand, Mead's approach to the self is *differentialist* insofar as he insists that the *separation* between the 'I' and the 'me' is real, rather than invented. Hence, the 'I' and the 'me' exist as *two autonomous ontologies* within every person. On the other hand, Mead's account of the self is *holistic* insofar as he suggests that the *unity* of the 'I' and the 'me' is genuine, rather than imagined. Thus, the 'I' and the 'me' exist as *one conglomeratic ontology* within every person.

What manifests itself in the paradoxical nature of Mead's – simultaneously differentialist and holistic – conception of the self is the paradoxical constitution of the human subject: every self is equipped with the idiosyncratic and innovative aspects of the 'I', whilst being shaped by the collective and conservative aspects of the 'me'. Of course, just as our subjective worlds cannot be dissociated from our social worlds, our social worlds cannot be divorced from our subjective worlds. To the extent that our subjective worlds are pervaded by the 'I' *and* the 'me', our social worlds are constructed by virtue of the 'me' *and* the 'I'. Society is a collective force which resides in our individuality, and our individuality is a subjective force which inhabits our society.

Although the 'me' and the 'I' fulfil complementary functions, the nature of the former is fundamentally different from the nature of the latter. Whereas the 'me' is a direct product of the social communities to which we belong, the 'I' embodies the irreducible components of our personality by which we

distinguish ourselves from other members of our communities. Put differently, every self is at once an expression of individuality and an expression of society: as an expression of individuality, it enables us to convert ourselves into *unique and distinctive* members of a given community; as an expression of society, it permits us to become *integrated and assimilated* members of a given community. Our individual identities, which we develop as unique entities, reassert our need to create a sense of *personality*; and our collective identities, which we develop as integrated entities, reaffirm our need to generate a sense of *commonality*. In short, Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' serves as a conceptual tool to account for every person's simultaneous immersion in individuality and society.

II.   Freedom and Control

Another meaning of the distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' in Mead's writings is perhaps a less obvious, but certainly an equally significant, source of existential ambivalence: the relationship between *freedom and control*. From a Meadian perspective, there is no human freedom without the creation of a personally developed 'I', and there is no social control without the assimilation of a socially constructed 'me'. "The 'I' gives the sense of freedom, of initiative"[10], and of inventiveness. The 'me', on the other hand, equips us with a sense of control, of directive, and of normativeness. Individual freedom is the expression of the 'I' over against the expression of the 'me'. By contrast, "[s]ocial control is the expression of the 'me' over against the expression of the 'I'"[11]. As soon as we enter the stage of being, we are protagonists of a social process which is based on the interaction between ourselves and others: we enjoy the freedom to be part of the world as individuals, and we are exposed to the control exercised over us by our consociates. Human selves are caught up in the dialectical interplay between freedom and control, self-determination and social determination, individual autonomy and social constraints; in brief, we are trapped in the eternal struggle between the 'I' and the 'me'.

Given that freedom and control coexist in the human world, the productive and executive side of human autonomy cannot be disentangled from the regulative and grammatical side of human heteronomy. The production and execution of our actions is inconceivable without the regulation and normalisation of our actions. Every time we act, the world has already acted upon us; and every time the world acts upon us, we have already acted upon the world. One central feature of the human being-in-the-world is the relative determinacy which pervades our existential engagement in *individual*

autonomy: only insofar as we are immersed *in* the social world are we capable of going *beyond* the social world by affirming the idiosyncrasy *of* our subjective world. Yet, another significant feature of the human being-in-the-world is the relative determinacy which permeates our existential exposure to *collective heteronomy*: only insofar as we are immersed *in* our subjective world are we capable of going *beyond* our subjective world by assimilating the idiosyncrasy *of* the social world.

We are able to be what we want to be, but only to the extent that society allows us to realise and exploit the potentiality of our individual determinacy. And we are prepared to be what society wants us to be, but only to the extent that we allow society to exercise and enforce the potentiality of its collective determinacy. Grammars of freedom are always permeated by grammars of control, just as grammars of control are always pervaded by grammars of freedom. The assumption *that* human existence is shaped by the struggle between freedom and control is relatively uncontroversial; the question of *how* human existence is shaped by this struggle, however, could hardly be more controversial.

The strength of the Meadian conception of human existence is its capacity to account for the subjective immediacy of the struggle between freedom and control. For the struggle between individual freedom and social control takes place not only *between* human selves but also *inside* every human self. The potential conflict between who we *want* to be and who we are *expected* to be describes a source of existential ambiguity which is inscribed both in our societies and in our subjectivities. As a subjectively articulated ambiguity of existential significance, the human struggle between freedom and control is always located *within* the human self, that is, *within* every ordinary subject equipped with an 'I' and a 'me'. To be sure, as relatively autonomous beings, we have privileged access to our subjective world. Nevertheless, although our subjective world escapes the parameters of direct observational scrutiny and empirical measurement, it is always already intruded by our external world. In fact, the social world is by definition a collective intruder of the subjective world, just as the subjective world is by definition an individuative intruder of the social world.

The dialectic of freedom and control is embedded in the socio-constructive locus of human existence: *culture.*[12] Whether we live in a primitive or complex, tight or loose, horizontally structured or vertically structured, collectivist or individualist, relatively homogeneous or relatively heterogeneous culture – *any* form of culture is necessarily based on the

structural interplay between control and freedom. Traditional and collectivist societies tend to be control-based, whereas advanced and individualist societies tend to be freedom-based. Whatever type of society we live in, we – as human actors – are equipped with both an 'I' and a 'me'. The more society succeeds in imposing its rules and regulations on the individual, the more it succeeds in shaping the constitution of the self by virtue of collective control. The more society allows its members to act and function according to their own needs and desires, the more it enables them to shape the constitution of their selves by virtue of individual freedom. In the former scenario, the 'me' is the exogenously determined engine of the self. In the latter scenario, the 'I' is the endogenously determined architect of the self.

In order to be effective, the preponderance of social control needs to be reproduced by the predominance of the 'me', just as the preponderance of individual freedom needs to be confirmed by the prevalence of the 'I'. Freedom and control, then, are not simply external matters of socially negotiated regulations and expectations, but they are also internal matters of individually developed schemes of action and habituation. The potentiality of freedom and control can only become a human reality insofar as selves are impregnated with the generative complementarity of the 'I' and the 'me', which carries the organisation of their coexistentiality right into the condition of their subjectivity. Put differently, the 'me' equips society with relative control over its individuals, just as the 'I' endows the individual with relative freedom from society. Human selves cannot escape the existential ambivalence caused by the struggle between freedom and control, but they can convert the social determinacy of individual potentiality into the social potentiality of individual determinacy. If the existence of the 'me' permits us to be thrown into the world as members of the world, the existence of the 'I' empowers us to throw ourselves back into the world as creators of the world.

III.   Transformation and Reproduction

In Mead's writings, the distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' refers to another key source of existential ambivalence: the relationship between *transformation and reproduction*. Every human self has both a transformative and a reproductive side: the 'I' is the source of the subject's power to shape 'the' natural, 'our' social, and 'its' subjective world; the 'me', by contrast, is the vehicle of the subject's capacity to be shaped by these worlds. The far-reaching significance of this matter can be summarised in two fundamental

questions. First, how do we explain the possibility of *social order*? And, second, how do we explain the possibility of *social change*? A Meadian answer to these two key questions relies upon the 'me' to account for the possibility of social order and upon the 'I' to explain the possibility of social change. Whereas the existence of the 'me' allows for the social continuity of our actions, the existence of the 'I' manifests itself in the individual idiosyncrasy of our actions. Insofar as our actions are normatively regulated, they are motivated by the – individually internalised, yet socially constructed – 'me'. Insofar as our actions can transgress already existing norms, they can be driven by the – individually externalised, yet socially embedded – 'I'. From a Meadian point of view, there is no social order without the reproductive power of the 'me', and there is no social change without the transformative power of the 'I'.

It is worth mentioning that both the 'me' and the 'I' are at the same time immanent and transcendent forces of the social. As an *immanent* force, the 'me' inhabits every socialised subject capable of reproducing the social order in which it finds itself situated; as a *transcendent* force, the 'me' allows the self to go beyond itself by immersing itself in intersubjectively negotiated realms of sociality. As an *immanent* force, the 'I' dwells in every individual subject capable of transforming the social order in which it finds itself situated; as a *transcendent* force, the 'I' enables the self to go beyond itself by immersing itself in subjectively affirmed realms of individuality.

Thus, social change – conceived of in Meadian terms – is essentially due to the transformative force of the 'I'. In Mead's words, "[t]he 'I' is the response of the individual to the attitude of the community [. . .]. His response to that organized attitude in turn *changes* it"[13]. The social is never for ever. By definition, every social order is potentially subject to social change, because the reproductive power of every 'me' is potentially exposed to the transformative power of the 'I'. Due to the reproductive force of the 'me', selves are capable of absorbing their environments: every interaction *with* our social environment is an action *upon* human subjectivity. Due to the transformative force of the 'I', selves are capable of changing their environments: every reaction *to* our social environment is an action *upon* human objectivity. As Mead remarks, "the individual is constantly reacting to the social attitudes, and *changing* in this co-operative process the very community to which he belongs"[14]. It is in the various processes of assimilation of the individual, within the situation in which the 'me' finds itself, that social order falls into place; and it is "in such reactions of the individual, [. . .] over against the situation in which the 'I' finds itself, that

important social changes take place"[15]. Hence, rather than deriving the possibility of social order and social change from structural forces that are *external* to the human self, we can locate the possibility of social order and social change in the reproductive power of the 'me' and the transformative power of the 'I', both of which are *internal* to the human self.

IV.   Unpredictability and Predictability

The Meadian distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' allows us to shed light on a further source of existential ambivalence: the relationship between *unpredictability and predictability*. Human life is characterised by yet another paradox: the actions undertaken by human beings can be both relatively unpredictable and relatively predictable. In other words, while some of our actions are unforeseeable and irregular, others are foreseeable and regular. We are performative entities whose practices can either deviate from or coincide with the norms and expectations which are constantly thrown at us by society. In any case, our actions are embedded in socially negotiated patterns of behavioural normativity. If the possibility of social change is due to the relatively unpredictable nature of social action motivated by the 'I', the possibility of social order is rooted in the relatively predictable nature of social action guaranteed by the 'me'.

Both the unpredictability and the predictability of our actions are considerable species-constitutive accomplishments: the fact that we can never entirely foresee the actions of other human subjects means that every social encounter can be a coexistential journey into largely insecure territory, and the fact that we can often – consciously or unconsciously – foresee the actions of other human subjects means that every social encounter can be a coexistential ritual on fairly secure territory. Human existence is always situated between the unpredictable and the predictable nature of social actions: the course of human history is a product of performative sociality. The interplay between the 'I' and the 'me' enables us to make history by constructing and reconstructing sociality. The construction of humanity is a permanent process of social reconstruction. To the extent that we, as human beings, are condemned to move within spaces of social reconstructability, we are doomed to confront the performative ambivalence of our actions, which are always located between the individuative power of purposive agency and the collective power of coordinative determinacy.

Following Mead, the relatively unpredictable nature of human action emanates from the existence of the 'I', whereas the relatively predictable

nature of human action stems from the existence of the 'me'. Given that "the 'I' is something that is never entirely calculable"[16], the interactions which take place in society are never completely predictable. Given that "the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes"[17], the interactions which take place in society are relatively predictable. The fact that the development of human societies is at the same time relatively unpredictable and relatively predictable cannot be dissociated from the fact that human beings are both individual and societal beings who seek to come to terms with the existential contingency of their inner worlds by constantly oscillating between the – endogenously determined – heterodoxy of their 'I' and the – exogenously determined – orthodoxy of their 'me'.

One central question in social and political theory is why it is so difficult to control human behaviour by virtue of systemic – for example, economic or administrative – forms of power. Put differently, a key phenomenon that haunts social and political theorists is the performative elasticity of human agency, which seems to transcend the systemic rationality of societal structurality: it is far from clear to what extent it is possible to impose steering mechanisms on society which allow for the calculable control of social development through the use of systemic power. This problem can be summarised in the following question: why is it so difficult to control human action 'from above' through systemic action? From a Meadian perspective, an answer to this question can be found in the sociological power of the relationship between the 'I' and the 'me': it is the unpredictable force of the 'I' which can always potentially challenge the predictable force of the 'me'. The most powerful steering media of society can never annihilate the decision-making capacity of the individual. No matter how deeply ingrained social rules and norms may be in the predictable force of the 'me', they do not possess the power to eliminate the unpredictable force of the 'I'. The human house of being is constructed upon the coexistential cornerstones of the 'me' and the 'I': the former permits us to dwell in the house of being as collective – and, hence, relatively predictable – entities; the latter, by contrast, allows us to inhabit the house of being as individuative – and, thus, relatively unpredictable – entities. What we can never entirely predict, therefore, is the predictability of the social; what we can certainly predict, however, is its unpredictability.
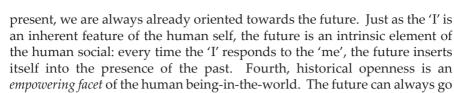
V.   Future and Past

Another, rather complex, implication of Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' has to do with the historical nature of the human being-in-the-

world: the relationship between *future and past*. Human activity is unavoidably embedded in and conditioned by worldly temporality. Just as social practices are spatially determined because they take place in collectively constructed realms of human territoriality, they are temporally determined because they are situated in relationally created spheres of human historicity. As the German word *Geschichte* suggests, history is essentially a cumulative conglomerate of temporally interconnected layers. The 'me' enables us to absorb and internalise the historical layers accumulated by our social environment; conversely, the 'I' induces us not only to act and work upon the layers that have been transmitted *to* us from the past, but also to invent and externalise new historical layers that can be generated *by* us in the present to create a future.

The existence of the 'me' illustrates the fact that we are *always already* thrown into the world. The existence of the 'I', on the other hand, corroborates the fact that we are *always still* to throw ourselves back into the world. Our immersion in the past can challenge, but never do away with, our orientation towards the future. In fact, our 'being-here-in-the-present' would be pointless without our capacity to mediate between the 'has-been-there-in-the-past' and the 'will-be-there-in-the-future'. The interpenetrative power of the 'I' and the 'me' lies at the heart of our situatedness in the present, the immersive power of the 'me' permits us to cope with our embeddedness in the past, and the projective power of the 'I' allows us to face up to our placedness in the future.

"That movement into the future is the step, so to speak, of the ego, of the 'I'. It is something that is not given in the 'me'."[18] The future-oriented nature of the 'I', as opposed to the past-laden nature of the 'me', reveals the significance of historical openness for the constitution of human existence on four levels. First, historical openness is a *constitutive element* of the human being-in-the-world. From a Meadian point of view, the categorical openness of human society is mainly due to the existence of our future-oriented 'I', which is inherent in every ordinary subject capable of speech and interaction. Second, historical openness is a *deep-seated need* of the human being-in-the-world. According to Mead, the existence of the 'I' is indicative of the fact that subjects have a deep-rooted need to project themselves into the future. We have to be able to look forward to the world in order to look forward to life. The reality of the human today is impregnated with the potentiality of the human tomorrow. Third, historical openness is an *inevitable feature* of the human being-in-the-world. Following Mead, every human practice is an act towards the future. Even when we wish to restore the past or maintain the

present, we are always already oriented towards the future. Just as the 'I' is an inherent feature of the human self, the future is an intrinsic element of the human social: every time the 'I' responds to the 'me', the future inserts itself into the presence of the past. Fourth, historical openness is an *empowering facet* of the human being-in-the-world. The future can always go beyond the present because, put in Meadian terms, the 'I' is capable of bypassing – and sometimes even transforming – the 'me'. Human selves are able to go beyond society because they are equipped with the capacity to go beyond themselves. Our orientation towards the future is a source of existential empowerment, allowing us to invent human reality over and over again. Since all human selves are doomed to engage in the coexistential exercise of articulating themselves by virtue of the 'me' and the 'I', they carry both the past and the future within the presence of their existence.

VI.   Self-Realisation and Self-Alienation

The distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' reveals another major source of ambivalence in human life: the relationship between *self-realisation and self-alienation*. As entities capable of self-realisation, we can exploit our capacity to cultivate the 'I', which inhabits our subjectivity. As entities capable of self-alienation, we can be colonised by the 'me', which is dictated to us by our society. Thus, the autonomy of the 'I', whose ego-affirming power allows for human self-realisation, can be undermined by the heteronomy of the 'me', whose ego-colonising power can lead to human self-alienation. Our need for self-realisation is not a fiction but a reality: only insofar as we find ourselves self-realised as human beings are we able to experience the worthiness of human life. Life seems worth living not only because the world seems worth relating to but also because we are capable of inventing our relationship to the world as entities with an inner drive towards self-realisation.

Self-realised subjects are actors able to recognise themselves in and identify themselves with their actions. Self-alienated subjects are actors compelled to place themselves outside and distance themselves from their actions. The dictatorship of the 'me' can easily lead to complete self-alienation when there does not seem to be any room for self-realisation. Analogously, the dictatorship of the 'I' can easily produce the illusion of complete self-realisation when there does not seem to be any room for self-alienation. The struggle over the humanisation of humanity has always been, and will always remain, a struggle for and against self-realisation and self-alienation. The challenge consists in creating an equilibrium in which neither the former

dominates the latter nor the latter dominates the former. The ego-affirming power of the 'I' and the ego-colonising power of the 'me' coexist in the universe of human selfhood. Our need for individuality and our need for sociality force us to accept our need for humanity.

From a Meadian perspective, we seek to realise ourselves by realising the potentials inherent in our 'I'. Insofar as we succeed in realising the potentials inherent in our 'I', we draw on our capacity to go beyond the constraints imposed upon us by society and embodied in the 'me'. In the light of the liberating function of the 'I', Mead is willing to attribute not only significant power but also an emancipatory mission to the 'I'. The Meadian emphasis on the – distinctively human – need for self-realisation is based on a firm belief in the transcendental function and ordinary reality of the 'I': "It is that 'I' which we may be said to be continually trying to realize, and to realize through the actual conduct itself."[19] Within the Meadian framework of social analysis, self-realisation is conceived of as a human practice. In other words, we realise ourselves only insofar as our daily activities constitute invaluable sources of autonomy and creativity. From a pragmatist point of view, we need to focus on concrete human practices, rather than on abstract human capacities, if we aim to demonstrate that the emancipatory potentials of our existence are always already part of our daily activities, rather than of transcendental imperatives.

VII.   Self-Assertion and Self-Adaptation

The distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' points to another source of existential ambivalence: the relationship between *self-assertion and self-adaptation*. As entities whose inner worlds are impregnated with the individuative force of the 'I', we have a deep-seated need to assert ourselves before others as expressive subjects who are unique members of a given community. As entities whose inner worlds are permeated by the collective force of the 'me', we have a deep-rooted need to adapt ourselves to others as assimilative subjects who are integrated members of a given community. Only if we are able to *assert* ourselves before others as *unique* members of a given community are we capable of developing a sense of personality which allows us to situate ourselves in the world as irreplaceable entities whose existence confirms the particularity of individuality. And only if we are able to *adapt* ourselves to others as *integrated* members of a given community are we capable of developing a sense of solidarity which permits us to situate ourselves in the world as replaceable entities whose existence reinforces the generality of society. Social selves, in the Meadian sense, can only exist as

assertive and adaptive entities, for only insofar as we assert ourselves before others, as indistinguishable beings, can we develop a sense of individuality and only insofar as we adapt ourselves to others, as adjustable beings, can we develop a sense of sociality.

The daily rhythm of our lives always depends on our capacity to establish equilibrium between our need for self-assertion and our need for self-adaptation. The most assertive individual is nothing if not integrated *into* society, and the most adaptable individual is nothing if not distinguished *from* society. Just as we seek to be recognised as meaning-producing entities with an individual sense of identity, we aim to be recognised as meaning-fusing entities with a collective sense of identity. The development of an individual sense of identity depends upon our capacity for self-assertion, and the creation of a collective sense of identity is contingent upon our capacity for self-adaptation. The rhythm of our everyday life is marked by the percussive power of the 'me' and the repercussive power of the 'I'. Whatever is thrown at us by society in order to make us conform to what is *always already* constructed can be thrown back by us at society in order to make us reform what is *always still* to be reconstructed.

The reconstructive power of society is inextricably linked to the reconstructive power of consciousness. Consciousness is never simply a private matter but always a thoroughgoingly social affair.[20] Indeed, consciousness enables us to go back and forth between ourselves and other selves. We are eternal commuters between who we are as inhabitants of our individuality and who we become as inhabitants of our society. Every time we assert ourselves before others we seem to *be* what we are without ever having become who we are, and every time we adapt ourselves to others we seem to *become* what we are without ever being who we are. The dialectical interplay between the authentic and the performative aspects of our existence describes a social process based on a constant going-back-and-forth between ourselves and others. No human being can possibly escape from the reciprocal processes of social interaction. For the authenticity of our individuality has no currency without our performative encounter with others, just as the performance of our individuality has no currency without our authentic encounter with ourselves. The self-assertion of the 'I' equips us with the capacity to develop a sense of authentic integrity, whose existence we can only undermine if we deny ourselves the privilege of affirming ourselves as carriers of individual identities. The self-adaptation of the 'me' gives us the opportunity to develop a sense of performative integrity, whose existence we can only undermine if we deprive ourselves of the ability to

take on collective identities.

"It is this recognition of the individual as a self in the process of using his self-consciousness which gives him the attitude of self-assertion or the attitude of devotion to the community. He has become, then, a definite self."[21] In order to engage in social life we are obliged to engage in a permanent process of negotiation between what and how we *want* to be and what and how we are *expected* to be. The assertion of our individual will cannot be divorced from our devotion to the societal will, since the former is necessarily shaped and constrained by the latter. To be sure, *philosophical* accounts of the self can differ fundamentally from *sociological* accounts of the self: the former – for example, in a Kantian or Cartesian fashion – tend to emphasise the power of *self-assertion*, derived from individual consciousness and transcendental rationality; the latter – for instance, in a Marxian or Durkheimian fashion – tend to stress the power of *self-adaptation*, expressed in collective consciousness and social solidarity. "There is a new social whole [. . .] because of the self with its own assertion of itself or its own identification with the community."[22] To the extent that the self asserts itself before others as a unique member of its community, it contributes to the variegated nature of the social whole. To the extent that the self adapts itself to others as an integrated member of its community, it contributes to the bonding nature of the social whole. As individuative creatures, we seek to distinguish ourselves from our social environment; as collective creatures, we seek to be accepted by our social environment. Fully-fledged defenders of individuality need to be fully-fledged members of society in order to become fully-born children of humanity. "Let us assert ourselves before others as individuals" and "let us adapt ourselves to others as consociates" – these are two categorical imperatives that underlie Mead's conception of the human subject.

VIII.   Individuality and Conformity

Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' serves to explore yet another pivotal source of quotidian ambivalence which permeates the nature of human existence: the relationship between *individuality and conformity*. The analysis of this source of existential ambivalence is particularly important as the critical study of the relationship between individuality and conformity obliges us to examine the normative presuppositions that underpin Mead's conception of society. As Mead puts it, "[t]he value of an ordered society is essential to our existence, but there also has to be room for an expression of the individual himself if there is to be a satisfactorily developed society"[23].

In other words, the possibility of social order is just as fundamental to the healthy functioning of human coexistence as the possibility of individual expression, which may or may not diverge from the normative canon of society. The stability of every social order depends on its capacity to tolerate or deprecate, promote or repress, include or exclude different forms of individuality. As 'me'-based entities, we have a need for social conformity and coexistential stability; as 'I'-driven entities, we have a need for self-referential individuality and biographical volatility.

Far from embracing either an individualist or a collectivist model of society, and far from suggesting that either a pluralist or a monist model of society is capable of promoting the genuine empowerment of the human subject, Mead insists upon the complexity of the social universe, reminding us of the fact that in every human society there is a need for the expression of singularity and individuality, on the one hand, and for the expression of loyalty and conformity, on the other.[24] To be more precise, both individuality and conformity are central driving forces of the social: as individuative beings, we contribute to the transformative diversity of society; and, as conformative beings, we contribute to the reproductive stability of society. Every society is composed of different cultural, political, and ideological traditions; the challenge consists in articulating our need for individuality and our need for conformity in such a way that the former and the latter do not undermine but complement each other. In fact, individuality and conformity need to be cross-fertilised by society in order to contribute to enhancing the overall well-being of humanity.

Nonetheless, the question remains how the ideal of a balanced society, in which there is enough room for individuality and conformity to coexist in a fruitful manner, can be measured against the reality of an unbalanced society, in which there is a disproportionate emphasis either on individuality or on conformity. Put differently, the ideal of a society which is freedom-based enough to allow for the cultivation of individuality and control-based enough to allow for the consolidation of conformity clashes with the reality of societies in which the prioritisation of individual freedom implies the destabilisation of collective control or in which the prioritisation of collective control requires the abolition of individual freedom.

When reflecting upon the historical transition from traditional to modern society, Mead makes a case for the view that the emergence of modern individualist societies is a historical opportunity which can, at least in principle, contribute substantially to the progress of humanity. Mead puts

it as follows:

> [. . .] primitive human society offers much less scope for
> individuality – for original, unique, or creative thinking and
> behavior on the part of the individual self within it or belonging
> to it – than does civilized human society; and indeed the evolution
> of civilized human society has largely depended upon or resulted
> from a progressive social liberation of the individual self [. . .].[25]

Not that a Meadian interpretation of human evolution compels us to be
uncritical of the damaging social and psychological effects of
individualistically structured forms of coexistence, but it certainly obliges
us to recognise the emancipatory potentials which are set free in societies
committed to the promotion and protection of individual freedom and
expression. Again, from a Meadian point of view, the problematisation of
the interplay between individuality and conformity is a sociological dynamic
which takes place both outside *and* inside the subject: it is *outside* the subject
where the societal norms which determine the interplay between
individuality and conformity are negotiated; and it is *inside* the subject where
the rules of this interplay are articulated through the internal, and often
disconcerting, dialogue between the 'I' and the 'me'. Thus, a comprehensive
sociology of individuality and conformity cannot do without a critical
psychology of the 'I' and the 'me'.

Just as the colonisation of the 'I' by the 'me' can lead to the creation of an
overly 'me'-dependent – that is, *oversocialised* – personality, the colonisation
of individuality through the pressure of conformity can result in the
consolidation of an excessively control-based – that is, *oversocialising* –
society. And just as the rejection of the 'me' by the 'I' can bring about the
formation of an overly 'I'-centred – that is, *overindividualised* – personality,
the rejection of conformity through the celebration of individuality can
produce an exceedingly freedom-based – that is, *overindividualising* – society.
The existence of the 'I' suggests that we need a healthy dose of individuality,
the existence of the 'me' indicates that we need a healthy dose of conformity,
and the coexistence of the 'I' and the 'me' reminds us of the fact that we
depend on a balanced dose of conformative individuality and individuative
conformity. The potentialities of individuality and conformity manifest
themselves in the realities of the 'I' and the 'me'.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the analysis of the 'I' and the 'me' is central to the Meadian account of the self, not only because it is of crucial referential relevance in Mead's writings, but also – more importantly – because it obliges us to confront the complexity of the existential ambivalence of human selfhood. If we acknowledge that every subject is internally divided between an 'I' and a 'me', then we need to face up to the deep ambivalence of human existence, which arises from the multifaceted interplay between individual and society. To suggest that the relationship between the 'I' and the 'me' can be regarded as an expression of our existential ambivalence means to assume that we develop a sense of selfhood through the constant interaction between the individuative and the collective aspects of human life. As subjects capable of reflection, we can convert our existential ambivalence into an object of contemplation; as subjects capable of action, we can transform our existential ambivalence into the motor of our worldly situation. Whether we reflect or act upon the world, the world is ours if we accept that we are of the world.

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Endnotes

[1] See, for example, Mead (1967 [1934]: 173-178, 192-200, 209-213, and 273-281). Here we shall focus on Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society*, in which the distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' has a number of different meanings. It should be noted that Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' was heavily influenced by William James, who put forward a dualistic conception of the self (see James, 1890).

[2] See, for example: Baert (1998: 70); Crossley (1996: 55-56, 61, 78, 90, and 144-145); Habermas (1992 [1988]: 171-173, 177-182, and 187-193); Silva (2007a: 49 and 53); and Silva (2007b: 5-6, 43, 51-59, 62-65, and 82).

3 See, for example: Baert (1998: 70); Habermas (1992 [1988]: 172, 179, and 187); and Silva (2007b: 51-55).

4 See, for example: "It is the self as such that makes the distinctively human society possible" (Mead, 1967 [1934]: 240).

5 See, for example: "The human being is social in a distinguishing fashion" (ibid.: 241).

6 See, for example: "Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of that situation or object, for it is a part of the mechanism whereby that situation or object is created. [. . .] Out of language emerges the field of mind" (ibid.: 78 and 133).

7 Cf. Baert (1998: 68-69).

8 Mead (1967 [1934]: 199).

9 Ibid.: 178.

10 Ibid.: 177.

11 Ibid.: 210.

12 See Susen (2007: 214 and 287-292). See also Triandis (1996: 408-409).

13 Mead (1967 [1934]: 196, italics added).

14 Ibid.: 199-200, italics added.

15 Ibid.: 217.

16 Ibid.: 178.

17 Ibid.: 175.

18 Ibid.: 177.

19 Ibid.: 203.

20 See, for example: "No individual has a mind which operates simply in itself, in isolation from the social life-process in which it has arisen or out of which it has emerged, and in which the pattern of organized social behavior has consequently been basically impressed upon it" (ibid.: 222).

21 Ibid.: 193.

[22] Ibid.: 192.

[23] Ibid.: 221.

[24] See Mead (1967 [1934]: 221-222).

[25] Ibid.: 221.

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Reconsidering the Marxist Theory of the Capitalist State: An Alternative Approach

by Fatma Ülkü Selçuk

Introduction

The neo-Marxist manner of treating the consent of the masses as a prerequisite for capitalist survival has to be revised once despotic regimes in several capitalist states are considered. For a more thorough analysis, it is necessary to stress the decisiveness of armed force for the capitalist hold of state power. It is also important to acknowledge that only if a multi-level analytical framework is adopted can a fuller account of the phenomena be given. The conceptual boundaries of the state have to be reexamined and a new conceptualization has to be offered. These are among the tasks this article attempts to fulfill. It critically examines the portrayal of state in classical Marxist texts and Perry Anderson's approach to armed power compared to Gramsci. There are also conceptually innovative attempts as regards the 'state', 'state power', 'action types', and 'rationality', in order to lay relatively solid grounds for theoretical construction.

It is possible to analyze 'the state' from a variety of perspectives. In spite of this theoretical diversity, social theorists seem to agree that the state or the concept of the state has a profound impact on the modern individual's life. While a variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on the issue of the state have been established, much still remains open to debate. Among these varied approaches, the Marxist approach presents a powerful toolkit for analyzing the class character of the state. Yet, since the varied works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels highlight diverse dimensions of the state rather than providing a systematic work on state theory, there have been serious disputes in the interpretation of their works. Hence, the debates – along with the reconstruction of theory – gave rise to a rich Marxist literature with novel dimensions introduced and different emphases made concerning the capitalist state.

Within the past few decades of Marxist studies, the 1960-1980 era can be considered as the one marked by the rise of Althusserian structuralism (e.g.

Althusser, 1971; Poulantzas, 1975a; 2000) although there were also studies which remained outside this current (e.g. Miliband, 1969). In the course of the 1970s, several Marxist studies on the capitalist state (e.g. Altvater 1979; Blanke, Jürgens & Kastendiek, 1979; Braunmühl, 1979; Gerstenberger, 1979; Habermas, 1973; Hirsch, 1979) focused on the functions and/or form of the state, while the early 1980s saw the rise of poststructuralist analysis in the (post-)Marxist terrain (e.g. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Amid the post-1990 era, several studies critically evaluated capital and state (e.g. Bellofiore, 1999; Brunhoff, 1999; Carchedi, 2001; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; Jessop, 1997; 2002) by focusing on the geographical dimensions of the question, especially with reference to capital flows, capital accumulation regimes/strategies, and/or forms/functions of the capitalist state. In the second half of the twentieth century – with the exception of a few works (such as Anderson, 1976) – the primary interest of several key Marxist theorists analyzing the capitalist state (e.g. Aglietta, 1987; Althusser, 1971; Altvater, 1979; Blanke, Jürgens & Kastendiek, 1979; Braunmühl, 1979; Gerstenberger, 1979; Habermas, 1973; Hirsch, 1979; Jessop, 1997; 2002; Offe, 1993; Poulantzas, 1975a) remained predominantly on the economic and/or ideological dimensions of the question rather than the means of violence.

The strategies pursued by capitalists and relatively micro-range factors influential over state practices received very little attention except for the studies undertaken with (neo)pluralist or (neo)elitist orientation (e.g. Dahl, 1956; 1961; Domhoff, 1967; 1970; 1983; 1990; Dye, 1986; Mills, 1956; Soloway, 1987; Truman, 1959; Useem, 1984) despite the fact that several of them did not formulate the question with reference to the capitalist hold of state power. On the Marxist front, the works of Miliband especially have approached the question of identifying the channels enabling and/or facilitating the bourgeois[1] hold of state power from a multi-level perspective. However, his work has been criticized by several Marxists (e.g. Clarke, 1991; Poulantzas, 1969) for ostensibly falling into the trap of bourgeois social science.

In this article, Marxist perspectives on the state will be examined with a focus on the following: Jessop's categorization of Marx's and Engels' texts; the Miliband and Poulantzas debate; and Perry Anderson's criticism of Gramsci. The analysis will proceed in such a way as to stress the decisiveness of armed force and the need for a multi-level analytical framework. Firstly, the question of conceptual boundaries of the state is examined and an alternative conceptualization is offered. Secondly, the approach to the state in classical Marxist texts is critically analyzed, with alternatives suggested when

deemed necessary. Thirdly, the question of the character of armed power with reference to the state is analyzed. Lastly, a multi-level framework is proposed for the analysis of relations concerning the state. In spite of locating the Marxist state debate at the center of this article, there is no claim that its theoretical standpoint is a version of Marxism.

The Conceptual Boundaries

Contrary to the belief that defining such concepts as the 'state' or 'consent' should be left to philosophers (cf. Barry, 1989), social scientists must, for the sake of analytical clarity and coherence, define the boundaries of their conceptual tools. As for 'the state', the attributed meanings have changed considerably both in time and with reference to its definer. Quentin Skinner's (1989) survey provides an understanding not only for the change in the meanings attributed to the state but also for the conceptual evolution ending in 'the state'. He showed that, in Western Europe, while earlier concepts used in place of the state were oriented towards a personal view of power, the modern usage of the state started to denote impersonal state apparatuses distinct from not only the ruler but also the ruled. As for today, among the most widely invoked definitions of the state – one that has even influenced Marxist theorists – is that of Max Weber. While Weber's footprints can be traced most clearly in those works treating the presence of legitimacy as taken for granted (particularly at times of non-rebellion, or non-intense class struggles),[2] his influence has had crucial implications over the conceptualization of consent and violence vis-à-vis state power. Weber described the modern state in terms of its monopoly over the legitimate use of force (see 1978a: 54, 65). However, for Weber, although legitimately monopolizing the means of violence was the essential characteristic of the modern state, territoriality, administrative staff and laws were among its other key features (see ibid: 56). As Helliwell and Hindess note, for Weber, "compliance is unlikely to survive for long unless it is accompanied by a belief in the legitimacy of the leader's power" (1999: 81). Actually, this problem-generating estimation has been embraced by several Marxist (especially the neo-Gramscian) and non-Marxist (especially the liberal structural functionalist) authors, while a number of others questioned its validity (e.g. Anderson, 1976).

As for Marx and Engels' treatment of the capitalist state, as Miliband asserts, "Marx himself [. . .] never attempted a systematic study of the state" (1969: 5). This gave rise to very diverse approaches in the interpretation of the works of Marx and Engels. However, for our present purposes only the

conceptualizations of Miliband and Poulantzas will be examined, since they represent polar opposites in what has been one of the most influential debates on the theory of the capitalist state over the past few decades. For Miliband, in his definition of the state, his major insistence was on the necessity to distinguish between government and state. He pointed out that when Weber spoke of the state with reference to the monopoly of legitimate force, it was the *government*, not the state, to which he was referring. Miliband argued:

> 'the state' is not a thing, [. . .] it does not, as such exist. What 'the state' stands for is a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system (1969: 49)

As for the parts of the state system, he suggested that "the government, the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub-central government and parliamentary assemblies" are the institutions which "make up 'the state', and whose interrelationship shapes the form of the state system" (Miliband, 1969: 54). Miliband also stressed that the state system is *not* identical with the political system, since the latter includes several further institutions such as parties and pressure groups as well as a number of non-political institutions such as giant corporations, churches, and the mass media (1969: 54; cf. Althusser, 1971, on ideological state apparatuses). So, unlike Althusserian accounts – and unlike the Gramscian integral state, which conceptualize the state as the political society plus the civil society – Miliband tried to *demarcate* the state and non-state by distinguishing 'the state' from the broader 'political' realm.

As for Poulantzas, he alleged that the purely instrumental conception of the state, which equates the state with political domination, reduces the state apparatus to state power (2000: 12), as if "there is a free-standing state power which is only afterwards utilized by the dominant classes in various ways" (2000: 13). He stressed the necessity to conceptualize the state as a 'relation'. In his refusal to apply the concept of power to the state, he attempted to distinguish himself from those who:

> account for the relative autonomy of the State in terms of the group made up of the agents of the State and in terms of the specific power of this group, as those conceptions which apply the concept of power to the State invariably do: the bureaucratic class (from Hegel via Weber to Rizzi and Burnham); the political elites (this is Miliband's conception [. . .]); the techno-structure (power of the 'business

machine' and the State apparatus, etc. (Poulantzas, 1976: 73-74)

Poulantzas identified a particular use of the concept 'power' with a 'bourgeois approach'. His refusal to apply the concept of power ended in the rejection of a thorough analysis of the forces acting in and upon the capitalist state positions, and paradoxically the reduction of the state to class struggles.[3] He treated the state "as a relation, or more precisely as the condensate of a relation of power between struggling classes" in order to "escape the false dilemma entailed by the present discussion on the State, between the State comprehended as a Thing/instrument and the State comprehended as Subject" (Poulantzas, 1976: 74). While Poulantzas never clarified the conceptual boundaries of the state in his texts, there is no reason to oppose Poulantzas' point on the relational character of the social and the state. Obviously any 'social' is 'relational', but still the problem of analytical clarity remains unless an expansion of those relations is given. In other words, even though any social is a result of relations, and moreover is never neutral (since once it emerges it gains an existence of its own), identifying the forces – both at a micro and macro level – and their magnitude acting upon the social should be the best route to take towards understanding the character and relative weight of the determinant(s) of the resultant and its specific biases (if not all its dimensions). Regardless of Poulantzas' contributions mainly at macro level, he insistently refused to integrate micro dimensions into his analysis, labeling others with being infected by 'bourgeois science'. For his works following *Political Power*, he claimed that he modified and rectified certain of his analyses, but in an opposite direction to that of Miliband, in a way to "emphasize the primacy of the class struggle as compared with the State apparatus" (Poulantzas 1976: 74). Yet, unlike Miliband, Poulantzas did not develop initiatives for the conceptual clarification of 'the state' except for his insistence to treat it as a relation in connection with class struggles.

Since conceptual boundaries are vital for analytical clarity, the attitude of Miliband over against Poulantzas is to be preferred in distinguishing the state from other social entities. The conceptualization of the state presented in this article shares a similar concern with Miliband. The state is defined mainly by its legal form, which necessarily has a selective character since the laws of the state (written or unwritten) favor particular interests as against others (cf. Jessop, 1990), while those interests are not held to be restricted only to class interests (cf. Poulantzas, 1975a; 2000). The state, with its legally defined positions, is portrayed as both a site (denoting internality) and an object (denoting externality) of struggles. The following is the definition

proposed here, with the acknowledgment that the word 'state positions' can be replaced by a prevalent equivalent depending on the era and context analyzed (e.g. the king's men, servants of the crown, or any other specific signifier helpful for demarcation):

The state is a set of networks/institutions (operated by empowered agents)

(1) with the official authority to make (1.1) laws that at the same time define state positions, and (1.2) arrangements through the legally defined state positions;[4]

(2) deriving its official authority from its power to set the rules and from its claim of sovereignty over a particular territory; (2.1) that becomes possible only by the presence of people commanding some strong/successful enough armed force[5] who enable the practice of making laws and arrangements through the legally recognized state positions, (2.1a) in favor of particular group(s) of people, defending their interests within and outside the territory[6] (2.1b) as against other armed and non-armed forces and interests of group(s) of people within and outside that territory[7] (2.1c) with no unconditionally necessary consent of those living on the territory except for some degree of consent of the determinant exercisers and/or steerers of armed power;

(3) with officially recognized state positions (3.1) some of which are granted the authority to collect taxes from the people on that territory; the taxes that can be transferred or used by the legally defined positions in state networks for (3.1a) legal or (3.1b) illegal practices;

(4) the incumbents of which can make (4.2a) legal or (4.2b) illegal arrangements through their officially assigned authority.

From this definition, it can be detected that not the consent of masses but the threat or use of means of violence (which is not conceptualized as necessarily a part of the state networks) is seen as the source making the presence of the state possible. Theoretically, while those mentioned as 'strong enough armed people' may cover even the whole society (all inhabitants armed), they may also be comprised of a group of outsiders. As for the aforementioned clash of interests, this may denote an exclusively inner conflict, a conflict between the interests of the inhabitants and outsiders, or their combination. Similar to Weberian accounts, there is territoriality in the definition. Its distinguishing feature is the official authority granted by armed force; and its law-making capacity and legally

defined state positions. Although the state officials are restricted to the incumbents of the legally defined state positions, state practices are not held to be restricted to legal practices. Therefore, this proposed conceptualization of the state attempts to move beyond the legalist-formalist accounts, providing the opportunity to draw the line between the non-state and state practices, and the non-state and state incumbents, which becomes crucial especially in answering such questions as how to categorize the status of the illegal armed forces; how to conceptualize the status of the state incumbents' illegal practices; and where the state ends and where it begins. So far as the conceptual boundaries of the state are defined, the next section will focus on state power with reference to the classical Marxist texts.

Critical Examination of the Marxist Portrayal

As for the approach to the state in classical Marxist texts, Jessop (1990: 26-28) suggests a useful categorization, identifying six different usages. The first is the treatment of the state as a *parasitic* institution with no essential role in economic production and reproduction, which oppresses and exploits the civil society on behalf of particular groups.[8] The second approach is one that treats the state as *epiphenomena* or surface reflections of the material relations of production and class struggles stemming from the system of property relations.[9] The third approach treats the state as the *factor of cohesion*, as a regulator of the struggles with repression and concession, and reproducer of the dominant mode of production, defining the state in functional terms in a manner to include every institution contributing to cohesion.[10] The fourth allegedly sees the state as an *instrument* of class rule.[11] As for the fifth approach, it treats the state as *a set of institutions* without assumptions about its class character, and sees it as a public power that emerges at a certain stage of the division of labor.[12] Lastly, the sixth approach sees the state as a *system of political domination with specific effects on the class struggle*, with a focus on the forms of political representation and state intervention, examining them with reference to the long-term interests of a particular class or class fraction.[13]

A critical examination of these six points identified by Jessop is presented along the following lines. As for seeing the state as *parasitic*, it must be stressed that any institution hindering the liberty of human beings is parasitic to a certain extent, including the state (denoting a parallel with the anarchist accounts that conceptualize the state as a parasitic institution), but it does not follow that the state never promotes liberty or that any non-state is non-parasitic. On the contrary, any institution, social collectivity or

individual hindering human beings' survival and positive self-development may be addressed as parasitic when they do so. Therefore, seeing the state as a contextually parasitic institution does not entail that the market (as a part of the realm of the non-state) or the institutions embodied in 'civil society' (with reference to its meaning excluding the state) are to be conceptualized as necessarily and absolutely non-parasitic.

As for the second approach Jessop identified, treating the state as an *epiphenomenon,* it has to be acknowledged that once the state emerges, its form, rules and incumbents become among the 'material transforming forces' rather than simple secondary mental phenomena caused by and accompanying the economy without any casual influence itself. In this respect, a parallel can be drawn with the state-centered approaches that consider the state as an entity with a structure of its own, the actions of which cannot be reduced to the responses given to pressures of social classes and groups,[14] with the acknowledgment that bureaucracy here is not treated as a social class with interests of its own and the state is not treated as an institution engendering special common interests stemming from its structural location in the society (cf. the criticism of the state-centered approach in Jessop, 1990; Miliband, 1983).

As for the third approach – the state as the *factor of cohesion* – if cohesion is not conceptualized as synonymous with harmony or the consent of the masses, the state may be seen as a factor of cohesion (among other factors of cohesion), since insofar as the official authority (whether a monarch or the elected representative of the nation) continues to exercise power with a claim of sovereignty over a particular territory, regardless of the presence/lack of consent of the masses, a *degree* of success in holding the elements of the society *in the territory* can be assumed to exist on the part of those whose collective long-term interests[15] the state practices favor as against their antagonistic sides. However, if 'cohesion' is conceptualized as uniting the elements of society by means of *mainly consent* through concessions and ideological processes, then the state is *not* held as a necessary factor of cohesion. Unlike the theories assuming a state of tacit consent with reference to residence or benefiting the services provided by the state, whether in a so-called 'free state' or not (Locke, 1689: 301-302; Rousseau, 1762: 93; cf. Hume, 1777: 476), the presence of individuals living in a country without active protests, with a majority of 'yes' votes in a referendum for a constitution, and even votes to pro-capitalist political parties, is not necessarily indicative of the inhabitants' consent to the capitalist order. Actually, there is little alternative for an individual discontented with the

present condition in a particular society but to continue to live there. For example, a particular individual may prefer living in a classless society, but she may simply not see it as a viable alternative in the short or long run, and may prefer a 'lesser evil' among the alternatives she sees viable, or may simply stay silent. Furthermore, strictly policed national borders act as a force over the majority of the people, pushing them to live in a particular society. Besides, even if there were no borders, the question would still remain: 'Is there a place in perfect conformity with the desires of the individual where she can move?' If the answer is negative, cohesion – in its consent-loaded meaning – is seen not as a necessary attribute but rather as a tendential and non-necessary characteristic of the capitalist state. As for the apparatus unity of the state, it is held to exist only to the extent that there is some degree of conformity with its elements parallel to the biased selectivity of the state, which is structured by the *de jure* or *de facto* binding rules pushing its incumbents towards particular paths of action (cf. Jessop, 1990, on the state's structural selectivity, its tendential substantive institutional unity, and its function of maintaining social cohesion).

As for the fourth approach Jessop identified – the state as an *instrument* of class rule – unlike Poulantzas' (2000) claim that this entails viewing the state as external, and in contrast also to Jessop's (1990) claim that this means seeing the state as neutral, not all those claimed to be instrumentalist treat the state in the way it is commonly alleged. Besides, there are hardly any references in the works of Poulantzas and Jessop which prove that Miliband, for example, saw the state as exclusively external or absolutely neutral. As long as the laws are treated as non-neutral (as is done by Miliband) and the state networks (including the state form) are considered to be structured by the laws in effect to some degree, the claim that Miliband treated the state as neutral becomes invalid. To return to the question of whether to treat the state as an instrument or not, regardless of this legally biased form, a number of examples indicate that state positions (and even some top positions) can be, in part, occupied by those defending working class collective long-term interests[16] in a capitalist society,[17] and sometimes state-power can be used to favor the anti-capitalist forces. Therefore, here, it is held that insofar as the state is structured by its legal arrangements in a biased way (whether those laws are enforced by a monarch or representative assembly) it is in no way neutral. However, to the extent that its power is open to the influence of those relatively non-favored and favored (in terms of the existing legal structure), among its other features, the state, with its legally defined positions, can be treated also as a *non-neutral instrument*, or better, an entity composed of non-neutral instruments, the incumbents (if not necessarily the

laws) of which endow it with a contradictory character.

As for the fifth approach Jessop noted – treating the state as *a set of institutions* – here, with respect to the class character of those institutions, it is held that, only to the extent that the laws favor a particular class (and its particular short and/or long term interests), do institutions of the state structured by those laws reflect the class character of the state. Other factors moving beyond those laws (these laws themselves may have and generally do have a contradictory character) are treated as reflecting the non-legal subjective side (meanwhile the institutional side, which generally is contradictory, can be considered as the legalized subjectivity) of the state's class character (e.g. communist practices of the army commanders in a capitalist society). Although the need for regulating the complex social relations in a society with its increasing division of labor may require the presence of coordinating and intervening hubs, theoretically, there is no need for that coordination to take place exclusively in legally defined state positions, even in capitalist societies. For example, the function of the 'central bank', 'licenses', 'public works', can be undertaken by those enterprises, organizations, or networks in non-state positions, which may be still exposed to legal regulations. But still it is held that the state's major distinguishing characteristic is its legally defined state positions, which at the same time make up its institutions, while, similar to Miliband, the political system and relations are not seen as limited to the state and the state positions/institutions. Therefore, in the conceptualization proposed here, the state of being exposed to 'not-directly economic' class struggles or being exposed to state regulations or public law does not make an institution necessarily a part of the state. For example, although the institution of 'family' may be exposed to utilization for capitalist interests (in addition to possible other interests), and even though it is exposed to the regulation of the state, here it is not conceptualized as state apparatus. The conceptualization of the state in an opposite direction renders the borders of the concept 'state' vague and blurred, stripping it of its analytical power, making it almost impossible to properly identify the state and non-state, ending in a loss of meaning and an inability to demarcate particular sets of institutions/relations from some others which have certain major distinctive characteristics despite their shared ones with that of the state.

Lastly, regarding the sixth approach – seeing the state as a *system of political domination with specific effects on the class struggle* – although here the state is portrayed as a privileged site of political domination on account of its power to influence social relations and structures on a wide spectrum (including

the class struggle), 'political domination' is not conceptually restricted to the 'state' or 'state positions'. This is not to deny the crucial impact of different state forms over the organization capacity, interests and struggles of social classes, since as Trotsky (1971) argued in his *The Struggle against Fascism*, the state form (e.g. the state in a parliamentary republic granting the citizens bourgeois constitutional liberties, or the state ruled by fascists in a mono-party regime with active mass support) does affect the provision of opportunities and imposition of constraints over class forces, with critical implications for struggle strategies. Besides, the state form does have impact over the perceptions of many people as regards the way they perceive the state. Yet, all those forms are still legal forms made possible by *armed force* (provided by the state and/or non-state armed elements). Therefore, what remains unique to the 'state' over against other armed and/or political institutions is again its *official authority, granted by laws, taking its power from the armed forces strong enough to impose that official authority over the territory*. Therefore, the state is seen as a unique (not exclusive) form of political domination in addition to its other features.

Having clarified at least a few issues with respect to the six points raised by Jessop, another question he raised will be examined: namely, how to evaluate the state – as *'a thing, a subject, a social relation, or a construct'*? In this respect, Jessop's answer to the question is insightful. He not only handled the state as a relation, but also identified some of its distinguishing characteristics, and, unlike Poulantzas' subjectless analysis, Jessop underlined the presence of *calculating subjects* operating "on the strategic terrain constituted by the state" which "are in part constituted by the *strategic selectivity* of the state system and its past interventions" (1990: 262).

Certainly, any 'social' is an ensemble of '*relation*s'. Therefore, distinguishing a social entity embodying several sets of relations from others requires expanding those sets of relations denoted by the concept. The first step of this expansion should be to fix and demarcate the borders of the concept used in a way to denote particular sets of relations, while its further steps should be to expand the components of the relations defined in the borders of that particular concept, by identifying relatively privileged factors, the forces enabling or acting upon those factors, and the implications of those factors over the analyzed social entity.

As for the question of whether the state is a *construct* helping to orientate political action or not, the answer is that, even if not exclusively defined as such, it is a construct inasmuch as any social phenomenon has a partially

constructed side. However, despite this constructed side, the state is a social institution (embodying and regulating several sets of social relations), and has an existence of its own, constraining and influencing the ways individuals feel, think, and act, which should be handled in a similar vein to what Durkheim means by 'social fact'. The question is what the distinguishing characteristics of the state are, with the acknowledgment that while that demarcation necessarily becomes a constructed tool of cognition, this does not change the fact that the relations themselves denoted by the concept are real, with an existence of their own. As for the state, if there are particular relations and regular outcomes of those relations (characteristics) different than others – for example, if 'the people recruited by the legally defined state army in the name of protecting the country' embody different sets of relations than 'the armed people employed by a private company to control the entrances and exits to the company', and if both of them are different than, for example, 'a man with a gun protecting the land he owns in the village he lives in' – whichever word is used to denote each set of relations, those relations *are* 'real' with an existence of their own, independent of human thought.

As for the question of whether the state is a *thing* or a *subject*, the answer depends on how the concepts 'thing' and 'subject' are defined. Here, it is not that the incumbents of the state have some common interests on account of being elements of the state. So, unlike the state-centered accounts, here the state is not conceptualized as a structure with interests of its own as a collective subject. However, it is the case that, in the way a physical 'thing' has an existence of its own, the state is a 'thing' with an existence of its own as a valid object of sociological inquiry ('social fact' in Durkheimian sense, with the acknowledgment that a social fact may not be explained exclusively by social facts), although unlike the neutrality of 'physical things', the state as a 'social thing' is a 'non-neutral thing' (embodying constant reactions, which may even give rise to radical changes in its form). The state displays a biased character mainly on account of the way the laws structure it, which is in some ways similar to what Jessop meant by the 'structural selectivity of the state', meaning that "it is not a neutral instrument equally accessible to all social forces and equally adaptable to all ends" (1990: 148).

In this section, one issue remains to be clarified theoretically, namely, the *nature of the incumbents of state positions*; whether or not those incumbents have any *will* at all (and, if so, how such a 'will' might be theorized). To begin with, the individuals are not puppets. Unlike the behaviorist approach theorizing the individual deprived of the capability to make choice, a parallel

can be drawn with rationalist accounts (whether liberal or not) which hold the individuals as capable of making choices, albeit in a constrained environment and cognitive capacity. Here, this choice is held to be in line with the considered individual's *rationality of being* (see that in the section 'A Multi-Level Analytical Framework'), which is commonly shaped in the most part (if not exclusively) by several (social and non-social) structural positions occupied, with the acknowledgment that some positions may be privileged over others, depending on the context. It is not to deny the presence of some degree of conditioning in human action (which nevertheless is thought to comprise at least some degree of unconscious calculation, rather than being equal to automatic behavior without any calculation).

Liberal rationalist approaches treating individual action as a matter of choice have some validity, but only to a certain extent. It is true that some norms are internalized in the way formulated by generally symbolic interactionist accounts. On the other hand, there is not much reason to treat human beings as *radically* different from all animals. That is not to claim that there is no choice for the individuals because they are either exclusively constituted by the social structures they occupy or that they are exclusively constituted by discursive practices. Still, it is conceded that there is some degree of conditioning in human beings while it may be an outcome of previous and present conscious and/or unconscious calculation. Specifically, it cannot be argued that 'learned helplessness' (depending on the context in general, and culture in particular) has nothing to do with a state of non-rebellion. If over and over, the rebels are severely punished (e.g. imprisonment, wounding, killing), this may create a state of conformity over generations without any necessary consent to particular rules.

Making this point clear is important because doing so makes the notions of mass internalization of dominant rules and tacit consent highly suspicious. Conformity under conditions where one makes a choice is in no way a one-to-one indicator of the presence of value-consensus or consent. Actually, even when there is direct implementation of violence there might still be a choice, since, for example, even under torture one can choose to 'talk and live' or 'not to talk and continue to be tortured (or die, or any possible other alternative)'.[18] While the 'choice to obey a rule' cannot be taken as an indicator of consent in every case (cf. Hoffman, 1995), the opposite way of reasoning generally ends in the underestimation of the determinacy of violence (whether actually applied or not) in analyzing domination relations in general and the state in particular.

Having made clear that making a choice on the side of obedience to rules cannot be considered as a reliable indicator of the internalization of rules or presence of consent, actions of state elements will be subsumed under three broad categories, varying in terms of the degree of voluntarily performing a particular state practice with reference to protection of capitalist interests: (i) 'active voluntary action'; (ii) 'passive voluntary action'; and (iii) 'involuntary action'. It is possible for any of these action types intentionally (or unintentionally) to work to the advantage or disadvantage of capitalist short/long term interests. As for 'active voluntary action', it can be divided into two. The first is action motivated mainly by material gains, such as electoral victory, promotion, or bribery, supplementary to an already-received regular salary/wage/status, (similar to Weber's instrumentally rational action), while the second is action motivated mainly by a strong belief in the value-correctness of the action (similar to Weber's value-rational action). As for 'passive voluntary action', the individual performs a particular state practice without much questioning as to its value-correctness or possible material advantages or disadvantages (apart from concern for the regularly received salary/wage/status). Instead the action is performed just because it is the given duty, without even theorizing the sacredness of duty (similar to Weber's traditional action). A possible questioning of the individual may result in 'active voluntary action' or 'involuntary action'. As for 'involuntary action', it ends in the performance of a particular state practice with a strong belief that the action is not correct while it is somehow performed in order not to be dismissed or because of a conflicting value-orientation. Here, except for the 'strong belief type of active voluntary action', none of these action types are seen as necessarily indicating the presence of consent in performing that particular state practice, while except for the 'involuntary type of action', none of these action types are seen as a necessary indicator of lack of consent. Yet, whatever the orientation of the action is, state elements are considered to be the *subjects* of the action, with or without consent. Consequently, here, even though the state as a collective is *not* treated as a subject, the incumbents of its positions – namely, the state elements – *are* held to be subjects.

Arms, Antonio Gramsci and Perry Anderson

There is another point that remains to be elaborated with respect to the Marxist state debate, that is, on the nature of state practices favoring capitalists. It is already apparent that because the legal framework makes the state structure biased and the average individual has some degree of choice, certain state practices are held to be pro-capitalist not exclusively at

the behest of the capitalist. Yet it does not follow that the importance of capitalists' strategic practices to realize their short/long-term interests in a given context is to be rejected. That is certainly a common method, but still the decisive factor that influences state practices is the holding of arms.

Indeed, if there is some strong enough *armed power* to steer the state practices, even the dominant mode of production may change. In this context, being 'strong enough' depends on the balance of forces as well as the orientation of individual actions. While this does not mean that unarmed state elements rule directly at the behest of the armed ones, it means that if a strong *enough* armed group (whether incumbents of state positions or not) intends to steer the non-armed elements by applying sufficient force, they would most probably – if not definitely – have the power to do so either by neutralizing and replacing the dissenting ones or by forcing the dissenters to act in line with their intentions. If there are challenges between the armed and non-armed elements of the state, and if the civilian governments act in the opposite direction to the will of those armed elements and manage to stay in power, this would be on account of the fact that either those armed elements believe in the relative legitimacy of the civilian government's challenge (e.g. legitimacy of democratic procedures) or those armed elements not holding that idea are perhaps unwilling to take further steps of intervention, or they are not strong enough as against other armed elements (e.g. other groups in the military, sectors of the police, other countries' armed forces, possible armed insurrection of the people among others). It is useful to refer here to a point which Perry Anderson persistently and solidly emphasized, that even in advanced capitalist countries the ultimate determinant of the power system is 'force' and that "[t]his is the law of capitalism, which it cannot violate, on pain of death" (1976: 44).

The treatment of 'consent of the masses', and 'force concentrated by the state' as the necessary components of modern society have been effectively theorized by Weber in his political writings. Weber's influence in social theory has not been restricted to liberal circles. On the contrary, several Marxists treated the consent of the masses as a necessary aspect of capitalist societies. This mode of interpreting the consent of the masses can be found also in Gramsci's 'Prison Notebooks' regardless of the contradictory points he made concerning force and consent. Gramsci has become perhaps the most celebrated theorist by those searching democratic ways of transition to socialism. In 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', Perry Anderson (1976) showed how Gramsci's conception of hegemony shifted in his 'Prison Notebooks', denoting predominantly cultural supremacy on the one hand,

and a combination of force and consent on the other. He indicated that, through a metamorphosis, Gramsci's emphasis on military struggle in his earlier writings later turned into an emphasis on consent. As Anderson suggested, in contrast to Machiavelli's emphasis on 'force' and 'fraud', Gramsci's emphasis was on the opposite pole, with Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Gramsci's *The Modern Prince* becoming the distorting mirrors of one another. Although Gramsci "adopted Machiavelli's myth of the Centaur as the emblematic motto of this research [. . .] where Machiavelli had effectively collapsed consent into coercion, in Gramsci coercion was progressively eclipsed by consent" (Anderson, 1976: 49). As for today, the 'dual perspective', which Gramsci had complained is often reduced to a banal and trivial treatment (see Gramsci, 1989: 169-170), is far from trivial, although social theorists have largely handled it with its one pole 'consent' rather than 'violence'. Still, the major problem is not the predominant privileged treatment of consent. Actually, the problem is the 'dual perspective' itself.

Although the limited scope of this article does not permit an analysis of Marxist approaches to ideology or Gramsci's theory since it focuses on neither of them, here, I have to open a parenthesis.[19] For Gramsci, there is the need to state that I agree with Chantal Mouffe in her view that Gramsci became avant-garde with his elaboration on the material nature of ideology. While he did not conceptualize ideology as false consciousness, he questioned the reductionist standpoint attributing ideological elements as an essential class-character (1979: 199). There is much to comment on Gramsci's approach to ideology, however, Gramsci in this section is referred to mainly in comparison to Perry Anderson's approach to coercion, along with his criticisms. As for Anderson's (1976) point that consent is given more emphasis when compared to coercion in Gramsci's writings, my point here is different. For me, while the consent of the masses is not unconditionally necessary for the reproduction of capitalist relations whether in the short or long run, the consent of a strong enough combination of armed elements ready to use violence is essential for that. Therefore, the problem is about encoding both consent (without specification) and violence as necessary factors. Gramsci wrote:

> Another point which needs to be defined and developed is the 'dual perspective' in political action and in national life. The dual perspective can present itself on various levels, from the most elementary to the most complex; but these can all theoretically be reduced to two fundamental levels, corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur – half-animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence

and civilisation, of the individual moment and of the universal moment ('Church' and 'State'), of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and of strategy, etc. Some have reduced the theory of the 'dual perspective' to something trivial and banal, to nothing but two forms of 'immediacy' which succeed each other mechanically in time, with greater or less 'proximity'. In actual fact, it often happens that the more the first 'perspective' is 'immediate' and elementary, the more the second has to be 'distant' (not in time, but as a dialectical relation), complex and ambitious. In other words, it may happen as in human life, that the more an individual is compelled to defend his own immediate physical existence, the more will he uphold and identify with the highest values of civilization and of humanity, in all their complexity (1989: 169-170)

Yet the dual perspective is not without problems. Indeed, as long as strong theoretical foundations are not laid for the necessity of the consent of the masses to the conditions to be ruled, or unless what should be consented to by certain groups/individuals is not specified as necessary factor(s), it is hardly possible for one to treat the 'consent of the masses to the capitalist order' as unconditionally the necessary factor for ruling the masses in a capitalist society. Therefore, in those theories under the influence of Max Weber, the problem is not only the underestimation of violence in general, but also the unconditional treatment of consent of the masses to the capitalist order as the necessary component in the absence of mass rebellion. It is quite clear that the presence of some degree of consent among masses to particular state practices does not always denote the presence of their consent to capitalism. Although estimating consent is less problematic in the case of rebellion (since there should be lack of some consent as regards what the individual protests), in the case of non-rebellion, it is extremely hard to identify the presence and character of consent since it is highly ambiguous as to which aspects of the rulers' policies there is consent and, furthermore, as to whether or not there is any consent to the rulers' policies at all.

Besides, motives other than consent to particular conditions may be in effect when the people do not protest or rebel actively against the pro-capitalist exercisers of state power or against capitalism. As Anderson suggested, factors other than consent and violence should be taken into consideration in analyzing mass obedience in a capitalist society (1976: esp. 41f). Indeed, generally, a multiplicity of factors is in effect, ending in the obedience of the masses in capitalist societies in a micro-macro range. However, we should assert not only the need to make a multi-level analysis of the determinacy of armed power for the capitalist hold of state power, but also the need to

demarcate state (armed) elements from other incumbents of social positions, so that the categories constructed would provide the analytical power to give a better picture. A critical examination of Antonio Gramsci and Perry Anderson's standpoints will help to clarify this standpoint further.

As for the question as to whether the armed forces are always restricted to modern state networks or not, the answer is negative. While Gramsci's position against Perry Anderson's position of equating the armed elements with state networks is held to be more plausible, Gramsci is wrong, according to Perry Anderson (1976: 32), not to restrict violence to the state alone. In Anderson's opinion, because Weber's definition of the state holds that the state has a monopoly on legitimate violence – which according to Anderson is essential for capitalist social formations – even though there may be armed elements not defined legally in state networks such as the military squads organized by the fascists in the 1920-1922 Italy, they should be treated as a part of the state because, for example, "the *squadristi* could only assault and sack working-class institutions with impunity, because they had the tacit coverage of the police and army" (Anderson, 1976: 32). Although Anderson acknowledged the presence of several armed elements outside the state in footnote 58, he insisted on the marginal character of such phenomena as "semi-legal organizations of private violence, such as the American goon-squads of the twenties and thirties" (1976: 32f) while "[t]he State's monopoly of the means of coercion may be legally drawn at the line of automatic weapons, rather than hand-guns, as in the USA or Switzerland" (ibid.). His insistence on emphasizing the concentration of means of violence in the state may be relevant to his point that "an insurrection will only succeed if the repressive apparatus of the State itself divides or disintegrates – as it did in Russia, China or Cuba" (1976: 77) while "[t]he consensual 'convention' that holds the forces of coercion together must [. . .] be breached" (ibid.).

Perry Anderson's insistence on the disintegration of the repressive apparatus of the state may be correct for several instances. However, the armed elements outside of the state positions should not be considered within the state just because *Weber's* definition of the state holds that the state has a monopoly of legitimate violence. Anderson's argument for overlooking the civilian armed elements seems to have two grounds: firstly, they are marginal (e.g. the mafia of the US in 1920s and 1930s), and secondly, those that are not marginal are supported by the state (e.g. the squads of fascist Italy).

First of all, today, the armed power of the mafia is far from being marginal in a good number of countries (e.g. Italy, Russia, Turkey) while it has brought about scenes of major battle several times. Secondly, taking the support of the state elements is one thing, but being a part of the state is another. For example, even if an adult feeds a baby while the baby cannot survive without that adult's support, we still cannot refer to the baby as that adult because the former survives on account of the support of the latter. They are ontologically two separate entities. Therefore, even though state elements may feed fascist squads, we cannot identify these two unless the latter is legally defined in state networks (according to the definition proposed in this article). This is not to deny the support provided by state elements to fascist paramilitary forces in a number of capitalist societies, but is to insist on separating the conceptual categories from each other with borders defined as clearly as possible. Otherwise, whenever a state element supports a non-state element (e.g. a police officer helping an armed communist militant in a capitalist society) we would have to consider the latter as a part of the state, stripping the concept 'state' of all its analytical power. In order to avoid what may be called 'conceptual absorption', that is, in order to refrain from allowing the concept to absorb the entities/relations denoted by other signifiers in an all-inclusive manner, conceptual precision is vital. For developing stronger theories, a multi-level analytical framework is also essential, since it enables the establishment of links between the relatively micro and macro frameworks.

A Multi-Level Analytical Framework

In conducting social analysis and particularly in theorizing the state, methodological preferences diverging on such issues as to what extent and how individual/collective subjects and structures that regulate, reproduce and transform social life should be integrated into the analysis, and in which manner they should be theorized, have remained at the points of departure. While the macro-level factors have much to do with the formation and transformation of individual feelings, thought, and activity, an overemphasis on social structures runs the risk of underestimating the neuro-physiological mechanisms (non-social parameters) that process natural and social inputs and that produce human action. Regardless of Bhaskar's claim that "social activity must be given a social explanation, and cannot be explained by reference to non-social parameters (though the latter may impose constraints on the possible forms of social activity)" (1979: 122), a problem seems to exist on account of reducing non-social parameters – that would include at least some instincts and partially certain desires with the acknowledgement that

desires especially are in the most part socially constituted – to constraints. Theories in search of further analytical strength should not hesitate to make use of findings from different branches of science, and integrate the non-social aspects to the analysis in a non-underprivileged manner. Non-social factors are not only the constraints but also the *pushing dynamics* of human action. What should be considered in social analysis is the interplay of structures, of motives of individual psyche (only partially socially constituted), and of structures and individual psyche.

For the sake of concretizing this issue, a point on motives must be briefly mentioned here. Certain motives behind certain types of reason *are* influential in shaping social actions, as in the case of non-rebellion on account of physical rationality (with a motive to protect the physical being) even though there may be no consent to be ruled. This is not to suggest adopting an exclusively methodologically individualist model, but rather that the under-treatment of motives (or non-social part of motives) giving rise to certain types of reason and relative irrationalities (both of which embody the social and non-social parameters) renders the analysis incomplete, running the risk of social-structural determinism on the one hand and discursive reductionism on the other. The intentional underestimation of the individual can be detected in Marxist state theory, especially in Nicos Poulantzas' approach in his reduction of the individuals to merely the bearers of objective structures and instances – an idea which was expressed very clearly in his criticism of Ralph Miliband (see Poulantzas, 1969: 70).

As Levine, Sober and Wright (1987) argued in 'Marxism and Methodological Individualism', the traditional Marxist interpretation of Marxism as scientific and materialist (while bourgeois theory is ideological and idealist), as holistic (where bourgeois theory is individualistic), as anti-empiricist and anti-positivist (while bourgeois theory is empiricist and positivist), often rests on the assumption that "Marxism embodies distinctive methodological doctrines which distinguish it from 'bourgeois social science'" (1987: 67). Not surprisingly, Marxist state debate could not escape from being the scene of war between such labels. This mode has been apparent especially in the critical comments aimed at Miliband, which claim his analysis remains in the borders of bourgeois terrain (e.g. Poulantzas, 1969) or bourgeois sociology (e.g. Clarke, 1991: 20; see also the criticism of Rational Choice Marxism as an example of this tradition in Wood, 1989). It should be recognized that neither reformism nor adventurism is inherent in, if not irrelevant with, the methodological standpoint. The belief in the magical scientific character of the theories proposed by a good number of Marxists,

ready to condemn the other side as 'bourgeois', possesses not only the extreme danger of generating historical disasters such as the Stalinist cleansing operations, but also the less extreme threat of creating an exhausting and unpleasant atmosphere among academics, theorists and activists critical of institutional domination and inequalities.

Actually, it has not been easy to avoid integrating micro-level factors even for those who uphold macro-level analysis in an orthodox fashion. For example, although Poulantzas criticized Miliband for his alleged reduction of analysis to the motivations and behaviors of the individuals, he could not escape from including the 'individual psyche' in his own analyses. In 'Political Power and Social Classes', he referred several times to *power fetishism* (Poulantzas, 1975a: 244, 339, 355, 356), while in 'State, Power, Socialism' he made an even greater critical point with reference to the *mechanisms of fear* (2000: 83), which inevitably entail reference (whether implicit or explicit) to human psyche and psychological motives. A move beyond both structural and interpretive explanations would require the acknowledgment of neuro-physiological processes (e.g. instincts, needs, and desires; only partially socially constituted) and particular types of reasons reacting to numerous social inputs. The interests and relative rational/irrational preferences of individuals have long been taken for granted in mainstream sociology and economy. However, adding the individual motives and psyche, and the logics lying behind them (that is, adding further micro dimensions to relatively macro-levels of social analysis) is likely to develop rather than harm the analysis, increasing the interconnections between the levels of analysis. Those macro-level analyses that under-represent or tend to exclude relatively micro-level factors run the risk of overlooking some possible influential factors and making false generalizations in the analysis. For example, overlooking the drive for survival (the instinct of living) may end in such a generalization and false conclusion that 'when the rulers insert more violence over the dominated, the consent of the dominated decreases, and this gives rise to rebellion; so for giving rise to a strong rebellion what the rebels have to do is to force the rulers to insert more violence over the dominated', as in the case of proponents of certain guerilla strategies provoking the state armed forces to attack the demonstrators or the dominated, who would then in turn supposedly fight against the attackers (state armed forces). Although most social scientists insist on making 'factual judgments' rather than 'political judgments', in social sciences false generalizations run the risk of ending in not only defective theoretical works but also disastrous outcomes which may sometimes result in millions of deaths. Alas, Marxism is no exception,

despite all its claims to infallible knowledge, genuine scientificity, and ultimate truth.

For the purpose of minimizing errors, what is proposed here is a multi-level analysis that excludes neither macro nor micro level factors. Structural positions occupied should be treated as forces granting potential capacities to and constraining individual cognition and action, which transform other structures and individual actions and are transformed by them. This type of analysis necessarily focuses on the potentialities, activation, and operation of structures and individuals with reference to their reproductive and transformative orientation. We should not hesitate to refer to motives/drives and reasons/rationalities when necessary, since discussions on consent and violence as regards state theory require such notions. Now then, for grounding further discussions on the 'capitalist hold of state power' on a firmer basis, two basic types of rationalities derived from the 'rationality of being'[20] will be assumed to exist (in addition to possible other types of rationality), which are 'physical rationality' and 'emotional rationality', both of which are in interplay with each other in terms of hindering, shaping, and sometimes even giving an end to the physical being. Since the acknowledgment of physical rationality has the potential to radically question the bases of those arguments that take the consent of the masses for granted for the existence of the capitalist state or capitalist hold of state power, or which hold the equation that 'if the consent of the masses decreases the masses would rebel' or that 'if the masses do not rebel that must be because of the power of bourgeois ideology' (see, for example, Gramsci, 1989: 239; Jessop, 1997: 574; cf. 1990: 76; Marx, 1844: 9; Miliband, 1969: 272; 1983: 66; Poulantzas, 1975a: 223, 317; 2000: 28) two 'reason types' will be elaborated for contributing to understand, at least in part, why capitalism still prevails in spite of widespread discontent, and which micro-level factors are in effect for the 'capitalist hold of state power'.

Here, 'physical rationality' and 'emotional rationality' are proposed to be treated as among the major reasons for understanding why sometimes people give their consent to be exploited and dominated; why sometimes they stay still but do not give their consent; and why sometimes they rebel. Although there is no claim that only these two reasons exist as basic types of rationality, here they are held to be important factors underlying social action. As mentioned previously, all rationality types can be subsumed under the 'reason of being', which can be considered as a processor of the physical, emotional, and cognitive interests of the being, all of which are somehow linked to the neuro-physical structure of the individual.

Meanwhile, physical rationality that refers to conscious and/or unconscious calculation for 'physical survival and health' is assumed to be a basic (but not always primary) type of rationality, the components of which internally and externally confront with contradictory reasons. As for 'internal contradiction', the example of 'a worker who has cancer as a result of not using gloves while he works with chemicals because he feels uncomfortable for his hands to sweat' reflects the internal contradiction between long-term physical rationality and short-term physical rationality, where the latter becomes irrational from the former standpoint (the classical utilitarian short-term/long-term dilemma). As for 'external contradiction', any sub-orientation/reason of emotional rationality challenging physical survival or health can be given as an example, as in the case of 'a person preferring to kill himself because he finds physical survival simply meaningless (which can be interpreted as an outcome of boredom)' or 'because he thinks that would be in the interest of his community (for example a suicide bomber with the motive of 'duty' and 'honor')'. It is apparent that there is no claim that physical rationality can never be challenged and that physical motives are necessarily non-contradictory and harmonious. On the contrary, physical rationality is composed of multiple reasons (each with multiple sources, orientations, and dimensions) with the potential simultaneously or consecutively to contradict one another. But still, it is held to be a basic type of rationality which has implications for motives pushing the person to both obedience and rebellion.

Nevertheless, physical rationality does not have an absolute privilege over other reasons. Although physical rationality is attributed a general (but not absolute) priority as long as human beings are at the same time emotional creatures, emotional rationality – dealing with feelings of aversion, hate, anger, serenity, revenge, compassion, love, and power – can become the major reason for a particular action, while conscious and/or unconscious calculation of the mind may be oriented towards the reduction of stress, experience of pleasure, or escape from pain. It is apparent here that emotions and rationality are not placed on opposite poles. Needless to say, components of emotional rationality are internally and externally open to contradictions and challenges in a simultaneous and/or consecutive manner. Not only physical rationality, but also emotional rationality is important to understand obedience and rebellion. Although there is much to examine about rationality and the relations between different types of reasons, for the moment, acknowledgment of the presence of physical and emotional reasons is sufficient to draw the attention to the importance of micro-level factors.

As for the question concerning the multi-level hold of state power, a tension may arise between tendential multiplicity and tendential unity. Although the pluralist view that state power cannot be dominated by a single group in liberal democracies is questionable, classical Marxist accounts reducing the political struggles to exclusively class struggles and the hold of state power exclusively to the owners of the means of production is also problematic. As for the question of how to define 'power', whether as "one's *capacity* to exercise control or command over others" or as "one's ability to 'make a difference' in the world" (see Helliwell & Hindess, 1999: 74 for those meanings in *Oxford English Dictionary*), power here is seen as the capacity to make a difference (to make work), while it is considered as the capacity that can be not only exercised but also held. As for 'state power', it is subject to struggles and is defined as '*the capacity to make arrangements (that includes 'to execute arrangements') through state networks via legal or illegal means, which covers the capacity to perform a wide range of practices from laws to violence, while there is always the possibility of the presence of arrangements contradicting others*'. When certain individuals or collectivities steer the exercisers of state power in line with their own interests, on account of their *intentional practices* (not side effects), and *with a privilege of determinacy*, then they can be considered as holders of state power. There are instances where both the *hold* and *exercise* of state power can be tendentially identified at particular levels of abstraction, and where not the *hold* but only the *exercise* of state power can be distinguished. Meanwhile, there is always the possibility of a range of holds and exercises of state power (including the possibility of partnership of those in and out of a particular state position and those within state networks) as regards a variety of different interests/desires (of the individuals, groups, communities and classes among others). Therefore, there is a multi-level hold of state power in a micro-macro range with varying time intervals.

Theoretical Reconstruction against Orthodoxy

For the construction of theories with the power to identify the problems with more accuracy, neither micro-level nor macro-level factors should be overlooked insofar as they are present. Once the biological motive of physical survival is considered, in a capitalist society consent to the capitalist order cannot always be treated as the prerequisite of obedience, while lack of consent to certain given conditions can be assumed to exist for many (if not all) of those who rebel against the capitalist order. What a great many people have deep in their heart may be a world without wars, with no rich and poor, although they may not rebel either due to the needs/desires

decreed by their physical/emotional reasons or simply because they do not believe that a peaceful world is possible given the existing human material. Although an elaboration on such needs/desires and an exploration of the possibilities of a peaceful world requires data from not only such departments as sociology and political science but also from psychology, biology, medicine, chemistry, and physics, at least the rebellions of the past century indicate that the physical/emotional reasons of a great many people must have been so radically challenged by capitalism that millions of people rebelled at the expense of their lives, what they possessed materially, and even the people whom they cared about. Therefore, even the strong survival motive in living things may be challenged on account of mainly (if not merely) emotional impulses. However, the strong motive of physical survival and wellbeing/satisfaction should not be underestimated either.

Theoretical approaches taking for granted the success of bourgeois ideology in the absence of strong anti-capitalist rebellions in capitalist societies may trigger two dangerous tendencies. The first is the belief that the more the people face pro-capitalist violence, the more they tend to rebel against capitalism (as if they have no motive of physical wellbeing and have a dominant motive of revenge – superior to all other motives – conditioning them towards fighting against those who insert violence over them). The second is the belief that when exploitative and oppressive characteristics of capitalism are propagated against the people, the latter become ready to rebel against capitalism (as if what many people long for is not a world with no rich, poor, wars; as if people have no motive of physical wellbeing; as if people have nothing to care about except further material gains; as if people are engaged in only capitalism-relevant exploitation and oppression relations; as if knowing about certain factors influencing the enslavement of the individual is sufficient for starting to fight against them; as if sometimes rebellion does not radically harm particular physical/emotional interests of the rebel). With the expectation to steer the masses towards anti-capitalist rebellion, while the first tendency runs the risk of generating isolated terrorizing practices without the will of the masses, the second tendency runs the risk of being stuck in ideological demystification practices. Although exploring the possibilities of a world without exploitation and oppression requires far more attention and theoretical elaboration than has been decreed by several Marxist state theorists, until now it has been relatively easy for many Marxists to put the label of 'bourgeois' over a number of works critical about capitalist domination without any hesitation.

Rather than automatically identifying Marxism and the macro-mode of

analysis with 'science', a scientist has to be as open-minded as possible and encourage a multi-level analysis as much as possible in order to minimize the risk of missing possible factors that have to do with the miserable state of humankind. This text has attempted to reconstruct the concept 'state' so as to enhance analytical clarity. It has drawn attention to the importance of constructing the micro-macro link in social analysis, and it has proposed to give reference to physical and emotional reasons without restricting analysis to only macro-level factors. It has also criticized the tradition of equalizing Marxism with science and proposed solutions to the widely discussed issues on the capitalist state among Marxist circles. Underestimation of the importance of the means of violence along with physical motives is held to render such analysis misleading. For this reason, the consent of the masses to capitalism is not treated as unconditionally present in liberal democracies. Conceptual innovation becomes urgent when the prevalent concepts in scientific analysis start generating problematic judgments.

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Endnotes

[1] The concept 'bourgeoisie', to which a number of different meanings has been attributed in relation to its members' world view, lifestyle, social origin and location in the production process (for a critical evaluation of the concept 'bourgeoisie' see Wallerstein, 1988; Poulantzas, 1967) is, here, used as synonymous to 'capitalist class', regardless of the word bourgeoisie's etymological and other associated meanings. The working class and capitalist class are defined in terms of their location in the production process vis-à-vis each other. As for the capitalist class, its members own the means of production while the unpaid part of the labor of the wage-worker is a major source of their profit. As for the capitalists' (whether as a member of the

'capitalist *class*' in particular or the '*category* of capitalist' in general) tendential (not fixed, absolute, or unchallenged) common point on account of their structural location in the economy, it covers both their anti-anti-capitalist motive (including anti-communist motives) and their motive of securing profit. Yet, apparently, the capitalist class is far from being a homogeneous entity in spite of the characteristics, structural constraints, and motivations its members share. Therefore, several Marxists have given reference to the presence of various fractions of the capitalist class in their analyses (e.g. Aglietta, 1987; Jessop, 1990; Poulantzas, 1975a; 1975b; 2000). However, Miliband (1969) especially preferred to put the emphasis on the cohesion of the capitalist class rather than the differences, perhaps because, as Jessop argued, his writings were principally against the distortions and mystifications of the pluralist approach (1990: 29-30). It would be unjust to consider Miliband as claiming an absolute homogeneity of the capitalist class, as he wrote: "[s]pecific differences among dominant classes [. . .] are safely contained within a particular ideological spectrum, and do not preclude a basic political consensus in regard to the crucial issues of economic and political life" (1969: 46), while the economic elites in a capitalist society constitute "a dominant economic class, possessed of a high degree of cohesion and solidarity, with common interests and common purposes which far transcend their specific differences and disagreements" (1969: 48).

[2] Here, the class struggle process is held to take place at a site embracing the interplay of associative and communal relationships in a micro-macro range. What makes a struggle class-related is held to be the fight for the interests of class members due to their structural location in the production process rather than the presence of class members in the fight.

[3] According to Poulantzas, "[t]he State is a class State not only insofar as it concentrates power based on class relations, but also in the sense in which it *tends* to spread through every power by appropriating its specific mechanisms" (2000: 44).

[4] Meanwhile, 'for whose interests' and 'on account of which intentional determinant efforts' this official authority is activated are relevant to the question of holding 'state power'.

[5] Those armed elements may *not* be a part of the state.

[6] This may at the same time require the defense/shrink/enlargement of the territory over which sovereignty is claimed where those particular groups do not necessarily denote those living within that territory.

[7] 'Group' in 2.1a and 2.1b refers to 'any possible combination of individuals', including the 'class'.

[8] For example, see Marx's (1844) 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' for his evaluation of the nineteenth century Prussian state. Jessop notes that although this approach disappeared in Marx's later analyses to a great extent it can still be found

even in those later analyses of Asiatic modes of production, Oriental despotism and the Asian state (1990, p. 26). Nevertheless, "although the idea that the modern state is essentially parasitic is still held in anarchist circles, it was not long retained by Marx himself" (ibid.).

[9] Jessop notes that this approach can also be found largely in Marx's earlier writings, while from time to time, it also occurred in his later writings (1990: 26-27). While Marx's comments on law constitute a good indicator of this approach, it can also be detected from the *Preface* to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (see Marx, 1859).

[10] Jessop notes that this approach can be found in the classic texts such as that of Engels, Lenin, Bukharin, and Gramsci, yet despite this it is commonly associated with Poulantzas (Jessop, 1990: 27).

[11] Jessop notes that this approach can be found especially in Marxist-Leninist accounts (1990: 27).

[12] Jessop notes that this approach can be found in both the works of Engels and Lenin (1990: 28). See especially *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels, 1884), and *The State and Revolution* (Lenin, 1917).

[13] Jessop notes that this approach is best illustrated in Lenin's (1917) remark considering the democratic republic as the best possible political shell for capitalism and that the change of persons, institutions or parties cannot shake the rule of capital once the democratic form of state is established (1990: 28). This approach can also be found in the discussions on the Paris Commune.

[14] Contemporary state-centered approaches (e.g. Block, 1987; Skocpol, 1979; 1985) are mainly inspired by Weberian accounts.

[15] This short-term and long-term distinction is made purely for analytical purposes and for classifying struggles as regards different sources of conflict. This categorization with reference to class interests may be formulated as follows: as for collective *long-term* class interests, this category refers to those interests of the class members in abolishing or restoring a mode of production in line with their relatively collective long-term *economic* interests, giving rise to class conflict/struggles on a long-term interest basis. As for *short-term* class interests, here, this category refers to those interests that favor any possible combination of elements of a particular class/category in terms of increasing the share from production at the expense of the interests of particular members of the same or different class/category without an intention to restore or abolish the mode of production in which they are situated.

[16] There are a variety of different analytical standpoints concerning the scope of the working class (e.g. Braverman, 1974; Callinicos & Harman, 1987; Dahrendorf, 1965; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992; Goldthorpe, 1979; 1987; Poulantzas, 1975b; Wright, 1984;

1989) which are conceptualized parallel to the theoretical interests of each author. Here, the *category* of 'wage-worker' signifies only 'those producing goods or services, deprived of the ownership of means of production they work with, who, more or less regularly, have to sell their labor power in return for the wage promised or received, predominantly on account of economic coercion'. The wage-worker *category* is referred to as 'working class' when the means of production that the worker uses are owned by the capitalist. Where the ownership belongs to the state or the workers of the enterprise, those workers are considered as belonging to the 'wage-worker category', not 'class', unless particular individuals or groups of people vis-à-vis wage-workers' opposite side do not turn their control over the means of production (in/with which the considered wage-workers work) into a regular source of private income/privileges by exploiting the workers' labor – in other words, appropriating a part of the output (or a part of the return to the output) produced by the wage worker on a regular basis. Eradicating the status of 'working class' in a collective manner in a way with a lesser (including zero) degree of exploitation is encoded as the working class's long-term collective interests. Meanwhile, there is no assertion that there is no possibility for a wage-worker to eradicate her status of wage-worker in a way to be better off in economic terms (in its narrow sense) without the expropriation of means of production. Actually, she can do so if she can find the opportunity to be a well-off self-employed or exploiting class element, although this does not invalidate the presence of some collective working class interests which are antagonistic to both short- and long-term interests of the capitalist class. As for the antagonistic class struggles between the capitalist class and working class forces on a short-term basis, they mainly take the form of struggles for more shares of the output (goods/services) produced by the worker in the course of the production process (denoting a structural antagonism) or redistribution process (subsumed under the struggle among a variety of positions occupied by class members, segments, and non-class categories).

[17] In this article, it is assumed that what makes it possible to talk about the presence of the 'capitalist society' within a particular country border is 'the presence of the exercise of state power sufficient for securing the conditions of existence of the bourgeoisie; favoring the bourgeoisie more than any other propertied social *class*; and predominantly as against forces aiming to eradicate the capitalist mode of production, *whether* those state practices are present on account of the determining strategic practices of the bourgeoisie *or not*, where there is a capitalist mode of production (along with the presence of possible other modes of production)'. Here, the state in capitalist society is called the 'capitalist state' or 'bourgeois state'. This definition indicates that whether or not there is a *bourgeois* subject with intentional pro-capitalist practices determinant in making the state overtly 'capitalist', a capitalist state may be established or run even by non-bourgeois elements without the presence of any determinant strategic bourgeois practices at all. For example, theoretically, even a strong enough armed wage-worker group may demolish a feudal state and establish a capitalist one, just because they admire the capitalist state in another country.

[18] Although it is possible to interpret the preference of dying in torture as the 'consent to die', it cannot be interpreted as an indicator of consent to the conditions that force the person to make the choice. Therefore, while there might be 'no consent to be tortured', there might be 'the consent not to talk but to die under torture'. Similarly, 'the preference to work in a job under economic coercion' does not necessarily indicate that there is consent to capitalism, if, for example, that person desires a society where there is neither the rich nor the poor.

[19] Marxist debate on ideology will have to be elaborated further elsewhere. I have dealt with this issue in my unpublished paper 'Marxist Conceptions of Ideology' (submitted in the course 'Ideology and Discourse Analysis', during my doctoral study at Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology, on January 24th, 2000), in which I tried to reconcile positive and negative conceptions of ideology, with a focus on Marx, Lukács, Gramsci and Althusser. The focus of the present article is not on a Marxist approach to ideology, since a number of texts have effectively dealt with this. Yet, since my focus on Perry Anderson's criticism of Gramsci here runs the risk of giving the impression of underestimating Gramsci's contributions, at least a few points made in such texts with reference to Gramsci should be given. Examples include Larrain on the centrality of organic ideologies (1991: 79); Eagleton on Gramsci's treatment of organic intellectuals as the unifiers of theory and practice (1991: 119); Woolcock on organic intellectuals as the organizers through hegemonic apparatuses (1985: 206); Hall *et al.* on Gramsci's treatment of ideology as the cement of the social bloc and his understanding of hegemony as irreducible to ideology (1978: 48); Mouffe on "the importance of moral and intellectual reform [. . .] in the creation of a 'collective will'" (1979: 191); Larrain on Gramsci's understanding of catharsis as a passage to an ethico-political moment, on his understanding of religion – as the bridge between philosophical system and the belief of masses – and on common sense as the most widespread form of ideology among subordinated classes (1991: 85); Kearney on Gramsci's point that class interests mask themselves as cultural values and natural instincts (1986: 174) and the presentation of sectional class interests as collective interests (1986: 183). These comments exhibit the very diverse dimensions developed by Gramsci concerning ideology. In spite of my emphasis on violence as the prerequisite of the presence of the state, it is important to stress that I do not suggest that the use of violence is the path to a peaceful classless world. On the contrary, I see violence as disrespectful to life in the most part, leading to an almost vicious circle of oppression. My recent essays –published in Turkish – make this point clearer, in which I have treated the conceptual innovation and renewal in the world of meaning in a way to locate 'respect to life' at the centre of human practice as the most viable alternative for a non-oppressive world. In a way, 'respect to life (living and promoting life without killing –with priority to human beings – at its heart)' (from the micro to the macro) can be encoded as the existential interest of both the individual and humanity, while it can be considered as the basic ethical principle aimed to be accomplished with relative individual/collective progress. Unfortunately, this essay is too short to explain the details of my ethical/political construction in which compassion is attributed a central and positive role. Yet, a few points can be made here to make my attitude regarding violence clearer. Firstly, for

me, violence has to be eliminated as much as possible at both relatively micro (including the relationship between partners) and macro levels (including the renewal of weapons technology in a way to eliminate those ones with a strong potential to kill and wound human beings). Secondly, violence should not be deliberately applied to the innocent. The innocent should not be sacrificed. Thirdly, even though defeating capitalism is the prerequisite; it is not the sufficient condition for a peaceful world. Fourthly, while the working class in particular and disadvantaged groups in general may be more prone to fight against capitalism it does not follow that they are more prone to act in line with the principle of 'respect to life'. Fifthly, a parallel can be drawn between the elimination of violence and feminization of relations in a micro-macro context, with the acknowledgment that 'femininity' should be treated as a quasi-arbitrary signifier denoting relative compassion, mercy, gentleness, peacefulness, and constructiveness. And, at least for this essay, lastly, for the sake of 'resistance to violence without violence', there is the need to re-conceptualize and reinterpret death in a way to overcome the fear of death.

[20] 'Being' here refers to 'existence', yet it is not equivalent to mere physical survival. It includes but may sometimes challenge physical survival. 'Rationality of being' embodies several types of reasons each of which may be the combination of several others, each of which within and between themselves may be conflicting as regards the consciously recognized/unrecognized orientations/goals and/or relative time (term-relevance). A number of Marxist state theoretical analyses could have given a fuller account of the relations formulated in them if 'human nature' were not treated as neutral and the state of 'being' were not overlooked, both of which gave rise to theorizing individuals as merely the bearers of their structural positions and/or societal effects (including discursive practices).

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Leo Strauss, Political Philosophy, and Modern Judaism

by J. Christopher Paskewich

Introduction

At times, it can seem like Leo Strauss (1899-1973) fell out of the sky. His works on political philosophy often investigate topics that are obscure by any standard and involve terms that he never seems to define. Some readers find him speaking over our heads to some unknown audience. Strauss's stature as a political philosopher demands that scholars grapple with his works, but they are surprisingly complex – perhaps more challenging than many other authors because he is said to have written esoterically.[1] As he would write to Alexandre Kojeve: "I am one of those who refuse to go through open doors when one can enter just as well through a keyhole" (Strauss, 2000: 236). But his political philosophy has a past much like anyone else. Since he rarely made autobiographical remarks, Strauss's works appear to jump out of him fully-formed. However, this is not the case, and an investigation into his early works will help us find our way through the keyhole.

This essay explores Strauss's intellectual roots and traces his political thought to his bewildered first investigations in theology. While a majority of his books and essays are on the ancient Greek philosophers (and some medieval philosophers as well), he has a larger body of work on Jewish philosophy than is commonly known. This body of work, which is beginning to be analyzed more carefully by scholars, contains some of his most personal reflections that allow us greater access to understanding his larger political philosophy as a whole. His writings on Jewish philosophy – especially in his early years – focus on a simple question of faith: can one actually *'believe'*, when in fact there may be nothing out there? I argue that Strauss's early theological struggles with this question make much of his later political philosophy intelligible, particularly his famous concepts of 'Jerusalem and Athens' and 'exoteric/esoteric philosophy'.

Beginning with his analysis of Judaism in the modern world, we see Strauss posing a problem.[2] Modernity and our culture of empiricism ruined the

prospects for genuine belief in orthodox religion – but a life without faith lacks meaning. Strauss thinks his way out of this problem by a return to a pre-modern relationship between philosophy and religion. We will see that his *religious* (not philosophical) conflicts led him to famously side with ancient philosophers against modern ones. Also, I will show how he poses a practical solution to the conflict between philosophy and religion that he thinks people face in this time of (post)modernity.

Jerusalem and Athens: Unpacking the Concept

Strauss's early 'political-theological' struggles are represented in the concept of 'Jerusalem and Athens' (1965: 1). These two cities represented the irreconcilable conflict between faith and reason (1989a: 73). This pairing was first discussed in 1954, in the famous essay 'What is Political Philosophy?' That work and two others – namely, the lecture 'Thucydides: The Meaning of Political History' (no listed date), and the essay 'Jerusalem and Athens' (1967) – comprise Strauss's writings on the subject. Perhaps the best introduction to the distinction between the cities is the question he poses, to wit: 'is it to reason or revelation that one should look for answers about the highest things?' (Orr, 1996: 29).

To illustrate the point, one could compare two examples found in Strauss's works. The illustration for Jerusalem is biblical, and found in the first book of Kings.[3] Strauss uses this story of Naboth's vineyard as the opening for his *Natural Right and History* (1953). King Ahab desired a vineyard that was close to his palace, but it belonged to a man named Naboth. He offered Naboth money or even a better vineyard for it. Naboth declines, saying 'The Lord forbid that I should give up to you what I have inherited from my father'. Ahab eventually takes the vineyard by force, killing Naboth in the process. Speaking directly to Ahab, the Lord condemns him and his descendents.

The illustration for Athens is found in a story from Xenophon's *The Education of Cyrus* that Strauss frequently retold. In this story, Xenophon's protagonist, Cyrus, is posed with a riddle of sorts. Two boys, one large and one small, each inherits a tunic from his father. The large boy inherits a small tunic and the small boy inherits a large tunic. What should be done? At first, Cyrus thinks the just behavior is to switch the boys' tunics, so each has one that fits. His teachers rebuked him for this view and told him that there is more to justice than a well-fitting tunic – there is the law and the laws applying to possession must be followed. Thus, the respective ill-fitting tunics must not be interfered with by the government. The final twist to the story comes

when Cyrus's mother in turn rebukes the teachers' view by noting that it is only the local law of Persia where 'equality of rights is considered justice'. In other places, the state (or king) must be deferred to by law and one's right to possession by inheritance or purchase is only secondary.

These two examples reveal the conflict between the two cities. In the case of the two boys and their tunics, the just solution depends on the sort of laws one has at that place. The vineyard case is more complicated though. King Ahab suggests (as Cyrus did) that a more just arrangement exists – he could use the vineyard more than Naboth and the latter's possession was a secondary concern. However, Naboth cannot break God's law: it applies universally and does not change, even if the vineyard is located in a different country. What can be inferred from the Xenophon example is that just behavior is largely derivative of local laws – a kind of legal positivism. For the city of Athens, in Strauss's eyes, the laws are a product of human reason and tradition; that is, the laws could have been created otherwise. This is in sharp contrast to the vineyard example and the city of Jerusalem, where God's law transcends locality and era. We even find that the story of the vineyard has God enforcing this very principle.

Each city, then, represents an approach to life – one based on reason, the other on revelation. Strauss credits the "secret vitality of the West" with these two independent traditions contained within Western Civilization and their subsequent struggle with one another (1989a: 73). But there is a tension between both cities that cannot be resolved by any synthesis or common ground. The tension manifests itself politically. He observes that we are being "crude" to divide the Western Tradition into the polar opposites Athens and Jerusalem. He notes that the divide is an artificial one, *except when we speak politically* (ibid.). In 1962, Strauss would describe the connection between Athens and Jerusalem in this way, "political dependence was also spiritual dependence" (1965: 3). The difference between the two cities is in their foundations for the political and for the way of life within the city.

Strauss assigns three qualities to Jerusalem. First, he calls Jerusalem the city of prophecy (1959: 9-10).[4] Following the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, he considers the prophet to be the human source for the law of society: positive law is received from a divine source. Second, Strauss observes that "according to the Bible, the one thing needful is obedient love" (1989a: 73). He locates this obedience in Jerusalem. Third, the wisdom of Jerusalem is found through the "fear of God" (Strauss, 1983: 149). What do all of these

qualities tell us about Jerusalem as a way of life? We are struck by the emphasis on obedience – the truth is out there and we simply must *respond* to it. We merely follow what has been revealed, with no further questioning, contemplation or skepticism involved.

Athens also has three qualities assigned to it that mirror those of Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is the city of prophecy, Athens is the "city of political philosophy" (1959: 9-10). Obedient love was the one thing necessary to Jerusalem, but free enquiry is the one thing necessary to Athens (1989a: 73). Wisdom for Jerusalem begins with obedient love, while wisdom for Athens begins with "wonder" (1983: 149). The path of Athens is the creative use of the mind to investigate. In a somewhat relativistic perspective, we essentially 'reveal' our own laws. This understanding of Athens does not respond to the laws it sees with obedience, but with critique and skepticism.

The central difference between the two cities is the *source* of our ethical guidelines – the origin of our laws – and whether they come from Law or reason. The Law involves *obedience* to the right way, while reason requires *free enquiry* to examine the alternatives facing us. Strauss points out that there is no concept of 'natural' in the Jewish Bible (the old testament); human thought did not emerge in tandem with this concept. Strauss thought that the Greek philosophers were responsible for the concept of 'natural', which would eventually be used as the ground for right (1983: 138). While local laws were typically seen as conventional, Athens would attempt to derive what is right from nature and not revelation – it is philosophy's endeavor to separate our traditional way of doing things from the right way or 'natural' way (even if the natural way is not easily found).[5] In this way, Athens hoped to regard nature as a parent. For Jerusalem, nature is more of a sibling. Both people and nature come from the same parent, and follow that parent's Law.

Jerusalem and Athens: A Preliminary Resolution

This understanding of Athens and Jerusalem poses a very down-to-earth dilemma: namely, the very study of this concept is inherently biased. Strauss is clear that the endeavor of political philosophy is an Athenian one – we are prejudiced before we even begin any kind of 'open-minded' study of the two cities (1983: 150). Open-mindedness is a quality of Athens, not Jerusalem. Furthermore, taking an open-minded approach to Jerusalem is tantamount to saying it is wrong – either the Law is divine or it is not. Strauss does not see any way for us to be open-minded about the actual belief. However, we are not at a complete loss for studying Jerusalem. The Bible would be the

doorway through which we would begin our study, and he thinks we can avoid prejudicing ourselves by studying it in a particular way (1983: 151). If we read the Bible as if it were any other book, we tacitly admit that we do not *believe*. The Bible has more to say to those who believe than those who do not believe, so it cannot be treated like any other book (1965: 35). However, if we take the reverential view of the Bible, we exclude Athens and a sense of free enquiry. Thus, we also cannot treat the Bible reverentially. How then is Jerusalem to be studied, if we can be neither reverential nor skeptical?

Well, we do so by taking the skeptical *and* reverential view of the Bible. We can combine both views because "the Bible does not require us to believe in the miraculous character of events that the Bible does not present as miraculous" (1965: 151-152). The actual compilation of documents, as Strauss points out, do not claim the status of miracle as, say, God talking to a person would. Strauss observes that the Bible may very well represent memories of histories, and over time these memories may have been deepened "through meditation of the primary experiences" (1965: 151). But, we cannot be sure as the Bible is not clear on this matter. Thus, we examine what the Bible says without reverence or skepticism; we examine it to see merely what is said, to learn from it. Strauss calls this a *noetic* or intellectual way of reading (1997a: 367).[6]

It is in this way that Strauss reads Genesis and the other narratives of the Bible. From them he culls a biblical political philosophy that can be pitted against the political philosophies of the Greeks or anyone else. Strauss seems to interpret the miracles seriously – that is to say, his analysis accepts them at face value – but he does not enquire as to whether or not the miracles happened. Strauss appeases the skeptics by not assigning biblical 'mythology', such as miracles, any extra interpretative or theological weight. He appeases the reverent by sincerely listening to what the Bible says and keeping careful track of each intellectual development it suggests.

The Strauss that emerges here is one faced with a serious religious puzzle. He could not unconditionally accept the Torah and its implications, yet at the same time he could not declare it to be nonsense either; he denies himself any ground in between. With this biblical hermeneutic, he seemed close to making peace with his theological difficulties. While admitting that his endeavor stood him on the side of Athens, he openly recommended a provisional embrace of Jerusalem: "the proper posture of a man who does not believe [. . .] is to enter into this mystery, into this mysterious belief"

(1997b: 344-345).[7] As many scholars take it for granted that Strauss was *not* religious, he seems to have followed his own advice and imagined what a life according to faith would be like:[8]

> God's revealing Himself to man, His addressing man, is not merely known through traditions going back to the remote past and therefore now 'merely believed', but is genuinely known through present experience which every human being can have if he does not refuse himself to it. This experience is not a kind of self-experience, of the actualization of a human potentiality, of the human mind coming into its own, into what it desires or is naturally inclined to, but of something undesired, coming from the outside, going against man's grain. It is the only awareness of something absolute which cannot be relativized in any way as everything else, rational or non-rational, can; it is the experience of God as the Thou, the father and king of all men [. . . .] Only by surrendering to God's experienced call which calls for one's loving him with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's might can one come to see the other human being as one's brother and love him as oneself (1959: 8-9)

Even while admitting that both sides are irreconcilable, he found a way to embrace both without completely denying either. However, this optimistic settlement was only achieved with his writings from the 1950s and 1960s. There is evidence that he had been preoccupied with these issues as far back as the 1930s (Zank, 2002: 35-36). During this (at least) thirty-year journey during which he struggled with how a scholar should treat the conflict of philosophy and religion, he had a parallel struggle. This parallel 'theological-political predicament' was the "Jewish problem" (1965: 1). The roots of this problem are found in his especially political (and in some ways, Jewish) understanding of religion.

Strauss's Political Understanding of Religion

Strauss's early theological difficulties forced their way into his first book, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (first published in 1930). This book showed his initial attempts at reaching beyond the Enlightenment era for new vistas that would solve his religious puzzles (Zank, 2002: 12). His second book was *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors* (first published in 1935). This book was a failed attempt to win him a position at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Green, 1997: 5; 55 n11). Strauss was hoping to establish his 'Judaic Studies' credentials. Thus, he collected his thoughts on Maimonides, modernity, and the prospects for

religion in liberal society. As a compilation, it brought together his major
papers of the 1930s that outlined his ideas on the religious consequences of
modern political philosophy (Zank, 2002: 24). Strauss's third book, *The
Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Genesis* (first published in 1936),
continues the same theme despite its secular exterior (1997c: 453-454). Thus
far, he approached the modern problems for religion by entering through
the door of religion. Now, he sought to examine the problem by entering
through the other door: namely, that of modernity and its roots.

A central figure throughout all of these early works was the Jewish
philosopher, Maimonides. Maimonides was perhaps the one thinker Strauss
studied from his youth to the very end of his life.[9] In 1963, he would write
that his investigation of Maimonides was "twenty-five years of frequently
interrupted but never abandoned study" (1968: 140). This constant attention
was appropriate because Maimonides's preoccupations had become
Strauss's as well. Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* opened the discussion
on what was at stake with Athens and Jerusalem: it was designed to help
pious Jews reconcile the Bible with what they had read in the works of Plato
and Aristotle. On the one hand, the Jews must be faithful to the Torah and
the Law. On the other hand, Greek philosophy was satisfying to the intellect
and *seemed* true.

We see that Strauss's preoccupation is in some ways a more Jewish (or
Islamic) dilemma, than one that Christians experience. Saint Thomas of
Aquinas, for example, reconciled these two impulses by trusting reason (and
Aristotle) but admitting that revelation complemented and completed this
knowledge. Christianity could embrace such a solution because of its
religious nature. Consequently, fledgling Catholics would have an easier
time than fledgling Jews with the reconciliation of Aristotle with the Bible.
Unlike Jews, Catholics might see Jerusalem and Athens as less of a
dichotomy.

Strauss's understanding of 'Jerusalem and Athens' takes into account the
differences between religions of the Law and Christianity. He understands
revelation to be more than knowledge originating from God – he interprets
it politically (Tanguay, 2007: 51-52). Thus, he revealed how religion imparts
a set of divine rules to order society. This understanding of revelation is
common to Judaism and Islam, but not Christianity.[10] Christianity consists
of rules for society as well, but only when theologically and dogmatically
pushed to do so. Its basic nature could be found in cultivating the impulses
for certain behaviors, as opposed to a code of laws. Christianity essentially

brought changes of the heart that were (at least theoretically) compatible with any regime. Judaism brought changes in Law and had to be understood as a way of life for a community. It is an open question as to whether Strauss ultimately considers Christianity to belong to 'Jerusalem' – he admits that Christianity has an inner tendency to reconcile Athens and Jerusalem, but repeatedly asserts that Athens and Jerusalem *cannot* be reconciled. Nietzsche, a philosopher Strauss counts as a major influence, described Christianity as 'Platonism for the people'.[11] Strauss might very well see it this way too: an apolitical religion with pretenses to being philosophical, rather than revelatory in the vein of Judaism or Islam.

It is likely that Strauss would not have juxtaposed Athens and Jerusalem so much – nor described religion in such political terms – had he not approached the subject from an admittedly Jewish/Islamic perspective.[12] Consequently, he would not have seen such a crisis between religion and philosophy had he not viewed it from this perspective. But, rather than making for an idiosyncratic or even biased view, this perspective could have trained his eyes more clearly on a situation that many people missed. He shows this in his attempts to abstract from his own experience to a more general understanding. We see that Jerusalem becomes a symbol for all orthodox or traditional religion (including Christianity). He writes that "from every point of view it looks as if the Jewish people were the chosen people in the sense, at least, that the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem as a social or political problem" (1965: 6). Thus, what seemed like a Jewish concern becomes a human one. To learn more about the 'human problem', our next step must be to explore the Jewish problem on which it is based.

The Origins of Strauss's Jewish Problem

As with Plato's *Republic*, Strauss took a problem for the individual (in this case, himself) and examined it in the city, writ large. The Jewish problem, writ large, is how to assure the survival of Jews in the world: "only through securing the honor of the Jewish nation could the individual Jew's honor be secured" (1965: 5). For Strauss, this problem was always coupled with another: namely, "the problem of Judaism", or Jewish spirituality in the modern world. Strauss describes it in the following way:

> [German] Jews opened themselves to the influx of German thought, the thought of the particular nation in the midst of which they lived – a thought which was understood to be German

> essentially: political dependence was also spiritual dependence.
> This was the core of the predicament of German Jewry (1965: 3)

Strauss thus saw modern Jews as spiritually crippled inasmuch as they have borrowed the culture of wherever they have lived, but their true religious identity was no more. He thought religious life requires a particular set of rules for society. Borrowing another set of rules inevitably means replacing one's own. There are only two main ways, then, for a minority like this to relate to the 'host' culture. They can assimilate completely and turn their back on the host culture (though the host culture is effectively 'your' culture). Or they can become nationalistic and spurn the society that took them in (1965: 5). Intriguingly Strauss thinks neither of these paths allows Jews to 'regain their honor'.

It would seem that liberal democracy offers a solution to the Jewish problem: for it guarantees the safety of Jews. Yet, as important as security is, it is only one side of the Jewish problem. Liberal democracy does not solve the spiritual side of the Jewish problem – that is, the question of choosing assimilation or nationalism. Strauss writes that "the liberal solution brought at best legal equality, but not social equality" (ibid.). Jews are equal to non-Jews before the law, but non-Jews are free to hate Jews socially. This again raises the issue of assimilation and whether it is better to become like the majority to avoid being 'the outsider'. Strauss describes the problem he sees with the liberal state as follows:

> Liberalism stands or falls by the distinction between state and society, or by the recognition of a private sphere, protected by the law but impervious to the law, with the understanding that, above all, religion as particular religion belongs to the private sphere. Just as certainly as the liberal state will not 'discriminate' against its Jewish citizens, so is it constitutionally unable and even unwilling to prevent 'discrimination' against Jews by individuals or groups. To recognize a private sphere in the sense indicated means to permit private 'discrimination', to protect it and thus in fact to foster it. The liberal state cannot provide a solution to the Jewish problem, for such a solution would require a legal prohibition against every kind of 'discrimination', i.e. the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between state and society, the destruction of the liberal state. Such a destruction would not by any means solve the Jewish problem, as is shown in our days by the anti-Jewish policy of the USSR (1965: 6)

Strauss is highly critical of what liberal democracy can ultimately offer its citizens. Liberal democracy accepts Athens much more than Jerusalem. Forcing religion into the private sphere can undermine its authority in the individual's eyes, but that same private sphere guarantees enough tolerance for the philosophical life. Strauss argues that liberal democracy is the only regime where "the philosopher can lead his peculiar way of life without being disturbed" (1964: 131). Not so for the 'citizen' of Jerusalem. The question would become whether it was simply enough to have space for philosophy, or whether space must actually be created for religion.

Strauss answered this question by using the Jews as a kind of test case. His answer would have to establish physical *and* spiritual security for the Jews. Both Zionism and liberalism provided physical security but how would spiritual security be found? Strauss distilled contemporary Judaic thought on this subject into four schools, each of them lacking the answer. A search to find more than peaceful existence – to find a meaningful spiritual life – led him beyond these four schools and into the terrain that his early books (and to some extent the rest of his career) would cover.

The first school Strauss identifies is the above mentioned solution of liberalism (as articulated through Hermann Cohen). This approach would have the Jews assimilate into liberal society. The drawbacks to this approach have already been discussed: namely, "'the fault of liberalism was its failure to understand the essential inability of the Jewish people to be assimilated" (Novak, 1996: xiii). The second school – that of Political Zionism – correctly understood these flaws of liberal society. This position (advocated by Theodore Herzl) sought for the Jews "the restoration of their honor through the acquisition of statehood and therefore of a country" (1965: 5). Security has been won for the Jews through their own state. However, it ignores the spiritual side of the Jewish problem (Arkush, 1996: 116). The simple act of founding a state is largely geographical and does not ensure any internal changes in the people. Recall Strauss's point about the German Jews. They were largely German in culture and beliefs. Relocating to another locale may prevent discrimination but it does not replace their inherent 'German-ness' with 'Jewish-ness'.

If Political Zionism ignored the Jewish soul, a third school tried to embrace it – Cultural Zionism (as articulated by Ahad Ha'am). As the name suggests, this school sought to establish "Jewish Heritage itself as culture, that is, as a product of the national mind, of the national genius" (1965: 6). Strauss is contemptuous of Cultural Zionism though because it only succeeds in

mentioning that the inner world matters as much as the outer one. Otherwise, it undermines religious faith because it establishes Judaism as one culture among many. Strauss thinks it essential to any Jew that Judaism be treated as the special and *true* faith – Judaism requires that Jews be *chosen* – and not just as any other religion.

The final school that Strauss discusses could be called the 'New Thinking' school. This position (exemplified by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber) attempted to fuse orthodoxy and Enlightenment philosophy. Dogma and troublesome beliefs were jettisoned or revised in light of scientific evidence. Crucial parts of the Jewish faith that contradicted modern empirical findings were sacrificed, implying that the 'faith' must be wrong. However, Strauss was not persuaded: could the religion of Judaism be meaningful without the miracles of Moses parting the Red Sea or receiving from God the Decalogue on top of Mount Sinai? (1965: 8). This school effectively changed the religion – allegedly God-given – to fit science. Whether one accepts religion or not, he thought this made the Jewish religion appear as nothing more than myth that can be rewritten at will.

At this point, Strauss rejected the four major approaches to how Jews might guarantee their physical and spiritual security in an era of modernity. His focus gradually shifts from concerns about whether Jews should assimilate to whether Jews can actually believe in their own religion. This was an inevitable change however. As noted above, he finds assimilation neither possible nor honorable – Jews must retain their identity, whether through Zionism or through liberal democracy's private sphere. What increasingly concerns him is whether modernity will even allow Jews to retain their identity if that identity is entwined with such an old religion. Strauss thought that the problem of Jewish spirituality was exacerbated by the skepticism in belief that was created by the age of the Enlightenment, and the subsequent discoveries of natural science (e.g. evolution, the age of the Earth, and so forth). In today's world, he considered it difficult to be a rational, educated person, *and* hold orthodox religious beliefs – particularly ones that may incorporate miracles or patently non-scientific ideas (1965: 9; 13). This leads him to abstract from the Jewish problem to the question of whether any traditional or orthodox religion can be accepted today (i.e. the human problem). Even if Jerusalem and Athens were theoretically irreconcilable, he would craft a practical truce between them. The remainder of this essay outlines just how this practical truce could make space for both philosophy and religion.

Conclusion: Strauss's Solution to the Jewish Problem

Strauss's early thought was characterized by a return to pre-modern philosophy. This includes the medieval philosophy of Maimonides and Alfarabi as well as the ancient philosophy to which he would devote most of his later years. To Strauss, the idea of 'return' seems to be a change in intellectual perspective that almost amounts to a different consciousness (though he is not explicit about this). In a 1949 essay 'Political Philosophy and History', Strauss outlines how one must uncover how particular concepts and questions were understood in the past. This uncovered meaning would allow us to think beyond our age and transcend this age's peculiar problems (1959: 74). By learning these perspectives that are "healthier" than our own, we may actually be able to think this way or at least beyond our age. As one scholar writes of Strauss during this period:

> He shows us the path that once led him from political Zionism through a consideration of various other Jewish teachings to an awareness of the untenability of all modern attempts to solve the Jewish problem. This road brought him to a juncture where he faced two positive alternatives: the unqualified reaffirmation of orthodoxy or the exploration of the possibility of a return to pre-modern Jewish rationalism. We all know where he went from there (Arkush, 1996: 111)

Arkush thinks that Strauss chose the latter path: returning to orthodoxy is simply not possible in this age of modernity. Consequently, he would pose a new direction that *was* viable.

Strauss's solution was framed by the Jewish problem. If all four modern approaches to Judaism were flawed, he would seek a pre-modern Judaism (Zank, 2002: 29). He wrote that "this situation not only appears insoluble but actually is so, as long as one clings to the modern premises" (Strauss, 1995: 38). Through the works of Maimonides, Strauss came to see how hostile an influence philosophy really was for religion: "the return to Judaism also requires today the overcoming of what one may call the perennial obstacle to the Jewish faith: traditional philosophy, which is of Greek, pagan origin" (1965: 9). In a deceptively simple move, he sought that the question between atheism and belief would never be asked. It was a modern question to pose whether religion was possible – this was not a commonly espoused topic in ancient and medieval communities, despite what some isolated philosophers might have personally felt. A return to pre-modern Judaism – and hence pre-modern religion – meant that philosophy

could not be allowed to interfere with religious faith. Everyone in the community would have to accept it without a hint that *any alternative to it is really credible*. According to this rationale, leaving faith unquestioned lends one the meaning and direction needed in life, but the very act of questioning that faith would unsettle it more and more.

With this solution, Strauss seems to betray his own theological difficulties and his serious efforts to be fair to both Jerusalem *and* Athens. After all, he would not have been led on this intellectual journey if he did not consider *both* philosophy and religion to be essential to our lives – he could have merely dismissed philosophy at the very beginning. Nevertheless, he considers the city of Athens and its pagan philosophy to be the cause of the Jewish problem. When faced with the impossibility of orthodox religion in the modern age and the simultaneous need for philosophy, he seems to choose the suppression of philosophical enquiry, at least insofar as it could harm religion. However, this is not the entire picture. We find a connection here to one of Strauss's most notorious views about philosophy, exotericism and esotericism.[13] The philosopher makes use of 'exoteric (public) and esoteric (secret)' speech (Strauss, 1989c: 64). This means that philosophers give a layered teaching for both public and private consumption:

> The exoteric teaching was needed for protecting philosophy. It was the armor in which philosophy had to appear. It was needed for political reasons. It was the form in which philosophy became visible to the political community. It was the political aspect of philosophy. It was 'political' philosophy (1988b: 18).

A crucial component of Strauss's reading of the philosopher, then, is that the philosopher must be very sensitive to ideas or teachings that could have adverse public effects. Strauss goes so far as to presume that most philosophers throughout history did publicly accept and endorse the "orthodox view" (1989d: 32). He explicitly links Socratic and orthodox teachings in their effects, i.e. the former serves to reinforce the latter (1989d: 204).

Strauss's view of philosophy as divided between exoteric and esoteric speech can be traced back to his understanding of the Greek *polis*. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, the eminent classicist, notes that "religion, law, government, all were municipal" (1956: 352). Strauss approved of this reading and called the *polis* the "holy city" (1964: 241). Given the divine origins of a city's laws and government, political philosophy could only be seen as an act of impiety, for it critiques what should have been accepted by

faith. Philosophy – and political philosophy in particular – leads ultimately
to skepticism toward one's religion. Moving beyond the *polis*, Strauss notes
that there is an "absence of a discipline called 'philosophy of religion' from
medieval philosophy", at least for Muslims and Jews (1989b: 219). Because
the Islamic and Jewish religions (unlike Christianity) brought political laws
to the city, the only available avenue to critique – or even *discuss* religion –
was through *political* philosophy (1989b: 223). By (carefully) investigating
political principles, one could also investigate religion.   Given the
community's investment in their religion, however, it would seem that even
this discussion of political philosophy must be done responsibly (i.e.
esoterically). Strauss observes that philosophy needs to be careful about
what it publicly advocates because "there are basic truths which would not
be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm
to many people" (1988b: 36).[14]

Strauss's postulated exotericism and esotericism implied that significant
changes had to be made in the reading of philosophy, as well as
understanding what relationship philosophy bears to the political realm.
However, I am arguing more than this: namely, *Strauss's discovery of
exotericism and esotericism was also the discovery of a solution to the Jewish (and
human) problem*.[15] Strauss posed a provisional 'third way' to the theoretical
question of how to read the Bible without prejudice in favor of Athens or
Jerusalem. But this abstract problem was very different from the practical
one of how to balance the pursuit of philosophy by some minority of citizens
and the practice of religion by a majority of the others. The way to preserve
orthodox religion without purging society of philosophy was to do what the
ancient and medieval philosophers had always done (in Strauss's mind) –
to conduct their philosophical (or scientific) reasoning in private, while
regulating what sorts of public impact they would allow these ideas to have.
In this way, philosophers must recognize that they have public
responsibilities. They may not want to admit that their actions (or thoughts)
affect others, but the reality is that they do. Consequently, restrained speech
from philosophers would make space for meaningful religious life. Insofar
as the Jewish problem meant preserving the Orthodox Jewish religion
without refuting philosophical critique, this is a solution. The same would
hold true for the relationship between philosophy and traditional religion
in general. In this way, Strauss came to a peaceful resolution of his earlier
theological difficulties.

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Endnotes

[1] See Brague (1998: 238).

[2] See Dannhauser (1990: 440).

[3] See I Kings, 21: 1-16 in (1985) *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

[4] See also Brague (1998: 236).

[5] Strauss's understanding of Athens appears to be somewhat relativistic, in that laws are merely conventions. While he considered the Epicurean line of thought to agree here that laws are conventional, there is the popular presence of natural right which is pointedly non-conventional (see Strauss, 1953: 109-113; 111 n44). However, much like Cyrus' mother in the above example, natural-right advocates considered local laws to still be conventional (see Strauss, 1953: 100-101). Strauss never claimed that natural right was actually being *used* as the basis for laws of any of the ancient cities (e.g. Sparta) as much as he postulated its existence (see Strauss, 1953: 98-99). Consequently, the 'city of Athens' (as in Athens and Jerusalem) would be affiliated less with a dogmatic sense of laws grounded in nature and more by a kind of skepticism in the face of conventionalism – a skepticism that might culminate in the existence of natural right. An additional point could be made that natural right was not always considered so dogmatically 'universal'. One example of this is how Strauss understands Aristotle's natural right to actually be mutable (see Strauss, 1953: 161-162).

[6] Cf. 360. This was a lecture Strauss gave in 1957 which was posthumously published without his permission.

[7] This was a lecture Strauss gave in 1962 that was also posthumously published without his permission.

[8] For a very intelligent discussion of the roots and significance of Strauss's (probable) atheism, see Zank (2002: esp. 23). Strauss's appreciation of Orthodox Judaism, however, did not require personal faith. He could defend Orthodox Judaism in his first two books, while also writing a letter during the same time period that contained the following statement: "by the way: I am *not* an orthodox Jew!" (1988a: 185, original emphasis). This correspondence was published posthumously, without Strauss's permission.

[9] See Green (1993: 3).

[10] See Strauss (1968: 185-187) and Lerner & Mahdi (1978: 13-14).

[11] For Strauss's view of Christianity as 'Platonism for the people', see Lampert (1996: 140; 155 n20). The original quotation from Nietzsche appears in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*. For Strauss's admission of Nietzsche's influence on him, see Strauss (1988a: 183). The Strauss-Löwith correspondence was published posthumously and without Strauss's permission.

[12] Strauss admits he came to the Greek philosophers – the primary focus of his life's scholarship – through the medieval Islamic philosophers. As this essay has made clear, he had meditated a great deal on the Jewish religion as well. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that Strauss's understanding of the modern relationship between philosophy and religion should be colored by his Jewish/Islamic studies. He has no such corresponding studies on Christianity (or Christian thinkers). See Strauss (1989b: 221-222) and Tanguay (2007: 55-56; 65-66). For Strauss's Islamic understanding of religion (and Islamic understanding of ancient Greek philosophy), see Brague (1998) and Leaman (1980).

[13] See Drury (2005: ix; chapter 2); Norton (2004; chapter 6); Pangle (2006: 56-59); Sheppard (2006: chapter 4); and Zuckert & Zuckert (2006: chapter 4).

[14] See also Strauss (1989e: 190-191), where he notes how careful Socrates was to not reveal all that he knew because it could potentially spread impiety – and Strauss claims Socrates was impious – and even disbelief.

[15] While Strauss's hermeneutical approach of exotericism/esotericism is well-known and frequently discussed, its origins are not. None of the authors listed above (see n13) link exotericism/esotericism to Strauss's early writings in Jewish philosophy and, especially, they have not linked it to his reading of the Jewish problem. The only scholar who comes close to linking the Jewish problem and Strauss's discovery of esotericism is Michael Zank. Though he never explicitly joins them, he implies there is a negative connection. Zank contends that Strauss abruptly lost all interest in the Jewish problem when he hit upon the phenomena of esotericism. My argument here is that Strauss's Jewish problem was *fulfilled* with his discovery of esotericism – for otherwise he would have had no solution. Zank's mistake occurs when he assumes that Strauss treats exoteric/esoteric writing as being merely careful speech about any general opinions of the community. Instead, this kind of writing must be understood as primarily (though not exclusively) concerning *religious* speech. Note that all of Strauss's specific discussions of authors who use exotericism/esotericism – like Plato, Leibniz, Gotthold Lessing, Alfarabi, Maimonides, Spinoza, Judah Halevi – are using it in order to leave the religious opinions of the community undisturbed. See Zank (2002: 34). For Strauss's examination of authors who use exotericism/esotericism for preserving religious views, see Strauss (1988b; 1989c).

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Butler and Buddhism: Identity, Performativity and *Anatta*

by Paddy McQueen

Introduction

This paper examines the interesting and unexplored relationship between Judith Butler's understanding of gender and the Buddhist teaching of *anatta* (not-self). It argues that insightful comparisons can be drawn between the two. Specifically, the Buddhist conception of the self is used to illustrate and defend Butler's idea of performativity, which underlies her understanding of the gendered self, as well as to provide a means of relating to ourselves as performative beings. The Buddhist method of realising *anatta* is used to generate a politics of indifference, which can ground a new and potent post-gendered feminist movement.

I.   Butler and the Performative

Butler's early work, most notably her pivotal text *Gender Trouble* (1990), attempts to sever gender categories from putative essences of femininity and masculinity by arguing that gender is not merely a cultural construct but rather a type of performance based on the adoption and display of certain signs and on the ritual repetition of stylised acts. She seeks to undermine the idea of gender as 'natural' and constitutive of a person's essence through unveiling gender as *performative*. Butler begins outlining this project by arguing that gender is "in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (1988: 519). Gender is created through acts which are internally discontinuous. These acts produce the "*appearance of substance*", but this apparition is no more than "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (ibid: 520; see also Butler, 1990: 141).

Butler (1990) introduces the term 'constative performances' to denote performances of identity that actively construct the identity that they are taken to be expressions of. Turning traditional conceptions of gender on

their head, Butler argues that gender is the effect, not the source, of our actions, thoughts and appearances. To give a mundane example, one does not walk in a certain way because one is a woman; rather one is a woman because, in part, of the way one walks. In a slogan: gender is a *verb*, not a noun. It is something one *does* rather than something one *is*. Actually, this itself is contestable on the terms of Butler's account, if it is interpreted as implying that there is an agent which 'takes on' a gender through their performances. According to Butler, the 'I' which we think of as gendered is constituted by those very gendered acts which we assume to spring from this 'I'.[1]

The idea is rooted in Nietzsche's claim that "there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is simply fabricated into the doing – the doing is everything" (1887: 25).[2] Inspired by this, Butler argues for an ontological rejection of any gendered essence, any metaphysical substance which is said to have gender. Assuming such a substance mistakes the *effects* of gender for the *cause*. In this regard, Butler writes, "the substantive 'I' only appears through a signifying practice that seeks to conceal its own workings and to naturalize its effects" (1990: 144). The "doer", Jagger observes, "is not an intentional subject who stands behind the act as its originator, but is rather constituted by it" (2002: 36). Because of this, "the 'doer' will be the uncertain working of the discursive possibilities by which it itself is worked" (Butler, 1995: 135). 'We' or 'I' are the product of external forces, mistakenly internalised as an individual essence.

Butler's theory of gender is linked to the process of 'becoming', which invokes Beauvoir's famous claim that one becomes, rather than is born, a woman (1949: 295).[3] Yet Butler critically reflects on this particular notion of becoming, observing that the phrase 'one becomes a woman' suggests "an agent, a *cogito*, which takes on gender" (1990: 8). For Butler, "woman is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end" (1990: 33). Thus, it is not an ontological category which we are born into, nor is it something we can arrive at. We are always moving towards 'woman', but as this category is essentially unstable it constantly changes, with the result that we can never 'be' woman. As such, Butler argues:

> gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and [. . .] ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort (1990: 112)

Gender is "not exactly what one 'is' nor is it precisely what one 'has'. Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place" (Butler, 2004: 42). Furthermore, while at times what I call 'my' gender appears as something that I 'author' or 'own', "the terms that make up one's gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author" (ibid: 1). This suggests an essentially *intersubjective* understanding of gender, which complicates the talk of "*my* sexuality or *my* gender" (ibid: 19). Butler uses the idea of gender as 'ecstatic' to illustrate this, returning to the roots of the word as literally being beside or outside oneself.

Butler's account explicitly rejects the idea that I – conceived as a unified, individual ego – possess a gender in any reified sense. Her work does not deny that people 'have' genders in the trivial sense that we can utter the sentence 'X has the property of being a woman'. Rather, her work is aimed at subverting our conceptions of gender identity by revealing the ways in which it is produced and reproduced. In doing so she shows that the notion of 'having' a gender is no more than a turn of phrase, a socially useful description which should not be taken literally. The reason being, of course, that we are constituted *through* our gender, itself an abstraction from a set of individual acts, and so to speak of ourselves as 'having' a gender falsely implies there is an 'us' that gender 'belongs' to.

This radical reworking of gender not only forces us to reconsider what it means to be gendered (i.e. treating the word 'gender' as a verb instead of a noun), but also shakes the entire foundations of identity upon which the modern sense of self has been built. Butler's critique of gender identity involves an ontological rejection of any substantial and persisting self. Although not a novel idea within Western philosophy,[4] it certainly conflicts with many philosophical and common sense conceptions about what we are. However, a thoroughgoing rejection of any substantial self has been upheld by Buddhists for over two thousand years. Through an exploration of the Buddhist view of the self, encapsulated in the teaching of *anatta* (literally 'not-self'), I shall defend Butler's theory of gender performativity and reveal how Buddhism can be used to formulate a powerful, subversive feminist politics.

II. *Anatta*: The Buddhist Doctrine of Not-Self

Buddhism has intrigued Western philosophers for centuries and there have been many attempts to explore points of agreement between the two

traditions.[5] While concerns are rightly raised over the ability to draw fruitful comparisons – whether because of the problems of translation, superficial understandings of Buddhism, or the danger of distorting Buddhist philosophy in order to produce simple assimilation into Western concepts and beliefs (which, in its extreme form, becomes an example of cultural imperialism) – this does not mean that insightful conversations cannot be had. Where a genuine fusing of horizons takes place, not only can exciting new ideas and perspectives emerge, but each position can be enriched by the other. Just such a strategic alliance is proposed here.

The doctrine of *anatta* is a central component of Buddhist philosophy, one which must be mastered before enlightenment is attained. It can be summarised as the claim that we are devoid of a permanent, substantial and independent 'self' (*atta*). This belief was a direct rejection of the prevailing spiritual attitude at the time of the Buddha's enlightenment, according to which the goal of religious practice was to become unified with Brahman, the universal Absolute, through discovery of this *atta*. The Buddha denied these metaphysical claims, arguing instead that we are "persons who are empty of selves" (Siderits, 2007: 32). Rahula explains *atta* as rejecting the existence of "the thinker of thoughts, feeler of sensations, and receiver of rewards and punishments for all its actions good and bad" (1959: 51). There is no substantial self which 'owns' the constantly changing mental phenomena of our experience; there is no 'I', no persisting and unchanging entity, which can be said to possess the characteristics we ascribe to people. Thus, *atta* is described as overcoming the 'I' conceit. Belief in an *atta* produces "harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', selfish desire, craving attachment, impurities and problems [. . .] in short, to this false view can be traced all the evil in the world" (ibid). This false belief also gives rise to *tanhá* (attachment), which in turn produces the *dukkha* (suffering, dis-ease, dissatisfaction) that characterises all life.

The *anatta* teaching is often misunderstood. The Buddha accepts 'conventional' talk about people and a 'self' (as in 'myself' or 'yourself'), providing we acknowledge that it is simply a way of denoting a certain set of mental and physical states and events. *Anatta* tells us that there is no independent and enduring self to be found within this person. However, the Buddha also stresses that the *anatta* teaching is not intended as an assertion that there is no self. The view 'I have no self' is still a doctrine that leaves a lingering sense of 'I' or 'self' to which we cling. This is made clear in the *Kalaka Sutta,* in which the Buddha says of an enlightened being: "When cognising what is to be cognised, he doesn't construe an [object as] cognised.

He doesn't construe an uncognised. He doesn't construe an [object] to-be-cognised. He doesn't construe a *cogniser*" (Buddha, n. d.: AN 4.24, my emphasis). We could easily substitute 'cogniser' for 'doer' to construct a direct parallel with Butler's Nietzschean critique of the subject.

Perhaps the best known explanation of the *anatta* teaching is the chariot analogy, recorded in *Milinda's Questions* (1963/1964 [n. d.]). The text features a series of discussions between King Milinda and Nagasena, a Buddhist sage. Nagasena has claimed that the name 'Nagasena' does not denote anything, or rather that it does not denote anything in particular. Instead it denotes the sum total of a set of physical processes, feelings, thoughts, events, bodily parts, and so on, that we combine into a complex unity. The thing we call 'Nagasena' is nothing over and above these individual parts. To make the point, Nagasena asks Milinda to consider a chariot. If we take a chariot apart into its composite pieces, we do not at any point see the chariot itself. Having identified each individual part of the chariot we may then ask: 'where is the chariot?' In response, we would be told that we are simply confused. The 'chariot' is here, for the chariot is the spokes, the wheels, the seat, the reins, etc. Yet none of these alone constitutes the chariot. Rather they combine to create a particular complex arrangement that we label 'chariot'. The idea of a chariot or self is referred to as a 'convenient designator', meaning it is a useful conceptual fiction. Such terms 'work' in that they are acceptable to common sense and aid how we interact with one another and make sense of the world. This does not mean, however, that we can or should ascribe any ontological weight to them.

In the parlance of contemporary metaphysics, we may say that Buddhist philosophy espouses a mereological reductionism – that is, the view that parts (not wholes) are real. *Contra* holism, the Buddhist *anatta* teaching relies on the assumption that the whole is nothing more than the sum of its parts.[6] When we come to fully appreciate the *anatta* doctrine, we cease to think about ourselves in ways that posit an abiding self. Indeed, it would not even make sense to ask such a question about a self. This is explained by the Buddha in the *Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta,* where he compares questions of what happens to the enlightened being to a fire that has been extinguished. We would not ask *where* the fire has gone. We understand that 'the fire' is merely a designating term for a collection of conditions creating a constant series of flames. Similarly, what 'I' am is simply a stream of dependently originated psycho-physical conditions which are constantly coming in and out of existence. The individual becomes a complex fluctuating, fluid and fragmented process. Importantly, I cannot ask what will become of myself

if I fully perceive there to be *no* 'self' that can become anything. This is well expressed by Hamilton, whose advice could equally apply to feminists concerned with defending the idea of both a feminine essence and the atomistic, substantial subject:

> [*Atman*] is stating that in seeking to know what you *are*, or even whether or not you *are*, you are missing the solution to the problem of cyclic continuity [. . . .] *That* you are is neither *the* question nor *in* question: you need to forget even the issue of self-hood and understand instead how you work in a dependently originated world of experience (2000: 26)

III.   A Metaphysical Interlude

There is, I believe, a perhaps unexpected means of illuminating and connecting Butler's theory and Buddhism. The source of this light is a metaphysical doctrine called four-dimensionalism (also known as perdurantism).[7] Four-dimensionalism is an explanation of how objects persist over time and undergo change while remaining the self-same object. For example, the bicycle I rode yesterday is the same one that I will ride today, even if I change some of its parts, repaint it, reshape it, and so on. David Lewis calls this the "problem of temporary intrinsics" (1986: 203). Four-dimensionalists solve this problem through an appeal to the notion of temporal parts to explain persisting objects: "change over time is the possession of different properties by different temporal parts of an object" (Hawley, 2001: 12). Sider describes this picture as "that of a world spread out in time populated by spacetime worms, sums of instantaneous stages from different times" (2001: 53). All the objects around us are actually just instantaneous stages, or parts, of that object, and not the object itself (which is the sum of its temporal parts). An object (a spacetime worm) is said to persist through having a temporal part or stage present at each moment of its existence. At each and every moment, a new individual concrete object passes into (and then out of) existence.   Persisting objects are the mereological sum of their temporal parts.

No persisting object has an enduring essence which survives across time and grounds cross-temporal identity. This applies as much to humans as it does to desks, bicycles and trees. What grounds the relationship between different temporal parts of the same object, and thus justifies the ascription of them as belonging to that object, is a causal chain. Each temporal part is causally connected to certain other temporal parts in a way that generates the idea of them being parts of the same object. But the term 'same object'

does not refer to another object, over and above the individual temporal parts; rather, it is a collective term for the sum total of temporal parts contained within a single causal chain. To help grasp this idea, imagine a hologram being projected. Essentially, this is a three-dimensional film. The hologram consists of very many individual frames run together so fast that it appears to be a single persisting image. But each moment a new frame replaces the old one. The object is the sum total of these frames and we connect the frames into a single object owing to the causal connection they share, which includes a particular certain spatio-temporal relationship to each other (a relationship not shared by temporal parts that form other objects).

Four-dimensionalism offers a useful metaphysical vision of how an object can be said to persist without any enduring essence. We can map Butler's reiterative account of gender and Buddhism's theory of the self onto a four-dimensionalist vision of the universe. Clearly there are differences, such as the fact that a performative act for Butler lasts more than an instant. But still four-dimensionalism provides a useful conceptual model of a world which is perfectly accepting of the rejection of enduring substances and yet allows talk of objects as if they were substantial and persisting things. By thinking in terms of space-time worms we may well start to grasp the Buddhist's conception of the universe, in which all names (and genders) are convenient designators and the objects they denote no more than causal chains.

IV.   Detachment and Indifference: What Buddhism Can Offer Butler

Before continuing let us briefly and explicitly summarise the proposed points of contact with Butler and Buddhism. Firstly, Butler battled against the prevailing gender essentialism within feminist theory, while the Buddha rejected essentialism regarding the self. Secondly, both tried to reconfigure their respective objects of critique in ways that resisted reification and instead emphasised that what may appear to be substantial is simply a will o' the wisp, a deceptively real yet ultimately empty idea. Thirdly, our mistaken belief in such illusions keeps us trapped in cycles of suffering, perpetuating these myths and internalising them until they become the truth of our being, the core of our existence. Finally, salvation lies in unveiling these charades, peeling away the layers of scientific, sociological and psychological explanation under which these apparitions have buried themselves.

These remarks are, to some degree, merely rhetorical formulations. It would be naïve and misleading to somehow implicate the Buddha and Butler in a

mode of mutual understanding. Their projects are highly divergent, perhaps even ultimately incommensurable. For example, Butler's project rests upon highly politicised foundations, whereas the Buddha (on one interpretation) sought to deny the salience of worldly concerns. But what the preceding sections attempt to show is that the Buddhist conception of the self is compatible with Butler's analysis of the subject. This suggests that future investigation into this connection promises to be productive. In what follows, I would like conduct one such investigation. Specifically, I shall explore how the Buddhist's response to *anatta* can be transposed onto Butler's theory and used to formulate a political response to the conception of gender as an unstable, performative construct.

In order to realise the truth of *anatta* the Buddha encourages strict meditative practice aimed at dissolving the belief in a persisting, substantial self. During meditation, the practitioner is encouraged to reflect upon their internal mental states, to note the arising and passing of thoughts, emotions and feelings. As one enters deeper into meditative awareness, one appreciates the transient nature of the mind. This encourages a detached attitude to any particular conscious state, instead accepting that it will inevitably pass and thus should not be positively/negatively valorised. Ultimately, according to the Buddha, all suffering is caused by attachment, and therefore the way to eliminate suffering is to eliminate craving. Once one ceases to have thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', one is on the path to eradicating *tanhá*. By seeing oneself as a chain of causally connected events, rather than an abiding locus of 'self', one can appreciate the ultimately empty nature of persons. One effect of this is to increase your sensitivity to those around you. Because you cease to invest any special interesting in yourself – principally because your 'self' does not exist – you become more attentive to the lives of others. This is the basis for Buddhism's principal of universal compassion.

Furthermore, through understanding oneself as essentially a process, one appreciates the way that this process causally interacts with others. Because in the Buddhist universe everything depends upon everything else for its existence, we come to view others as inextricably connected to other beings and objects around us. Alan Wallace aptly sums this up in his description of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist view of the world, to wit:

> each person does exist as an individual, but the self, or personal identity, does not exist as an independent ego that is somehow in control of the body and mind. Rather the individual is understood as a matrix of dependently related events, all of them in a state of

flux (2007: 109)

This echoes Butler's exploration of the ecstatic nature of gender and how we must consider the political, ethical and practical effects of how we relate to those around us (see Butler, 2004; Heyes, 2006).

In Sanskrit the word 'conventional' (*samvrit*) literally means 'concealing'. So, a conventional truth 'conceals' the ultimate truth. In other words, behind every conventional truth is some greater ultimate truth which explains the former's successful practice. I think this is an important point. Conventional truths are not simply 'illusions' as such. They are useful and valuable. But we should not become attached to them; that is, we should not imbue them with ontological significance. I suggest that the best way to conceptualise the appropriate relation to be taken towards one's 'self' is that of *indifference*. Through detachment towards one's sense of 'I' and the mind's contents (the inner ego), one cultivates an indifference to it. This does not mean one ignores the mind's contents – indeed, in certain meditational practices one attends to the mind and nothing else. But the key is to let it pass, not to grasp at thoughts, feelings and emotions. Note them, and then let go.

I find that the concept of indifference can be a very useful way of relating to gender. If it is no more than a regulatory fiction, then we should not invest too much of 'ourselves' in it. Indeed, the tendency to attach value to gender, to see it as part of 'us', our fundamental identity and the root of our being, is precisely what Butler's work aims to dissolve. Clearly, this moves us away from radical feminist as well as many gay and lesbian movements, all of which celebrated their essential identity as a 'woman' or 'homosexual'. A societal indifference to (as well as a degradation of) the feminine or the homosexual was precisely what needed to be abolished in order to remedy patriarchal oppression. But if, as is increasingly clear, gender is best understood as a signifying practice premised upon enforced conformity to social norms, rather than an internal essence, then we must consider how best to respond to this fact. I contend that a response to the gender as a convenient designator should mirror that of Buddhism to the issue of the self: namely, by detached indifference. This means we can talk about gender, and make use of it within daily political discourse and even base localised movements upon it. But, at the same time, we should always be open to contesting it, remaining somewhat distanced from it, accepting its transience and resisting identification with it.

Indifference to the way that each of us is gendered can open up acceptance

and understanding of the way other people are gendered. Just as Buddhist indifference toward the self generates an ethic of universal compassion, so everyday indifference toward gender can promote appreciation of ways in which gender is alternatively (and subversively) performed. The less ontological importance we assign to our gender, the more sensitive we can become to those sexualities and gender expressions which differ from our own. Gender indifference encourages us to stop taking our own gender as the norm against which all other difference translates as lack and deviance. An obvious example of transgressive gender explorations is the transgendered movement, which seeks to 'play' with gender and thus reveal its performative aspect. Importantly, this is not a 'free play', but rather expresses the possibilities of alternative modes of gender expression within a limited field of constraints. However, the more that gender is subverted in this way, the less limited these constraints may become as the parameters of the field of enactment are expanded. By maintaining a fundamental indifference to gender, we may find it easier to treat gender as ''play', and also understand and appreciate those who are already in the act of subverting gender norms. Gender indifference can loosen the shackles of an imposed gender system which demands conformity to allegedly natural and inevitable modes of behaviour.

It must be stressed that I am not trying to downplay the undeniable and intolerable suffering rooted in experiences of gender oppression. We should definitely not be indifferent (in an apathetic sense) towards such experiences. However, it is one thing to attend to suffering and another to try and formulate ways to reduce and, ideally, eliminate it. Buddhism does not deny the suffering of individuals. Indeed, the fact of suffering is what first caused the Buddha to abandon his princely life and embark upon the quest which led to his eventual enlightenment. However, we can sympathise with someone's suffering while encouraging them to appreciate the way it can be eliminated.

Indifference, in the sense being advanced here, allows us to conceptualise important and powerful strategies of challenging gender binaries and the discursive network of exclusionary norms it supports. Specifically, we can explore and celebrate identities which situate themselves *in* difference, identities which are located between supposedly impermeable boundaries. These cyborg figurations – of which we may include intersex, transsexual and transgendered individuals – reveal the essential instability of the current gender system and its contingent, normatively enforced sexual and gendered dichotomies.[8] The deconstructive effects of those who exemplify this notion

of indifference are a recent and powerful phenomenon, one which can be used to the highlight the contingency of bodies and gender norms. Their willingness, as noted above, to play with gender suggests a certain indifference to gender norms (or at least their supposed inevitability and naturalness).[9] Such resistance to current gender discourse suggests a potent means of opposing the existing gender structure, thus opening up new ways of expressing gender. The more we understand the performative nature of gender – a set of repeated actions which we falsely attribute to a single, substantial essence or biological nature – the more we can begin to re-think it, reinterpret it and re-perform it. One way of furthering this understanding is by appreciating the Buddhist teaching of *anatta* and the attitude of detachment and indifference it generates.

The idea of indifference being advocated here appears to fit well with queer theory's refusal of identity categories and deconstruction of sexual norms. Queer theory encapsulates gender indifference through its focus on the idea that "the category 'woman' is a fiction and that feminist efforts must be directed toward dismantling this fiction" (Alcoff, 1988: 416). Butler's gender performativity and Haraway's cyborg represent important and powerful accounts of how such a 'dismantling' can be instigated. Queer theory echoes these deconstructive tendencies through its subversion of normalising discourses, and thus resonates with the concept of indifference. Queer theory revels in oppositional positioning, in challenging everything, including its own premises. The "ultimate challenge of queerness", Gamson claims, "is not just the questioning of the content of collective identities, but the *questioning of the unity, stability, viability, and political utility of sexual identities* – even as they are used and assumed" (1995: 397). Consequently, queer theory challenges emancipatory politics to produce a form of organising in which, "far from inhibiting accomplishments, the *destabilization of collective identity is itself a goal and accomplishment of collective action*" (ibid: 403).

Fusing queer ideals and the concept of indifference, we can see that the notion of identity is not ruled out altogether. Indeed, it is far from clear what it would mean to exist without an identity. Rather, the assumption of an identity – both individual and collective – must be treated as a contingent, practical and impermanent accomplishment. We must resist the tendency to reify identity, remain willing to relinquish an identity at any given time, and be open to alternative identities which we may encounter (no matter how 'deviant' they may appear to us). As Butler eloquently puts it, to "deconstruct the subject of feminism is not [. . .] to censure its usage, but, on

the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it from the maternal or racialist ontologies to which it has been restricted, and to give it play as a site where unanticipated meanings might come to bear" (1992: 16).[10] Through enacting a politics of indifference, identities become sites of permanent openness and re-signification.

There is, perhaps, a precedence of the ideal of indifference being proposed here. The San Francisco 'Gay Shame' collective/movement identifies itself on its website as a "Virus of the System" which resists "commercialized gay identity".[11] It rejects the "self-serving 'values' of gay consumerism" and dedicates itself to "fighting the rabid assimilationist monster with a devastating mobilization of queer brilliance". We may read this as a rejection of the supposed links between gay identity and social norms and values. The stereotype of the gay – only too visible in Gay Pride marches – is seen as falsely normalising and essentialising homosexual identity. Furthermore, the supposition that 'because we are gay, we share commonalities' is rejected wholesale. It is common to hear someone, upon learning that their acquaintance is gay, reply with a suggestion of arranging an introduction with a friend of theirs whom is 'also gay'. But why should sexual preference (and the term 'gay' encompasses and thus conceals a multitude of divergent sexual practices) determine one's aesthetic, moral or social beliefs and preferences? Personality is not mono-causally related to sexuality. As a 'gay' friend once remarked: "I'm gay, so what?" By consciously parodying the notion of Gay Pride, Gay Shame does not criticise notions of gayness; rather, it severs the supposedly natural/inevitable connections between sexuality and behaviour (a move which Butler is also keen to initiate). This opens up space for new ways of expressing oneself which subvert the normative expectations of the current gender system, thus offering a means of resisting and ultimately transforming its most oppressive effects.

Conclusion

This essay has explored both Butler's theory of gender and the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta*. It has suggested the ways in which Buddhism can help us grasp the ontology of gender in Butler's work. It has also shown how the Buddhist response to *anatta* can be usefully appropriated into a feminist politics of indifference. This does not mean that we should all aspire to be Buddhists, but it does mean that we should be open to its teachings and ready to take on board the valuable insights, tactical readings and socio-political interpretations that can be drawn from Buddhist thought.[12]

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Endnotes

[1] Butler acknowledges the similarities this idea bears to Foucault's theory of subjectification (see Foucault, 1980).

[2] Nietzsche (1887: 25) uses the analogy of a flash of lightning to demonstrate his point, arguing that people are mistaken if they separate the lightning from the flash and claim that the flash is an effect of a 'subject' called lightning.

[3] Butler (1986) provides a detailed discussion of this claim, analysing the extent to which we are able to choose how we become gendered as well as the relationship between sex (the body) and gender (cultural norms) within this process.

[4] Hume (1739-1740); Nietzsche (1887); Parfit (1986).

[5] Among the more interesting are Keown (1992); Morrison (1997); and Wallace (2003).

[6] Buddhism also employs an early example of Ockham's Razor, arguing that persons can be fully explained without needing to posit a substantial self. Therefore, their explanation of personhood is ontologically more economical.

[7] See Sider (2001) and Hawley (2001).

[8] See Haraway (1991); Bornstein (1994); Stryker and Whittle (2006).

[9] This should not be taken to imply that all trans-individuals are literally indifferent to gender norms. Indeed, transsexuality is typically associated with a strong desire to conform to stereotypical masculine/feminine characteristics. Nonetheless, trans-identities do reveal the contingency of gender norms and there are those who express an explicit indifference to gender identity (i.e. Bornstein 1994). I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to these considerations.

[10] For a very clear and useful discussion of this issue, see Lloyd (2005).

[11] All quotes are taken from the 'Gay Shame' website.

[12] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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Reviews

Derrida, An Egyptian: On the Problem of the Jewish Pyramid
by Peter Sloterdijk
Cambridge: Polity, 2009, hbk £45.00 (ISBN 978-0-7456-4638-1), pbk £14.99
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by Arthur Willemse

In the essay *Derrida, An Egyptian: On the Problem of the Jewish Pyramid*, Peter
Sloterdijk tries to make sense of Jacques Derrida's forebodings on the *survival*
of his name and work after his death. Although Derrida is one of the most
highly regarded philosophers of the twentieth century and was already a
celebrity in his time, he believed that his name would be forgotten the
moment after his passing. Yet he also thought that some part of his work
would survive in the cultural memory. Sloterdijk takes these two
premonitions to be utterly contradictory.

Peter Sloterdijk is a prominent German philosopher and public intellectual.
Particularly notable among his works, next to the earlier *Critique of Cynical
Reason*, is the vast *Sphären* trilogy (unfortunately unavailable in English at
present). In *Sphären*, he transforms the philosophico-anthropological
question *'Who is man?'* into *'Where is man?'* His interest in the environment
or whereabouts of humankind can also be discerned here, as *Derrida, An
Egyptian* presents a question of logistics, transport science or "political semio-
kinetics", as Sloterdijk calls it.

As with Martin Hägglund's (2008) *Radical Atheism – Jacques Derrida and the
Time of Life*, Sloterdijk's essay offers another contemporary and important
understanding of Derrida's work in light of the theme of survival. To
compare, Sloterdijk says the following of survival: "Existing in the moment
means having survived oneself up to that point. At every moment in which
it reflects upon itself, life stands at its own sepulchre, remembering itself –
while the voices of its own been-ness sound from the depths" (2009: 63).
Meanwhile, Hägglund writes: "To survive is never to be absolutely present;
it is to remain after a past that is no longer and to keep the memory of this
past for a future that is not yet" (2008: 1). Both call to mind the position of
the philosopher, as described in Derrida's essay 'Violence and Metaphysics',
which states that "those who look into the possibility of philosophy,
philosophy's life and death, are already engaged in, already overtaken by
the dialogue of the question about itself and with itself; they always act in

remembrance of philosophy, as part of the correspondence of the question
with itself" (2001a: 99).

The two works differ strongly, however, in their respective approaches.
Whereas Hägglund coaxes the notion of survival from Derrida's work in
pointed opposition to prominent other readings, Sloterdijk sets up a string
of friendly meetings between Derrida and various thinkers and writers. In
a paper from 1999 entitled 'Regeln für den Menschenpark', Sloterdijk wrote
of the connections and conversations that occur between thinkers separated
by time and space. In the present essay, Sloterdijk charts seven such
encounters (between Derrida and Niklas Luhmann, Freud, Thomas Mann,
Franz Borkenau, Regis Débray, Hegel and Boris Groys) in order to elaborate
on the notion of survival in deconstructive philosophy. This is achieved
through a discussion of the Egyptian roots of and influence on Jewish culture
in particular and Western culture in general. Sloterdijk conceives of Western
culture and philosophy as a continuous, circular exodus from a shared
Egyptian heritage: the time when no metaphysical language could be spoken
as civilisation was the realm of immortals, already present in their self-
evident architectural sense – the pyramid. Analogous to Hegel in the
Philosophy of Right, Sloterdijk often thinks of examples of architecture as
being representative of time apprehended in bricks. In his recent book, *Im
Weltinnenraum des Kapitals* (2005), Sloterdijk took Dostoevsky's description
of the crystal palace from *Notes from the Underground* to be that of the self-
awareness of the globalized society. In *Derrida, An Egyptian,* the pyramid at
face value fulfils this role with regards to the Egyptian empire. More
importantly, however, it shapes by negation our own contemporary
metaphysical attitudes, especially towards death.

Sloterdijk sees Derrida's work as truly connecting with this Egyptian legacy,
and admires the work all the more for it. To be sure, there are many instances
where Derrida identifies fundamental issues which are justly indecipherable
to our philosophical tradition, a tradition Derrida takes to owe its triumphs
exactly to this ineptitude with regards to its own foundation. Examples are
Bataille's laughter in the face of Hegel (2001b), Levinas' Jewish ventriloquism
of the Greek metaphysical language (2001a) and the ghosts of Marxism
(2006), never to be incorporated completely in a philosophical account. For
Sloterdijk, the pyramid provides another important expression of the ways
in which human experience is irreducible to philosophy, and how
philosophy thereby *survives* itself.

However much Sloterdijk and Hägglund may be in agreement on some
fundamental points, the former finds in Derrida's work an ambiguous

attitude towards mortality. Where Hägglund stresses a clear-cut radical atheism that "informs [Derrida's] writing from beginning to end" (2008: 1), and which allows for "only one realm – the infinite finitude of *différance*" (2008: 4), Sloterdijk argues that "Derrida did not simply want to drive away the ghosts of the immortalist past; he was rather concerned with revealing the profound ambivalence resulting from the realization that both choices are equally possible and equally powerful" (2009: 37). This is why, in the end, the pyramid entitles the two opposing civilisations – the Egyptian culture of immortality and the modern Greek *polis* – to the same conclusion: "[T]his pit [the pyramid] expresses the fact that human life as such is always survival from the start" (Sloterdijk, 2009: 63).

While his essay maintains its agenda and tries to solve the question of Derrida's afterlife, Sloterdijk's series of contextualizations suggests a number of divergent perspectives on his work. For instance, in the confrontation with Hegel, which is particularly telling with regards to Derrida's style, Derrida is presented as the former's psychoanalyst. Meanwhile, Derrida will appear in the chapter on Groys as Hegel himself. In doing this, Sloterdijk paints a multilayered and beautiful picture of philosophy as, what could be called following Luhmann, 'what *we* can do *now*'. It should be noted, however, that not all confrontations are equally rewarding. Sloterdijk's discussion on Thomas Mann's novel *Joseph and his Brothers* seems redundant, since it does not at all make "self-evident why Derrida's deconstruction must be understood as a third wave of dream interpretation from the Josephian perspective", which would be its sole purpose (2009: 26). Sloterdijk has somewhat of a reputation for allowing himself grand conclusions based less on substantive evidence and more on creative allusions and connections. This reputation is without doubt reaffirmed in this latest essay. He does not provide a close-reading of Derrida. Rather, this slim volume is better seen as providing a profound and provocative example of how thinkers like Sloterdijk and Derrida reinvent the enterprise of philosophy.

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Living on Borrowed Time
by Zygmunt Bauman and Citlali Rovirosa-Madrazo
Cambridge: Polity, 2010, hbk £50.00 (ISBN 978-0-7456-4738-8), pbk £14.99
(ISBN 978-0-7456-4739-5), 100pp.

by Matt Dawson

How does one view the credit crunch? Is it simply another 'bust' period
following one of capitalism's 'booms' or was it more significant? Was it an
indication of the unsustainability of capitalism, either generally or in a
specific, financially-driven form? Zygmunt Bauman's latest text, a collection
of conversations with journalist and academic Citlali Rovirosa-Madrazo,
addresses such pressing questions.   As this book shows, Bauman's
conception of 'liquid modernity' has rested upon an idea of capitalism which
promised instant gratification and provided the means, in the form of credit,
to attain it. The alliance of the desire for instant gratification, on the one
hand, and rising credit use, on the other, culminated in the events of 2008:

> The present-day 'credit crunch' is not an outcome of the banks'
> failure. On the contrary, it is a fully predictable, even if by and
> large not predicted, fruit of their outstanding success: success in
> transforming a huge majority of men and women, old and young,
> into a race of debtors (Bauman, 2010: 20)

There are eight 'conversations' in this book, split into two parts. Part one
has sections on capitalism and the credit crunch; the welfare state; and the
state, democracy and human rights. Part two turns its attention to genocide;
population; religious fundamentalism; DNA inscription; and love. Despite
this thematic breakdown, the book exhibits some recurrent concerns, such
as the relations of capitalism and the nation state in a 'consumer society' (cf.
Bauman, 2007); the individualization of previously collective concerns; the
'break' between 'solid' and 'liquid' modernity; and the potential for
alternatives.

For Bauman, the close relationship of state and capital, so evident amid the
credit crunch, is not new in principle, since the actions of the state have
always been directed by "whatever is perceived to be in the 'interests of the
economy'". Instead, we should look at how these interests are "adjusted to
the changing state of society" (Bauman, 2010: 37). Revising Habermas'
conception of state and capital in *Legitimation Crisis*, Bauman argues that "in
the liquid phase of modernity the state is 'capitalist' in as far as it assures the
continuous availability of credit and the continuous ability of consumers to

obtain it" (2010: 24). Therefore the recapitalisation of the banks was intended
as a way to ensure the supply of credit needed for a consumer society. This
is contrasted to the actions of the state post-1929 when, in a society of
producers, the focus was squarely on ensuring a healthy supply of labour,
through the development of, what Bauman terms, the "social state" (2010:
35-36).

The social state of past years saw the problems it was designed to tackle
(most notably, poverty) as *shared* concerns and looked for *collective* responses.
However, the contemporary welfare state has instead 'subsidiarized' [sic]
these concerns to the level of individuals, leaving citizens (isolated-by-
decree) to find their own ways out of poverty. The welfare state merely
monitors and polices behaviour (see Conversation Two). In addition, while
the Left has traditionally provided a voice for those facing the greatest harm
from the credit crunch, today the Left instead focuses – often more
enthusiastically than the right – on refinancing capital (Bauman, 2010: 53-
54). The upshot is that new forms of insecurity are identified and fought
against, with the claims of the far right over immigration gaining popularity:

> Chasing the migrants away, one rebels (by proxy) against all those
> mysterious global forces that threaten to visit on everybody the
> fate already suffered by the migrants. There is a lot of capital in
> that illusion that can be (and is) adroitly exploited by politicians
> and markets alike (Bauman, 2010: 66)

Bauman warns against an increased 'religionalization of politics' where, as
in the above, politicians hope to paint a black and white picture of 'good
versus evil' and remove the concept of negotiation, one of the fundamental
bases of politics (2010: 132). Since liquid modernity can be categorised as a
time of increased uncertainty, fundamentalism – both the scientific and
religious kind – gains new converts as both aim to provide clear moral
guidelines on what is 'right and wrong', while taking everyday decisions
away from the individual (Bauman, 2010: 129). Thus, while it may mean a
new manifestation of the processes of modernity, liquid modernity does not
represent the strong 'break' with solid modernity that Rovirosa-Madrazo
sometimes alludes to through her questions (see 63-64).

Bauman goes on to identify individualization with the 'discovery' of new
diseases such as 'eyelash hypotrichosis' (eyelashes which are insufficiently
long or dense), and the resulting 'cure' (Latisse) developed by the same
company behind Botox (2010: 145-148). These are only successful since "the
creation of a 'new man' (or woman) has been deregulated, individualized,

and subsidiarized to individuals, counterfactually presumed to be the sole legislators, executors and judges allowed inside their individual 'life politics'" (148, see also Conversation Seven). Meanwhile, changing attitudes toward sex – with its almost total separation from procreation – and relationships – as instantaneous and 'made to measure' – are also, for Bauman, indicators of the liquid modern appeal to individuals as consumers (see Conversations Five and Eight).

So what of alternatives? As Rovirosa-Madrazo's introduction makes clear, part of the appeal of Bauman is his status as a critic of capitalism *and* socialism (Bauman, 1976). He maintains that socialism is not so much a "specific design" of society, but rather a "stance" to be taken by individuals (2010: 16). This does not mean that the socialist utopia has nothing to tell us, quite the contrary. In an individualised, consumer society, which has been brought about by a union between global capital and the nation state, Bauman argues:

> At some point, therefore, the resurgence of the essential core of the socialist 'active utopia' – the principle of collective responsibility and collective insurance against misery and ill fortune – would be indispensable, though this time on a global scale, with humanity as a whole as its object (2010: 69)

This task, for Bauman, is up to what he terms 'generation Y' of the Western world, who have grown up living in a society which promised constant and exciting forms of work, as well as readily available credit for the diverse desires the wages from work could not (yet) satisfy. With the credit crunch bringing both of these to an end, generation Y faces its own pressing questions. This text is consistent with some of Bauman's others in arguing that one of the major problems of liquid modernity is that, following Castoriadis, society stops questioning itself (2010: 30; cf. Bauman, 1999: 8). While Bauman is willing and well placed to raise poignant questions of contemporary society, he is firm in the belief that it is neither his right nor his task to supply the answers.

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Decolonizing Development: Colonial Power and the Maya
by Joel Wainwright
Cambridge: Blackwell, 2008, pbk £19.99 (ISBN: 987-1-4051-5706-3), 328pp.

by Stratis-Andreas Efthymiou

Joel Wainwright's thorough critique of development in Belize offers an original reading of development. He investigates the relationship between colonialism and development, and explores the ways in which colonialism has shaped the modern world. He does so by drawing on philosophy, political theory and the case study of Maya in Belize. His book is published as part of the Antipode Book Series which focuses on distinctive new developments in radical geography. The overarching aim of the book – to "decolonise capitalism as development" – is certainly broad, but with the focus being on the small area of southern Belize the author is able to draw upon a rich source of detailed information and specific examples to make some important and thought-provoking claims. Through the use of the case study, Wainwright attempts to bring to light the complex dynamics through which colonial tropes have been drawn (and redrawn) in contemporary development discourse(s).

Wainwright begins the book with a substantive and well crafted thesis in which he highlights the ways in which the expansion of capitalism through European colonialism has contemporary corollaries in our present day capitalism *qua development,* with particular attention given to how these forces shape "politics, subjectivities and the worldliness of the world" (2008: 23). He clarifies his own approach to the study of Maya by first taking the reader through some possible alternative theoretical approaches, with detailed explanations of what he perceives to be their major shortcomings. Here, Wainwright presents a forceful critique not only of Marxist approaches to development economics, but also of state theory which he regards as inadequate to the task of explaining the dynamic forms of colonial hegemony as it has been articulated through neoliberal capitalism. He argues that postcolonial theory provides an important extension and modification of the Marxist problematic. However, the author goes on to argue that the postcolonial literature has avoided the question of how the state produces its *space* – that is, *territorialisation* – which, as Wainwright points out, has always been at the heart of colonial capitalism. In so doing, Wainwright studies the political effects of capitalism *qua* development in the colonial present in a manner which simultaneously investigates the spatio-ontological basis of the nation-state (i.e. territory).

In problematising colonialism-development, he is calling for (and attempting to engage in) an extension of the Marxist and postcolonial theoretical purview. This argument takes place within a well delivered, spirited and strong philosophical register. Borrowing and shifting a term from Derrida, he refers to the practice of reading he adopts as *spacing.* Employing spacing in this particular way makes it possible, he argues, to achieve critical readings of capitalism *qua* development in the Americas, which are already related to colonial discourses. In applying the above methodology to Belize, he successfully illustrates in this book that the hegemony of postcolonial development articulates and reinforces capitalism and territorialisation.

Early in the book, Wainwright examines the ways in which colonial practices, which have territorialised Mayan spaces, have actually bound together political identity with development and settlement. In his words, "Colonial power materialized a longstanding alignment of the concepts of city, citizen, and state" (2008: 27). The latter is examined by way of conducting a deconstructive reading of the inherited concepts of development, territory and Mayanism, respectively.

The matter of territorialisation is tackled throughout the book. The first chapter is devoted to illustrating how the geographies of southern Belize were constructed through colonial practices. Here, Wainwright demonstrates how the resulting hegemony that enabled colonialism was "constituted on the basis of spatial forms of political power: settlement, land taxation, and territorialization" (2008: 59).

Overall, Wainwright's reading of colonisation and development calls into question the enframing of development in Belize. Following Timothy Mitchell, Wainwright argues that "what is at stake in colonialism and development is the very constitution of modernity as the dominant mode of enframing the world" (2008: 28). The author here aims to question the enframing that has made it possible to think of Belize as having a proper, empirical and historical geography – one that, he argues, silences Mayan resistance to these practices.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, entitled 'Colonizing the Maya', takes place through readings of archival texts, maps and development practices. Wainwright examines the subaltern history of southern Belize and more specifically the colonisation of southern Belize, the settlement and territorialisation of the Maya. He also examines the discourses of the Maya farm system, the reform of their agricultural practices, the agricultural development projects, the accelerated

development and the broader archaeology of Mayanism. In this part of the book, the reader discovers the documented centuries of resistance and struggle over the Maya's representation and their land.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Aporias of Development', revolves around the politics of state-led development projects since the 1950s. This is explored through three case studies of failed attempts at development. Firstly, he considers the work of a soil scientist who served the British colonial state and was instrumental in transforming colonial discourse into a discipline of development. Secondly, he cites two development projects that aimed for the 'settling' of Maya agriculture by improving mechanised rice production. And finally, he considers a 'counter-mapping' project, the Maya Atlas, which offers an indigenous view, and thus represents an attempt to oppose the top-down established approaches to the geographical management and development of southern Belize. Wainwright, who was himself involved in this last project, came to the conclusion that since the maps had to be compiled within the parameters and language of Western cartographic practices, such a project could never have been truly 'indigenous'.

Wainwright concludes by arguing that in consolidating the theoretical gains of postcolonial Marxism, "we should be able to conceive colonial power as the simultaneous extension of territorial and capitalist social relations" (2008: 283). Indeed, in the close study of Maya in Belize, the author aptly demonstrates how development has been actually maintaining precisely what it promises to resolve – namely, power inequalities.

Finally, he successfully illustrates that we may take hold of development conceptually in such a way as to be able to think more critically of capitalism's great historico-geographical achievement of becoming capitalism *qua* development.

For those with an interest in theorising development this book provides not only an original perspective but also a rich source of information on the social and political theory surrounding the concept. The book contains a high level of theoretical engagement, and as such it appears to address an academic and/or theoretically specialised reader. People unfamiliar with postcolonial theory may find some of the language and arguments difficult to follow. But such minor issues will not detract from what is a significant achievement and what will surely influence the ongoing debates on development, capitalism and postcolonialism.

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Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht: The Story of a Friendship
by Erdmut Wizisla
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, hbk $45.00 (ISBN: 978-0-30013-695-1), 288pp. Translated by Christine Shuttleworth

by R. Phillip Homburg

In his own *Story of a Friendship*, Gershom Scholem writes, "It became very plain to me [. . .] that Benjamin's relations to his fellow Marxists were marked by something like constant embarrassment, which of course was connected with his attachment to theological categories. This was true of Brecht as much as it was of the circle around the Institute [for Social Research]" (1981: 259). Wizilsa's text stands in juxtaposition to Scholem's whose resentment towards those who pulled Benjamin outside of his sphere and towards Marxism and communism – Adorno, Asja Lacis, and, most of all, Brecht – is only too apparent. Wizilsa's first task is to correct the mis-characterizations that have plagued the reception of Benjamin's relationship with Brecht. He does more than this, however, and this work stands as an important testament to the complex and often conflicting relationships that Benjamin cultivated.

The opening chapter of the book has two aims: first, to situate the reception of the relationship in a wider historical context than that provided by Scholem; and second, to explore the relationship between Brecht and Benjamin beyond mere biographical and historical data. Thus, Wizilsa does not stop at the particular reception of Benjamin's growing friendship with Brecht as asserted by Scholem's and Adorno's accounts, but instead widens his scope to include figures such as Günther Anders (Hannah Arendt's first husband) and, most notably, a number of women who were close to both men. Singled out among these women is Brecht's frequent collaborator, the actress Margarete Steffin, who often served as a go-between for the two men and kept in close contact with Benjamin throughout the 1930s. By extending the context of Benjamin's relationships beyond his two closest interlocutors – Adorno and Scholem – Wizilsa gives us a far richer and more intellectually active impression of Benjamin.

This contextualization is dispensed with quickly, however, in order to explore the more central concern of the book, that is, the constellation between Brecht and Benjamin. The development of this constellation becomes clear in the central chapter of the book which deals with the journal *Krise und Kritik.* While it never saw the light of day, the organization and

ultimate failure of the project was indicative of the relationship between the two men. Discussions about the journal began in September, 1930, and in spite of its ultimate failure the journal brought co-editors Brecht, Benjamin, Bernard von Brentano and Herbert Ihering, together with Siegfried Kracauer, Georg Lukács, Ernst Bloch, among others. The list of interested parties indicates the nature of the journal: it brought together both artists and critics in order to foster critical engagement on both sides. Wizilsa's in-depth analysis of this project focuses around the two concepts implicated in the title of the journal: namely, *crisis* and *criticism.* The subject of criticism had been central to Benjamin's early work, as had the relationship between the act of criticism and the work. *Krise und Kritik,* however, demonstrated a sustained interest in criticism, but with an additional focus. Benjamin's primary concern in his early work was *Kunstkritik,* and, while still primarily aesthetic in nature, *Krise und Kritik* also had social and political implications. The systematic failure of criticism in the face of the crises of the 1930s was a common concern held by both men, and this journal represented an attempt to address how criticism could develop within the current state of affairs. This question coalesced around the potential critical method that the journal and its contributors would pursue, yet it is also in precisely this area that a central division between Brecht and Benjamin can be found.

Wizilsa demonstrates the nuances that separated Brecht's and Benjamin's conceptions of criticism. Wizilsa argues that Benjamin held two methods simultaneously: namely, *theology* and *materialist dialectic* (2009: 81). In this light, it is interesting that Benjamin wrote essays on Brecht and Kafka at the same time. Brecht, for his part, held a more "scientific approach" to criticism which is compared to the positions held by members of the Vienna Circle. Benjamin's more open and experimental approach to criticism is contrasted with Brecht's more dogmatically positivistic method. We can see why Scholem and Adorno found Brecht's influence on Benjamin to be potentially dangerous for their own projects, but the influence was highly productive for Benjamin because of this danger. While Benjamin rejects the simple Brechtian notion of criticism as politics continued "by other means", *Krise und Kritik* marks a move towards a form of *total criticism* – aesthetic, political and social – in his thought. This form of criticism, however, was supported by a belief in the openness of criticism, as the agenda of the journal indicates: it would present philosophical and aesthetic works as works in progress. The journal ultimately collapsed due to political in-fighting, but it marks the beginning of a sometimes tumultuous collaboration between Brecht and Benjamin, and its themes and methods were enduring for Benjamin.

The chapter on *Krise und Kritik* is followed by two chapters dealing with the attitude of these two men towards one another. The chapter 'Brecht on Benjamin' is the more illuminating of the two, since, on Brecht's side, the relationship was a mostly private affair. (This is where Wizilsa's extensive archival research really pays dividends for both the book and its reader. The author provides not only a complex and nuanced picture of Brecht's reception of his friend's work, but also Benjamin's critical review of Brecht as well as works that Benjamin sent Brecht to read). Benjamin, by contrast, was a critic and, as a result, had much to say about Brecht's artistic output *publically*. This chapter is less revelatory than its counterpart but still Wizilsa gives an excellent overview of Benjamin's reception and engagement with Brecht's work. While Benjamin almost always publically praised Brecht, the author portrays their relationship as rather ambiguous. One gets the sense that while dialectical materialism – represented artistically by Brecht – was one side of the method, a theological element laid underneath. Moreover, it appears in this book that the inconvenient confluence of these two elements was as disturbing to Brecht as it was to Scholem.

These two sections are rich and well analyzed. They provide some essential insights for Benjamin research, such as Brecht's rejection of Benjamin's explication of Baudelaire.   For his part Benjamin reacted with disappointment to Brecht's superficial praise of Kafka. Brecht's inability to see the parallels between his own work and Kafka's proved indicative of the limits of the former's assimilation of Benjamin's thought (2009: 166). Wizilsa expertly elucidates the context of the relationship, yet he leaves the reader free to draw his or her own concrete philosophical conclusions from the analysis. Such an approach seems to me an appropriate one for the study of Benjamin. This method of analysis limits the wholesale appropriation of Benjamin's thought and as such surpasses Scholem's one-sided examination of Benjamin.

Although Wizilsa only hints at the wider philosophical implications of the Brecht-Benjamin constellation, he does so with good reason. Furthermore, this is only a minor complaint when compared to the significance of the contribution that the author makes to the existing literature. Wizilsa's Benjamin exists beyond the most common and comfortable appropriations in the social milieu of Weimar Germany. He is far from the depressed, private scholar we are so accustomed to seeing. It is hard to detect what Scholem interpreted as embarrassment in Brecht's reception of Benjamin's work – even the more 'theological' works, such as the essays on Kafka, with which he disagreed. Rather, there was a productive disagreement between

the two men. This productive tension is best described by Brecht in an epitaph to Benjamin, as "attrition tactics" (a strategy which Benjamin apparently enjoyed utilizing during their many chess games in Denmark). In many cases, Benjamin's relationships seemed all too often to benefit his interlocutor more than himself. With Brecht, however, we get a real sense that it was the basis of resistance toward and tension between each other's thinking on which Benjamin built a great portion of his mature thought. Wizilsa's timely and impeccably researched book effectively widens the context in which we can examine Benjamin's life and thought.

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One Dimensional Woman
by Nina Power
Hampshire: Zero Books, 2009, pbk £7.99 (ISBN: 978-1-84694-241-9), 81pp.

by Zoe Sutherland

> [T]he spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs by the
> individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the
> efficacy of the controls (Marcuse, 2002 [1964]: 10)

Nina Power's book *One Dimensional Woman* extrapolates from two central observations. The first is that feminist discourses of emancipation have become increasingly subject to exploitative forms of appropriation, by both the consumerism of capitalist society and the opportunistic – and often aggressive – politics of liberal democracy. The logic of feminist discourse, along with its concepts and slogans, is being used to sell fashion items, beauty products and sex toys, and even to enhance the justification for imperialist wars and, ironically, pro-life Republican politics. The second observation, coinciding with this phenomenon, is that much contemporary feminism seems to lack the necessary grasp of this situation to motivate any meaningfully critical response. As feminist discourse becomes increasingly appropriated by and incorporated into the status quo, any specifically embedded political content is effectively emptied out, while its concepts – now seemingly applicable at will – can be used against its originary emancipatory aims, thereby tightening its own shackles in the process. At a time when women of the contemporary Western world are being reassured that they have never had it better, Power urges feminism to reclaim, reorganise and reinvent itself, so that it may once again become a systematic and critical political force for the future.

The particular manner in which contemporary culture represents women as emancipated and empowered is, from the beginning, contradictory and confusing. For example, Power highlights how a host of bewilderingly popular shows – the most explicit being *Sex and the City* – are unashamedly blunt endorsements of the fact that contemporary female achievement is to a large extent identified with the right to (conspicuously) consume. As Power identifies, contemporary formulations of the emancipated woman make reference to "the ownership of expensive handbags, a vibrator, a job, a flat and a man – probably in that order" (2009: 1). It is deeply ironic that such portrayals, in which women's 'liberation' is represented through the freedom to be engaged consumers, also parade as forms of transcendence over stable or standardised conceptions of female identity. In reality, the

very character of consumption encouraged – "playboy bunny pendants and
bikini waxes" (Power, 2009: 1), or even the ostensibly innocent slogan
repeated in *Sex and the City* (namely, that a woman can never own too many
pairs of shoes) – seems to entrench women firmly within an expected gender
role. This entrenchment has a dual force, for even what appears to be
women's absolute freedom to 'shop' and 'fuck' at will is presented in
problematic ways: either these activities are shown as constituting a mere
hedonistic prelude to the dicovery of 'The One', or they become synonymous
– "you go to the 'City' in search of 'labels and love'; the one mediating the
other" (ibid.: 41).

Power's point is simple but crucial: for an account of women's position in
society, an appeal to representation – whether it be cultural or political – is
inadequate. It is not enough that women have entered the workplace, have
moved increasingly into top jobs, or are being depicted within the media in
ostensibly empowering ways. What we are lacking is a critical dissection
and closer analysis of the specific details of these social changes, as well as
their nature and various effects.   To engage critically with such
representations, a sober grasp of the realities of the concrete transformations
in women's relations to the workplace is essential, and in this regard the
section on 'The Feminization of Labour' is to my mind the strongest (if least
humorous) theoretical part of the text. Power moves beyond any shallow
premise that the expansion of women in the workplace is positive *per se*, to
an examination of whether the actual nature of the concrete social and
economic conditions of the work being done is emancipatory in real terms.
Power's account emphasises how, in the contemporary workplace, women
– especially those who fall into 'agency' work – are socialised (more so than
men) to be *non-specific professionals* (2009: 18), highly adaptable and multi-
tasking, permanently accessible for temporary or part-time work and capable
of slotting effortlessly into an array of varying roles. While often paraded
under the banners of 'choice' and 'freedom', such conditions serve to
perpetuate real concrete social and economic inequality, not least in terms
of pay, job stability and the acquisition of a consistent skill base.

Most reviews of *One Dimensional Woman* have overwhelmingly identified its
strongest moment as being the section on pornography. By suggesting that
we embark upon a kind of genealogical tracing of pornography, and to
become aware of how and why it might have changed over time, Power
wants to open up the space for a more productive dialogue with
pornography, one free from the dogmatism often associated with second
wave feminism.   The issue of pornography – to be engaged with

productively – must be elevated over and above the typical ahistorical or essentialist dichotomy of 'good' and 'bad'. Instead, what might be investigated is how and why contemporary pornography has become vacuous, lifeless and, following Power's account, less fun for its participants, as the industry has become ever-increasingly profitable. The implication in Power's text is that pornography would do well to remember its roots. While contemporary pornography represents sex as something alienating and almost entirely external to other human and social relations, banishing it into a realm of ever more extreme and subsequently ineffective fantasy, *vintage* pornography – employing the forms of slapstick and vaudeville – is apparently amateurish and theatrical, and as such remains identifiably embedded within a rich artistic heritage and cultural context. Power claims that the modern audience of vintage porn may be shocked that "the participants genuinely seem to be enjoying themselves, and that they might even be quite keen on sleeping with each other" (2009: 53). This is a weak point in Power's argument because it diverges from the book's former analysis on the concrete social and economic conditions of production and work, and moves towards a projected speculation of those conditions, which is essentially based upon an aesthetic claim hinging upon notions to do with the historical relativity of the reception of cultural products.

A striking feature of *One Dimensional Woman* is its unorthodox and somewhat hybrid form. The text navigates a precarious space somewhere between personal rant, political pamphlet and academic booklet, which makes it both accessible on a number of levels to a wide spectrum of readers, as well as open to critique from many sides. An academic purist, for example, might make the charge that Power – as a lecturer in philosophy – makes arguments that are fragmented or lacking in analytic rigour. Yet such hybridism also has its benefits. The composition of the text, based as it is upon what were originally a series of blog entries, has allowed for a kind of organic development of the thought and writing processes, through which the particularity of the author's sentiments are able to resound in a manner that feels uniquely refreshing. Power can sometimes accelerate into what feels like diatribe, utilising her shrewdness and wit to their full polemical force, yet she remains capable (where appropriate) of holding a sharp theoretical lens over her own observations and providing the focus necessary to elevate the work beyond a mere popularised polemic.

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call for papers

SSPT **18 (Autumn/Winter)** – *Utopia, Dystopia and Critical Theory*

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