THE CHALLENGES OF POSTMODERNISM

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edited by

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Contents

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R.C. Pradhan

The Challenges of Postmodernism: An Introduction

Postmodernism has been the philosophical response in the twentieth century to the Enlightenment project well entrenched in Western thought since the seventeenth century. Modernism which is the official philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment has a long history and is still active in various schools of philosophy of the twentieth century such as Philosophical Analysis and Phenomenology. It is only in the sixties that philosophers started questioning the official philosophy of Enlightenment. A number of philosophical movements such as "post-structuralism" in the studies in language and literature and architecture, "feminism" and other intellectual movements rose to challenge the basic assumptions of modernism. Since then philosophers have joined in chorus questioning the fundamental tenets of modernism.

WHAT IS MODERNISM?

Modernism does not stand for any particular school of philosophy. As a philosophical outlook it pervades almost all schools of philosophy from rationalism to empiricism, from Kantianism to Neo-Kantianism, and from Hegelian Idealism to pragmatism. The spirit of modernism is the hallmark of such radical philosophical movements as Philosophical Analysis and Phenomenology. That is to say, modernism has been the longest surviving outlook or world-view in the Western thought pervading all aspects of the intellectual life.

What is central to modernism is the affirmation of the rationality

of man not only as a thinker but also as a man of action in the world. The idea of the thinking self which is the fountainhead of the concepts of rationality, reason, truth, unity, laws and so on is the foundation of the modernist thinking popularly known as Enlightenment. From this basic concept have evolved the ideas of self as an individual subject and the capacity of the self as the knowing self in relation to the world. From Descartes to Kant to Russell, there is a continuous epistemological tradition that has explored the relation between the knowing self and the world. In this connection, philosophers have developed the notion of truth as the seat-anchor of human knowledge and the representation of the world in thought and language.

The idea of representation of the world in thought and language is one of the basic tenets of modernism in view of the fact that the thinking self is the centre of the Enlightenment universe. To represent is to mirror the universe in the categories developed in our conceptual scheme which is embedded in our language. The Enlightenment thinkers have espoused the idea that thought and language are logical pictures of the world in view of the fact that they share a common logical structure. This idea implies that the universe itself has a rational order just as our thought has. This ensures that the world outside us is as much rational as our thinking is. This harmony between the world and the mind has led to the rise of modern science which explores the implicit rational order of the universe. Modern science is the embodiment of the implicit belief that the world basically is a law-governed universe in which things fall into an order, even if there are apparent gaps in this universal order.

The Enlightenment man embodied the ideas of hope and progress which were manifest in his approach to the problems of politics, morality and social organizations. The idea of justice and equality of all and the progress of mankind leading to the establishment of an equitable social order was deeply entrenched in the social philosophy of the Enlightenment. This gave rise to various social and political movements giving hope of liberation of mankind from exploitation, repression and colonial rule all over the world.

THE FAULTLINES IN THE EDIFICE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment project started cracking under the weight of its own conceptual load. The intellectualized world-view saw cracks in its over-ambitious idea of rational order in the human world as well as in the non-human Nature. The so-called rational order in the human world was bound to break down because of the irrational forces which were unleashed by the social movements such as communism, feminism and other liberation movements. Not that man was ever believed to be fully rational. But the faint hope of making the human world rational to the extent of keeping it orderly was belied because the Enlightenment idea of man had many lacunae. Man's over-emphasized rational spirit got bruised in the face of the vicissitudes faced by mankind during the World Wars in the twentieth century.

The idea of progress in the history of mankind also got severely dented when the promised communist state did not materialize. The idea of the linear development of mankind was not found to be commensurate with the actual achievement of man in various fields. The world has not been able to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, hunger and disease for the vast masses of people. The human misery has not come down in spite of great strides science and technology have made. The idea of a just society has remained a dream for most of the people in the world. Injustice and exploitation of the poor by the rich has remained a part of the human world. In this scenario, the Enlightenment project has been shattered into pieces.

The post-Enlightenment philosophy and literature saw the decline of the order in the human creations. Art and literature saw first signs of the crack in the order in which literary creations were made. These creations no more bore the imprint of an essential order of the things but rather saw the emergence of chaos and disorder in the bosom of the human existence. The barbaric nature of man has manifested itself more in the form of mass violence and irrational killing of man by man. The rational man of Kant is no more visible in the thick fog of the debased human nature. Art and literature have grappled with the problem of man in the most surrealist fashion giving up all pretensions to human rationality.

The post-Enlightenment philosophy has also seen the emergence of deconstruction as a method of philosophizing leading to the deflation of the rationalist metaphysics of the past. It gave a fresh impetus to skepticism, irrationalism, relativism and other allied doctrines. Postmodern philosophy is an antithesis of modernism in that it questions the very idea of a rational discourse which can be the bedrock of philosophical activity. If reason is deconstructed, then the concepts of language, truth, meaning and understanding also get deconstructed. Postmodernism poses the greatest challenge to the philosophy of modernism by questioning its fundamental belief in the supremacy of reason in human thinking.

DEATH OF THE RATIONAL MAN

Postmodernism has declared the death of the rational man in the sense that there is no rational man per se in a universe of irrationality and break down of the rational order in the society. This has been made more pronounced by the fact that none of the postmodernist thinkers like Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Deleuze have ever attempted to speak in the way their classical counterparts spoke of man as realizing a grand ideal. The grand ideal itself has receded to the background in view of the fact that human beings are creatures of history and tradition and can never rise above them as the transcendental philosophers believed in the past.

The central notion of the subject or self has become irrelevant in the postmodernist thought because the self itself has become a mere socio-cultural construct rather than a permanent transcendental self. As a social construct, self has become a mere relative phenomenon and thus needs to be replaced by the physical body which has greater affinity with things around him or her. Thus self has been brought down to the level of objects in the world . Modernism has centred around the notion of self or subject in the hope that it will provide the right starting point for investigation into the nature of the mind and the world. Descartes

turned philosophy around this subject and thus inaugurated the modernist era in philosophy.

The trajectory of the philosophical development in the postmodernist era has included such concepts as de-centring of the self and the world being subjectless thus paving the way for the rise of skepticism and naturalism. The scope of transcendental philosophy has been denied because the transcendental self itself is missing from the scene.

THE END OF PHILOSOPHY

Postmodernist thinkers believe that philosophy as a transcendental critical enterprise has ceased to be relevant because it no more begins with axioms or first principles of any kind. Philosophy is a free enquiry into its own irrelevance and its own foundationlessness. Thus the idea of philosophy being the foundational enquiry no more holds good. Philosophy still talks about language, morality, knowledge and truth but has no illusion of arriving at a grand narrative of any of them. Truth is fragmented into human contrivances that are no more unified under any category like correspondence or coherence. Thus there is an absolute emptiness in the place of the grand narratives giving the impression that philosophy has ended in utter emptiness.

Philosophy has made way for the small narratives of all kinds; it has made room for all kinds of discourse that deal with matters scattered throughout the space of human activities. It accepts, for example, the discourse of feminism along with that of the subaltern and the marginalized. It allows for the diversity of the cultures and societies with difference as the hallmark. Thus it creates the congenial atmosphere for the growth of all types of thinking without the hegemony of Reason.

Philosophy of the postmodern variety has no name to be called by. It is open-ended, free-floating and anti-hegemonic. It is free from the system-building activity. It believes in the affirmation of the human will that goes into different directions in search for the different truths lying everywhere. In this sense, philosophy lives in

the shadow of the diverse phenomena of life. Philosophy is now a reflection on life with no idea of a goal to be pursued. The critical deconstruction is its goal and its method.

This collection of essays aims at discussing some of the issues raised in the postmodern writings of the last century. The issues range from language to man and the world thus weaving an interesting story of conceptual issues that go beyond the strict confines of postmodernism. It has been our effort to keep closer to the spirit of the postmodern inquiry. It is generally held that even if modernism as a philosophy has not ceased to be relevant in our times, yet the bold assumptions of modernism cannot be taken for granted. Postmodernism has shaken the complacency of the modernist ideology especially in the West.

Philosophy—*Doing the Interval*

Divya Dwivedi and Shaj Mohan

Postmodern is seen as a crisis in and for philosophy, and philosophy is seen as a "discourse of legitimation" of every other discourse.[1] For Lyotard, philosophy, identical to meta-narrative or grand narrative, which talks about everything and reduces everything to an identity or a proposition that is determined by the principle of identity—*a being which is not a being is not a being*—is no longer possible since something has happened to the identical. Though philosophy may have attempted this many times in its movement, it has never successfully determined all that is to an identical. This very attempt and its impossibility are philosophy and life. The sense or direction or destination or the end of the movement of philosophy is never known to it. Philosophy has many times tried to determine this end for itself in the restless quietness of the intervals between such determinations of ends in which it attempted to remedy this ill of an interval with inventions. In a sense, a certain kind of philosophy that attempted a determination of its end in terms of something that can be presented to it, or, if you like, of a proposition that obeys the principle of identity, such that this interval can be overcome, had begotten for itself a name, "metaphysics of presence"—certainly an abuse, from Heidegger.[2] This very act of characterizing its own past and being concerned with a sense of itself is philosophy. This is evident in the case of the tradition that is called "continental"—an explicit concern with history of itself starts, at least with Spinoza. But the same is found again in Aristotle, the chronicler of the Socratic and

the Pre-Socratic, or in Plato's dialogues where the Pre-Socratics make guest appearances. In this history of being-concerned-with-itself, bearing with all the other senses of such a phrase, there are overcomings carried out—Kant overcoming the Leibnizians and Spinozists, Hegel overcoming all those who came before him, "French Philosophy" carrying out the task of overcoming Heidegger (this desire can be a definition). Overcoming has certainly many Hegelian lessons. To overcome one must be able to determine that which is to be overcome, which is to say that philosophy has to successfully determine the object proper to it. But also it is this successfully determined object that has to be overcome. However, what is essential for any such overcoming is an *interval*; there must be an interval such that the object that priorly determined the direction of philosophy may ease its weight and another be conceived in its wake.[3] These intervals are of course everywhere. These intervals are not only seen in one occidental history of philosophy, but in the many occidental histories that attempt to avoid the interval-everywhere by closing off one another through an act of refusal to read one another, and also in the histories yet to be written.[4] These intervals seize the philosopher her/himself: Kant's twelve years before *Critique of Pure Reason*, the interval between Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* period and *Investigations* period, the eight year hole for Deleuze. The interval itself indeed is philosophy; as we are already multiplying the definitions of philosophy, it occurs within these intervals, and while at it giving rise to intervals; or rather *we are doing the interval*.

Philosophy is understood to be in a crisis as it has lost its object to other sciences. A certain understanding of philosophy following from Quine has left all that is interesting to say to sciences, and a certain interpretation of the philosophy of Derrida has led to a belief in the "overcoming of philosophy" by literature. Both these developments in their most acute form can be traced, at least to Kant. The post-Kantian crisis in philosophy in the 18th and 19th century Germany was concerned with what is the matter proper to philosophy. Nature, whose concept has changed from the Greek *physis*, had already been investigated by physics. There were sciences for all areas. Then what was the task left to philosophy

became a question that determined in a decisive fashion the conception of philosophy as a *science of the sciences* which grounds every other science—that which grounds in the essential sense cannot be other than the grounded, as per the understanding of that time. Yet it must be remarked that this task was seen as the legitimate operation for philosophy already by Descartes.

Under these conditions philosophy became explicitly concerned with a determination of its object internal to a method that takes care of the two traditional regions of philosophy—*metaphysica generalis and metaphysica specialis*—which themselves were indeed getting transformed. With an acute attention to the tradition, it can be said regarding all these matters that such concerns, although *oriented to* in a manner so very different, were the concern of philosophy all the time, not unknown to any period in the history of philosophy. But the manner in which this problem is posed today has been caused by the development of questions posed by Kant, Hegel and Heidegger, which transformed the prior questions in a radical manner. In fact the notion of the "radical", etymologically related to latin *radix* meaning root, itself was posed by Heidegger in 1929 in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* as a crisis in Kant's critique concerning the root of the faculties.[5] A certain misunderstanding of this term within and outside philosophy has certainly led to much of the gossiping about a finishing off of philosophy.

The problems we are concerned with carries this situation as a background. Today all humanities departments dissect philosophy, which by itself constitutes a unique sense of praxis (for Plato *theoria*, originally to see, was the highest form of praxis), into theory *and* praxis, and incorporate it into their own disciplines as theory, that is, as methods to be applied—a symptom of which is a discipline that runs within academic philosophy curriculum, namely, Applied Ethics. Thus, a method proper to philosophy had been determined and proposed by other disciplines in accordance with their own interests, which becomes evident even in a cursory survey: Historicism by the history department, literary criticism by literature department, philology and etymological enquiry by non-mathematical linguistics, the method of abstraction by mathematical linguistics (Noam Chomsky, *On the Nature*

Acquisition of Language). But there have been, and are still in praxis, many methods employed by philosophers, such as *mantis* for Plato, *geometric* for Spinoza, *calculus* (which was invented by Leibniz to approximate the *intuitivus originarius)*, *Critique* for Kant. With Husserl in the last century the necessity of a method proper to philosophy became an acute one: "*Philosophy, however, lies in a wholly new dimension.* It requires a *wholly new point of departure* and a wholly new method, a method that distinguishes it from every positive science".[6] These methods, mainly due to their complexity and weight of tradition, and the complications involved in putting them to praxis without a rigorous understanding concerning the constitutive relation between method and object, and also problem and solution, in philosophy, have prevented their appropriation. This situation certainly demands that, we-who-are-situated-here, take up the matter decisively.

Philosophy wanders in search of its own direction, its own subject-matter and its own sense and, it is an interminable wandering, which also occupies an interminable interval. This also explains the "crisis" that philosophy has suffered before its end, for those who believe it has ended. A crisis is a crisis concerning sense or direction or orientation, in the Kantian sense. In "What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?", Kant conducts the question as an orientation and polemic to the problem of Spinozism.[7] It was said of Lessing, after his death, that he was a secret Spinozist, which was un-thinkable at that time. Kant sets out to "rescue" Lessing and simultaneously determine what is thinkable and what is not. In order to direct himself to this task he has to determine orientation itself. "The proper meaning of the word, to orient means to use a given direction in order to find others—literally to find *sunrise*"; in order to determine the orient "I need the *feeling* of difference [since in intuition they are not different] in my own subject, namely, the difference between my right and left hands".[8] But the orient can always be sighted, which is a case of orienting oneself "merely mathematically" and it can misdirect one's movement, if one does not pay attention to *feeling*, "[one] would inevitably become disoriented".[9] Regarding this faculty of orienting Kant

has less to say: "it is a faculty implanted by nature but perfected through frequent practice".[10] Now Kant would tell us that he can "extend this concept even further, since it could be taken as consisting in the faculty of orienting myself not merely in space, i.e. mathematically, but in thinking in general"—this is an attempt to find the left hand side and the right hand side of philosophy or the body of philosophy, for which this feeling does not "naturally come to its aid".[11] This attempted orienting of the body or corpus—the disparate congregation of bodies without a formal unity—of philosophy is a symptom of a crisis in philosophy; it occurs when it proceeds with a determination that it ought to determine its left and right.

But philosophy has always been in this crisis of direction or orientation. To be precise, this very crisis is philosophy. There has certainly been a peculiar realization of this interminable *analysis*, if we understand analysis as decomposing to the origin, which philosophy has to undertake, which in fact is a sense of itself, a feeling in the Kantian sense, of its own end as the interminable. This realization has forced some of the major philosophers of the last century to announce an end of philosophy or stay shy of it for some time. The former case is certainly that of Heidegger and its complexity lies in the fact that it also concerns the object and sense proper to philosophy, to which we will return soon.[12] The latter concerns Derrida, where it was a matter of "strategy without finality".[13] But what must be emphasized here is that this sense of its end, as the interminable, did not occur suddenly to it. It occurred at least when Heidegger was concerned with Being, which is itself the unpresentable; or even before him when Kant conceived of the difference between *intuitus originarius* and *intuitus derviativus* in order to determine the conditions for the derived intuition as the a priori forms of intuitions of space and time, which are never formally representable;[14] or even before that when Spinoza conceived the conditions for having any kind of knowledge as encounter or touch. The sense of a crisis itself has a movement—critique in Kant, sublation in Hegel, destruction in Heidegger, deconstruction in Derrida. We could go on. But the point is that

this very end, interminability, is announced to philosophy by itself since the very beginning. For this reason it has no beginning since a beginning without a terminable sense is not a beginning. One begins in the proper sense to get somewhere, some place, away from here, and at the same time if one already knows this end at the beginning itself, then one has not begun. You are already here and you are already there; a coalesced fold, a non-fold, which is neither beginning nor end.

It is in this sense that philosophy and philosopher wander in search of an object proper to then or in search of their end. This lacking in an object proper has been another sense of the crisis for philosophy. This, Heidegger marks in his *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* as the difference between regional ontology and fundamental ontology.[15] Disciplines other than philosophy have a region specific to it and the enquiries into the being of these regions constitute regional ontology. In the case of physics this region is called nature, in the case of psychology this region is called psyche, and in the case of sociology its object is society, and so on.

During this phase Heidegger would say that the object of philosophy is *Being* and the discipline that corresponds to it is fundamental ontology, an enquiry which he proposed to undertake then. But *Being* as such is not something that is like any other being. It is not something that would be an object. But since the so-called turn in Heidegger, which he, in a letter to Father Richardson, calls an *inversion* of title, introduces a serious difficulty.[16] Is the inverted title, where time and ontological difference comes to be the enquired, something that belongs to philosophy? The answer is complicated. The ontological difference is a concept proper to philosophy that Heidegger invents. This is how it is with philosophy: the philosopher has to construct her/his own concept, his own object. Being is never given apart from an epoch, an epoch of the understanding of being, or the epoch of a concept:

> The development of the abundant transformations of Being looks at first like a history of Being. But Being does not have a history in the way in which a city or a people have a history. What is history-like in the history of Being

is obviously determined by the way in which Being takes place and by this alone. … Being … is what is sent [in a giving which holds itself back and withdraws, sending gift]. … To hold back is, in Greek, *epoche*. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of Being. Epoch does not mean here a span of time in occurrence, but rather the fundamental characteristic of sending. (*On Time and Being* 8, 9)

If Being were not given apart from an epoch, apart from a concept, there wouldn't have been the perdurance that holds Being and beings together. The epochal is metaphysics. Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is the essential forgetting of Being—by determining it as *a* being, it sends Being into oblivion. But beings persist even in these epochal conceptions of Being. That is, the place of the taking place continues to hold. This is the resistance of concepts. Concepts are the bringing together of being and the place. In bringing the perdurance and being together, concepts are never exhausted. Rather, all epochs repeat. It is in this sense that concepts are clearings. Having Being at issue, or having a concept, and therefore having world, for "clearing is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent".[17]

This concept of difference is extensively thought in *On Time and Being*. Being is not identical to beings, as a being amongst others.[18] The difference between Being and beings is the ontological difference. The difference between Being and beings is a difference that never *comes to be*. The separation of Being and beings which makes their co-belonging as the co-belonging of Being itself is unpresentable just as being itself is, which is to say that the essence of Being is as the unpresentable. It can also be said that the co-belonging is not determined by Being, since only beings are determined by Being. The difference in its persistence is not to be confused as something wholly other than being, but it is inseparable from Being in the sense of the self oblivion that is a companion, yet a companion not determined by it. It is as the essence of Being that the difference of Being persists, the essence which cannot be revealed as a being. This is no matter of one being older than the other. The persistence of Being and beings with one another would never have been without the persisting difference, which prevents Being from being *a* being, which is to say, to quote Nietzsche:

If the world had a goal, it must have been achieved. If there were for it some unintended final state, this also must have been reached. If it were in any way capable of a pausing and becoming fixed, of 'being', if in the whole course of its becoming it possessed even for a moment this capability 'being', then all becoming would long since have come to an end, along with all thinking, all spirit. The fact of spirit as a form of becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state, and is incapable of being.[19]

This persistence is the unconditioned. This persistence is resistance, being resisting itself, or being's resistance. In resisting itself, being persists. The resistance of being does not get determined by being. This persisting sense of resistance is what is carried on by what we call *French Philosophy* today. For us Philosophy is the thinking of this resistance, in that philosophy resists the identification of beings and being. Or philosophy is resistance itself. Here we must note that this abundance of definitions, senses, directions that philosophy gives itself is its resistance to be *a* being.

The answer to the earlier question, whether the persistence belongs to philosophy, in a way is *no*. Heidegger does shift the talk to what he calls poiesis, which is not identical to poetry in the empirical sense [Heidegger carries on the Greek sense of this term which Plato himself also specified in contrast with its narrow use even in his own time in his Dialogue *Symposium*: poiesis as the coming into being and persevering of every being, and not just poetry as a particular region of being, that of the art of verbal construction].[20] But Heidegger also writes in the very text where an end is announced, *End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*: "end of philosophy means the beginning of the world civilization that is based upon Western European thinking" and "proves to be the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world and of the social order proper to this world".[21] This is obviously an apprehension of the state of things to come and simultaneously an urging to philosophers.

But this is not a problem that Heidegger alone encountered. Plato himself in fact encounters in his wanderings, the interminable analysis. For Plato it was the *Idea* that was the object proper to philosophy. Plato's search for the relationship to be constituted to this object takes the form of crisis in his work and destines his

wanderings. This is the significance of the dialogue *Phaedrus* where Plato mentions the "modern and tasteless" distinction between the older sense of *manic* or "inspired madness which was a noble thing" and did not separate divine inspiration and madness, and the later alteration through the addition of a 't' because of which *manic* now gives the sense of illness.[22] *Mantic*, on the other hand, retained the former sense of the inspired madness of the oracle, and of the philosopher, here *Socrates,* who in a state of inspiration could apprehend the *Idea*. But when posed with challenges, by himself in the dialogue *Parmenides*, he invents another object proper to philosophy, in *Timaeus*. This, the new destiny, is that "third nature", neither Idea nor the bodied world, which is the "place", "*khora*" in Greek, where one must look for an explanation of how the world shares in the Idea without the Idea losing its purity: an explanation that Plato admits to be a "bastard reasoning".

> And there is a third nature, which is space, and is eternal, and admits of no destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real; which we beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space, but that what is neither in heaven nor on earth has no existence.[23]

Khora that stands between Idea and world, without itself being bodied forth in the world, is *not*, and is yet the condition of this worlding. In this, *khora* is transcendental. Derrida warns that "*hyle*: material, wood, raw material [is] a word that Plato never used to qualify *khora*".[24]

Derrida's relationship to philosophy again is complicated. In the essay "*Differance*" Derrida would say that "differance is neither a *word* nor a *concept*".[25] Here what we must pay attention to is the coming together of word and concept. Concept, in a certain manner is what belongs to philosophy in all its wanderings. But here we must make clear the concept that is proper to philosophy. Kant makes a distinction between discursive concepts and pure concepts. Discursive concepts are those which are derived from the generality of things and pure concepts are those which are without any empirical derivation.[26] It is in this manner that Derrida

creates his concepts of differance, writing, invagination, etc. Now, for Spinoza, in *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy Demonstrated in a Geometric Manner*, the objective reality of a concept is its reality in so far as it is given to it by the reality of the object. Spinoza conceives the formal reality of a concept, as opposed to objective reality, as the reality of the concept in itself. This is what Derrida means when he says that differance is not lacking in anything. Later, in 1994, Derrida, in an interview would say that philosophy is a relation to event, which is something that Heidegger almost resisted.[27] But to demonstrate things in the manner proper to the word resistance we will briefly look at Derrida's concept of *resistance*.

Interestingly it arises in his reading of certain moments in Freud where Freud himself seems to be exceeding his regional ontology which is psychology, including both interpretation of dreams and metapsycholgy. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud presents his own interpretive movement toward the meaning of dream with an obstacle, a resistance, an indissoluble knot which he calls the *nabel*, translated as the navel or the keystone, of the dream.[28] We are here simultaneously confronted with two models of resistance. In the first, that is, resistance functions as the orchestration of an anagogic interpretation that "concerns the depth of meaning" and is "marked in the movement of *ana* (recurrent return toward the principial, the most originary, the simplest, the elementary, or the detail that cannot be broken down)".[29] Here is the "*hermeneutic* drive […] the principle of reason itself […] where it prescribes that one must render reason […] at any cost".[30] There must be resistance for something to be interpreted, but the resistance will finally be mastered by analysis. Here resistance is the very dreamwork in the form of displacement and condensation, as well as the reason why there is dreamwork and disguise of the wish to be fulfilled. In the second case, which is actually the case according to Freud, this very resistance as the source as well structure of the dream, and precisely because it is both, becomes an unanalysable knot or navel. The raw material of the dream and the dreamwork are not separated. This is the resistance that Derrida points to, a resistance

constitutive of the being of dreams rather than as a pleasurable or economical passage to their meaning and thus to their undoing. It is the same resistance that cannot be reduced in a psychoanalytic relation of analyst and analysand for the sake of therapy. The navel of the dream is a point where analysis does not yield, and anagogic interpretation stops. The being of the dream remains irreducible to its meaning because of resistance, which is the reason why there is dream in the first place, as Freud knew in the beginning. But inasmuch as this resistance orchestrates meaning in the shape of a dream, it also provokes an *interminable* interpretation, which therefore ceases to be anagogic even though this is its impulse.

For Gilles Deleuze the definition of philosophy is the discipline that creates concepts. In fact he proclaimed himself a *metaphysician*. Every other discipline now claims to concepts—mathematics, sciences, and advertisement industry. Concepts in philosophy are distinguished from the concepts that are employed in sciences. In fact, Deleuze says, sciences do not have concepts, nor does art. Sciences have functions and general concepts. A functional relation occurs between two variables, or between variables, parameters and constants, where *ceteris paribus* or *other things remain constant,* that is, there is a closed environment that is assumed. A general concept refers itself to something outside of itself, and from this it obtains a consistency. But this consistency depends on the outside and therefore is violable by this outside. To give an example Say's law in economics says "supply creates its own demand", which of course is countered by another law, "demand creates its own supply". Similarly, demand law says that "*ceteris paribus,* demand and price, have an inverse relation", that is to say, lower the price, greater will the demand be; which is countered by the Giffen's rule: in exceptional circumstances the demand for certain things will go up even as their price increases. But it's the *ceteris paribus* that interests us. All general concepts are always violable by another incident which counters the generality of occurrences. This is why science requires a control over an environment. Spinoza writes in *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*: "By objective reality of an idea I understand the being of the thing represented by the idea, in so far

as it is in the idea".[31] That is, objective reality is not what a concept has, but a reality that does not belong to something else, as a result of representing something else.

Philosophy alone produces concepts which have an internal consistency. An example for this will be Kant's conception of space and time as forms of intuition, where time is the determinable in the concept of *Cogito* (but not in Descartes)—they would not be something other than what they are. Kant distinguishes between the forms of intuition and formal intuition. In the case of the latter, the order already provide by, for example, space as form of intuition which already unifies its own manifold, is itself represented as a unity, as one space. A formal intuition will be a geometry, to which a form of intuition can never be reduced to. Which is to say that a concept in philosophy is not disputable by means of an empirical verification; science and philosophy have entirely different stories. That is, this concept in Kant occupies a plane, which is consistent by itself. Plato's concept of the Idea (One, as it appears in the dialogue *Parmenides*) is again such a concept. One is in itself and in nothing else; it would never be something other than what it is. This marks the concept.

For Deleuze, concepts are not something that requires an external validation. They are always a self-conception. There is also such a concept of philosophy: "the creation of concepts". But concepts imply a repetition of other concepts. To repeat, for Deleuze, is to pick up the arrows shot by predecessors, to alter them by sharpening, and to shoot them in other directions. Deleuze emphasizes an apprenticeship in philosophy to be necessary for a philosopher. But he also says that the philosopher is not a historian of philosophy. The philosopher must snatch the history of philosophy from the academic scholar and introduce repetitions, which are also reactivations. While Derrida shied away from the word "contemporary", which implies a re-activation, Deleuze blissfully remained a philosopher of contemporary world, knowing well that a time that is of "Deleuze" is a *long way from here*.

The long way from here itself, which is to be distinguished from eternity, in fact, is the destiny of philosophy, *the interval*, and not an

arrival or a departure. It never arrives to a here and now. But yet the here and now is the very non-arrival of the destiny of philosophy. Philosophy is not simply concerned with its own destiny, but with destiny as such, and in this manner all destinies. Yet it does not mean that the philosopher would go on dictating the sense of all other disciplines to them, and would demand the right to censor all other Departments, as Kant envisioned in *Conflict of Faculties*.[32] Philosophy occurs to you only when you have a problem that is essentially philosophical, a problem that concerns orientation, not orientation in terms of the ontic this or that, but orientation itself. The crisis in orientation itself is philosophy. Philosophy, today, in the era of ours, sometimes marked as postmodern, certainly is not in a crisis. Philosophy is crisis itself.

NOTES

1. Lyotard defines "*postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives" or grand narratives, which include any "discourse of legitimation [or] discourse of philosophy": "to the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it". *The Postmodern Condition, From Modernism to Postmodernsim: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Cahoone, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, pp. 259, 260. A naïve sense seems to inform crisis in most cases. To give an example, "We are living through a protracted crisis of western society and culture…the very way along which many among these authors [Heidegger, Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida] and others established it…belong to it". Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, ed. David Curtis, OUP, 1991, p. 13. These conditionings of crisis with a simplistic notion of curse that is accorded to a culture whose values and familiar schemes of conduct are dissipated into the lacunae created by its own philosophers constitute philosophy into a matter of cultural value watchman. The certain relation between culture and anthropos and culture and anthropology has to be studied in detail. But in passing it can be said that its roots are to found, in our time, in the misapprehension of The Analytic of Dasein in Being and Time, to be an anthropology and being-in-the-world to be a sociology.
2. "What characterises metaphysical thinking, which seeks out the ground for beings, is the fact that metaphysical thinking, starting from what is present, represents it in its presence and, thus exhibits it as grounded by its ground". "End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*. Ed. David Farrell Krell, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1978, p. 432.

3. The sense of interval in this formulation should not be mistaken for the Hegelian formulation of double negation or "supersession" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In Hegel's master-slave dialectic, each of the two confronting "self-consciousnesses", in its desire for complete recognition from the other, desires "self-certainty" and therefore already sees it-self in the other, and thus loses itself. This negation of the other's "essential being" is the "first supersession", which includes a "second supersession" and is hence a double negation wherein "it proceeds to supersede its own self, for the other is it-self". *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller, Intr. J.N. Mohanty, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1998, p. 111.
4. This successful determination of its subject-matter proper has staged many scenes of polemics for philosophy. In one such contest, between Averroes and Avicenna, Duns Scotus intervened—"no science can determine its own subject". The context of this contest is Averroes' and Avicenna's concern with the subject-matter of metaphysics. For Avicenna being is the subject matter of metaphysics and not God—"the metaphysician proves that God exists [the being of God]". *Philosophical Writings* Duns Scotus, Allan Wolter, Hackett, 1987, p. 9, 10. Averroes attacked Avicenna; existence of any object is proved only in relation to motion, therefore God's existence is proven in Physics.
5. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. James S. Churchill, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, p. 145.
6. Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Trans. Lee Hardy, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999.
7. "What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?", *Religion and Rational Theology*, Trans. Ed. Allen Wood and George Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 8.
8. Ibid., p. 8. This of course is, especially in Kant's time, manifest in the quest for the *place* orient, which lured and yet eluded philosophy, from which Hegel attempted to rescue the occident by finding its origin, as well as that of philosophy, in Greek thought, where its end also is announced. With Heidegger this gesture comes to have a different sense of an origin whose inexhaustivity proposes a "waiting" to us, while he remains critical of Hegel's feelings regarding the Greeks: "the 'not yet' of the unthought—not a 'not yet' that does not satisfy us, but a "not yet" to which *we* are insufficient". "Hegel and the Greeks", 1960, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 336.
9. Ibid., p. 9.
10. Ibid., p. 9.
11. Ibid., p. 9.
12. Heidegger indicates this complexity in "End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" as follows: "we understand the end of something all too easily in the negative sense as mere cessation […], perhaps even as decline and impo-

tence. In contrast what we say about the end of philosophy means the completion of metaphysics. However, completion does not mean perfection, as a consequence of which philosophy would have to have attained the highest perfection at its end. Not only do we lack any criterion that would permit us to evaluate the perfection of an epoch of metaphysics as compared with any other epoch; the right to this kind of evaluation does not exist". pp. 432–433.

13. Jacques Derrida, "Differance". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1982. p. 7.
14. Kant defines *intuitus originarius* or original intuition as "such as can itself give us the existence of its object—a mode of intuition which, so far as we can judge, can belong only to the primordial being"; and *intuitus derviativus* or derived intuition as "dependent upon the existence of the object, [and] therefore possible only if the subject's faculty of representation is affected by that object". *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. Norman Kemp-Smith, London: Macmillan, 1963, B72, p. 90.
15. Heidegger, Martin. *A Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth May, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. p. 136.
16. Heidegger's letter prefacing Richardson's text says: "The thinking of reversal *is* a change in my thought. But this change is not a consequence of altering the stand-point, much less abandoning the fundamental issue of *Being and Time*. The thinking of the reversal results from the fact that I stayed with the matter-for-thought [of] "Being and Time", sc. by enquiring into that perspective which already in *Being and Time* was designated as "Time and Being". William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff: 1974, p. xvi.
17. "End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", p. 442.
18. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, Trans. Joan Stanbaugh, University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 4.
19. *The Will to Power*, Ed. Walter Kaufman. Trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Holingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, p. 546.
20. *The Dialogues of Plato*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Great Books of the Western World*, Ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1952, p. 164.
21. P. 435. Heidegger defines the essence of this modern technology as "the way of that revealing through which the actual everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes standing reserve". *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper & Row, 1977, p. 24.
22. *The Dialogues of Plato*, p. 123.
23. Ibid., p. 457.
24. Jacques Derrida, "Khora", *The Derrida Reader*, Ed. Julian Wolfreys, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. p. 259.
25. *Margins of Philosophy*. p. 7.

26. A24, p. 69. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant makes the distinction between concepts that are empirical "when they contain sensation (which presupposes the actual presence of the object)", but are pure "when there is no mingling of sensation with the representation". B75, p. 92.
27. Raol Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 106.
28. Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, Trans. A.A. Brill, Wordsworth: Hertfordshire, 1997, p. 368.
29. Jacques Derrida, *Resistances*, Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, California: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 12, 19.
30. Ibid., p. 5.
31. *Collected Works of Spinoza*, Ed. and Tr. Edwin Curley, Princeton University Press, p. 239.
32. *Religion and Rational Theology*, Trans. Ed. Allen Wood and George Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 261.

The Postmodern as Ethical

K. Gopinathan

I

Long before the marginalization of female characters by the relatively recent phenomenon of macho superstars, Malayalam film industry had produced a considerable number of films "centred on powerful women characters". Instead of highlighting their identities as autonomous individuals, these films focused on the roles assigned to these characters within the family hierarchy. It is interesting to note that the "woman centred" popular hits in the early stages of Malayalam cinema (1950s and 60s) were named as *Tharavattamma* (Matriarch of joint family), *Udyogastha* (Employed woman), *Chechi* (Elder sister), *Oppol* (Sister), *Vivahitha* (Married woman), *Oru Penninte Kadha* (Story of a woman), etc. No wonder, the films that foregrounded the functional identities and familial responsibilities of women in the narrative, tended to "forget" their proper names. The right to a proper name and the realization of one's own I-dentity is a decisive Cartesian move towards the process of individuation and formation of modern subjectivity. Retrieval of the "errant" back into the family order, through punishment/repentance, or an outright elimination of them from the narrative to preserve the sedate peace of the familial paradise were some of the oft repeated themes of the films during this period. Beyond the "protected zone" of the family, the vast public space where history unfolded and mighty political battles were fought, remained a space exclusive to male participation.

The classic texts of early Malayalam cinema empathized with the plight of the victims of the oppressive class/caste and joint family systems and rigorously campaigned for the emerging bourgeois modernity. They emphatically projected the profile of a republic-in-the making and humanists author; problems of gender and caste remained repressed in the narrative. Citizen-individual's intense desire to break class/caste/joint family barriers, in order to constitute himself/herself as the subject of a modern republic was re-layed in the texts of this period. Nation/State is re-sited or re-located within the family that constituted itself as an allegorical space. Set against this backdrop, Chandran's films can be seen as an enquiry through the feminine subject, into the structural logic of this space.

Hema, the female lead in his Tamil film, *Hemavin Kathalarkal* belongs to a lower middle class family and is employed. As she is the only source of income, her family is averse to the idea of her getting married at all. But the family cannot hold it back for long and she gets married to one of her lovers. But it doesn't take much of a time to replace the love and mutual adoration of the courtship days with jealousy, suspicion and ego clashes. She is forced to resign her job and is confined to the interiors of the family. Deprived of whatever little autonomy and agency she had in life, Hema is put completely under the control of her husband. When feelings of despair, loneliness and worthlessness begin to ruin her life, Hema once again exercises her choice, this time to leave the family. In the climax of the film, we see her in the company of a group of children in a remote village, apparently working towards the realization of her dream of a village where children do not starve.

The impact of the tectonic shifts that were taking place in the depths of the Kerala society, to accommodate the emerging set of values and principles of socio-political organization was tremendous. No institution, other than the family could be expected to record the subtlest rumblings of this momentous period in the social history of the state and "women-in-the-family" were at the epicentre of any structural realignment to register the intricate details of the drama unfolding around. Thus it is apt to say that the realist weepies, woven around an all-suffering woman, in this

period of radical social transformation enact "the painful entry of a traditional society into the historical process" (Kapur, 1993: 24). The valorization of the "powerful women" in the "women centred" weepies was instrumental in satisfying two vital strategic needs of that period. The very act of sympathetic identification with the women characters was itself a critique directed at the "excesses" that women were subjected to in the traditional societies. As a medium of modernity, cinema functions as a facilitator of the historical emergence of a modern subject. At the same time, by "throwing light" into the dark corners of the traditional joint family, the enlightened/rational apparatus of cinematograph was ensuring the production of an idealized "willing female subject", willing to continue within the "new" patriarchal family reorganized on the principles of transcendental liberalism.

The woman, bruised and battered by the "excesses" of the joint family and by the casteist social order, was thus relocated within the nuclear family order. And at the end of the long winding cinematic narrative, with lots of twists and turns, there appeared the ambiguous and "*subham*" (happy/end) on the screen. The faith in the happy resolution (*subham)* of the narrative contradictions through a smooth transition from the traditional society to the modernized nuclear family was continued and even survived the much radicalized decade of the 1970s. As a result, at the leave of the melodramatic discourse, family is "fully" present in the narrative space, while at the level of discourses on the structural legitimacy of this institution, it remains marginalized. And by the latter half of the 1980s and 90s, the family and the problems of man–woman relationship, are again moved into the narrative centre of the films by some of the new generation filmmakers in Malayalam. This period has produced some of the finest creations like *Adaminte Variyellu* (Adam's Rib) and *Rugmini* by K.G. George and K.P. Kumaran, respectively. The films made by them are informed by fundamentally altered concerns regarding family, gender equality, sexuality, and they were daring enough to ask questions capable of undermining the very foundations of this oldest institution in the civil society.

The emergence of the modern feminist and activist groups among the educated and economically and socially empowered sections of women in Kerala during this period had begun to change the geography of political awareness. The traditional parameters of political/ideological analysis are found inadequate to articulate the discrimination and exploitation suffered by dalits, adivasis, women and other marginalized sections. Their liberation struggles directly impinge upon the institutional foundations of the political economy and civil society: on the subtle emotional worlds of interpersonal relationships. The "Kerala Sex Workers Forum" came into existence in 2000. Following this, during the last five years, Sex Workers Forum organized seminars and notably a "festival of pleasure", which was a gathering of sex workers, gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities. The forum also participated in the struggles by the Adivasis and other marginalized sections. Thus the visibility of the sex worker—the most marginalized and oppressed section in the society—was instrumental in bringing out to the fore the contradictions inherent in the mainstream society and also within the mainstream feminist movement. The intrinsic limitations of the traditional politics of both the left and the liberals and the urgency of transcending them, in order to enter into new territories and embrace the broader dimensions of human existence were thus underscored. The discourses, debates and the polemics thus generated in Kerala society in these years reached a high pitch when Nalini Jameela, a commercial sex worker, published her autobiography, in 2005. "The Feminists" belief that only they are capable of independent thinking and sex workers are mere victims who lack this capacity is wrong. It is on our own decision that many of us come into this field" (Jameela 79). This book has been instrumental in generating a focused discussion on the moral duplicity and hypocrisy of our society and on the structural contradictions of the family as an institution, which was also carried over into the contemporary Malayalam cinema, documentaries and TV programmes. *Suasanna* and *"Oridam"* are the best examples of films dealing with the life of the sex workers at the fictional level. The interesting thing to noted is that cinema and electronic medial play a crucial role in enhancing

the reach and the impact of the campaigns and struggle of all the marginalized groups in Kerala society, especially of the sex workers.

II

Chandran's third and widely appreciated film *Alicinte Anveshanam* and his latest *Kathavaseshan* share a lot of similarities in their narrative techniques. Both make a brilliant use of the format of the popular detective fiction, to travel through the personal to the political. The "search" for the missing husband takes Alice to all his friends and acquaintances, from prostitutes to politicians and to all the possible places he is likely to frequent, from illicit country liquor joints to divine Dhyana Kendras. The world thus "reveled" to her through her travel, from personal to political, is a world normally forbidden to a housewife locked within a nuclear family. Her descent into the public space reveals the concealed "other" (side) of her husband, including his fall from the earlier radicalism into bourgeois degeneration. Perturbed and disturbed by the "unknown" aspects of the personality of a man, with whom she had spent many years together as his wife, Alice abandons the search for her husband and decides to assume responsibility for her own life.

If Alice has all the "reasons" on her side to justify her search for the missing husband, not a single "reason" of any sort can be cited for Renuka Menon's search for the "cause" of Gopinathan Nair's (her fiancé) suicide in *Kathavaseshan*. Her "self is torn by an irresolvable and irresistible strife between the order of the "same" which strives to totalize everything under the illumination of "reason", and the order of the "other" in which vital parts of human existence remain necessarily unillumined" (Hutchens, 2004: 17). It is this unillumined territory of Gopinathan Nair's self that Renuka's "search" leads her into. "The other person's very presence forces one to stand up for oneself and exercise one's discovered freedom," (Hutchens 22) says Immanuel Levinas. The Levinasian truth that the other always overflows the same is the philosophical ground for treating the other as an ethical horizon.

Alice's and Renuka's explorations into this overflowing, into this ethical horizon, through their search into the "presence of the absent" husband/fiancé liberates them from the roles "assigned" to them by the patriarchal society. The exposure of Alice and Renuka to the other and through that, to an otherwise access denied, "gents only" public sphere, facilitates their movement from self-indulging independence to the other-directing autonomy. For these characters, the other is not hell but a gateway to a different world illumined by a different ethical horizon. The travels through their "absent" husband/fiancé transform their beings and their worlds as well.

Separation of the private and the public as mutually contradictory spaces is essential for the patriarchal family order. Any meaningful engagement with the public presupposes some "lack" in the women. For instance, Hema lacks a family, Alice and Resmi (in *Ponthanmada)* a husband, Mankamma (in *Mankamma)* both, Susanna virtue and Renuka her fiancé. We see all of them in the public spaces or some neutral and undefined space most of the times and in Mankamma's case she is out on the streets from the first to the last frame in the film; the roadside teashop which shelters her is on a disputed space, for which there is no proper ownership deed. The shop and the house adjacent to it are burned down by the land mafia and the police brutality on them during the emergency period results in the death of her husband. Again, at the end of the film, Mankamma is seen on the streets, homeless and alone, preparing for the next round of ordeals and struggles.

As a bilingual film, which liberally uses the couplets of Subrahmanya Bharathi and reminds us of the Dravidian archetype of fiery Kannaki, the danger of Mankamma playing a modern day Kannaki is very strong. Cut to size and "shown its right place", History, in the film, does not mask the epic dimension of the individual's struggle to control her destiny and Mankamma remains one of the brilliantly portrayed women characters in Malayalam Cinema. And as O.K. Johny, the documentary filmmaker and film critic observes: "An awareness of the conflicts between womanhood and the male perspectives that control it lengthens from Alice and Hema to Mankamma as well" (2001: 140).

III

In *Susanna,* the awareness regarding the systematic violence on the feminine is developed into an organized and definite indictment of the institution of the family which reminds us of Jameela's observation: "Though it is created by them, the present society is a prison for men too. Ask each male—Are you free? We know very well that they are not free. From the tears of our clients it can be understood that how horrible is the society that we live in" (Jameela, 2005: 148).

No other Malayalam film or a character in any of the films in recent times has kicked of such acrimonious and high decibel controversies as this. Feminists of many shades tore Susanna to pieces cursing her as the prophetess of false morality and rejecting her as a woman lacking in agency.

Of all the women characters in the recent Malayalam films why did Susanna alone gather such a storm around her? To reach anywhere near an answer to this question we need to have a closer look at her. Cut to flashback. Susanna is in her youth, an extremely beautiful girl from a poor family and the most sought after girl in the village. Apparently a voracious reader of pulp fictions and stories serialized in popular weeklies, she lives in the fictional world created by them. She is having a roaring love affair with Thomachan, the son of a filthy rich estate owner. One night, mimicking a usual sequence in one of the serialized pulp stories, they elope. Planter Varkey, the boy's father, brings Susanna back from the fictional world to the real world of class, caste, religion, family, honour etc. and with tears rolling down his cheeks, he begs her to send her lover back to the family to marry another girl, according to the prevalent social norms. He also takes the responsibility of looking after her for the rest of her life. The same ease, with which she used to identify with the sorrows of the characters in the love stories, enables her to be moved by the pathos of the father of her lover and to send him back. Everything goes according to Varkey's plans but fate refuses to spare Thomachan who is killed in a road accident soon after the marriage.

Susanna leads a happy and prosperous life in the company of five elderly lovers, including planter Varkey. All of them are respected

middle/upper middle class "family men" and are unhappy in their own ways. As "family" in the cinematic narrative is the allegorical space where the sovereign republic is re-sited, Susanna's status as an "outsider" to it is an emphatic statement against the ideological underpinnings of all institutional structures. As in the life of almost every one of us, the march of events in her life, rather than the informed choices, turns her into an errant in the company of "sins" and her life proves that "the infinite is the banal reality of every situation, not the predicate of a transcendence" (Badiou, 2001: 25). An infinite capacity for love and an openness to see the divine in dirt are the two factors which motivate her.

The problematic nature of the individual's relationship with the family and the desire for its exclusion are manifested mainly at three levels in the narrative. We have seen that some of the characters in Chandran's films leave their families and as in the case of Hema and Sussanna come out into the fluidity of the community existence. The repressed desire to "exclude" the private/family and to reach out to the public/street is presented as a metaphorical reality in the repeated sequences of "house on fire" in *Mankamma.* After each of these sequences Mankamma is found again with a renewed vigor and vitality in the "inbetweenness" of the ambivalent space of hotel cum house cum street. In Susanna, the motif of the exclusion of the formal institution of family is forcefully inscribed into the narrative, through the innovative employment of the camera, in the visual orchestration of the plasticity/fluidity of space-time. As if in an alien terrain, the characters are constantly on the movement-mode in Susanna's "house", which reminds us of the circular movements of the characters in the films of Jansco and Tarkovsky, and the feelings of "being stranded" that these evoke in the viewer. The characters in these films, as in *Susanna* are not making any real advance in space-time, since they are not chasing a linear narrative (or space) where *subham* (happy end) is assured in advance.

Contrary to the well-defined and pre-designed divisions of space into definitive functional rectangular areas and to the pre-patterned movement of members in a typical middle class family, characters in S*usanna* are exploring, trying to fathom the space

around them. Since the nature of their relationship to the space is not of "ownership" they are not "settled" in it. They do not belong to the space which they own. To all the five men who are, according to Susanna, "not old but children who desperately need love and care", she is a friend, lover and a guardian angel. Above all she is a listener to their tale of woes and she counsels them back to mental harmony. Their engagement with/in the space and among themselves is not governed by the logic of distribution of power in a nuclear family order. The portrayal of space-time as fluid, discontinuous and fragmented, in effect, destabilizes the architectural symmetry of the house. This decentres and excludes the family and thus transforms it into an autonomous space where the institutional logic of the nation inscribed in the family is defied.

The uniqueness of the women characters in Chandran's films lies in their ability to take us to a territory, not yet cognized or made sufficiently visible. Unlike their sisters in the early films, these women rise above the subliminal and the subsequent struggles in their lives transform them into individuals known by their "proper" names. The name of a woman is extremely important which signifies a symbolic world that she is forced to inhabit. Nalini Jameela shares her experience like this: "I changed my name to Jameela and decided to live with him (Shahul Hameed). Even though there was no religious conversion, he was very particular that his wife should be known as a Muslim among her relatives". Years back, writer Madhavikutty (Kamala Das) embraced Islam and changed her name to Kamala Surayya. In the popular hit Malayalam film "Manichitrathazhu", the heroine Ganga, through magic and psychiatry, is cured of her unconscious desire to kill her husband and at the end (subham!) of the film, her "rebirth" is confirmed with a confession: "now on I will be known as "Ganga Nakulan", with husband's name as surname".

Gradually, all these characters like the mad old woman in *Kathavaseshan,* are seen at the threshold of an alternative ethical horizon; beyond the "World of Reason", at the borders of a different republic. Renuka Menon's journey into the life of the young engineer Gopinathan Nair initiates her into the "other" world of petty thieves, slum dwellers, prostitutes and pimps, corrupt police

officers, lumpen proletariat, selfless love and friendships, mad old women and the world of communal riots where even adolescent girls like Nazeem are raped to death. Nothing else can surpass the ability of cinema to produce images which are much more than what they show. And this makes it as Godard says, "century's metaphor" or the "registrar of History". In *Kathavaseshan* "image enables us to talk less and say more" (Godard & Yourself, 2005: 103) about a republic born in rape and bloodshed which as in Nazeem's song still gropes in the dark (*andhera hi andhera*…) as far as women, dalits, adivasis etc. are concerned.

Yeh-duniya meri nahin hai—Nazeem the most vulnerable victim of class/religion/gender machine in the half a century old republic, continues her song as Shahina, Susanna, Mankamma, Resmi, Alice and Hema join her to form a chorus. Many who condemned them in the broad daylight furtively slipped from their beds at night and kinocked at the sinners' doors. Abuses like home breakers and sexual perverts are hurled at them and their lives are threatened as in the case of Susanna, not only by the predictable fundamentalist forces but also by the secular, moralist and educated youth like Ramesan, son of Colonel Ramachandra Nair, one of the five lovers of Susanna. Ramesan's original idea is to murder Susanna to save his father but very soon as he himself confesses "he is possessed" by her. For Ramesan, a return to his mother/home is possible only "after understanding this woman", a free woman. But after "knowing, Susanna, a free woman, he will not be returning to the "same" family but to an "other" family, other society, with a hew ethical horizon. Let me conclude this paper with a passage from the manifesto brought out by the sex workers forum which may be echoing this: "Equal relationship between woman–man, woman–woman, man–man, and between sexual minorities is that we demand. You ask a man, whether he has a good female friend. He is longing to see independent women." (Jameela 148).

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Identity and Antagonism: Tensions in post-Marxist theorizing

T.V. Madhu

Identity has conventionally been defined to be a relation that each thing necessarily has to itself and to nothing else. To say that everything is related to itself is to state nothing. It is an empty statement of the logical form A=A. Essentialists, however, take this to be implying an ontological value. For them, to say that A=A is to say that there is some underlying essence that makes A what it is, different from B. In the philosophical literature, the term substance (sub - stance = standing under) refers to this underlying essence of a thing. Postmodern thinkers in general challenge the essentialist notion of identity. For this purpose, they largely depend upon the Saussurean perspective that identity is a differential function. Saussure's concern, as is well known, is the problem of identity in linguistics; for him the identity of a linguistic sign is wholly a function of differences within a system. This thesis obviously implies the rejection of the referential theory of language. According to the referential theory, names are like labels pasted on the objects that are already given to us as coherent entities. Human beings merely assign a name to each object or idea; different languages carry different sets of names, but the relationship of every language to the totality of objects is fundamentally the same. Against this view, Saussure argues that a linguistic sign is to be understood as a union of a form that signifies and an idea signified rather than a

thing and a name. The relationship between the signified and the signifier is purely arbitrary.

The first implication of the arbitrariness of the sign is that there is no essential relation between the signifier and the signified. That is, another signifier could easily replace one signifier for the same signified. The thesis of the arbitrariness of the sign also implies that each language is to be understood not as a system of representation but as a system of articulation; language articulates reality. It is through language that the real that is meaningful for us is constructed. Each language categorizes the totality of objects, organizes and articulates the world differently. The articulation of reality is arbitrary in the sense that there is nothing outside language that determines this process. There is nothing in "nature" that determines where we should mark the boundary between two linguistic units. In other words, the identity of a sign has nothing to do with a natural essence; the relations that set it off from other signs define a sign. Pushing this insight into its logical extreme, Jacques Derrida argues that any insistence on the differential nature of linguistic units would work against the "metaphysics of presence". If the identity of every sign is to be what others are not, and a signified consists of traces of what contrasts with it, then it is impossible to speak of the presence of a single autonomous signified as the original source of signification. To say that the "original" or the transcendental signified is absent is not only to say that identity does not refer to anything substantial but also that every identity is internally challenged.

Discussion in this paper is centred on the question of social/ political identity. For postmodernists, social and political identities are analogous to Saussure's linguistic signs. Like Saussure and Derrida they reject the essentialist/ referential theory of identity in favour of a differential theory. One of the most important attempts to subvert essentialism in the social and political field is the poststructuralist inspired "radical democratic theory" of which the work of Earnesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe is the best-known example. Their theory that claims to undertake the project of reinventing liberal democracy is often characterized as post-

Marxist. At fundamental level, it takes the poststructuralist critique of identity to be its essential methodological presupposition.

Post-Marxism, for Laclau and Mouffe, is an anti-essentialist remoulding of Marxism. In a significant sense, it is a continuation of the Marxist project inspired by Marx's critical theory. But, at the same time, it moves beyond Marxism by critically reworking its conceptual presuppositions. Poststructuralists in general treat Marxism to be one of their targets of attack. For most of them Marxism is nothing but a different variety of the essentialist mode of thinking. Laclau and Mouffe, however, do not agree with this perception. For them, the attack on the essentialist tendencies of Marxist theory does not necessarily lead to the total abandonment of Marxism. Their project necessarily involves a rejection of the classical Marxist idea of an underlying economic rationality that is claimed to constitute the essential core of human history and also the thesis of the primacy of the economic structure and the centrality of a universal class. Hence, their relation to Marxist theory is of the nature of a critical engagement. It opens up a new conceptual plane which no longer can properly be termed Marxism. Nor is their intervention anti-Marxist, since the conceptual plane they engage is somehow rooted in the Marxist tradition itself. The expression "post-Marxism", with all it vagueness, thus only indicate the direction their theoretical explorations move in.

Classical Marxism, as Laclau and Mouffe understand, implicitly contains essentialism mainly in two interrelated socio-theoretical forms: economism and classism. By economism they refer to the tendency implied especially in the second international Marxism to conceptualize the domain of economic relations as the ultimate base impervious to other social/cultural domains. Classism, as they understand, refers to the dogmatic belief in the privileged role of the working class and particularly to the tendency of reducing different forms of social and political agency to the class-agency. In other words, classism involves the claim that the non-class identities are ultimately reducible to the class identity, to the "original". In their most celebrated work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, both the thinkers undertake a detailed attack

on these tendencies with a strong conviction that the social reality is irreducibly plural in nature. We, here, do not go into the different aspects of their attack, but confine ourselves to their aim. Positively, their critique is aimed at legitimizing the so-called "new social movements" of the West. New social movements represent the struggles of different social groups like women's or indigenous group's identity struggles that have almost replaced the political space of the traditional leftist movements, especially in the second half of the last century. By rejecting the class-politics of the traditional left, that is, the politics that assume class to be the single fundamental reality, Laclau and Mouffe aim to defend a kind of identity-politics that the new social movements tend to propose. As a part of it, they also aim to overcome the limitations of leftist "imaginary" by proposing the ideal of a pluralistic society, the "radical democratic imaginary".

What is the content of the "radical democratic imaginary" that Laclau and Mouffe talk about? Obviously, what both the thinkers have in mind when they talk about the radical democratic imaginary is the image of a non-totalitarian association towards which different groups might strive. The question that concerns us here is the question of the identity of this association. What kind of identity that it is allowed to have? As Mouffe herself says in one of her works, one cannot hope to build up such an association without referring to a "we"; to build up it is to construct a "we" based upon the ideals of a certain radical democratic tradition.[1] Both this conception of "we" and the image of an ideal society would create some difficulties in understanding Laclau and Mouffe's perspective. The question of how such positions can be justified within the ambit of the postmodern/anti-foundationalist mode of theorizing of Laclau and Mouffe is definitely a troubling one. Let us have a close look at the way both the thinkers try to tackle this issue.

In contrast to the essentialist conception, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the discursive construction of social identity. Discourse, as they understand, is a system of differences in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed. To say that identity is discursively constructed is to say that it does not necessarily

refer to anything substantial. It is true that at certain level social identities appear to have some fixed meaning. Laclau and Mouffe explain this by using the concept of hegemonic articulation. It is through the hegemonic practices of articulation that the meaning of social identities gets partially fixed. This idea can be made clear by looking at the way both the thinkers deal with the identity of political movements. A political movement gains its identity, they argue, not by means of any essence, but through the hegemonization produced by some one of the particular groups in the movement. That is, the interest of particular group gets articulated to be the meaning of the whole movement. Laclau and Mouffe argue that it is the same kind of articulation that is constitutive of the identity of anti-Tsarist movement in Russia. The anti-Tsarist revolution is not a single autonomous movement having an original meaning. Its identity could come only from some sub-group in the struggle; for example, the workers who went on strike for higher wages. The movement would then derive its identity from the "hegemonization" produced by this group.[2]

Another important concept of Laclau and Mouffe that is to be mentioned in the context of our discussion of their anti-essentialist theory of identity is the concept of antagonism. While discussing the question of political movements they emphasize the antagonistic construction of identity. A political movement gets its identity by means of the fact that those different unrelated struggles within the movement share a common enemy, for example, the Tsar's regime in Russian revolution. This sharing, Laclau and Mouffe claim, is provided to be the condition for the possibility for the joining of various groups to form a movement. The concept of antagonism discussed in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is to be understood as implying this crucial insight. Originally the notion of antagonism is employed in the writings of the German political philosopher Karl Schmitt who defines the enemy to be the "the opposed other" or "the antagonist" implied in every collective identity. In his essay, "The Concept of the Political", Schmitt claims that there cannot be any identity without antagonism.[3] Every single actor who is engaged in an antagonistic conflict constructs itself as the only group that has the capacity to grasp the truth, the

good and the just. That is, a social group constructs its identity by defining itself to be a privileged group and this is possible only when there is an opposed other with whom each group contrasts itself. It is on enemy's account that each group becomes a coherent subject. In other words, enemy defines who "we" are. In his Glossarium, Schimitt writes, "Tell me who your enemy is and I will tell you who you are".[4] For Mouffe, such a conception of the enemy is indispensable in theorizing radical democratic imaginary. We have already mentioned her view that radical democratic theory aims at constructing a "we" basing on certain traditional radical democratic ideals. In addition, she argues that "to construct a "we" it must be distinguished from the "them" and that means establishing a frontier, defining an enemy".[5]

Differing from the somewhat naïve formulation of Schmitt, Laclau and Mouffe try to work out the logical implications of social antagonism in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. For them, to say that identity implies an opposed other is actually to say that identity does not exist. The statement that identity implies an opposed other is of the symbolic form "A $\supset$ anti-A". That is, A implies the forces that challenge A. That which occupies the space represented by "anti-A" cannot be merely a different particular. It indicates a permanent movement that make A radically unstable. Every being is made unstable by the non-being and it is this movement of destabilization that is the true meaning of "the enemy".

Jacob Torfing, in his excellent analytical study of the radical democratic theory[6] points out a significant shift in Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of the concept of social antagonism. We shall have a close look on this shift. Laclau, in one of his earlier essays, defines social antagonism to be a relation of logical contradiction within discourse.[7] He arrives at this definition precisely to distinguish the relation of social antagonism from the relation of real opposition. In a real opposition, two independent things are related in such a way that they are opposed to each other i.e. a relation of the type A—B, whereas logical contradiction involves a mutually affirmative relation between two binarily opposed propositions, i.e. a relation of the type A—non A. The

relation of real opposition is "real" because the two poles in the relation are claimed to be representing the real entities. But, for Laclau, there is nothing "real" in the social world. The so-called real is discursively constructed, and once this possibility is admitted, then there is nothing wrong in viewing social antagonism as a relation of logical contradiction within discourse.

This position, however, is clearly rejected in the later writings of Laclau and Mouffe. The reason behind this rejection is more important for us. Laclau and Mouffe later realize that the two poles in an antagonism are not always logically contradictory. Take the antagonistic relation between Nazism and Jews as an instance. Both are obviously opposed to each other but they are not logically contradictory. Neither are they real oppositions, since both Nazism and Jews represent no substantial identities. Laclau and Mouffe thus claim that social antagonism is to be distinguished from both real opposition and logical contradiction. In real opposition, say "A—B", both A and B are independent things. In logical contradiction, say "A—non—A", A is independent but "non—A" is not. But, real opposition and logical contradiction both assume A is fully A, whereas in social antagonism the other prevents A from being fully A. To be more specific, in logical contradiction A is fully A, it is defined in its own terms, and the other (non—A) is defined in terms of A. In the case of social antagonism the situation is entirely different. The identity of A is threatened by the antagonistic force. Hence, what distinguishes social antagonism from both real opposition and logical contradiction is that the latter two are objective relations whereas social antagonism puts into question any objectivity. Torfing summarizes Laclau and Mouffe's later argument as follows: "If social antagonism helps us to establish the boundaries of the discursive formation of society, it also, at the same time, prevents society from constituting an objective, rational and fully intelligible reality. As such, social antagonism is, at once, the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of society".[8]

The implications of the concept of social antagonism are extremely complex. One of the obvious implications is concerned with the impossibility of conceiving society as an essentialist

whole. The logical conclusion of this position is that society, as a whole does not exist. What exists, then, is a fragmented society, an inherently fractured composition of different groups or identities. If it is the case that every identity is a matter of antagonistic construction, then no social group can claim any final truth with regard to their identity. There is no closed identity possible in the social field since every identity carries with it an element of indeterminacy at the fundamental level. Every identity is internally challenged, and no social group can escape this self-contradiction. It is not only the case that a social group is internally prohibited from knowing itself but that it is prevented from being itself, since that with which it identifies can never be claimed to the original. To use the Derridian jargon, original is permanently deferred. For Laclau and Mouffe, it is this indeterminacy that makes politics possible.

But, what kind of politics do Laclau and Mouffe talk about? Does their theoretical proposal for a radical democratic imaginary escape essentialism by positing indeterminacy at a basic level? More precisely, is it possible to propose a project of political action basing on the thesis of indeterminacy? These questions, to my mind, are indicative of some of the unavoidable tensions in the post-Marxist theorizing. We shall start with the question of political action and explore a little into the paradoxes associated with it. Agreeing with Laclau and Mouffe, we argue that a particular social group in its fight for a non-repressive society constructs a "we" by contrasting itself with a "them", since, there is no "we" without "them". But, following the same logic, we would have to admit that this antagonistically constituted "we" will always be in tension, precisely for two reasons: one, the "we-consciousness" of the social group does not refer to any substantial identity at the time it engages in the political action. Two, the social group in question can never hope to achieve any final identity in future even. Its political action will not tend to be guided by the illusion that the abolition of the antagonistic force will permit them to become the fully constituted "we". For example, the feminists construct their identity by contrasting themselves with the patriarchal, male chauvinist oppression. But, with the knowledge that "to construct

a "we" it must be distinguished from "them", their political action is freed from the illusion that afterwards, when the patriarchal oppression is abolished, woman will finally achieve their full identity with themselves. Even if the patriarchal oppression were to disappear, another would take its place. Political project that the feminists engage in here cannot imply any claim on final or complete identity. As a matter of fact, it deconstructs itself, makes itself impossible. Slavoj Zizek, who is supposed to be one of the sympathizers of the post-Marxist thinking, points out this aporia in any such conceptions of politics. He argues, "to grasp the notion of antagonism in its most radical dimension, we should invert the relationship between the two terms: It is not the external enemy who is preventing me from achieving identity with myself, but every identity is already in itself blocked, marked by an impossibility".[9]

Let us briefly look at the crucial implications that Zizek's insights have for understanding the self—other dialectic in the social field. If other is something that constitutes self, the self-consciousness of a social group, then it is, as Laclau calls, a "constitutive outside": an outside that constitutes and destabilizes the inside. Zizek goes further by arguing that a particular enemy does not exhaust this "outside". It is a vacuum that exists irrespective of particular enemies. To use Zizek's expression, every other is a trace of the Other. When a social group represents itself in terms of an identity, that is, in every act of its self-representation, it actually attempts to mask this radical otherness, a move that necessarily fails. This failure is indicative of a certain "traumatic impossibility'. The social field, thus, is structured around this traumatic impossibility, "around a fissure which cannot be symbolized".[10]

Laclau and Mouffe would claim that their vision of society is not essentialist because it does not refer to anything substantial. If a theory conceives identities in terms of differences, then it is impossible for it to presuppose the existence of a substantial subject outside the discursive system. The subject is, rather, to be seen as having a particular discursive subjectivity. Accordingly, Laclau and Mouffe put forward a constructionist perspective of the social. The theory of subject implied here is obviously rooted in the Althusser's scheme. For Althusser, individuals become subjects through

a process called interpellation. Ideology interpellates concrete individuals by addressing them in a way that constitutes them as particular discursive subjectivities. Subjects having the discursive identities, in Althusser's terminology, are "subject-positions". Society is not the totality of subjects or concrete individuals. It is constructed of various subject-positions. But a deeper analysis of the concept of antagonism, the one that we have attempted earlier, would reveal that the concept has the potential to subvert even the Althusser-inspired, radicalized vision of the subject. The concept of society as constructed of "various subject-positions" implicitly already substantializes society—suggesting a master "viewpoint" of the social itself, a viewpoint from which all the discourses of the "subject-positions" are exposed as limited and ideological.[11] Antagonism, on the other hand, disallows anything to become substantial. For the same reason, it cannot serve as a principle on which a theory of society can be built.

The aim of this paper was to reveal some of the tensions involved in the mode of theorizing of Laclau and Mouffe. These tensions, we may say, are due to the deconstructive impulse that is necessarily implied in their theoretical move itself. Laclau and Mouffe's attempt to problematize identity-thinking in social theory basing on the concept of antagonism is of obvious importance. But, however, the implications of the concept of antagonism work against the pretension of the theory that it could provide us with an alternative model of society. To be more precise, Laclau and Mouffe assume antagonism to be a condition that makes the radical democratic imaginary possible. Antagonism, as we have seen earlier, implies indeterminacy, that, there is an element of indeterminacy at the fundamental level of every antagonistically constructed identity. To the extent that the principle of indeterminacy defines the "content" of the radical democratic imaginary, the politics that is made possible within its framework will necessarily fail to comprehend the radically critical nature of antagonism. Thus, the condition of possibility of the formation of radical democratic imaginary, also, at once, becomes the condition of its impossibility.

NOTES

1. Mouffe, C., (1993), *The Return of the Political*, London and New York: Verso.
2. Butler, Laclau and Zizek (2000), *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 302–303.
3. Schmitt, Karl (1976), *The Concept of the Political*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p.65.
4. From Schmitt's *Glossarium*, quoted in Anna Marie Smith (1998): *Laclau and Mouffe, the Radical Democratic Imaginary*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 129.
5. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, (1993), London: Verso, p. 69.
6. Torfing, Jacob (1999), *New Theories of Discourse*, Oxford: Blackwell.
7. Torfing refers to the perspective of Laclau's paper "Populist Rupture and Discourse", p. 43.
8. Torfing, Jacob (1999), p. 44.
9. Zizek, Slavoj (1990), "Beyond Discourse-Analysis", in Laclau (ed.), *New Reflections on the Revolutions of our Time*, London: Verso, pp. 251–252.
10. Ibid., p. 249.
11. Cf. Brockelman, Thomas (2003), "The Failure of the Radical Democratic Imaginary", *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 29 (2): 187–212.

A Requiem for Literature? Literature and the Challenges of Postmodernism

Sachidananda Mohanty

It might be useful to begin this essay with a few caveats. I am not a philosopher by training but primarily a literary-critic, historian, translator and writer. I am interested in the application of literary-theoretical insights for illumination and better understanding of literary texts.

What are the implications of a philosophical movement called Postmodernism for literary studies? In the modern world, institutional pressures and patronage, the production and dissemination of knowledge with the help of a media hungry for instant attention, seem to lend a quasi-corporate stamp upon intellectual enquiry in the metropolitan academia. At what point in time does radical enquiry become co-option, and co-option a band-wagon activity? What accounts for the consideration of one set of texts and philosophies as passé and other sets as avant-garde? How do we make sense of the fact that we herald the death of the author and in the same breath see no discordance in the payment of hefty royalty cheques to the terminators of the authorial self? As I shall suggest, my aim here is not to offer a counter discourse to Postmodernism but basically to examine its impact on literary studies.

We recognize the intersection between postmodernism and post-colonialism. But how do we explain the vocal advocacy of post-colonialism with the unabashed embracing of mono-language and monoculture in the western world, a Janus-like development that is increasingly felt in the post-colonial societies thanks to the forces of globalization?

What can I learn from postmodernism with regard to literature and what must I politely disagree with? Do I equate obscurity and deliberate density of language, at times associated with post-modern theory, with profundity of thought? Limitation of the Western canon is one significant offshoot of postmodernist thinking. I have recognized this and consequently spent the last seven years of my career in retrieving archival texts related to early literary women of Orissa. Now, does it make me an iconic figure in the literary world? Not really! But it is important for me. That is one way I respond to postmodernism through praxis. But certainly I must inform my praxis with new insights from the world of theory, call it postmodern theory if you will.

Having located myself in the larger institutional setting with my approach to postmodernism, I wish to outline in the next section the crisis of literary studies today and in the final section I shall concentrate on a few areas which for me represent a fruitful meeting points between postmodernism and the literary experience.

II

In his important study *Literature Against Itself*, critic Gerald Graff[1] captures the spirit of the embattled discipline called Literature. Such crises, he argues, are not new but have been played out in its earlier incarnations as well. Each movement that comes as uncompromisingly avant-garde and iconoclastic, in due course, finds institutional acceptance and gets domesticated.

Graff's prognosis is supremely comforting. It plays down the radical challenges posed by postmodernism. To a generation of literature students fed by the neat distinction between the text and the context, the word and the world, the foreground and the background that must now face newer challenges such as the

"death of the author" intertextuality, cultural relativism and what is aptly described as the "hermeneutic of suspicion," Graff seems to confirm the reassuring words of Browning's "Pippa Passes": God's in his heaven, all is right with the world!

Or is it? The eighties and nineties of the last century on both sides of the Atlantic mounted radical challenges to the concept of literature as we knew it: a body of canonized texts whose moral and aesthetic values enjoy unquestionable universal appeal. These were challenged by a spate of new titles: Alvin Kernan's apocalyptic volume *Death of Literature,*[2] Roland Barthes', *Death of the Author*,[3] Richard Ohmann's *English in America,*[4] Leslie Fiedler's *What Was Literature?*[5] All seemed to ride on the postmodern wave. Many of these were not works in literary theory in the sense of the term in which it is understood. Indeed, in their approach, analysis and treatment of the subject matter, they replicated paradoxically very much the subject matter of New Criticism or formalism whose conclusion they disfavoured and discarded. But invariably they rested their arguments on the radical thought of the postmodernist schools of Nietzche, Derrrida, Foucault, Lacan or Lyotard. Gone were the earlier Romantic Modernist conception of the artist and the work of art as author-centred and text based. Equally obsolescent were T.S. Eliot's theory of depersonalized art in his seminal 1917 essay "Tradition and individual Talent" or his later essay dating back to 1929 entitled "The Frontiers of Criticism" where he posits a clear boundary line between literature and the other disciplines. Earlier epistemologies did recognize intentional fallacies but the author did exist. The new dispensation proclaimed that the author was dead: As Roland Barthes argued:

> Writing is that neutral composite oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing[6].

or the following:

> A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into many relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader not as hitherto said the author[7].

The impact of the postmodern challenge in Literature has been widely felt in India as well. Beginning with the nineties, *The Lie of the Land* and other titles critiqued the Euro-centric bias of the English departments Said, Gramsci, Spivak, Gauri Viswanathan, the works of the feminist, Marxist Post-Structuralist and Subaltern schools were deployed to critique the ideological underpinnings of English literary studies and canon.

The challenge of postmodernism is well known. It critiques the logo-centric view of the European enlightenment project. It is anti-foundational and destabilizes the subject position. It questions objectivity, teleology, linear progress and grand narratives. Following Derrida, it suggests that all quest for meaning is a perpetual deferral of meaning. In fact, all meaning is indeterminate. Following Foucault, it argues that human kind is caught in a pervasive web of power. It interrogates the European claim to universalism and gives legitimacy to smaller narratives and local histories.

As indicated earlier, it is not my intention to offer here a philosophical discourse counter to the claims of postmodernism. Arguably we have come a long way from the times when in his essay "Literary Criticism and Philosophy" F.R. Leavis forbade philosophical thinking and argued that poetry and criticism dealt with concrete particulars whereas philosophy dealt with abstractions. Instead I shall outline what to my mind are some of the emancipatory possibilities of a postmodernist Literature and what are its dead-ends.

A major achievement, as I see it, has been the way conflicts over the literary canon is publicly staged today. The alarmists may call it "culture wars" involving the defenders of the western canon and its opponents. But on the whole it has had a salutary effect upon the discipline of literary studies. The Stanford debate of 1985 involving the Assistant Secretary of Education, William Bennett, and the President of Stanford University over the comparative merits of the classics of the western tradition vis-à-vis texts such as Simone de Beavoir's *Second Sex* that valorize socio-political and ideological issues, has been instrumental in the opening of the canon.

The conservative backlash represented by Allan Bloom, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Dinesh D'Souza and Roger Kimball and E.D. Hirsch Jr. has brought centrestage the place of literature in late capitalism. Similarly, theories of literary canon formation represented by works such as *The Unusable Past* by Russell J. Reising have unveiled the complex cultural and ideological underpinning of literary sensibility rooted to the national imaginary.

The biggest result of postmodern thinking in literature has been what is known as multiculturalism. This is seen in two fields. One is the interface between education, especially higher education and literature. While critics from Plato to Newman, Arnold, Leavis, Eliot, Richards, Wilson and Trilling have underlined the crucial role of poetry and literature to the higher learning as indeed the making of the academia, the present thinking constitutes clearly a more radical departure and makes the examination of this interface absolutely pivotal to a vital aspect of modern multicultural living. The second area for fruitful enquiry in the sense is literature and identity politics.

Diversity concerns in higher education must inevitably take into account a set of factors related to polity, economy, culture, pedagogy and demography. For instance, the traditional bias in the American state in favour of English and western European languages among the immigrant population vis-à-vis less valorized languages such as the Slavic and Oriental ones—this and other blind spots are recognized today as essential to our understanding. With modification, these and others may have a great deal of relevance for other societies as well including ours in India. And consequently the newer approach to dalit, tribal and feminist studies in India.

The new interface between literature and multiculturalism must therefore redefine the notion of national languages and literatures. New anthologies such as *Heath* and *Norton* regarding the marginalized literary-cultural experience or more recent and radical efforts in the US by cultural historians and archivists that have unearthed early work in non-English language by the immigrant population are welcome addition in this regard.

Similarly, the new and more radical reworking of literary-multiculturalism needs to reassess and historicize the role of the University system and disciplinary formations in the West and in the East. The antecedents of this system and its patronage by the clergy, royalty, the feudal class, the newly emerging bourgeoisie of the modern Nation State at different historical times need to be recognized. And so also is their impact on the colonial educational system and their continued influences upon post-colonial societies. So far, this has received the attention of "specialists in the history" of education or sociologists of knowledge. Literary critics, barring significant figures like Gauri Vishwanathan have regrettably kept away from such domains. This is one area that must receive in future the attention of multiculturalists rooted to literature.

There are two prominent drives that are at times pitted against one another by sections of literary multiculturalists: (a) the drive towards cultural universals and (b) the drive towards cultural specificity. The former affirms a set of values that go beyond the cultural frontiers, the latter is clearly confined to specific commonalities and history as conventionally understood. A challenge is to ask whether these seeming divergences could be harmonized by a multicultural thinking under the larger umbrella of inclusiveness.

How can such inclusiveness be promoted in literary, cultural and ethnic terms in the context of embattled marginalized groups? One answer that can be suggested is to create through mutual negotiation and understanding a hierarchy of marginal experience and to relate as Satya P. Mohanty remarks, all experience in terms of the notion of the whole to the parts. We need to devise new discourses of dialogue based on what Patrick J. Hill[8] calls a conversation of respect.

In practical terms, diversity in the classroom can be advanced by a variety of pedagogic strategies which include Gerald Graff's strategy of "Staging a Conflict" whereby students can be encouraged to consciously debate the merits of a text like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in terms of traditional/existential vis-à-vis post-colonial perspectives. Similarly, feminism, in literary/academic courses is best advanced not by the creation of disciplinary ghettos

or "windowless boxes" but by ensuring vitally a woman's point of view in every course. Literary projects based on such new thinking are currently being carried out in different parts of the world. At the Radcliff Institute for instance, Homi K. Bhabha is working on the concept of cultural citizenship. His book *A Global Measure* intends to explore the cultural, ethical and aesthetic claims that accompany the desire for global progress in an intercultural context. He is interested in the ways in which writers, philosophers and psychoanalysts conceive of transitional states of being and meaning where ends and outcomes may be contingent and obscure but historical events and moral judgement require some form of narrative closure.

Let me conclude by reading a passage from an important essay by Edward Said called "Secular Criticism" (1983) that appeared in *The World, the Text and the Critic*.[9] In this important work, Said declares literary criticism practiced then into four categories: (1) practical criticism (2) academic literary history, a descendant of 19th century classical scholarly, philology, and cultural history (3) literary appreciation and interpretation and finally (4) literary theory especially American literary theory that shows an observable deliberate attention of prior European models such as structuralism, semiotics, deconstruction, etc. Said recognizes their importance but regrets that the four forms represent a precise development of intellectual labour under what is called specialization that is disconnected from the serious political concerns of society. As Said declares:

> The degree to which the cultural realm and its expertise are institutionally divorced from their real connections with power was wonderfully illustrated for use by an exchange with an old college friend who worked in the Department of Defense for a period during the Vietnam War. The bombings were in full course then, and I was naively trying to understand the kind of person who could order daily B-52 strikes over a distant Asian country in the name of the American interest in defending freedom and stopping communism. "You know," my friend said, "the Secretary is a complex human being : he doesn't fit the picture you may have formed of the cold blooded imperialist murderer. The last time I was in his office I noticed Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* on his desk." He paused meaningfully as if to let Durrell's presence on that desk work its awful power alone… Many years later that

whole implausible anecdote….strikes me as typical of what actually obtains: humanists and intellectuals accept the idea that you can read classy fiction as well as kill and warm because the cultural world is available for that particular sort of camouflaging, and because cultural types are not supposed to interfere for matters for which they social system has not certified them.

Literary theory influenced by postmodernism has made a vital difference to our understanding of the word and the world. As Said argues, we need to connect this theory, including Post Modern theory, with the actual circumstances of the world.

NOTES

1. Gerald Graff and Reginald Gibbons, ed. 1985. *Criticism in the University*. Evanston: North Western University Press.
2. See Alvin Kernan. 1990. *The Death of Literature*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
3. Roland Barthes. 1977. *Image, Music Text*. London: Flamingo.
4. *English in America*: *A Radical View of the Profession*. 1976. New York: OUP.
5. Leslie Fiedler, 1982.*What Was Literature*: *Class Culture and Mass Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
6. *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 1989. London: Edward Arnold. p. 114.
7. Ibid. p. 118.
8. "Multiculturalism: The Crucial Philosophical and Organizational Issues." 1991. *Change*. July/August.
9. *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin. 2000. New York: Vintage Books. pp. 220–221.
10. For a comparative Indian view, See Ashis Nandy. 2000. "Gandhi After Gandhi—The Fate of Dissent in our Times." *The Little Magazine*. Also <http://www.transnational. org/forum/nonviolence/2001.

Globalization, Postmodernism and Indian Languages

Panchanan Mohanty

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias. (Wilde, 1963:924)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the above excerpt, Oscar Wilde's contention is that Utopias are as much a part of human life as the real world. Members of every community, society, or country/nation nourish a longing of at least one utopia, which is constructed to overcome the quandaries of life. In fact, such utopias entice and impel them to inch towards liberation and fulfilment. "One of the earliest commentators on postmodernism, Daniel Bell, made the suggestion that something like a postmodern condition arose when the utopian ideals and life styles associated with modern artists began to be diffused among populations as fashion, lifestyle and consumer 'choice' ". (Connor, 2006:5) Thus, in this postmodern world, which is driven to a large extent by the market forces and their values, it is not unnatural that utopias have fortified themselves by occupying more space than ever before in all the advanced and advancing cultures. It should be reiterated that we become social beings by sharing the

same culture with others, and no culture can be acquired without recourse to language. This is how languages play an instrumental role in the construction of utopias, and it is clearly manifested in a multilingual society like that of India.

According to Fishman (1971), all developing multilingual nations can be divided into three categories: (i) those with more than one Great Tradition, (ii) those with one Great Tradition and (iii) those without any Great Tradition, and modernization of all these nations is feasible only through a dominant language or language of wider communication. India falls in the first category, because it is a nation of nations and, therefore, a conglomeration of a number of Great Traditions. It needs a dominant language just to get over the competitions and conflicts among these Great Traditions. All the indigenous Indian languages are a party to these competitions and conflicts because they are coloured in terms of caste, region, religion, etc. In contemporary India, English has a clear edge over the Indian languages because it is not a native tongue and, therefore, not "coloured". That is why, it is obvious that English plays the key hegemonic role in globalizing this country. The present paper intends to discuss some of the issues related to globalization of this country through English.

2. GLOBALIZATION AND POSTMODERNISM

The cliché "the global village" was coined by the Canadian writer Marshall McLuhan in the 1970s with reference to the changes that were taking place due to the unprecedented development and growth in information technology and electronic communication systems. Then, it was Theodore Levitt who created the term "globalization" in 1983, and it has acquired a cult status all over the world in less than two decades. Besides being a fascinating area of interdisciplinary research, it has grown in such great speed that there is hardly any discipline in the humanities and social sciences that has not been influenced by it. So one of the implications of globalization is the end of almost anything that is region- and culture-specific. Nothing in this world has an autonomous

existence; rather everything is claimed to be interconnected and has got an identity on the basis of its place in the broader world order. It either cooperates and collaborates with or opposes and protests against the "hegemonic other". Though all such studies have been projected as "new", Eriksen (2003: 2–3) argues otherwise: "If the word is recent, the concerns that animate research on globalization, or transnational flows, are not... empirical work on globalization does little to counter claims that this body of research largely deals with the dissemination and recontextualization of, and resistance to, modernity." Modernism "...involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases not only of Western art, but of Western culture in general." (Abrams 1993: 119) So the avant-grade becomes a significant characteristic of modernism because "...a small, self-conscious group of artists and authors ...deliberately undertake, in Ezra Pound's phrase, to make it new" (Ibid.: 120) Thus, modernism is elitist and favours great art. On the other hand, "Postmodernism is associated with both the end of the avant-grade ...and the end of the intellectuals" (Featherstone, 1995:48). For this reason, intellectuals, who used to be enlightened legislators, have been relegated to the role of not-so-important interpreters in the postmodern period. Featherstone (1995: 73–74) further states: "...postmodern theorists have emphasized fragmentation against unity, disorder against order, particularism against universalism, sycretism against holism, popular culture against high culture and localism against globalism." At the same time, Scholte (2005: 133) has clearly expressed that "Postmodernist theories highlight the significance of modernized rationalist epistemology as a mindset that has been vital to the techno-scientific advances and bureaucratic institutions that have made globalization possible." Thus, both globalisation and postmodernism can be claimed to have been caused by modernism. Because of the rapid expansion of consumerism, culture has become subservient to economy in this globalized world. As opposed to the melting pot ideology that nurtured the "we–they" division leading to fixed identities, the postmodern citizen possesses multiple identities; and as a result, a syncretic, hybridized culture is on the rise. In this connection,

Scholte (2005: 252) has stated: "A hybrid identity draws from and blends several different strands in substantial measure, so that no single marker holds clear and consistent primacy over others."

If we look at languages from this point of view, we will find that multilingualism appears more normal today than it used to be earlier. This is why learning of Asian language is being emphasized in England. India is also undergoing a similar experience. English is being used in many domains just like "another" Indian language. However, alongwith the spread of globalization a resistance to this trend is also expanding all over and it can be attributed to postmodernism. This is what Featherstone (1995: 9) has referred to as "the dual process of zoning and cultural syncretism." and Kim (1999: 6) has called "twin pressure of globalization from without and localization from within." In fact, globalization has intensively influenced three major aspects of our life, viz. communication (information system), economy, language and culture. When the goal of globalization is to level out the local uniquenesses and promote homogenization so that the whole world becomes isomorphic, postmodernism encourages to preserve the distinct and significant characteristics of the "local". So we notice an interesting interaction and interplay between the global and the local. Robertson (1995) has neologized the term "glocalization" to refer to the patterned ways of appropriation, incorporation, and transformation of the global flows at the local level. According to him, the global includes the local. Thus, for him globalization "...has involved and increasingly involves the creation and the incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole." (Robertson, 1995: 40) There is another important aspect of globalization that must be kept in mind: Different disciplines have different focuses in their globalization studies. For example, when "... economic globalization refers to the increasing transnational character of production, marketing, and transaction, ... cultural globalization refers to the increasing irrelevance of distance" (Eriksen, 2003: 4). Not only that, "... quests for symbolic power and professional identity sometimes tempt academics to caricature the positions taken by their predecessors, so that their own contribution may

shine with an exceptionally brilliant glow of originality and sophistication." (5–6) There are two other points that need to be mentioned here. First, any study on linguistic globalization should go with similar studies in anthropology and sociology because both have a common base, i.e. culture. It must be pointed out that today's anthropological and sociological studies dealing with the issues of globalization are not historical, nor are they fully closed and independent, and linguists need not overemphasize the "newness" of their studies in this case, rather they have to explore its continuity with the studies of the past. Second, a distinction has been made between globalization as process and globalization as experience (Beck, 2000). The former refers to the mechanisms of transnational flows and the latter to the awareness of the interconnectedness of human life in local places in the context of a larger world society. According to scholars (Appadurai, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997), "place" is a cultural construction based on local experience seen through the eyes of global consciousness. In fact, these two points are the focus of the present paper.

3. THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION

A careful look at the history of the world reveals that there were transnational flows right from the beginning. As back as in 300 B.C., Prakrit, along with Buddhism, had migrated to almost all the Asian countries. For centuries, languages like Persian, Arabic, Portuguese, French, etc. have been nurtured on the Indian soil. The spread of English in the British colonies is well known. Now the question is: what is so special about the globalization of the postmodern era?

Crystal (1997, 2003) argues convincingly that for the first time in the history, a language like English has emerged as a "genuine" or "true" world language in 1990s, because it is the mother tongue or first language of about 400 million people, almost the same number, i.e. 400 million speak it as a second language with basic level of conversational ability, and finally, almost another 600 million speak it as a foreign language. Thus, the total number of English speakers is 1400 million, which is about one-fourth of

the world's population. This is one of the major reasons for which English is most frequently translated into other languages all over the world. However, the above figures clearly show that only one out of four speakers of English is native. Again, in terms of area, it is learnt as either a second or a foreign language in more than 100 countries that is more than half of the whole world.

Crystal (2003: 10) further states: "A language becomes a world language for one reason only—the power of the people who speak it. But power means different things: it can mean political (military) power, technological power, economic power and cultural power. Each of these influenced the growth of English at different times." This is why English has been able to reach this unprecedented status leaving other languages behind. English has put itself in a never-before situation by achieving this feat. First, other languages are changing after coming in contact with it. Secondly and more importantly, it is also undergoing changes due to its contact with various other languages and the functions it is expected to perform in those societies. Connor (2006) states that *delegitimation* and *dedifferentiation* are the two words that characterize postmodernism. According to him: "Authority and legitimacy were no longer so powerfully concentrated in the centers they had previously occupied; and the differentiations—for example, those between what had been called 'centers' and 'margins', but also between classes, regions, and cultural levels (high culture and low culture)—were being eroded or complicated. Centrist or absolutist notions of the state, nourished by the idea of the uniform movement of history towards a single outcome, were beginning to weaken" (3). For this reason there are "Englishes", not "English" in today's world. However, it is not our concern here; so we will concentrate only on the first one.

4. THE INDIAN SITUATION

India was never a linguistic unit at any point of time in history, and that is why multlingualism has been the most significant identifying characteristic of the Indian society and ethos. If we analyse the linguistic situation of India in a historical perspective,

we will notice that "Sanskrit, Persian and English have enjoyed the highest status in different periods of Indian history, old, medieval and modern respectively, both as the languages of the ruling elite and as medium of intellectual communication." (Das, 1991: 23) The question is: why only Sanskrit, Persian and English? One striking commonality among these three languages is that none of them was spoken as a mother tongue by any group in this country. So it can be inferred that due to their exceptional linguistic diversity, the Indian intelligentsia always preferred an "other tongue" as the link language or language of wider communication. Besides being the language of the Hindu gods and religious books, Sanskrit was also the vehicle of communication for the upper caste and class Hindus. Persian was the language of the court, administration and education during the Moghul rule and even after that. Cohn (1997: 18) has remarked: Persian "...was a kind of functional language, a pragmatic vehicle of communication with Indian officials and rulers through which, in a denotative fashion, they could express their requests, queries, and thoughts, and through which they could get things done." Thus, its extent was larger than Sanskrit that cut across the boundaries of caste, class and religion. It became a part and parcel of Indian social life by the end of 18th century. Finally, the advent of English brought about a sea-change in the linguistic, literary and cultural scenario of India. By relegating other European languages, like Portuguese and French to their respective colonies, English came out victorious in the struggle to occupy the position of the dominant language. It also altered the prevailing linguistic hierarchy by dislodging Persian from its high pedestal over a period of time.

It is interesting to note that Sanskrit and Persian were secular in character in the initial stages; but they were identified with the Hindu and Muslim communities later. On the other hand, the journey of English was different. It was introduced on the Indian soil in order to enlighten the Indian people in two ways: First, by imparting English education to them. The following statement of Charles Grant (1746–1823), an influential Director of the East Indian Company and a leading architect of Anglicism, will drive home the point: "The true cure of darkness is light. The Hindus err,

because they are ignorant, and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders, and this remedy is proposed, from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us" (quoted in Pennycook, 1998: 78). The second one is by propagating the Gospel. In fact, for the fear of being converted to Christianity, many parents did not send their children to English schools. Naik and Nurullah (1974: 127) have stated: "The orthodox parents refused to send their children to English schools because they were afraid that English education made young men lose faith in the religious beliefs and practices of their forefathers—a fear that was not entirely groundless."

But the moment the Indians realized that learning English was an assured way to better economic and social status, many of them sent their children to English schools. As a result, English acquired a casteless, creedless and secular character very quickly. Then, it has gone from strength to strength over the centuries, which has culminated in its recognition as one of the two official languages in independent India. To be specific, it has become the language of higher education, science and technology, upper level judiciary, etc. So it is not surprising that it has acquired enormous economic and political power, which has become even stronger after it became the language of the Internet in 1990s.

It is no more the same language it used to be decades ago. Gandhi (1958–84), a champion of the vernacular languages as a part of his *swadeshi* ideology, had written: "I cannot tolerate the idea of parents writing to their children, or husbands writing to their wives, not in their vernaculars but in English" (Vol. XX: 159). And, "Our English speech has isolated us from the millions of our countrymen. We have become foreigners in our own land. ...Every English educated Indian who has penetrated the villages has realized this burning truth" (Vol. XXIX: 377). He would have been certainly surprised and depressed to see how the situation has become entirely different from what he had expected. Almost all Indian parents want their children to learn English. On the basis

of their country-wide survey, Agnihotri and Khanna (1997:85) observe: "Most informants (nearly 94 per cent) thought ...that English was important for them because 'it will help them to build a better career' or 'it will be useful for higher education in India'. 'It will help me to become a more knowledgeable person' was the opinion of 83 per cent of the interviewers. A fairly substantial number of the (75 per cent) held the view that English 'will add to my prestige and personality'. It is very interesting to note that English is perceived not only as an academic and economic ladder, it is also seen as a means for enhancing social mobility and individual personality."

It would not be an exaggeration to state that it has become the language of wider communication at least in the cities and towns. Names of a majority of shops are found to have been written in English. Not only that, a careful analysis of the use of English in the public and market places reminds us of the situation that was there in the earliest stage in the growth of our languages. If we examine the inscriptions and manuscripts written in the first half of the second millennium A.D., we can notice complete disregard for spelling in them. Grammatical structures were also not a high priority. What was on the top of the agenda was use of the local language for various purposes. It was a kind of golden age for the Indian languages. A similar situation is noticeable in the use of English in contemporary India. English is being used more often in every sphere of the Indians' life than ever before. In fact, use of English has become more important than accuracy of its spelling and grammar. In other words, the "global language English" has been fully appropriated at the local levels for various purposes. So hybridization has become rampant and all pervasive. In the earlier situation it was Indian languages *versus* English; but now it is Indian languages *and* English. That means Indian languages and English are in a synergic relationship now. English, thus, has become a "glocal" language in India, if we use Robertson's (1990) neologism.

The other important point is that it has also become *the* language of advertisement in contemporary India. Needless to state that advertisement is a crucial instrument to promote globalization

and through it hegemony of the dominant language is established. This trend can easily be seen in writing on the walls, road-side hoardings, advertisements in both print and electronic media, hotel menu cards, etc. The following pictures will demonstrate how English has been extensively used in many spheres of our life even though its representation does not follow the Standard Indian English norms.

Let us consider the advertisements 1 through 5 (see Appendix) that show very interesting spelling mistakes. They belong to 5 different kinds of domains, i.e. garment shop (No.1), furniture shop (No. 2), hotel (No. 3), government office—district collectorate (No.4), and English medium educational institution (No. 5). What is amazing is that the misspelt words are not uncommon; rather they are commonly used in day-to-day conversation. For example:

Table 1

Advt. No.	Misspelt word	Correct spelling
1	unbeleievable	unbelievable
2	almaria renge	almirah range
3	fesility	facility
4	neet	neat
5	estabilsheshed experiencenced mediem	established experienced medium

Advertisements 6 through 10 in the Appendix, which are taken from newspaper advertisements and pamphlets, present examples of hybridization between English and Hindi and transliteration of Hindi words in Roman script. For instance:

Table - 2

Advt. No.	Hybridisation	Transliteration
	chill your *dil* 'Chill your heart'	• *dil* 'heart' • Zindagi ke meethe pal, har pal (Every moment is a sweet moment in life)

	Free blue bucket *ke liye* blue! 'Free blue bucket for Blue (Surf)!	• ke liye 'for'
	Fruit salad *ek* minute *mein* 'Fruit salad in one minute' *Ekdum* fit 'Fully fit'	• ek 'one' • mein 'in' • ekdum 'fully'
	sofa mela 'Sofa exhibition'	• mela 'fair'
	maghamasam Wedding *pattu* sarees *hungama* The month of Magha Crowded sale of bridal silk sarees	• Maghamasam 'A Hindu month between mid-January and mid-February' • pattu (Telugu word) 'silk' • hungama 'pandemonium'

Besides these, it is also very common to find hybridization and transliteration in television and road-side advertisements. The following slogans, taken from these advertisements, are illustrative:

Name of Product		*Slogan*
Airtel (mobile phone Service provider)	:	Aisi azadi aur kahan this kind freedom and where 'Where else this kind of freedom!'
Anacin (pain-killer tablet)	:	Sar dard ka *full stop* head ache's full stop 'Full stop of headache.'
Britannia Fifty-Fifty (biscuit)	:	*Pepper* ka chakkar pepper 's circle 'Enigma of pepper.'

Coca-cola (soft drink)	:	Jiyo sar utha ke live head having raised 'Live holding your head high.'
Hero Honda (motorcycle)	:	*Generation* nayi, bharosa wahi generation new, trust the same 'A new generation bike, but the trust is the same.'
IBP (petrol/diesel)	:	*Pure* bhi, Poora bhi pure also, full also 'Pure and full both.'
ICICI Bank (an Indian Bank)	:	Hum hain na! we are 'We are there!'
Kit-kat (chocolate)	:	Kit-kat kha, *happy* ho ja Kit-kat eat, happy become 'Eat Kit-kat, be happy.'
Nature Fresh (vegetable oil)	:	Khao *lite*, jiyo *lite* Eat light, live light 'Eat light, live healthy.'
Reliance India Mobile (phone)	:	Kar lo duniya mutthi mein Make world fist in 'Capture the world in your fist.'
Zee TV (an Indian TV channel)	:	Jiyo Zee bhar ke live Zee heart full 'Live a full life (with Zee TV)'

Notice that besides transliteration of Hindi words, common English words, e.g. full stop, pepper, generation, pure, happy and lite (an unconventional but widely used for "light" in informal writing) have been employed to serve different purposes, and it is indicative of the ongoing hybridization process.

Finally, what do these two kinds of representation in English mean? First, wrong spelling of common English words denotes that people are more interested in using a kind of English rather than the correct and grammatical English. As a result, though the domains of its use have expanded far and wide, there is hardly any control over it. Secondly, writing of Hindi utterances in Roman script evidences that Hindi has crossed the borders of the so-called Hindi region and gone far beyond it. But is only the first two primary language skills, i.e. listening and speaking that seem to have been acquired by a number of people in the non-Hindi speaking areas, and not the remaining two skills, i.e. reading and writing. Most probably for this reason, Roman script has been employed to represent Hindi utterances. At the same time, it is surprising that a similar trend is prevalent in the Hindi region too, and it is indicative of the fact that a sizeable number of Hindi speakers, usually the younger generation, are not conversant in reading and writing Hindi though they can speak it. On the other hand, not all the non-Hindi speakers, who reside in the Hindi-speaking areas, are keenly interested in learning to read and write this language.

If this is the condition of Hindi in spite of its formidable support base, both governmental and otherwise, the status of other Indian languages can easily be imagined. Recent studies show that strong languages like Tamil and Bengali are shrinking in terms of the domains of their use. So it is pointless to discuss the condition of the non-scheduled or minor languages. In fact, most of them are on the track of decline and decay. It is undoubtedly an impact of globalization, which has been dealt with by scholars all over the world under the topic "language endangerment", but I will prefer to defer such a discussion to some other time.

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APPENDIX

No. 1

No. 2


ADMISSIONS ARE IN PROGRESS
ESTABLISHESHED BY WELL EXPERIENCENCED TEACHERS
SAHITI VIDYA NIKETAN HIGH SCHOOL
ENGLISH MEDIEM.
RECOGNISED BY GOVT OF A.P.
NURSERY TO X CLASS
OPP-SERILINGAM PALLY RLY. STATION.
BRANCH-NALLAGANDLA HUDA TELLAPUR ROAD.

No. 3


COLLECTORATE OFFICE
KEEP IT NEET AND
CLEAN

No. 4


PARCEL SERVICE
HOTEL
PRESS MEDIA

No. 5


G.B.INN
LODGE
A/C & Non A/C Rooms
Very Reasonable Rates
100 Cars Parking Fesility.
Flat No 105 To 110,Pareek Plaza,
Nalagandla Road, OPP; B.H.E.L
Nursery,Beside Vegetable Market Yard
Serylinmgam Pally,R.R Dist.
Ph : 55989823

No. 6


மிதியடிகள்
பாதுகாக்குமிடம்.
जूते रखाली
का जया.
KEEP YOUR
SHOES

No. 7


Amul
KOOL
CHILL YOUR DIL !
Zindagi ke meethe pal,
har pal
Amul
Shrikhand
Mango

No. 8


FREE BLUE BUCKET
KE LIYE BLUE!
Surf excel

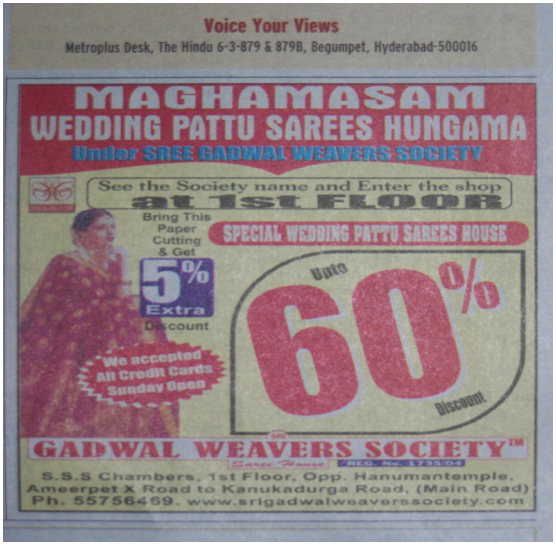
No. 9


Fruit salad
Ek minute mein
Amul
Fresh Cream
You'll flip. For the new flip top.
Amul
LITE MILK
Ekdum fit
Amul
PIZZA CHEESE
MOZZARELLA
Amul. Asia's largest milk brand.

No. 10


Sofa Mela
Double advantage
Flat
30% OFF +
FREE
HOLIDAY PACKAGE
3Days 2Nights
75 exotic locations to choose
We make style, easy simplified and affordable
THE Woods
DRESS YOUR HOMES
Besides St. Andrews High School, W-Marredpally, Secunderabad
Ph: 27716054, 55169004

No. 11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No. 12

Prolixity and Playfulness in the Time of Late Postmodernism

Tutun Mukherjee

This paper addresses the major concerns of Postmodernism in interrogating the basic premises of Modernism and explores the way Postmodern strategies have made a difference in our understanding of life and society. The paper also considers the major shifts in worldview that have resulted from the postmodern critique of modernism. Finally, within the framework of post-modern postulates and the strategies of interpretation, the paper makes an effort to understand the contribution of Amartya Sen's cultural analyses to the postmodern discourse.

FORGIVE THIS PROLIXITY

SHARON LEITER

We haven't spoken in so long.
I had forgotten how to talk
I practice in my sleep.
and now I surge with speech

For all those years, you see,
it wasn't a matter of words.
Of words I had plenty
and scattered like confetti.

Words sprang from the
anxious sweat of my skin,
buzzed in the heated circuits
of my brain.
Words buried me in strange terrain.

And I forgot whatever it was,
once, in an empty room
I was desperate to tell you,
before the slow, insidious
journey away.

I

That "postmodernism" as a term[1] defies all attempts to pin it down to unilateral all-encompassing definitions emphasizes its *differance*. Emerging out of the ethos of "modernism", it carries the effect of and a reaction to the earlier world-view in its procedural rebellion against the totalizing systems of thought, while exploring at the same time many of modernism's avant-garde theories.[2] While there can be no clear dividing line between the vague and ever-shifting meaning of the two terms, postmodernism marked a shift in sensibility and is celebrated as the end of philosophical self-delusion, a critical attack on oppressive metanarratives, and the final dissolution of foundational thought; it is also denounced for being relativistic, nihilistic, irrational or hyper-rational and prolix.

Indeed, postmodernism cannot be pinned down to a meaning because it challenges the very notion of fixed meanings. That does not mean, however, that attempts have not been made to define its different aspects. Such attempts have been prolific (the list of representative references at the end of this paper will illustrate) and the difficulty in theorizing about postmodernism results from the diversity of discourses available on the subject and the fluidity of the boundaries of those discourses. It may be said that postmodernism has a dual charge: of tracing a historical period and the theoretical matrices.

POSTMODERNISM AND FOUNDATIONAL DISCOURSES

The major thrust of postmodernism has undoubtedly been the interrogation and critique of the conventional attitude to knowledge and the modes of acquiring it. Rather than trying to uncover a pre-existing reality, postmodernism is partial to an investigation of the interactive process of *knowledge creation*. Inevitably, the force of its attack has been directed at Philosophy, a discipline that claims to relate the objects of knowledge to the faculties of representation or the possibility of their apprehension through mediation (e.g. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* respectively). It has been reiterated time and again that the rise and the periodization of postmodernism through the 1960s and the 70s went hand-in-hand with the decline of what is understood as "Traditional Philosophy". It is well known that the social-political crises witnessed through these decades in Europe and America [with their trickle effect on the rest of the world] undermined the complacent ideas about life and society. In fact, Frederic Jameson locates here "the gradual extinction of the philosopher's classic political vocation…[and]…the death of the subject: the individual ego or personality…the supreme philosophical Subject, the cogito but also the *auteur* of the great philosophical system" (1992, 318). Thus Philosophy becomes, according to his line of argument, "radically occasional…a disposable theory…rather than the ambition to express a proposition, a position, or a system with greater 'truth' values" (Jameson, 1992: 325). Consequently, the proclamation of the "end of philosophy," the "end of history", and the "end of ideology" gathers momentum with the proliferation of such notions.

The ethos is of extreme skepticism. One of the greatest challenges of philosophy is to decipher the nature of truth attached with knowledge. Since it is readily admitted by philosophers that "truth" is illusory, the process of "knowing truth"—indeed the very notion of knowledge itself seems to be in question. The high priests of postmodernism are quick to declare that there is no fixed meaning or truth or transcendental signified. Since author[ity] is dead, "reality" is implicated in slippery signified, and life is

perceived as chaotic and random, caught in a "prison-house of language".[3] Terry Eagleton astutely points out that the convenience of holding such an attitude of uncertainty is that it "frees you at one stroke from having to assume a position on important issues" because whatever is said can be taken as "a passing product of the signifier" (1996; 144–45). The social-political expediency of such a stance hardly needs to be stressed.

In order to understand the consequences of "the loss of meaning" or the assumption of the disappearance of both significant "reality" and the "traditional ways of making sense", it would be worthwhile to assess the important insights offered by postmodernism. This paper attempts a review of some of the conceptual re-configurations of postmodernism to examine whether the cultural churning has produced, as Habermas insists, mere aesthetic "playfulness" (of a Wittgenstein, a Derrida, a Barthes, or a Rorty) with its innate strategies of subversion and prolixity through endless deferment, leading towards relativism and nihilism[4]; or has there indeed been a significant construal gain?

Postmodernism produced new critiques of culture (Foucault; Huyssen); revisions of the political and the social (Lyotard, 1984); and new parameters for science and epistemology (Rorty, 1979), class (Hall, 1993), social action (Crespi, 1992), gender and family relations (Halpern, 1990; Seidman, 1991b); and economic life (Harvey, 1989; Lash, 1985). In each of these areas, postmodern theories extended the dimensions of knowledge which, in aggregate, provided a broad and inclusive theory about contemporary life.

Postmodernism has also been the time of experimentation, of humour and absurdity. The postmodernists exemplified a significant shift in attitude to the high seriousness of modernism with their playfulness, their aleatory and contradictory forms of reading demand total attention and commitment yet also profess the joy of returning to the text endlessly because every reading of the text is taken to be incomplete, a mis-reading, that whets the appetite for more adventure, a further engagement. Derrida talks about the private pleasures of reading while placing reading within a larger human context. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes describes the desire to repeat the experience of what he calls the "text of bliss or *joissance*" almost as a libidinous one. We are now

in the process of ameliorating the "high seriousness' of modernity, with its prioritization of order and the fetish for totality, into the laid-back ["joyful," as Nietzsche would say] pluralism of the postmodern, that heterogeneous range of life-styles and language make available. One could describe it as the extension of the experimental and avant-garde spirit of modernism into prolix and playful realms.

It is ironical that the postmodern theories couched in language that is playful, slippery, aphoristic and very often poetic, usually gets stripped of its playful and talkative dimensions and open-endedness by academics who put them into a normative straight-jacket and apply the insights in deadly serious and pedantic prose that arrests their innate playfulness and suspends all possibilities of slippages.

The words "Prolixity" and "Playfulness" as attributes which Janus-like are at once positive and negative, are used in the title of this paper as the "touchstone[s]" for postmodern writing:

> By definition, prolixity is a reference to
> a perceived dysfunction in use of language.
> Prolixity occurs, in a given context, when
> more words bring diminishing returns at
> achieving the purpose of communication.
> The term is sometimes applied to obfuscatory
> writing that is highly abstract and contains little
> information.
>
> What is considered generally effective
> communication in one context may be
> seen as excess, prolix, in another. Even
> within a given context, what is seen by
> some as purposeful and effective
> may be perceived by others as prolixity.
>
> Because communicating with language
> is an art, or craft, there is no objective test
> for what is excess and what is effective.
> Just as words mean whatever people generally
> think they mean, prolixity is whatever seems
> excessive to a significant number of hearers or
> readers, a subjective phenomenon.
> [paraphrased from OED 2005]

The strategies of deconstruction uncover the contingent origin of the binary hierarchies, and it does so not with the purpose of providing a better foundation for knowledge, but in order to dislodge their dominance and to create a space that leaves room for difference, ambiguity, and playfulness.
Derrida in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,* observes, "Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence" (292).

II

A CRITIQUE OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS

Postmodernism began by taking issue with Kant's and Hegel's notions of knowledge and representation. Nietzsche, Marx, Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Gadamer, the later Kuhn—all marked the paths of enquiry that the postmodern theorists would follow to address the blindness in the insights of western philosophy.

Invoking Nietzscheian *Fröliche Wissenschaft*, Terry Eagleton celebrates the spirit of postmodernism thus:

> We are now in the process of wakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back ["joyful," as Nietzsche would say] pluralism of the postmodern, that heterogeneous range of life-styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself....Hence, Science and Philosophy must jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as just another set of narratives. (144)

What Nietzsche initiated in the *Genealogy of Morals* was a systematic dismantling of uncontested concepts like Truth, Reality, Morality, Tradition, Knowledge, even God, as universal and metaphysical entities [as One Universal True Account] and the legitimation claimed by Science and Philosophy as providers of such notions. He further argued in the *Twilight of the Idols*, that when the value of (representational) truth is called into question, everything becomes [mere] *interpretation* ["There is

only a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective knowing"]. The world becomes nothing more than a "sign-world," a semiological construct, a mere signifier signifying itself. The obvious danger of Nietzsche's legacy ["Let us abolish the real world"] is the predictive nihilism and ethical impasse that having reached a *cul de sac* of no "Truth" or "Reality", no more Philosophy or Science as knowledge providers, nothing remains for the humans to seek.

While Marx examined the aspects of service values of people and commodities and their contribution to the structuring of the base and the superstructure, Kierkegaard described modern society as a network of relations in which individuals are levelled into an abstract phantom known as "the public" (1962, 59). In this sense, society becomes a realization of abstract thought, held together by an artificial and all-pervasive medium speaking for everyone and yet for no one. Heidegger's contribution to the sense of constructed-ness of the world emerged out of his belief that "*precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence*" (1993, 332). Heidegger saw modern technology as the fulfilment of western metaphysics, which he characterized as the metaphysics of presence. He maintained that from the time of the earliest philosophers, but definitively with Plato, western thought has conceived of being as the presence of beings, which in the modern world has come to mean the availability of beings for use. In fact, as he writes in *Being and Time*, the presence of beings tends to disappear into the transparency of their usefulness as things ready-to-hand (1962: 95–107). The essence of technology, which he names "the enframing," reduces the being of entities to a calculative order (1993: 311–341). According to Heidegger, humans are affected by this withdrawal in moments of anxiety or boredom, and therein lies the way to "a possible return of being, which would be tantamount to a repetition of the experience of being opened up by Parmenides and Heraclitus" (1993: 341).

Wittgenstein's theory of "language games" or meaning as use; Gadamer's notion of art as a representational play whose purpose is to be what it is, represent what it does, outside the subjectivity of its participants; Kuhn's application of the notion of "incommensurability" *[post- The Structure of Scientific Revolutions]*

to examine the conventionally accepted forms of knowledge and value as untenable—all marked the path for further enquiries by the poststructuralists and postmodernists.

Enthused with the *zeitgeist*-defining momentum of post-Nietzsche [as well as post-Marx/Kierkegaard/Heidegger] skepticism and the ethos of reflexivity, the postmodern enterprise reached out towards better understanding of the "ruptures" in history and the "constructedness" of human life and society through Jacques Derrida's deconstructive enterprise, Michel Foucault's genealogical and archaeological enquiries, Jean Baudrillard's and Jean-Francois Lyotard's investigation of cultural practices, Cornelius Castoriadis' praxis philosophy, Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatism and Charles Taylor's critiques of naturalist ontologies—to mention a few discourses—all of which challenge the authority of epistemological disciplines and attempt to restructure, through close-studies of texts whether philosophical, cultural or anthropological, the archive of human knowledge as value-dependent, culture-dependent and changeable.

A clearer idea of postmodernism is suggested by four of its major tendencies: One, the recognition of the permanent and irreducible *pluralism* of cultures, communal traditions, and ideologies, "forms of life" and "language games." Postmodernism therefore accepts that no knowledge can be assessed outside the context of culture, tradition, language games, etc. which makes it possible, endows it with meaning, and provides the criteria for its validation.

Two, postmodernism apprehends reality not as objective truth but through the phenomenological linguistic event, thereby replacing metaphysical objectivity by sociological subjectivity. This means that the subject is always already a part of a larger sociological matrix which includes history, culture, economics, religion, politics, philosophical worldview, and hence cannot be meaningful outside of it.

Three, postmodern philosophy emphasizes the importance of power relationships, personalization and discourse in the "construction" of truth and world views. It asserts a break with the artistic and philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment and replaces all foundational and universal metanarratives with the

local and the particular. Without universal standards, the problem of the postmodern world is not how to globalize superior culture, but how to secure communication and mutual understanding between disparate cultures. Postmodernism's rejection of conservatism or fundamentalism and celebration of fragmentation and multiplicity holds appeal for both liberals and radicals.

Finally, the postmodern Age is a time of incessant choosing. It is an era when no orthodoxy can be adopted without self-consciousness and irony as all traditions are understood to possess some validity. This is partly a consequence of what is described as the information explosion, or the advent of organized knowledge, world communication and cybernetics; in other words, the creation of an intellectual marketplace. Praxis and ethical aspects of human life constitute a serious concern in postmodernism because not only is knowledge in postmodern societies characterized by its utility, but it is also distributed, stored and consumed differently. According to Lyotard, postmodern condition also forces a distinction to be made between "knowledge" and "noise". According to him, what cannot be stored as computer algorithms or is not digitizable, will gradually cease to be recognized as knowledge. Not recognized by the system, it will consequently be relegated as "noise".

If the work of the postmodern writers can be said to be liberating, and if indeed the notion of liberation figures prominently in one way or another in what they say, then it is not difficult to understand why they chaff at any confining grid. Seen in this light, it would appear that postmodernism has brought about a "Copernican revolution" [as was claimed for Kant to have done] in the way life and the world were to be understood. While each postmodern thinker engages in discourses significantly different from the others, they are together in an elliptical loop because their work, taken collectively, brings to a close the dialectics of the Enlightenment, and reflect in their style of writing, a degree of prolixity and playfulness to put an end to the high seriousness of modernism.

Let us consider some of the major postulates of postmodernism and the postmodern re-configurations of traditional concepts.

RECONFIGURATIONS

A. Metaphysics and Epistemology

Postmodernism proposes the end of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology and so forth, on the ground that these types of discourse assume a fixed, universal reality and method of inquiry. In his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Richard Rorty describes with gay abandon the failure of "epistemology-centred philosophy" and declares that in the post-Philosophy mood of late postmodernism, the attempt to understand things by means of philosophical theory is passé. The important thing, he says, is to learn how to *cope*. Rorty may have a point here. Indeed, a fairly common characteristic of postmodern thought is its insistence on the primacy of the practical over the theoretical [this is reflected, for instance, in Gadamer's rehabilitation of the Aristotelian notion of phronesis: "the primacy of 'practice' is undeniable"]. However, it is one thing to accord priority to praxis, to ethos; it is quite another to deny to theory a legitimate role in the formation and sustenance of practices which enable humans not only to *cope* with things, but to critically and creatively engage with them [Plato, for instance, always structured his epistemological discourses on the three categories of *idos* or ideas, *techne* or craft, and *doxa* or opinion. But he was partial to *idos*—possessing the idea or the knowledge of immutable and everlasting truth. His emphasis gave rise subsequently to a static view of knowledge].

An irony of the postmodernist stance is that the discourses sometimes end up offering only general assumptions—even irresolute notions—about culture, human nature, values, and inquiry. Postmodernists do not hesitate to accept this fact; for instance, Derrida happily admits that he invariably "crosses out/erases" his own claims.

B. Totality and Essence

Jacques Derrida is the spirit of postmodern playfulness [never allowing any idea to stagnate] and prolixity [even his most devoted readers struggle with some of his writings, eg. *Glas*] and

his mode of poststructuralist critical analysis or deconstruction is postmodernism's theoretical and philosophical source[5]. He represents the spirit of enquiry, of interrogation, of not accepting any premise without examination. Through his practice he instantiates the way conventional texts can be excavated to reveal layers of unconventional meanings. His practice or the task of deconstruction is in fact to show that philosophical texts do not mean what they seem to mean, or what their authors wanted them or "intended" them to mean, and do not actually have any "decidable" meaning at all. As Derrida's own writing instantiates, the aim of a deconstructive reading is to show how texts laying claim to knowledge are full of internal tensions and contradictions or antinomies which constantly subvert their stated goals and claims to truth. It is obvious that deconstructive reading of philosophical texts unsettles conventional philosophical notions by showing the fallacy of trying to use language to "get beyond language" so as to arrive at some translinguistic, transcultural, transhistorical *truth*—or a "transcendental signified"—which language could then be said to "mirror." In fact, he insists, the philosophers, who aim at discovering "Truth" as a universal essence, cannot evade the trap of language. Hence, philosophical concepts turn out to be nothing more than disguised metaphors of local relevance. According to Derrida, there is no escaping the play of language.

Derrida's deconstructive undertaking calls into question not only modern philosophy but the entire philosophical tradition, or what Derrida calls the "metaphysics of presence." His deconstructive attack on what he calls "logocentrism" is liberating in that, among other things, it leads to freedom from the tyranny of the notions of *totality* and *essence*. The notion of "totality" or the idea that reality is "One", and is, consequently, the proper object of a Unified Science, is confining because it may suppress those items and entities which cannot/will not fit into the system. Thus, totality rules out both individuality and alterity—the "multiple forms of otherness' that postmodernism would like to represent. By discrediting the notion of totality or a totalizing discourse, deconstruction serves the postmodern concern for particularity and difference, diversity and heterogeneity, the fragmentary and

the marginal—or, in a word, pluralism—the necessary condition for genuine freedom and democracy.

The notion of "essence" too has served as a centring notion of philosophical discussions, defining the "whatness" or *quidditas* of knowledge that makes a thing precisely what it is and not something else. According to Derrida, essentialism upholds the Principle of Identity, the cornerstone of logocentrism and the tyranny of the status quo of the established power structures.

That is the "liberating and exhilarating" aspect of Derrida's work. But there is the other side too which is, if not deeply disturbing (like the charge made against Rorty) then at the very least, disappointing. Critics complain that after rejecting "metaphysical teleology", Derrida's deconstructive practice does not seem to lead anywhere. Though deconstruction is rigorous and analytical, requiring "the skill of the tightrope walker, tripping the light fantastic on a world-wire over the abyss," ultimately it seems to be "deconstruction for deconstruction's sake' that tends to leave the faithful at the edge of the precipice, as it were.

C. Reality, change and difference

Postmodernists insist that "reality" is more complex than "something existing out there" to be mirrored in one's thoughts. Rather, it is in part a human creation that can be moulded in accordance with one's needs, interests and cultural traditions. Because reality is in part culture dependent, it changes over time, as cultures do, and varies from community to community.

A corollary of this interactive view of reality is that there is no sharp fact-value distinction. All factual statements reflect the values they serve, and all value beliefs are conditioned by factual assumptions. This finds echoes in Foucault's view that knowledge is neither eternal nor universal and that knowledge and power cannot be separated, since knowledge embodies the values of those who are powerful enough to create and disseminate it. Foucault may appear to be overly suspicious of knowledge, but the link with people's interests which he identifies cannot be denied.

Postmodernists dissolve the distinction between fact and fiction. For them, there is no necessary relationship between words and things, signifier and signified, subject and object. Thus a discourse which claims to be describing reality, such as history, has no greater relationship to its referent than fiction. Both history and fictional narratives are substitutes for reality rather than good copies and bad copies of it. For instance, in postmodernist argument a fundamental category in history, the concept of the event that is supposed to refer to the particularity of historical occurrences, is considered meaningless since it is thought that there is nothing essential about events that link them to each other. Foucault refers to the term event as a "phantasm" which hovers over a heterogeneous jumble of occurrences; it is an effect of meaning that is not identifiable with anything in the actual event.

On another level, however, postmodernism seems to offer some alternatives to joining the global culture of consumption, where commodities and forms of knowledge are mediated by forces far beyond individual control. These alternatives focus on thinking of any action (or social struggle) as necessarily local, limited, and partial, but nonetheless effective. By discarding "grand narratives" (like the liberation of the entire working class) and focusing on specific local goals (such as improved day care centers for working mothers), postmodernism offers ways to theorize local situations as fluid and unpredictable, though influenced by global trends. Hence the motto for post modernity has justifiably been "think globally, act locally"—without much worry about any grand scheme or master plan![6]

Yet one realizes that just as reality is not *entirely* a human construction, "made by us, not given to us" as postmodernists have claimed, knowledge too is more the product of an *interaction* between one's ideas about the world and its experience.[7] After all, experience is influenced by individual concepts, and one does "see" things—even physical things—through cultural lenses. But this influence is not all-controlling. Reality can suddenly force one to change one's views about it. Taking note of the fact that generalizations can be deceptive, it is one thing to reject the idea of

a fixed, universal foundation to reality; it is quite another to claim that no useful guidelines can ever be identified.

D. Self and scholarship

Postmodernism questions the idea of a universal, unchanging, unified self or subject which has full knowledge of and control over what it thinks, says and does. It has shown that the self is influenced by its surrounding culture, changes within that culture and is fragmented like that culture. To a degree, it is not the individual who thinks, speaks or acts but it is the culture which thinks, speaks, and acts through the individuals of the community. In many ways Rorty is right to describe "the moral self" as "a network of beliefs, desires and emotions with nothing behind it… constantly reweaving itself…not by reference to general criteria… but in the hit-or-miss way in which cells readjust themselves to meet the pressures of the environment."

However, it would be fallacious to maintain that because the self is limited, conditioned and contingent in this way, it has no significance, identity or capacities. Individuals may be no more important than cultures, but neither are they less so. And the same may be said for specific groups within a larger culture: ethnic groups, gender categories, socio-economic classes, and so on. There is a tendency among postmodernists to emphasize these categories to the neglect of individuals. It is possible that two individuals of the same national background, ethnicity, gender, religion or the like may differ greatly; it is also possible that two individuals from vastly different cultures might appear to be kindred spirits.

One of the slogans of postmodernism is that "there is no centre," and in particular there is no central tradition of scholarship (namely Eurocentric, White, bourgeois and predominantly male) of which other traditions—ethnic and religious minorities, feminist, working class and subaltern, for example—are mere colonies. The dismantling of the binary structuring of "centre" and "margin" by postcolonial discourse was intensified in postmodernism's commitment to the dismantling of the logocentric and authoritarian master narratives of the White cultures.[8] It prompted focus on the politics of representation of the West's "Other" and encouraged the

"re-writing" of histories of peoples relegated to the "margins"—of culture, race and tribe, metropolis, empires, society, canon.

Foucault deploys genealogy to create what he calls a "counter-memory" or "a transformation of history into a totally different form of time" (1977, 160). This entails dissolving identity for the subject in history by using the materials and techniques of modern historical research. Foucault postulates that genealogical research leads to the disintegration of the epistemic subject, as the continuity of the subject is broken up by the gaps and accidents that historical research uncovers. Instantiating this, Foucault published *Histoire de la folie à l'age classique* in 1961 (translated as *Madness and Civilization* in 1965), wherein he gives an account of the historical beginnings of modern reason against the context of madness in the seventeenth century. His thesis is that the practice of confining the mad is a transformation of the medieval practice of confining lepers in lazar houses. These institutions managed to survive after the lepers disappeared, and thus an institutional structure of confinement was already in place when the modern concept of madness as a disease took shape. However, while institutions of confinement continued from a previous time, the practice of confining the mad constitutes a break with the past.

Foucault focuses upon the moment of transition, as modern reason begins to take shape within a cluster of concepts, institutions and modes of knowledge. For Foucault, the issue is that madness is not allowed to speak for itself and is at the disposal of a power. As he remarks: "*What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point*" (1965, x). The truth of reason is found when contrasted with madness as non-reason, and the difference between them is inscribed in their opposition.

In his later writings, most notably in *The Use of Pleasure* (1985), Foucault employs historical research to open possibilities for experimenting with subjectivity, by showing that "subjectivation is a formative power of the self, surpassing the structures of knowledge and power from out of which it emerges." This is a power of thought, which Foucault says is the ability of human beings to problematize the conditions under which they live. For philosophy, this means

"the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known" (Foucault 1985, 9). He thus joins Lyotard in promoting creative experimentation as a leading power of thought, just as Lyotard combines the language games of the expert and the philosopher in *The Postmodern Condition*. This mixing of philosophy with concepts and methods from other disciplines is characteristic of postmodernism scholarship in its broadest sense.

The common thread between the postmodernists—from Nietzsche to Baudrillard, Lyotard and Julia Kristeva—is a radical anti-essentialism or anti-foundationalism in their denial of essences, natures and other universals which place a grounded and constant meaning on existence. Thus, from a postmodernist perspective, there are no transcendent, transhistorical or transcultural grounds for interpretation. The first concept that falls in the wake of anti-essentialism is the idea of human nature, or what some postmodernists refer to as the transcendental subject. Postmodernists argue that there is nothing necessarily essential about human beings. To assume this only reduces the otherness, the uniqueness, and the singularity of individuals. For postmodernists, the world should be imagined as radically heterogeneous; the past as radically different from the present; and all cultures as radically different from one another A major complaint is that postmodernist prolixity and playfulness lead towards nihilism—trashing all philosophical (and historical) claims. Another complaint is that postmodernism eliminates epistemological and ethical foundations. However, it might be said that all these criticisms miss the point of the postmodern enterprise. Postmodernists do not maintain that decisions on epistemological and ethical issues are not valuable or that they are futile. They simply remove the necessity of foundations and the necessity of choosing one position over another, thus accommodating the choice of identifying one's own position.

SUMMING UP

The above discussion hopes to show that postmodernism is not an irreverent demolition squad that takes pleasure in its iconoclasm.

One cannot really understand the nature and purpose of the postmodern project if one fails to see how much the entire undertaking is motivated by the desire to effect a paradigm change from the "philosophy of the subject" to the model of linguistic inter-subjectivity that "knowledge" and "reason" ought to suggest to *create a new and radical imaginary*. It is an orientation that keeps perpetually open the promise of a future different from the past—the promise of a break with the past, and the promise of a new beginning. An unavoidable consequence of this future-oriented stance may be that the present might be subject to historical crises arising out of the disorienting collision of old and new. But as has been demonstrated by the work of the postmodern theorists, the more open one is to discontinuities, the more possible are new beginnings with new models of historical, cultural and normative change that elucidate—at the level of everyday practice—the ways in which individual agency can facilitate such changes. Much has been written about postmodernism, it is true, for it to be called a prolific endeavour. It is equally true that within that mass of prolixity are nuggets of wisdom scattered in abandon playfully. One has not been able to escape the hypnotic net of postmodern intellection. In the time of late postmodernism, one can only pause and reflect upon the way postmodernism has fostered the re-configuration of the interpellation of the "self" in the construction of new histories. And one can only echo with Foucault that "…those who for once in their lives have found a new tone, a new way of looking, a new way of doing, those people, I believe, will never feel the need to lament that the world is error, that history is filled with people of no consequence, and that it is time for others to keep quiet so that at last the sound of their disapproval may be heard."

III

AMARTYA SEN AND THE DISCOURSE OF POSTMODERNISM

It is in the light of the postulates discussed above and negotiations of postmodernism in trying to create a radical imaginary that I propose to read the re-configuration of India in the Western and/

or Orientalist Imagination in Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (2005)[9].

Sen is primarily an economist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1998 for his contribution to Welfare Economics. As he reiterates, his work is informed by his commitment to the *Theory of Social Choice* (see Sen, 1970). To the question whether the values that individual members of a society attach to different alternatives can be aggregated into values for the society as a whole in a way that is both fair and theoretically sound, Sen admits that when opinions differ, it is a complex matter to find a way to resolve differences to reach decisions benevolent for everyone. The theory of social choice that Sen is committed to emphasizes this invariable link between individual values and collective choice. The fundamental questions are whether—and, if so, in what way—preferences for society as a whole can be derived from the preferences of its members.

It is noteworthy that Sen's perspective in debating issues in economics also informs his understanding of culture and society. He deploys the empirical tools of his discipline for the production of a new understanding of India as an innately pluralistic and "argumentative" civilization. He consistently questions the presumption that one "must have a single—or at least a principal and dominant—identity" in a world which hopes to become increasingly borderless. He himself assumes the plurivocity of a man of multiple identities: a Welfare economist, a global intellectual, a liberal Indian, a cosmopolitan Bengali, a student of society and culture, a left-wing democrat.[10] His design is to demolish the stereotype in the Western imagination of India as the land of mysticism and spirituality, and *reclaim* a past of rationalism and scientism, skepticism and materialism—features that are usually described as Western characteristics. Sen validates his claims with illustrations from the *Vedas* which along with hymns and religious invocations also "tell stories, speculate about the world and …ask difficult questions" (xi). In fact, a doubt that is repeatedly raised concerns the very creation of the world: "…did some one make it, was it a spontaneous emergence, and is there a God who knows what really happened?" (xi) The *Rigveda*, for instance, raises a

series of questions like: "Who really knows? Who here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?...perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not—the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows—or perhaps he does not know" (xi). By drawing attention to such phenomenological issues which urge the deconstruction of given "truths', Sen attempts to *refashion* the idea of India to countervail the general essentialist assumptions about it.

Sen writes in the Preface: "India is an immensely diverse country with many distinct pursuits, vastly disparate convictions, widely divergent customs and a veritable feast of viewpoint" (ix). This large accommodativeness of India is what he wishes to configure in the new millennium. Unraveling the reality of Indian orthodoxy and the epistemology of nationhood as Western legacy, Sen re-constructs the country's inheritance of heterodoxy and heterogeneity as well as the "many Indias large and small" (45–72) which make up the social-political fabric of the country. These are the genealogies that India needs to weave into its contemporary polity, he says, to consciously highlight its inherent capaciousness where multiplicities and multi-lingualities can thrive because diversity is implicitly reflected in India's history of having served as home for many faiths.

Sen opens his discourse on the cultural life of India with the statement that "Prolixity is not alien to us in India" and gives instances of Indian loquaciousness. But he is quick to remind that the prolixity often serves a purpose, whether at the United Nations, in the *Mahabharata,* or in the Houses of the Parliament. His tone is conversational, his scholarship eclectic and the range of subject matter fascinating and wide-ranging [in the manner of a Bengali *bhadralok* holding forth at an *adda*—reminiscent of Johnsonian meetings in coffee houses].[11] One quickly realizes that behind the kaleidoscope of subjects and ideas, the animating thought is only one, and that is to stress the intellectual plurality of India's heritage. Sen believes that as a result of that plural heritage, "the simultaneous flourishing of many different convictions and viewpoints in India has drawn substantially on the acceptance... of heterodoxy and dialogue." Such an acceptance has created,

he believes, the "Argumentative Indian": predisposed, under the influence of thousands of years of conditioning, to doubt, question and dissent. Sen celebrates the heroes of both the "distant" and the "proximate argumentative traditions" (see Guha) and believes that the essence of India is inevitably argumentative, instantiated in its most distinct form in ancient India that was not corrupted by the advent of colonialism. He draws on sources ranging from Greek thinkers and Chinese scholars to Arab mathematicians that provide evidence of India's continuous dialogue on religion, astronomy, science and trade.

Taking democracy neither as a gift of the Western world that India simply accepted when it became independent, nor assuming that there is something unique in Indian history that makes it singularly suited to democracy, Sen suggests that India's democratic practices are intrinsic to its culture for having been intimately woven into its many traditions of public debate and interactive reasoning through the millennia of its existence. Sen takes issue with those who maintain that the uniqueness of the values of freedom and democracy in "Western thought" without looking for analogous models in non-Western intellectual traditions. There are, for example, debates on politics and participatory governance to be found in Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Arabic and Persian texts. He appreciates that "the difficulties of communications across cultures are real, as are the judgmental issues raised by the importance of cultural differences". But these difficulties must not lead to the creation of the binary of "our culture" and "their culture". Sen explains that dissent has always been an Indian characteristic (which M.K.Gandhi drew upon to be deployed as a political weapon) and the concept of debate has been instilled in the people of India from the very beginning of social formation. Debate and argument have been the bedrock of India's intellectual, philosophical and moral progress. Such debates might have taken place in temples, at village centres or in a king's palace where anyone, whether a prince and peasant, was heard. Sen cites the example from *Ramayana* when Javali who is not in awe of Rama as *avatara* or *purushottama*, criticizes his actions as not suitable for a wise man and a dutiful king.

Sen's arguments address Indians (living in India and abroad), those interested in India and Indology, and critics or supporters alike of multiculturalism, heterodoxy, globalization, and Western Enlightenment values. He also clarifies that it is important not to see the Indian argumentative tradition as the exclusive preserve of men and that the "use of argumentative encounters" frequently crossed the barriers of class, caste and gender. He seeks examples from history and contemporary times to present his case[12] and believes that identity and voice are important for engendering individual subjectivity. As an earlier book of his on the subject, *Rationality and Freedom* (2002) maintains, the three precepts of democracy—rationality, freedom and voice (as against silence) are the mutually reinforcing sources of civilizational advance, promoting heterogeneity that is conducive to holistic scientific, technological and cultural development. The stifling of even one of these three—by the state, community, religion or even family—is constricting and hinders human development and civilizational advance. This trinity (rationality, freedom and voice) Sen argues, is central to "social choice" and its wide-ranging applications.

The understanding and use of India's rich argumentative tradition—the foundational principle of which is dialogue (prolix or playful)—are critically important, Sen argues, for the success of India's democracy, the defence of its secular politics, the removal of inequalities related to class, caste, gender and community, and the pursuit of subcontinental and regional peace. The contemporary relevance of the dialogic tradition and of the acceptance of heterodoxy needs no defence. The tradition of heterodoxy has clear relevance for the continuance and consolidation of democracy and secularism in India. By recovering the exegetical lineages of the past, Sen wishes to ensure the survival of the practice of linguistic inter-subjectivity for creating "knowledge" and "reason" which will prove its viability by answering the nation's empirical needs of fostering healthy democratic practice and promoting the conditions for future developments. There is a fundamental generosity at work here, which seeks to use history to build a more harmonious and caring society.

Sen's book of 409 pages with four sections and 16 chapters turns the notion of the circumlocutous *babu* on its head by showing how important the tradition of argument, disputation and talking has been for the current entrenchment of Indian democracy and how important it is to involve individual agency for resurgence of the models of historical, cultural and normative change to facilitate the creation of new values in the time of late postmodernism.

Sen's interventionist endeavour, containing the historical resonance of both modernism and postmodernism, illustrates the way the latter concept is energized by the former as the postmodern *zeitgeist* gets variously appropriated and retranslated within a variety of historical temporalities depending upon location and cultural context.

NOTES

1. Postmodernism is indefinable as a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, trace, simulacrum, hyperreality, etc. to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty and the univocity of meaning. The term "postmodernism" became a major discourse with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-François Lyotard. There are disparate views on the subject. John McGowan, for example, supports Frederic Jameson view that "postmodernism as a temporal term designates a recent historical period that may be identified by a set of characteristics that operate across the whole historical terrain."
   In an essay titled "From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: the Local/Global Context," Ihab Hassan points out a number of instances in which the term "postmodernism" was used before the term became popular: Federico de Onís, 1934, (postmodernismo) a painter, in the 1870s, to mean Post-Impressionism; Arnold J. Toynbee, in 1939, to mean the end of the "modern' Western bourgeois order dating back to the seventeenth century; Bernard Smith, in 1945, to mean the movement of socialist realism in painting; Charles Olson, during the 1950s as reaction against the difficulty and experimentalism of modernist poetry; Irving Howe and Harry Levin, in 1959 and 1960, respectively, to mean a decline in high modernist culture. Also, Charles Jencks' 1977 essay "The Language of Postmodern Architecture" is cited among the earliest works which shaped the use of the term today. For a thorough historical overview distinguishing the threads of development

in different decades, cultural realms, and academic disciplines, see Hans Bertens' *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History.*

2. The French thinkers, citing the events of May 1968 as a watershed moment for modern thought and its institutions, began to work with concepts developed during the structuralist revolution in Paris in the 1950s and early 1960s, including structuralist readings of Marx and Freud. For this reason they are often called "poststructuralists." The Italians, by contrast, drew upon a tradition of aesthetics and rhetoric including figures such as Giambattista Vico and Benedetto Croce. Their emphasis is strongly historical, and they exhibit no fascination with a revolutionary moment. Instead, they emphasize continuity, narrative, and difference within continuity, rather than counter-strategies and discursive gaps.

   No one, however, suggests that postmodernism is an attack upon modernity or a complete departure from it. Rather, it is accepted that its differences lie within modernity itself, and postmodernism is a continuation of modern thinking in another mode.
3. Each one's "truth' is merely her/his own private "fiction'. Fiction is equated with mere semblance (simulacrum) and is denied the power to recreate or refigure, and thus enhance, what is called "reality'.
4. Habermas argues that postmodernism contradicts itself through self-reference, and maintains that postmodernists presuppose concepts they otherwise seek to undermine, e.g. freedom, subjectivity or creativity. He sees in this a rhetorical application of strategies employed by the artistic avant-garde of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an avant-garde that is possible only because modernity separates artistic values from science and politics in the first place. In his view, postmodernism is the aestheticization of knowledge and public discourse. Insofar as postmodernism introduces aesthetic playfulness and subversion into science and politics, he resists it in the name of a modernity moving toward completion rather than self-transformation.
5. While postmodernism may be taken to be a reaction against the rationalism, scientism and objectivity of modernism, post-structuralism is a critique of structuralism which claims that there are universal structures of language, and that these structures are ultimately the determining factors in life and thought. In Derrida, these two movements overlap resulting in a repudiation of much of the western intellectual tradition.
6. Lyotard's characterization of "paralogy" as those practices legitimating themselves exclusively within their own "small narrative" contexts, rather than within the macro-frames of modernist meta-narratives of Reason, Progress, History, etc.
7. This view may appear dangerously close to Kant's notion that knowledge is a product of interaction between mental structures and sense data. However, whereas Kant's mental structures were innate and universal and his sense

data natural and pure, culture and experience in the time of late postmodernism is seen as already deeply infected by each other. They are interdependent, and differ only in degree of determination by human agency.

8. Gayatri C Spivak, for instance, hopes that the construction of new ethical relationships with the so-called Third World and the First World, would upset the sense of the First World's pre-eminence.
9. Sen's *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (2005) is a beautifully produced hardback with a Kangra "Baramasa' masterpiece on the cover making it a preciously packaged reasoning of culture, the rich fare has much to offer through its sixteen essays. Perhaps the most significant appeal is its intellectually provocative and motivational force.

   The *Baramasa* (The Twelve Months) series of naturalistic paintings use cool, fresh colours extracted from minerals and vegetables that exhibit enamel-like lustre. Verdant greenery of the landscape, brooks, springs, flora and fauna are the recurrent images framing texts from Jaideva's *Gitagovindam,* Bihari's *Satsai* and Keshavdas' *Baramasa* that describe the eternal lovers Krishna and Radha rejoicing the moments of love. The texts describe the beauty of the countryside in different seasons and the sexually exhilarating effect of the season upon the human and the animal world. The graceful and expressive hand "movements' of the lovers, set against the verdant green background, certainly help to reinforce that effect.
10. Sen's *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of a Destiny* (2006) retains the spirit of interrogation of cultural complacencies and argues against the essentialist and one-dimensional imposition of "an identity" on a person—religious, ethnic or national—as a burden of destiny to be borne as though a person does not, indeed can not, be anything else and how this can and has led to global disorder and violence.
11. The tone is confident, however, and not magisterial. There is evidence of some hesitation regarding subjects like public health and medicines and so on.
12. There must have been a time when the freedom to interrogate was an intrinsic part of the Indian tradition, but in real life it has congealed into unquestioning acceptance of orthodoxy and uncritical genuflection before hierarchy. The enquiring spirit did lead to remarkable achievements in science and mathematics, as in the pioneering work of Aryabhatta in the fifth, Varahamihira in the sixth and Brahmagupta in the seventh centuries. But honest observers are appalled at the lack of such a spirit in the bulk of Indian universities today, where most students learn by rote, and teachers rarely encourage the right to disagree.

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Postmodern Discourse and the Discursive Formations in Foucault

S. Panneerselvan

1. MODERNISM VERSUS POSTMODERNISM

A series of socio-economic, cultural, theoretical and political events occurred in the contemporary scene throughout the globe, which helped in one way to give rise to new postmodern theories. France is a very good example for this. French theories were very much influenced by the rapid modernization process in France that followed World War II. Post-world war II modernization processes in France was an important event in this context. Scholars like John Ardagh argue that between the early 1950s and mid-1970s France went through a spectacular renewal. As a result of this, one can see the economic and social developments, urbanization, modernization and industrial development in France. In the 1970s, French theorists were attacking modern theories rooted in humanist assumption and Enlightenment rationalist discourse. For example in *Madness and Civilization* (1973), Foucault talks of "death of man" while formulating new conception of politics and ethics. Similarly Baudrillard's new form of society, culture, experience and subjectivity, Lyotard's idea of the impossibility of continuity with the totalizing social theories and the need for revitalizing the politics of the past are the important happenings in the postmodernist trend in France. Also one can mention about Deleuze, Guattari, Lacan and Mouffe.

Deleuze's and Guattari's conception of language, their criticisms against linguistic, their views on the social concept of meaning have emerged due to serious philosophical thinking. Laclau and Mouffe use postmodernism critiques to go beyond Marxism and to reconstruct the project of radical democracy. The postmodernists call for new categories, modes of thought and writing, and values and politics to overcome the deficiencies of modern discourses and practices have made significant change in the contemporary French philosophy.

At least in the past two decades postmodernism has become a dominating movement in the cultural, social and intellectual fields everywhere. In philosophy, a new awareness has entered which allows philosophers to look at things and theories in a new perspective. Thinkers like Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Habermas, Derrida, Rorty, Lyotard and others are related to this movement by their innovative approach and insights into the philosophical problems. As a result of this, postmodernism has produced new political and social theories, which throw new light into the old problems. The postmodernists do not have one single perspective or method. But generally it is agreed that postmodernism has emerged as a reaction to the modern tradition and traditional problems. Traditionalistic approach to history, politics, culture, theory etc., was questioned by the postmodernists. New discourses and new openings have entered into the postmodernism. It is a new discourse and in this, established paradigms were questioned and replaced by the postmodernism. It emerged as a revolt to modernism and modernist principles. One way of defining this movement is that it is the movement, which emerged after modern period. Though there is no unified theory or common set of positions among the supporters of postmodernists, for the above reason they are known as postmodernists.

It is true that in modernity, there was political, social and cultural transformation. In fact, modernity emerged as a reaction to traditional society and was characterized by innovation, novelty and dynamism. Thus prior to this modern period there was "premodern" period. Since premodern has not contributed much to the development of human race, we consider the modern

and postmodern period as more important than the premodern period. In modern period, reason was considered as the source of progress in knowledge. Some modernists went to the extent of believing that reason was the only source of knowledge. It is the foundation of knowledge, according to them. No doubt, modernity has produced many welcoming changes in the human society. One such change was the industrial transformation. Modernity also called for cultural transformation. New technologies and new modes of transformation and communication—all these are important features of modernism. It allowed urbanization, rationalization, bureaucratization, industrialization etc., which definitely have moved the human progress many step further.

But the evil effects or ill effects of modernization are too many. The industrialization has alienated the common man and woman from the society. They were removed from the public sphere. The colonialization reduced man to a machine. Man's values were lost. Modernity was the rule of domination and control. Horkheimer and Adorno very rightly defined it as a process whereby reason turned into its opposite and modernity's promises of liberation masked form of oppressive and domination. Postmodernism objects to the ontological and epistemological premises of modernity and works for a reproduction of meaning. It rejects the traditional identity of a discourse and explains how it is not possible to reduce the plurality of human values. It also rejects the hierarchy in culture, and celebrates the notion of plurality of cultures.

The development of social theories and discourse are the two new important contributions of postmodernism. One can always see the connection between postmodernism on the on hand, structuralism and post-structuralism on the other. Postmodernism adopts the techniques developed by structuralism and poststructuralism. It must be admitted that philosophy as discourse becomes possible through the techniques of postmodernism.

2. FOUCAULT AND POSTMODERNISM

Where do we locate Foucault? Foucault's contribution to postmodern thinking is highly important, though he will not

associate himself with postmodernism completely. He cannot be placed in one category or group, as he is a complex thinker. He was a critic of reason and western thought, like Nietzsche and Bataille. The impact of Nietzsche and Bataille on Foucault is noteworthy. It was Nietzsche who started the post-metaphysical and post-humanist approach in philosophy, and from him Foucault learnt what is known as "genealogical history". Also from Nietzsche, he understood that the will to truth and knowledge is indissociable from the will to power. Nietzsche's following claims are very important in shaping Foucault's thoughts. (a) Systematizing methods produce reductive social and historical analysis and (b) knowledge is perspectival in nature, requiring multiple viewpoints to interpret a heterogeneous reality. Foucault as a critique of modernity and humanism, approaches the problems like society, knowledge and power, and made a considerable influence on the postmodern thinking. Foucault draws upon anti-Enlightenment tradition that rejects the equation of reason, emancipation and progress. He asserts that an interface between modern forms of power and knowledge has served to create new forms of domination.

A close study of historic-philosophical study, for which Foucault is famous for, attempts to explain the above point from different perspectives, like psychology, medicine, punishment and criminology. His purpose is to write a critique of our historical era, which problematizes modern forms of knowledge, rationality, social institutions and subjectivity that seem given and natural, but in fact are contingent socio-historical constructs of power and domination. Apart from Nietzsche, the second influence came from Bataille, who also was a critic of Enlightenment reason and the reality principle of Western culture. Like Nietzsche, Bataille also supported the realm of heterogeneity and attacked the sovereign philosophical subject and argued in favour of transgressive experiences. Foucault focused on the social and discursive practices that play a role in the formation of the human subject. Throughout his philosophical writings he examined the means by which social and personal identity are generated and objectified. One of the most important of these strategies consists

of dividing practices, which categorize, label, isolate and exclude the subject from what is considered "normal" social intercourse. In *Madness and Civilization* he deals with how these dividing practice operated in the case of "insane" and pointed out that the manipulative procedures used to implement dividing practices change over time. In *The Birth of Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault continued this genealogical investigation of the rules and norms generating dividing practices. In *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* he dealt with the autonomous structures of knowledge. He always relates knowledge with domination. Knowledge, according to him, is always part of a cultural matrix of power relations. His critique of modernity and humanism, and development of new perspectives on society, knowledge, discourse and power, thus made him the important thinker of postmodern thought.

Foucault combined premodern, modern and postmodern perspectives. He makes a distinction between the classical era (1660–1800) and the modern era (1800–1950) in the post-renaissance period and says that in the classical era, we can see how human beings were dominated by power. He rejects the idea that human progress is from combat to combat; humanity installs each of its violence in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination. Modern rationality is a coercive force, according to him. He talks about the individuals who have been dominated through social institutions, discourses and practices. The task of the Enlightenment was to multiply "reasons for political power" and to disseminate it through the social field, eventually saturating the spaces of everyday life. In his writings of 1970s, Foucault stigmatizes modern rationality, institutions and forms of subjectivity as sources or constructs of domination. Analysis of knowledge and truth became the main task for him. While modern theories tend to see knowledge and truth as neutral, objective, universal or vehicles of progress and emancipation, Foucault analyses them as integral components of power and domination. He valorizes the amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism as compared to the inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories. For this reason, he is often considered a champion of

post-modernism where incommensurability, difference and fragmentation play an important role, though Foucault cannot be labelled as a postmodern thinker alone. It is because in his writings one can see the culmination of premodernism, modernism and postmodernism.

3. DIFFERENT FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

Foucault supports the need for plurality of forms of knowledge and microanalysis. His aim is to detotalize history and society as unified wholes governed by a centre, essence or telos, and to decentre the subject. His approach to history as a non-evolutionary, fragmented field of disconnect knowledge and society as a dispersed regularity of unevenly developing levels of discourse are important. In short, he is one of the supporters of "difference". "Respect…difference" has been his slogan. Nietzsche's conception that the world has no single meaning but rather countless meanings and that there is no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted, has paved the way for Foucault to reject the notion of approaching reality from a particular standpoint or from one particular way of philosophical thinking. He has understood that discourse is a complex reality that we not only can but also should approach it at different levels with different methods. This means, for Foucault, no single theory of method of interpretation can be acceptable. It is because there is always plurality of discourses, institutions and modes of power, which contribute to the modern society.

Foucault in his detailed study of historiography examines the different historical societies from the ancient Greek to the European societies up to twentieth century. How does his historiography differ from the conventional historiography? Foucault's approach to the study of history was archaeological and genealogical. One of his criticisms against the traditional method of writing history is that this modern form of history writing, which started at the early nineteenth century is the period which also experienced the dramatic increase in European colonization. Foucault explains the problems with regard to the dialectical history developed by Hegel. First of all, such a view of history tries to justify European

colonial practice as involving the clash of an advanced civilized West with the rest of the world, which was considered as barbaric and backward. Secondly, it tries to understand history in terms of great ideological belief systems like liberalism, capitalism, socialism, etc. Thirdly, a dialectic conception of history tries to understand history in terms of a grand or totalising vision. This synthetic view of history is replaced by a pluralistic view of history, according to Foucault. Thus Foucault admits multiple beginnings, pauses, gaps in history. This means that history should be studied in terms of discontinuity and disjunctive, rather than continuity and conjunctive. Foucault very clearly states that the conventional historiography always begins with a unified subject. Such a historiography marginalizes and silences women, indigenous and colonized people. They are only supporting actors; they cannot be the makers of history. It thus divides people into subjects and object, active and passive, the colonizing and the colonized people. Against this, Foucault develops the concept of "subjugated knowledge". It is a form of knowledge, which has been subjugated, or buried under the official or dominant forms of knowledge that emerge within a social order. As a part of the colonial project, the ways of knowing in science, history and government have been buried. For example, the colonizing forces have always tried to suppress the struggle of the colonized people. Edward Said had applied the Foucaultian ideas to colonial practice in his *Orientalism.* Said explains how colonial practice was based on the construction of Oriental people as being less civilized than people in the West, and hence the need to be colonized and governed by others. One can see how discourses established a set of binary opposites as civilized and barbarous, active and passive, progressive and backward, subjects of knowledge and objects of knowledge, etc. The traditional or conventional historiography ignores the history of the oppressed and the backward and the colonized. The subjugated knowledge helps to sustain the colonized people in their struggle against colonizing forces. Foucault is interested in creating a history of the different modes by which human beings are made subjects. He says that the goal of his work has not been to analyse the phenomenon of power, or to elaborate the foundations

of such an analysis, but to create a history of the different mode by which in our culture human beings are made subjects.

Foucault uses the terms like "archaeology" and "genealogy" to denote the new historiographical approach while discussing the critique of modernity. He says that his objective is to create a history of the different modes, in which human beings are made subjects. In his earlier writings, Foucault had been using the term "ontology of knowledge". His usage of the term "ontology" is different from that of hermeneutics. "Archaeology", i.e. historical approach, is also different from hermeneutics. It is also different from idealism and humanist mode of continuous evolution of thought. For example, in hermeneutics, there is a need for seeking a deep truth underlying discourse also. In idealist and humanist mode of writing, there is a search for "continuous" evolution of thought in terms of tradition. Archaeology rejects both. It tries to identify the condition of possibility of knowledge, as the determining rules of formation of discursive rationality that operates beneath the level of intention or the thematic content. In his writings, the term "genealogy" plays an important role. He defines the word as follows:

> Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories, which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today… What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledge against the claims of unitary body of theory which would filter hierarchies, and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.

Genealogy, for Foucault, depends on the voices of the disqualified in order to disrupt the serenity of what is. Though some argue that in his later period, he rejected the notion of testimony of the other, he maintained the view that genealogy reveals contingency as opposed to necessity and it is contingencies that allow the possibility of freedom. A close study of Foucault's works like, *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality* prove that he believes humanism and reason have functioned in the West as definitive, exclusionary terms and the identity of the society is formed on what it forcefully excludes. Foucault questions the possibility of a pure other. In *Discipline and Punish,* he argues that the excluded are never outside. "The carceral network does

not cast the unassimilable into a confused hell; there is not outside. It takes back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other. It saves everything, including what it punishes."[2]

Discipline, according to Foucault, works through a system of punishment and gratification. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the "prison" was used as a central disciplinary site. It was a disciplinary site in which the coercive force of disciplinary power could be used in a direct and overt way. The prison as a micro-society had its own experts, hierarchies, ranks and network and its own codes of conduct, protocols and procedures. Foucault talks about panopticon as one of the ways of discipline. It was Bentham who developed this concept in the eighteenth century. Panopticon, is a tower placed in a central position with the prison. The guards would be able to watch every cell and the prisoners from the tower which was designed in such a way that the prisoners would never know whether they are being watched or not. Here the prisoners would assume that they could be observed at any moment and would adjust their behaviour accordingly. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault talks of different modes of disciplinary power, which were prevalent throughout the social body and modern western cultures. By explaining that his approach is different from the methods that analysed power in terms of force imposed from the above, Foucault shows that discipline works through a series of quiet coercions working at the level of people's bodies shaping how they behave and how they see the world.

In his interesting essay, "What Is Enlightenment?" Foucault articulates how his critical practices differ from that of Kantian critique, where necessary condition plays a role. He says:

> This criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method… This critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are, what it is impossible for us to do and to know, but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.[3]

The above passage clearly shows that Genealogy exists as an alternative to transcendental thinking of Kant. It also teaches that history could have been other than what it has been. History is the

product of successive power struggles, which are discontinuous. Foucault who emerged two centuries after Kant observes the continuity of his post-Nietzschean genealogy with the classical critique of reason. He says:

> I think that the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: What is this reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?[4]

But Foucault emphasized the discontinuity also. He says:

> If the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today (is) … In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligating, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?[5]

The questions of Foucault prove that he is for practical critique of reason. In the above essay, Foucault attempts to transcribe the Kantian critique as an attitude that is addressed permanently to the discourse through which subject is constituted[6] Foucault's view about the relationship between knowledge, autonomy and political action does not presume the transcendental implications of pure reason as in the case of Kant. Each person is viewed as the subject of knowledge and the self is always situated within the control of social, economic and political institutions. The possibility of Enlightenment, according to Foucault, is not something connected with a priori necessity inscribed in practical reason, but that which enters into medicine, psychiatry, criminology, sexual hygiene, etc., as strategies of domination. In *Madness and Civilization, Discipline and Punish,* and *The History of Sexuality* one can see his genealogies of sanity and madness, sickness and health, sexuality and perversion.

In the well known essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory"[7] Horkheimer supports the notion of critical theory. The standard conception of theory, otherwise known as traditional theory, is collected knowledge, which is useful for describing facts, and from Descartes to Kant and Husserl, we find such type of knowledge. Horkheimer makes a distinction between traditional and critical

theory. One of the important tasks of critical theory is to challenge the privileged "non-position" of social–scientific knowledge by analysing the modes of its production, the roles it played in society, the interests it served, and the historical process through which it came to power. It is concerned with the historical and social genesis of the facts it examines and with the social contexts in which it results will have their effects. Later, the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*[8] appeared in support of critical theory. It also was in favour of the critical historiography. Nietzsche analyses modernity's preoccupation with history as a sign of its loss of a sense, of its own role in history. Modernity tries to beak with its past, but to know that its achievements are creative and novel, it must look back to see whether the past had anticipated it. Thinking historically is thus a peculiar paradigmatic feature of modernity. In other words, thinking historically means, more than thinking about the methods of historiography or the events of history, for even thinking about topics like knowledge, culture, morality, religion etc., can involve increased and perhaps, even exclusive concern with their historical nature. One can see the elements of critical history developed by Horkheimer in Foucault, who talks about three ways of thinking historically. (1) Antiquarian historiography tries to recreate the past as it really was, ignoring the present as if the present does not condition how the past is achieved and understood. (2) Monumental historiography looks at the past for models of how to act in the present, ignoring the novelty of the present and diminishing the significance of present agents by comparison with the triumphs of past heroes. (3) Critical historiography takes into consideration of both the present and future. Foucault is in favour of such historiography, which is visible in his approach to knowledge and power. Horkheimer and Adorno helped Foucault a great deal to develop his theory of power. One can see the influence of this in *Discipline and Punish.* The passage from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explain how Foucault developed his theory of power:

> Where the evolution of the machine has already turned into that of the machinery of domination… untruth is not represented merely by the outdistanced. As against that, adaptation to the power of progress

involves the progress of power, and each time anew brings about those degenerations which show not unsuccessful but successful progress to be its contrary.[9]

Foucault echoes the above point in *Discipline and Punish,* which shall be shown in the following discussion.

Marcuse in "Philosophy and Critical; Theory"[10] argues that reason is the fundamental category of philosophical thought, the category by which it has bound itself to human destiny. He says that in classical philosophy, it represents the highest human potential and in the modern period, it comes to be represented as self-conscious self-determination.[11] He further states that what remains outstanding to the realization of reason is not a philosophical task.[12] This means that the philosophical concept of free rational action was seriously inadequate. Critical theory is always concerned with the life of reason, not with mere reason, but with critical reason, which has helped Foucault to develop the theory of critical historiography.

4. DISCOURSE AND BIO-POWER

Foucault attempts to rethink the nature of modern power in a non-totalizing, non presentational and anti-humanist scheme. He says that to this day we have yet to fully comprehend the nature of power. He rejects the notion of modern power to be anchored in macrostructures for ruling classes. He gives a postmodern approach to power and sees power as dispersed, indeterminate, heterogeneous, subjective and productive, constituting individuals' bodies and identities. He argues how the two models of power, namely, the economical and the judicial are defective. For example, the economic model suggested by the Marxists has to be regarded as a reductionistic subordination of power to class domination. On the other hand, the judicial model approached power in terms of law, legal and moral right and political sovereignty. In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault talks of a new mode of power know as "bio-power". It is bio-power which, according to Foucault, lies at the root of the Nazi Holocaust. He argues that with the constitution of bio-power as the central concern of the modern state, sex became

the focus of an explosion of discourses concerning the health of the body. Thus discourses like, organic physiology, gynaecology, neurology, psychology, etc., which established life as the focus of power where the primary concern was the body and descent of the classes that ruled.[13]

Foucault believes that every production of knowledge serves the interest of power. Thus knowledge produced in economics, medicine, psychiatry and other human sciences is nothing but a part of the power of the social institutions that have grown around these disciplines. Foucault talks of three characteristics of power. First, power is productive. Secondly, it is only exercised by individuals but never possessed by them and thirdly, power is involved in every social relation. His contention is that the individual does not stand apart from power prior to it. Since individual is constituted to be power, individual existence and identity are among power effects. The individual exercises power at certain times and in certain places as a functionary of power's intentions, but not his own. He further says:

> There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject…the rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed tactics which, becoming connected to one another.[14]

Thus for Foucault, the individual is not the agent who puts power into play: on the other hand, individual is the element of power's articulation.

Stressing on the role of power, Foucault further argues that a society without power relations can only be an abstraction and in every social field, there are relations of power throughout. He wants us to reject the notion that knowledge can exist only where power relations are suspended. He is of the view that it is power which produces knowledge. Power and knowledge directly imply one another. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge. Similarly, there is no knowledge, which does not presuppose power relations. Thus he denies the independent knowledge. In *Discipline and Punish,* and other writings one can see the relation between power and

knowledge which is scattered in different forms. In *Madness and Civilization* he argues that man is historically constituted as the other of reason. In *The Birth of the Clinic,* he talks about the movement from a premodern speculatively based medicine to a modern empirically based medicine rooted in the rationality of the scientific gaze. Again in *The Order of Things,* he discusses the emergence of the human sciences and the importance of such a study where the rules, assumptions focusing on the shifts in the sciences of life, labour and knowledge of human societies are important.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* he corrects some of his past mistakes. This was due to the influence of French historians like Bachlard and Canguithem. In this work, Foucault maintains that discontinuity is a positive working concept. It is no longer seen as blight on the historical nature and stigmatized in principle. Foucault tries to break up the unity approach of Hegel and Marx with regard to evolutionary history and tries to see the possibility of having a number of groups. This detotatlizing move is the contribution of Foucault, which allows multiplicity of discourses in knowledge. With this concept, he attacks the traditional interpretation of history. But for this reason we cannot define him as philosopher of discontinuity. In the philosophy of discontinuity of Foucault, the break is not so radical; it does not simply negate everything that had preceded it. Very rightly, he says: "Rupture is possible only on the basis of rules that are already in operation" [15] Discontinuity does not mean complete change but a redistribution, a reconfiguration, a redefining. Thus in Foucault one can see the synthesis of continuity and discontinuity.

5. DECENTRING THE SUBJECT

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* he undertook two responsibilities. Decentring the subject and critical analysis of reason are these two important responsibilities. The work attempts to show that the subject is a fictitious construct. For him, archaeology would be the appropriate methodology of the analysis of local discourses. It criticized the human sciences as being grounded in humanist

assumptions. It also theorized the birth of the human sciences in the context of the modern episteme. In 1970, the transition from archaeology to genealogy took place. Genealogy is a new mode of historical writing, according to him. It seeks to foreground the material context of subject construction. A significant aspect of it is that it links theories to the operation of power and tries to put historical knowledge to operate in logical struggles. It highlights the power and effects relations they produced. Foucault is interested in writing the histories of unknown, forgotten, rejected, uncared, marginal discourses. He firmly believed that the discourses of madness, medicine, punishment and sexuality have independent histories and institutional identity, which are neither reducible nor enlargeable institutions like that of the modern state.

It was during the 1970s, he developed the theory of power and his historical vision of problems like madness, poverty and unemployment, has helped him a great deal to develop his theory of power. He says that to this day, we have yet to fully comprehend the nature of power. He tries to approach the notion of power from a non-totalizing, non-representational, and anti-humanist approach. Foucault's approach to the theory of power is rooted in a highly individual historical vision, which centres on the transition from tradition to modern industrial societies. He was mainly concerned with the forms of knowledge and models of social organization. His concept of power could be understood only in the context of the historical foundation of the modern west. He made a bold approach to conceive problems like madness, poverty, unemployment, the inability to work etc., as social problems and it is the responsibility of the state to take care of these. His approach to historical analysis can be seen in *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic*. His concern here was with the emergence of modern form of administration of the social world. In both the works, he makes it clear that his concern was with the physical rather than the moral disorder. The intervention in the social domain by agencies of welfare and control is more a fundamental feature of modern societies than an economy released from directly political relations of domination. In the two books that followed namely, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* his

attention was towards the internal structure of scientific discourse especially the discourse of human sciences. Again in *Discipline and Punish,* the historical analysis gains prominence. Here, Foucault explains the notion of power as follows: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces realities; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth".[16] He rejects the repressive and negative aspects of power and apprehend it as primarily positive and productive. Power constitutes the individuals on whom and through whom it subsequently operates. He says:

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals.[17]

He explains the importance of power in *The History of Sexuality* as omnipresence. Power is produced at every moment, at every point, or rather in every relation between points "Power is everywhere; not because it englobes everything, but because it comes from everywhere"[18] says Foucault.

In the writings of 1970s one can see the relation between forms of power and forms of knowledge. In fact there is a fusion between the two. While discussing the relation between the two, he says that power is a pre-condition of knowledge rather than knowledge a pre-condition of power. He talks about the transformation of the fundamental structures of experience through which human beings become able to think of themselves as the subjects of a purely procedural rationality of inquiry and to consider together irrational human beings as the possible objects of such an inquiry. He explains how the relation between power and knowledge concerns the repressive institutions, which make the formation of certain kinds of knowledge possible. He contends:

> If it has been possible to constitute knowledge of the body, this has been possible to constitute knowledge of the body, this has been by way of an

ensemble of military and educational disciplines. It was on the basis of power over the body that a physiological, origins knowledge of it became possible.[19]

His conviction is that the power and knowledge cannot even analytically be separated. "…it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful of resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge."[20] He stresses the point that power and knowledge directly imply one another and there is a power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time relations of power. For Foucault, structuralism is the captive to classical form of knowledge, and for this reason he rejects it.

6. DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

Foucault argues that the concept of human nature is a product of particular historical situation, a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge, which arose at the time of Enlightenment. He says: "If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared…then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea." He analyses the "discourse" or "discursive practice", which is rule-governed set of statements in which a community of human beings embodies what it thinks of as "knowledge". A discursive practice, according to him, is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a give period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciate function. By saying that the discursive practices are historical, Foucault makes it clear that they rare not found in all communities at all times and in all paces, but belongs to a particular phase in the historical development of a particular community. This means that there can be no criteria of truth and falsity, which apply outside a particular discursive

practice. There is no universal standards of logic or rationality. If the different discursive practices are found at different periods in history, one cannot look at history as progress towards objective truth.

The epistemes are the periods of history organized around and explicable in terms of specific world-views and discourses. According to him, knowledge and truth are not essential and a historical, but are produced by epistemes and hold that episteme together. This means, for Foucault, knowledge and truth are tied up with the way in which power is exercised in our age and are caught up in power struggles. Foucault talks of three main epistemes: (1) the renaissance, (2) the classical and (3) the modern. What is interesting is that he does not see a linear development from renaissance to modern age. Renaissance, he contends is the "age of resemblances" which is traced back to God or Nature, but in modern age, man is responsible for knowledge. Foucault's book *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* examines how epistemes work and speak themselves through the production of "discursive formations". The discursive formations are the organizing principles of an episteme. They work to make speech possible, organize ideas or concepts and produce objects of knowledge. Foucault's approach to the notions of the order of things and epistemes constituted a new way of looking at "the history of ideas."

Foucault's views on discourses and institutions can be seen in his book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* He talks about discourses, which can be understood as a series of events. He points out that what comes between ourselves and our experience is the grounds upon which we can act, speak and make sense of things. Foucault is interested in language as a whole, i.e., discourse. Discourses are nothing but language in action. Our actions and thoughts are regulated and controlled by these discourses. "Discourses can be understood as language in action: they are the windows, if you like, which allow us to make sense of, and 'see' things. These discursive windows or explanations shape our understanding of ourselves, and our capacity to distinguish the valuable from the valueless, the true from the false, and the right from the wrong".

7. EVALUATION

One thinker who was more sympathetic towards Foucault is Habermas. The transition from archaeology to genealogy in Foucault and his preoccupation with the theory of power is very much appreciated by Habermas. In his work, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* Habermas asks the following question:

> What, then, are the grounds that determine Foucault to shift the meaning of this specific will to knowledge and to truth that is constitutive for the modern form of knowledge in general, and for the human sciences in particular, by *generalizing* this will to knowing self-mastery into a will to power *per se* and to postulate that *all* discourses can be shown to have the character of hidden power and derive from the practices of power? [21]

Habermas himself tries to answer the above question by saying that if one takes the question of episteme, one never masters it. He says that this is precisely the reason for Foucault to go without the concept of episteme altogether, Habermas says: "When he (Foucault) gives up the autonomy of the forms of knowledge in favour of their foundation within power technologies and *subordinates* the archeology of knowledge to the genealogy that explains the emergence of knowledge from the practice of power."[22] Thus Habermas very well supports Foucault with regard to the theory of power and genealogy. Does this mean that Habermas has nothing to disagree with Foucault? Habermas says that the concealed derivation of the concept of power from the concept of the will to knowledge in Foucault is systematically ambiguous. He says that the trace of the philosophy of subject is not completely absent in Foucault. "Genealogical historiography is supposed to be … the functionalist social science and at the same time historical research into constitutive social science."[23] Habermas further says: "Foucault did not think through the aporias of his own approach well enough to see how his theory of power was overtaken by a fate similar to that of the human sciences rooted in the philosophy of the subject."[24] Though Habermas supports Foucault's critiques of subjectivity and the institutions of modernity, at the same time Habermas argues that Foucault has no standpoint from

which to criticize modern institutions and has no basis for ethics and politics. Both Foucault and Habermas relate knowledge to power but Foucault links reason with power and domination, but Habermas distinguishes different types of reason. Habermas also criticizes Foucault for rejecting modernity and Enlightenment.

All of his writings from *Madness and Civilization* to the *History of Sexuality* presuppose a close proximity of power and knowledge. but according to the critics, the concept of power has a drawback because of this intrinsic relation between knowledge and power. It is also argued that his critique of modernity is one-sided in its focus on repressive forms of rationalization and fails to acknowledge the merits of modernity. His criticism that modernity has brought only domination cannot be accepted because modernity has brought advances in medicine, democracy, liberty, law or equality which are not acknowledged by Foucault. For him, power breeds resistance but the nature of this resistance is not explained by him. In other words, he has not properly developed the notion of genealogy of resistance. Also, his understanding that power is mostly understood as an impersonal and anonymous force, which is exercised apart from the actions and intentions cannot be correct. He has not taken into account how the agents in positions of economic and political power administrate power. Though he talks about the micro level of resistance in power struggle, he does not discuss the modalities of local struggles. No doubt, the importance of local struggles cannot be neglected, but the multiplicity of the local struggle must be properly united or linked in order to avoid fragmentation. Otherwise the local struggles lose their significance. All micro-struggles must be related to macro-struggles to oppose the domination of power. Foucault has neglected this aspect. But it is an indisputable fact that Foucault could approach the theory of power from a postmodern perspective, though it has certain deficiencies.

NOTES

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Language, Truth and Reason: Modernism Versus Postmodernism

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In this paper an attempt is made to consider the challenges thrown by the postmodernists regarding the nature of language, reason and truth. It is well known that the postmodernist thinkers have questioned the idea of language and truth and also of reason implicit in the Enlightenment[1] thought. It is imperative therefore to investigate the arguments of postmodernism against the Enlightenment metaphysics of man and the world.

I would like to argue that though postmodernism has succeeded in opening up the debate against modernism, it has not succeeded in ruling out the modernist thinking in every aspect. Modernism is still a prevalent mode of thought especially in the West where the ideas of truth and reason still prevail in the face of criticisms from the postmodernists.

I. THE ENLIGHTENMENT METAPHYSICS OF MAN: REASON AND LANGUAGE

From the seventeenth century it is noted that man has been shifted to the centre of the universe as the Cartesian Cogito, i.e., the transcendental Ego.[2] The Ego has been posited as the source of the ideas and also as the seat of the human language and reason. Reason has been recognized as the hallmark of the human

beings, with entrenched capacities to think and have knowledge of the world. Descartes defined reason as the basic instrument of man in his quest for the absolutely certain knowledge of the universe.[3] Thus knowledge and thought have been rooted in the Ego for all practical purposes. Therefore Ego has dominated the Enlightenment understanding of man.

The idea of reason is the idea of a thinking faculty that engages man in the exploration of reality. It is the source of categories with which man thinks about the universe. Kant perceived reason as the cognitive as well as the moral faculty that gives rise to the universal and necessary laws that explain both the possibility of knowledge and the possibility of moral experience.[4] In this sense, reason holds the key to the nature of the universe as well as to the depth of the moral reality. The centrality of reason to the human activities laid the foundations of the Enlightenment project of the metaphysics of man with singular emphasis on the creativity and the law-abiding nature of man. Reason was theologized[5] in the philosophy of Hegel giving rise to the omnipotent God-like presence of reason in the metaphysical legislation over the whole universe. Reason became the creative force in the dialectical evolution of the universe

With the advent of reason as a creative force there appeared the idea of grand narratives that reason creates in the realm of metaphysics and logic. While logic lays down the principles of thinking, metaphysics brings out the conceptual map of the universe which reason provides for all mankind. Thus there arises the congruence of logic and metaphysics in the grand understanding of the universe. The totalizing spirit of the grand narratives has become the inheritance of the reason in the Western modernist modes of thinking. Western science is a gift of this totalizing spirit of reason which has manifested in the supremacy of science and scientific metaphysics. What metaphysics is at the level of reason, science is at the level of empirical thought. Both are privy to the totalizing character of the modernist thought.

Both metaphysics and science have given rise to language as the vehicle of thought. Language is the symbol system that articulates meaning and reference vis-à-vis the universe. Language cements the connection between thought and reality by virtue of its own

connective mechanisms. As the field of signifiers and symbols, language has a great capacity to organize thoughts both in science and metaphysics thus making grand narratives possible. Therefore language has been at the centre of any system of thought both metaphysical and scientific. Recent studies of language have revealed that language is the underlying reality in the human consciousness and is the unifying mechanism to study thought, consciousness and reality.[6] Language is the great unifier of things and ideas. From this point of view, language has been perceived as an embedded reality in the Enlightenment way of philosophizing. The twentieth century philosophy of language is a continuation of the Enlightenment view of language as a primary phenomenon.[7]

Language is characterized by (a) unity and (b) diversity in coping with reality. It has held the unified picture of the universe much in the fashion Wittgenstein has mentioned in his *Tractatus*.[8] Language, according to this view, is the picture of the universe much as it shares the logical structure of the universe. Language is credited to have a unified logical structure commensurate with the logical structure of the world. This makes it possible to make the representation of the world in language possible.

II. THE MIRROR OF NATURE

The mirror imagery has been entrenched in the modernist thinking in metaphysics and science because it has become the instrument through which the modernist mind has tried to unravel the mystery of Nature. Richard Rorty has very aptly brought out the importance of this imagery in modern thinking.[9] According to Rorty, the idea of picture has been the cornerstone of the Cartesian view of mind and language because both mind and language represent the world in their inner structure, i.e. in their "glassy essences".[10] This view of the matter has been evident in the post-Cartesian metaphysics of mind and the world.

There are two important points which need to be mentioned in this connection:

(1) Mind is a mirror of the world in its capacity to bring out the essence of the world.

(2) Language makes contact with the world by its logical form such that the world is well represented in language.

Both the points need to be discussed in detail because both have a potentially far reaching consequence for modernism in philosophy. The idea of mind as a mirror has to be taken as suggesting that there is within thought the power to capture the nuances of reality. Thought and things in the world have a logical relation which needs to be understood in the overall scheme of metaphysics. Hegel's dictum that the real is rational suggests that thinking does make a difference to the world. If we remove the mind the world ceases to be intelligible. Thus we are led to believe that mind makes Nature.[11] The other idea that language is a mirror of the world is equally important to understand how the linguistic representations are possible. Knowledge of the world is telescoped into the linguistic representations keeping in view the idea that language is a "great mirror"[12] of the world.

As already explained, the modern idea of language as the depository of the grammatical mechanism to track the world is well formulated in the writings of Russell and early Wittgenstein who went to the extent of saying that language and the world have a common logical structure. This inherits the Hegelian claim that the real is rational because of its sharing the logical structure of thought. Philosophers of language in general accept that language has a great potentiality to make the world intelligible to us because it has sense and reference[13] which are embedded in the language itself. Language has a built-in sense that makes it capable of representing the world as Frege has pointed out. Frege's idea of a prefect language introduces the idea of a logico-mathematical structure which language shares with the world. This idea has pervaded much of philosophy of language of the logical positivists[14] and the defenders of the ideal of a unified science a la Carnap, Hempel and Reichenbach.

The idea of scientific rationality espoused by the rationalist philosophers has been rooted in the Cartesian idea of mind as a thinking faculty. Mind is conceived in this tradition as the epitome of rational and logical thinking. Therefore there has been

a systematic effort to justify knowledge as a representation of the world which can be true on the rational grounds of objectivity and verifiability. Language, thought and the world are taken to be fulfilling the logical condition of having a systematic structure. This structure of the world is mirrored in the structure of language and thought.

III. TRUTH AND RATIONALITY

The idea of truth has been a part of the nature of rationality by virtue of the fact that truth is the core of any rational thinking. Truth is the hallmark of a rational thinking because thoughts are valuated by the standard of truth. As Karl Popper[15] has pointed out, truth is the goal of all scientific endeavour and is the ultimate aim that science as an enterprise must fulfil. Truth is the way the world stands to human thought and experience in the pursuit of unfolding the real nature of the universe. Truth prevents man from falling into ignorance.

In the Enlightenment theory of knowledge, truth has been admitted to be central to science. This is evidenced in the fact that science has been taken as a pursuit of truth. Truth, however, is not a mere method of evaluation of knowledge but the goal of knowledge itself. Thus truth cannot be a mere adjunct of knowledge but the essential feature of knowledge. From this point of view, truth is the essential condition on which knowledge is based. The theory of knowledge as justified true belief has been the cornerstone of Enlightenment epistemology keeping in view the idea that no knowledge is possible if no truth is guaranteed. Both Descartes and Kant defended the possibility of absolutely true knowledge on the ground that truth is accessible to human thought and experience.

The coherence and correspondence theories of truth have been part of the main tradition of epistemology in the modern period. So far as correspondence theory is concerned, we are assured of truth in case what we know exactly corresponds with what is known. This theory has been the bedrock of Western science because without this theory no scientific knowledge can

be vouched for. Science is basically about the world and so there can be no escape from the correspondence theory of truth in epistemology. The coherence theory emphasizes the fact that truth brings more truths together in a coherent system. It is the way the whole language works in its truth-tracking operations. Davidson[16] has brought out the semantic nuances of the concept of truth in his writings on the semantics and epistemology of truth. He continues the modernist engagement with truth in order to affirm the fact that truth is still the anchor of our beliefs regarding the world.

It is noteworthy in this connection that truth is well entrenched in the modernist ways of thinking. This is precisely because truth leads us to the facts in the world and thus keep us in constant engagement with the world. Truth is world-directed because of the fact that in truth lies the possibility of a proposition being in touch with reality. Science itself in the broad sense remains a truth-tracking enterprise so that we are in the better know of the world in spite of all possibility of knowledge collapse. Knowledge in the true sense of the term is a triumph of truth over untruth.

A rational man is a truth-loving man in the sense that a truth-speaker alone is capable of being a rational judge of things. Truth is the hallmark of rationality in this sense. If a man who knows not what truth is, is likely to belong to the camp of those who are irrational. The idea of a rational man is associated with the idea of truth in the most intimate sense.

IV. THE POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF REASON AND TRUTH

The postmodernists have questioned the very idea of reason in the transcendental sense. Their point is that there is no reason with a capital R and that there are only the ordinary ways of thinking but no extraordinary faculty like the semi-divine Mind. Postmodernism does not accept anything other than those little minds that are found in the ordinary human beings. Foucault[17] has questioned the idea that we can get transcendental knowledge by reason in an impersonal way. He questions the kinds of knowledge that have come into vogue in the modern thought—impersonal, God-like and beyond the ordinary ways of thinking and experience.

For him, knowledge is a practical ability that goes with man's urge for power. Knowledge and power go together.[18] This way of putting knowledge under the practical control of man seems to undermine the rationalist foundations of epistemology. Foucault has no fascination for the rationalist way of positing knowledge beyond the practical needs of mankind. Hence he questions the hegemony of reason and scientific knowledge over human culture. This is the first attempt on the part of the postmodernists to debunk rationalism, absolutism and impersonalism in human knowledge.

The process of deconstruction of reason and its powers goes further and manifests in the relativization of human thought and logic to the culture and society in which they are placed. Reason ceases to be as powerful as it was earlier in Descartes, Kant and Hegel. It is reduced to a rubble in the hands of the postmodernists. Lyotard[19] in his rejection of the grand narratives has questioned the way the reason has been portrayed as the source of all grand ideas. His argument is that there is no space for reason as a creative faculty in view of the fact that we manage with the small narratives in all our intellectual activities. Lyotard is the staunchest critic of the grand narratives in the intellectual world thus giving space for the mental activities which are many and varied in number. Thus reason seems to give way to the multifarious language-games or narratives which are entrenched in the human language. Lyotard's image of language is that of the multiple discourses which are very much comparable to language-games popularized by Wittgenstein.[20]

Truth falls into fragments with the collapse of the grand narratives. It becomes a mere tag with the propositions without bringing anything ontological about it. Truth is turned into a purely semantic notion without any adverse implications. The idea of truth as the semi-divine entity is rejected by the postmodernists. Rorty[21] is in the forefront of the postmodernists in questioning the modernist notion of truth. According to him, truth is at best a pragmatic device to judge the propositions made in the descriptive vocabulary; it is bound to be placed within a vocabulary and cannot be taken as a transcendental notion. The modernist idea that truth far surpasses the cognitive abilities of man is a matter

to be taken with a pinch of salt. Truth is bound to the cognitive powers of man and hence is immanent to the language and thought of man. In this connection he speaks of the relative[22] character of truth in the sense that truth has a tendency to be made rather than discovered. The postmodernist critique of truth is far more relativistic in the sense that it does not accept any absolute truth at all. Absolute truth vanishes with the disappearance of the notion of the linguistic representations in view of the fact that there are no absolutely true linguistic representations.

V. LANGUAGE FRAGMENTED: CONTINGENCY AND DIVISIBILITY

Postmodernists take language no more as a unified structure but as consisting of fragments of language which are independent elements to be taken care of. The postmodernists take the idea of an ideal or perfect language as misguided because they think that language always takes shape in contexts which are historical and cultural. Therefore there are as many languages as there are human communities. And so there can be nothing called the language in the absolute sense of the term. Languages are discourses that testify to the contextual variability of the linguistic activities. The linguistic activities are multifaceted and are relative to the communities in which we live.

Wittgenstein's idea of language-games and Lyotard's idea of narratives do signify the fact that language never works in a united fashion and that it gives rise to the multiplicity of linguistic phenomena. A narrative is a way a particular set of symbols is used to achieve certain purpose. Language-games are forms of life,[23] according to Wittgenstein. There are an infinite number of language-games which the human beings can play and each is significant in itself independently of what happens to other language-games. Thus independence and autonomy are granted to the language-games. In this sense, language seems to be fragmented and diversified to the advantage of the language-users. Rorty's idea of vocabularies[24] captures the same spirit in view of the fact that vocabularies arise contingently because of the human

needs. There is no ontological compulsion for any language-game to arise. Thus the possibility of language-games or vocabularies is contingently open. It is never ontologically closed.

Derrida's open revolt against the oppressive notion of an ideal language has to be noted in this connection. Derrida questions the way language has been projected as a unified system of symbols. That is why he takes into account the difference[25] as the hallmark of language. The difference of the symbols makes them significant as having different meanings, and not one meaning common to all symbols. Symbols are different by nature so that they act as signifiers within their own limits. Derrida speaks of the inherent limitations of the symbols as the signifiers. He does not think of the symbols as having any magical power. They work within the system of language.

The contingency of language is what matters most to the postmodernists because it is found that language has no ontological backing at all. It is entirely dependent on customs and conventions. That makes language a free-floating human phenomenon that has roots in the human life but is not conditioned by the world. As Rorty writes:

> Our language and our culture are as much a contingency, as much a result of thousands of small mutations finding niches (and millions of others finding no niches), as are orchids and anthropoids.[26]

Contingency thus defines the way language has developed and has been part of the history of mankind. This historical aspect of language is prominent in the idea of contingency of language.

The idea of necessity which has been entrenched in the structure of language in the modernist conception of language is challenged by the postmodernists who believe that there is nothing in language that can be permanent and timeless. The timeless core of language is misconceived because of the neglect of the historical and temporal aspects of language. Postmodernism emphasizes the fact that the core of language is its contingency and its temporal divisiveness. Time is the underlying reality of language and communication. There is no centre of language to be searched for by an inquiry into the foundations of language. Postmodernism de-centres[27]

language and puts in its place the fragments of language. There is a demand within postmodernism to dismantle language as a grand narrative into the small narratives that are numerous and diverse in their functions.

As Rorty has pointed out, the de-centred language is no more the bridge[28] between the self and the world as it is used to be in the modernist thought. Language is no more the medium through which the self represents the world. The representing language is dead because there is no such use made of language in the postmodernist context to represent the world standing out there. There is no world standing out there. There is only language and its multifarious use before us. The phenomenality of language is all that matters and not the world because there is nothing that the self can do with language except to use it as it can. Postmodernism denounces both the self and its picture making habits through its emphasis on the phenomenal reality of language.

VI. SELF DE-CENTRED

The postmodernists have rejected the modernist idea of self as the subject which faces the world through language. It has questioned the very idea that there is a self that is different from the body and mind of the human beings and that it is the centre of all activities of man including the linguistic representations of the world. The idea of the subject is subjected to doubt because it is a metaphysical concept and that it suggests as if there is no other centre of the world than this. It has been therefore suggested by the postmodernists that the subject is dead[29] in view of the fact that there is no such semi-divine reality other than the world which we the human beings inhabit.

The subjectivity which has been given a metaphysical status in modern philosophy since Descartes has been deconstructed as something which is not anything but a social reality without having any ontological roots. That is, there is no self that is not but a bundle of social relations,[30] if not of psychological states. The subjectivity is at best a social reality and has nothing to offer

as the so-called centre of the world in the Cartesian and Kantian sense. Rorty has shown that the social and conventional self is contingent[31] in every sense of the term. According to this view, the selfhood is a matter of our self-making in the sense that we create our sense of individuality in the process of engaging ourselves in the world. Thus we are led to believe that the self of the modernist thinkers has outlived its utility.

The postmodernist thinkers have been the champions of the view that the self that we are socially constrained to have is of the nature of desires and has the love of power. Foucault is of the view that the self is the centre of the psychological states and hence is an object for scientific investigation. It is an object to be understood and is not a subject at all. Like Foucault, Baudrillard also declares that the subject must be assimilated into the object. According to him, … "the subject has been defeated, the reign of objects has commenced, and we had better recognize the new rules of the game and make the necessary adjustments to the triumph of the object"[32] ... That is, the self is no more the subject but is the object which must be appropriately understood. He further "recommends that individuals should thus surrender to the world of objects, learning their ruses and strategies, and should give up the project of sovereignty and control".[33] Best and Kellner write:

> Metaphysics was traditionally the attempt to conceptualize ultimate reality and for modern philosophy the subject/object dichotomy provided the framework for metaphysical investigation. The philosophy of subjectivity maintained the superiority of subject over object. According to Baudrillard, this game is over and the subject should abandon its pretensions to gain superiority over the object world.[34]

Postmodernism has moved away from the metaphysics of the subject to that of the object for the reason that the subject is no more pitted against the object but is an object itself. The subject–object duality which characterized modern philosophy has been dissolved by the postmodernists. This has led to the objectvization of the subject and has brought an end to the metaphysics of subjectivity. This also brings an end to the transcendental ethics and epistemology which was the hallmark of modern philosophy.

VII. THE END OF HISTORY: THE IDEA OF PROGRESS REVERSED

Modernism believed in the progress of history. It had the vision of history as one of continuous progress from the past to the present and to the future. The modern thinkers had the unique notion of the march of history according to a divine plan as is argued by Hegel in his philosophy of history[35]. Hegel's philosophy of history culminated in the modernist notion of teleological history. Hegel had the insights of Kant and other German Idealists in mind while propounding the idea of world history as progressive and goal oriented. Thus there is reason to believe that modernism is associated with this particular notion of history which accepts that history is moving towards a higher goal.

Postmodernism, however, refuses to accept that there is any higher goal that history of mankind pursues for that matter. History for it is a history of events and facts that occur as time passes by. There is nothing beyond these facts to show that there is anything higher than these historical facts. The postmodernists in general have a sceptical attitude towards the idealist construal of history. For them history is factual and based on concrete evidences. There is no divine law of history to guide the destiny of mankind. Baudrillard has propounded the idea of "end of history"[36] to signal the fact that history is no more the repository of human hope and aspirations for the future. It is at best the record of the events that have happened.

History has always been the subject of diverse interpretations. It is the subject of matter of speculation as to what its meaning is. Modern philosophers have thought that history has an inner meaning which we have to understand by connecting the events into a system. This has been possible by introducing teleological categories like ends and purposes, progress, realization of a higher state of things and so on. Postmodernists disagree on this because they find that no higher goal can be ascribed to history. The happenings in history do not fall into any pattern or scheme. They happen in a haphazard way without any clear-cut end in view. Thus postmodernism denied the idea of progress in the human affairs thus making man a less divine entity.

With the death of subjectivity, it is inevitable that the human history follows suit. Man ceases to be at all unique among the things in the universe. Therefore man cannot hope to make the universe serve his purpose and that he cannot claim to be the chosen creation of God on earth. This is the lesson postmodernism derives from the catastrophic events which have overtaken the world in the last few centuries.

VIII. BACK TO MODERNISM: OVERCOMING RELATIVISM AND SCEPTICISM

Postmodernism has led to scepticism and relativism about the nature of human reason, knowledge and science on the ground that it has denied the very ground on which Western science and knowledge has stood so far. Science has always presupposed that there is a standard of rationality according to which we can judge the truth or falsity of the scientific claims. In the absence of the standard of truth and rationality, not only science is not possible but also we cannot make any knowledge claim for that matter. Knowledge in any field presupposes a faculty of knowledge and the epistemic values like truth and rational acceptability, as Hilary Putnam[37] claims. The postmodern critique of knowledge and rationality undermines the very assumption on which modernism stood for long.

Modernism has stood for the triumph of reason not because reason is infallible but because it is the only faculty that shows the way out of darkness and ignorance. Over the ages from the time of the Greeks, there has been a persistent hope in the mind of man that there will prevail on earth the age of rationality and truthfulness. This hope is itself the sign of rationality in the sense that we as a human race must aspire for higher things of life. Science, religion and morality all pursue the goal of a better life on the earth, not because we are a blind race struggling to exist as a wretched species but because we have the capacity to rise above the present state of wretchedness. Modernism has given man this hope even in the face of all odds. This is the greatness of modernism as the age of hope and aspiration.

Postmodernism ushers in pessimism and skepticism because it has no concept of reason. It has highlighted the blind will or the Nietzschean will to power as the most fundamental reality thus paving the way for the collapse of the idea of progress and the ultimate realization of goodness. Morally and epistemologically, the age of postmodernism is the age of disillusionment and collapse of scientific and metaphysical theories. This itself leads to an age of darkness because there is no possibility of salvaging ourselves from the morass of irrationalism and amoralism. The postmodernist thinkers have not given any hope to man for living a rational life wedded to progress and better life.

The collapse of the idea of truth and goodness has led to the downfall of any objective standard in the cognitive and other matters. Truth being absent the field is open for arbitrariness and social chaos. It has been found that none of the postmodernists has any theory of truth which can be a substitute for the modern theory of truth. Postmodernism is without a standard of truth and has no idea of rising above the contingencies of the world. Mere harping on the contingencies would not help because to talk about contingency is to presuppose necessity as a basic category. How can one talk about the contingency of language and self and the world without presupposing that there is necessity of the basic principles through which we understand these phenomena.

Relativism has arisen as a possible threat to language, truth and reason because there is an attempt in postmodernism to espouse the relativity of everything to a vocabulary in the words of Rorty[38] or to the narratives in the words of Foucault which are themselves contingent phenomena. In that sense, everything becomes a matter of arbitrary choice of the people of a particular culture or society. Relativism allows anything to pass off as true provided it satisfies the taste of the people concerned. Postmodernism has undermined the foundations[39] of the very language and reason which it uses to establish its thesis.

Postmodernism is right in condemning the excesses of rationalism and dogmatism, but it has gone to the other extreme of espousing scepticism about language, truth and reason. It has brought to the boiling point the necessity of a conceptual

framework that is divided between the distaste towards modernism and unexamined tilt towards postmodernism. We are indeed at the cross-roads. We are unable to give up the basic beliefs of a rationalist world-view but at the same time we are unable to accept whole-heartedly relativism and scepticism espoused by postmodernism. Thus postmodernism cannot be taken as an unmixed blessing. It is now time to examine its presuppositions and doctrines.

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Real is Rhetorical is Real

An Account of Postmodern Punctuations

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The prefix, post, already betrays the antecedents of the postmodern. And not long ago, Nietzsche had warned us that only that which has no history can be defined. The postmodern, in so far as it resists every form of identity however provisional, can speak about itself only by positing a presence which it seeks to negate. It is doubtful whether the late Romanian essayist, novelist and philosopher, Emile M. Cioran, would have considered himself to be a postmodernist. But in his brilliantly intriguing book of aphorisms, *The Trouble with Being Born*, which strives to capture the impasse of a speculative mind in its explorations of a disjunctive world and a divided self, he describes the metaphysical chill of knowing thus: "There is a kind of knowledge that strips whatever you do of weight and scope: for such knowledge, everything is without basis except itself. Pure to the point of abhorring even the notion of an object, it translates that extreme science according to which doing or not doing something comes down to the same thing and is accompanied by an equally extreme satisfaction: that of being able to rehearse, each time, the discovery that any gesture performed is not worth defending, that nothing is enhanced by the merest vestige of substance, that 'reality' falls within the province of lunacy. Such knowledge deserves to be called posthumous: it functions as if the knower were alive and not alive, a being and the memory of a being. 'It's already in the past', he says about all

he achieves, even as he achieves it, thereby forever destitute of the present".

Postmodernist knowledge is indeed posthumous. Its creator, man, who according to Foucault is only a recent invention, has been declared dead. But the celebration of that end, like every other "end of' celebration—the end of ideology, the end of philosophy, the end of history etc.—is, and perhaps will always be, premature. For, even those who have proclaimed that God is dead, as that great master of suspicion, Nietzsche, had pointed out, still have faith in grammar.

What sort of grammar can claim a postmodernist to be its native speaker? Teasing out even a tentative answer to that question is rendered difficult because each of the mixed species of post-isms—poststructuralism, postmarxism, post-Fordism, postindustrialism, postcapitalism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, to name a few—presents itself as the foremost exemplar of the genus postmodern. Moreover, the term "modern" itself is used to signify diverse, if related, philosophical articulations, cultural critiques, social, political and economic practices that have been promoted in the Western world beginning with the age of Renaissance, through the epochs of Reformation, Enlightenment, well into the twentieth century. I will not make even a pretense of tracing the trajectories of these manifold human endeavours. But if I am to single out one orientation that underlies each one of these varied human activities, I would venture to suggest that it is the search and associated contestation for authority that would justify both the engagement in any contingently (but not arbitrarily) chosen and pursued activity, and the outcomes (whether they be truth-claims, cultural products, consumer gadgets, social or political or religious identities) of that activity. Take, as an example, that hitherto prestigious human activity called philosophical inquiry. As Bartley reminds us, "The Western philosophical tradition is authoritarian in its structure, even in its most liberal forms. This structure has been concealed by oversimplified traditional presentations of the rise of modern philosophy as part of a rebellion against authority. In fact modern philosophy is the story of rebellion of one authority against another authority, and the clash between competing

authorities. Far from repudiating the appeal to authority as such, modern philosophy has entertained only one alternative to the practice of basing opinions on traditional and perhaps irrational authority, namely that of basing them on rational authority. This may be seen by examining the main questions asked in these philosophies. Questions like: How do you know? How do you justify your beliefs? With what do you guarantee your opinions?—All beg authoritarian answers—whether those answers are: the Bible, the leader, the social class, the nation, the fortune teller, the word of God, the intellect or sense experience. And Western philosophies have long been engaged in getting these supposedly infallible epistemological authorities out of trouble". That we have not so far found such an infallible epistemological authority even for our remarkably successful cognitive endeavour called modern science and technology is another matter.

The search for authority even as it continues to be unsuccessful in securing the sought after legitimacy had resulted in two important developments. Firstly, it led to claims of increasingly autonomous, self-legislating, internally constituted authorities in each of the currently prevailing, contingently demarcated spheres of human activities. The philosophical claim that questions concerning the ontology of theoretical entities (like fundamental particles in physics) in a science are matters internal to that enterprise is a case in point. The all too familiar disputes about the "essential" differences between natural and social sciences provide another example. The ahistorical self-transparent Cartesian ego with its clear and distinct ideas, the Enlightenment project of realizing unceasing progress and increasingly generous emancipation of men by moulding them through efficient techniques of instrumental rationality as embodied in modern science and technology, the Nietzschean Will-to-Power, the Husserlian phenomenological cognizing-self with its apodictic certitudes, the Heideggerian Being with its disclosures of immersions in the world, the essence-creating existential subject of Sartrean humanism, the subject-less systems of regularities of Structuralism are all milestones erected in the long march to that ever eluding destination of self-legislating, legitimate authority. Finally, the declarations of autonomy by the

various domains of literature and arts are too frequent and loud to be missed (Dadaism, cubism, surrealism, stream of consciousness, magico-realism, …).

The second related development arising from the search for legitimate authority has been the increasing differentiations accomplished by biologically embodied human agents endowed with perceptual and cognitive powers in cognizing their historicized selves and the historicized life-worlds in which they are inescapably embedded. These differentiations are manufactured by converting perceptual differences into cognitive distinctions.

In Western cultures, this cognitive enterprise of drawing ever new distinctions, infected through and through with human subjectivity and intentionality, has enabled the formation of two classical genres of fields of meanings or signifieds. On the one hand, there are all those fields of meanings constituting what has been traditionally called the genre of humanistic culture which strive to conform to the logic of the unity of experience of the meaning-seeking subject. On the other hand, there are all those fields of signifieds that may be conveniently collected under the genre of scientific culture which enforce (the so-called unity of sciences program) any system of logic that respects the law of identity, the law of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. Whatever else may be the differences between the two genres, they, however, shared two features in common. The first is that for any field of meanings or signifieds there is a language of signifiers and a grammar for forming strings of signifiers that are adequate to the task of embodying the meanings or signifieds of that field. We may call this the doctrine of representation. The second shared feature is the mind-independent real world whose entities serve as referents to the signifiers which however are the creations of the cognizing human mind. We may call this the doctrine of cognitive transparency.

Beginning with the early decades of the last century, the validity of both doctrines has become increasingly suspect, in both humanistic and scientific cultures' productions. The four dimensional space-time geodesics of Relativity, the wave-particles of quantum mechanics, quarks, black-holes, anti-matter, gauge-

fields and what have you have rendered superfluous all questions of meanings in their respective fields of scientific endeavour. What mattered most in any field of enquiry are the operational intricacies of the syntax governing the "freely chosen" abstract signifiers that no longer need to be connected to the concrete "signifieds" of the lived world. The drive for self-legislating, autonomous legitimation has at least problematized the issue of representation if it has not altogether dissolved the issue. Likewise, in the humanistic culture, the high-priests of "high-modernism", "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" and their allies, not to speak of the romantics, feeling increasingly threatened by and anguished at the fragmentation of the meaning-seeking subject wrought by the encroachments of modern science and technology, contributed to the problematization of the issue of representation in their characteristically rhetorical manner. Unable to secure any sense of unity of experience in an increasingly fragmented subject in their works, they, whether in the fields of visual arts, music, literature, drama etc., have gone on exploring the aesthetic effects of fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, random collages, mixed genres, multiply-narrated stories, impressionistic, morally ambiguous and self-conscious literary and artistic products generated by the vocabularies and grammars of the new languages they invented. And thus literature and various arts have become, like the sciences, increasingly technical with their own agendas for the production of aesthetic effects of "high" or "low" cultural goods. But if man is to be ushered into the portals of postmodernity and is to be seen for what he is, a nominal locus or "site" of truth-effects, philosophy must first be seen as nothing more than a rhetorical engagement. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is philosophy of science which has acted as the usher by arguing for the implausibility of cognitive transparency thesis.

The long and complex argument drawing on the actual practices of sciences need not detain us. For our purposes it suffices to note that following the detailed investigations of philosophers of science, Kuhn, Feyerabend and others it is no longer possible to ensure the ontological stability or identity of entities in the real world which act as referents to signifiers of the specialized language

of a science. Thus, for example, the answer to the question, what does the signifier, "mass", refer to in the real world depends on whether the signifier belongs to the language of Newtonian mechanics or the language of Einsteinian Relativistic mechanics. Thereby, either the existence of the referent in the "real" world is relative to the language which refers to it (and not independent of it) or the real world has to accommodate all the populations of theoretical entities (signifiers) that our imagination can cook up. In either case reality is problematized and the distinction between a signifier and its referent is collapsed. With this collapse and the absence of any fixities of the world, philosophy can at its best be only a rhetorical engagement (in the classical non-pejorative sense of use of language aimed at persuading the other to agreement as contrasted with polemical use of language). No wonder the postmodern philosopher, Richard Rorty, came up with the idea of disbanding philosophy as a discipline with its own particular interests, modes of argument, conceptual prehistory. He suggested treating philosophy as just one "kind of writing" among others, on level with poetry, literary criticism and the human sciences at large. We must leave the pragmatic American in him to wonder why he had excluded natural sciences in his effort of identifying the kinds of writing that are reducible to the level of an undifferentiated textual free-play of signifiers.

The postmodern philosopher Lyotard makes up for that omission by identifying the conditions under which modern science can become postmodern. Defining postmodernity as incredulity toward metanarratives he finds that "this incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it". He asserts that "science has always been in conflict with narratives…. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities and seeks truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy… making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative…." Modern science can then aspire to become postmodern if it refrains from making truth-claims but engages itself in the production of truth-effects and

invents "useful" regularities from them. Lyotard does recognize the paradoxical character of the most dominant knowledge system of our times. But he wants us to be credulous enough to affirm our postmodern condition: "Our incredulity is now such that we no longer expect our salvation from these inconsistencies…" A characteristic postmodernist stance of aesthetic celebration of and an ascetic quietude towards self-incarceration in the prison houses of postmodern knowledges in the most highly developed societies of the West.

The springs of celebration and quietude rise from the wreckage of the semiotic triangle caused by the modernist problematization of representation on the one hand and philosophy of science's problematization of reality on the other hand. The meaning/signified vertex of the triangle and along with it the meaning-seeking subject were banished into the oblivion of the now "autonomous" signifier vertex. Similarly, the referent vertex of the triangle was either declared non-existent or more modestly pronounced to be indistinguishable from the "free" signifier. Meanings and meaning-seeking subjects and reality are no more than shadows, in Plato's cave (with no one to watch them), cast by the invisible sun of differential play of signifiers. The postmodern incredulity of self-reflexive, self-conscious Western man toward any metanarrative of absent presence (read, metaphysics of presence) is sufficient to ensure that the question, "Can there be shadows without objects?" will not arise.

One supposes that for such momentous gestures of celebration and quietude in the affluent Western cultures there exist grounds more material than the abstract and abstruse proclamations of the semioticians, Sassurean linguists, structuralists, literary critics, avant-garde artists, aesthetic theorists, philosophers and cultural critics.

The ubiquitous colour television screen and the colour monitor of the personal computer provide one such ground. The images on the screen are simultaneously both referents and signifieds or perhaps, in the secluded isolation of the cozy bed-rooms of Western societies, signifiers are more intimate and real than the distant referents. Moreover, meanings can instantaneously be generated

and displayed by the syntactic click of a mouse or the touch of a key on the key-board or the pressing a button on a "remote" that is so close. Speech-actuated systems are being developed in the market-friendly laboratories of multi-national companies and programmed speech-synthesizer chips which are already mass produced will soon materialize the claim of the postmodernist that it is language which speaks. The virtual reality is in fact the only reality. All that there is, is simulacrum and mimesis. That discovery, as one watches the endless succession of images that saturate the senses, is surely an occasion for aesthetic celebration which a modernist whose capacity for incredulity has reached postmodern dimensions cannot deny himself/herself.

The burden of Western history provides another ground. The Anglo-Saxon and Continental philosophies from Locke to Bergson, if not earlier, refused to countenance the history of the "other" whether that other is men of different persuasions in their own societies or non-Western societies with their different life-worlds or Nature itself. Continental philosophies of phenomenology with its phenomenological-self and Marxism with its conflictual account of history, but both in their anthropological reading of Hegel, sought to appropriate the history of the "other" by idolizing the figure of man as the central element in the historical process. However, the figure of man came to be seen peculiarly impotent to make history in a world in which personal intentions and actions appeared so feeble in comparison with modern age's great social and economic forces and in which the moral passion of Marxism had culminated in the Gulag and the phenomenological search for authentic being had ended in Auschwitz. Western man's identity and character became increasingly less distinct. The Anglo-Saxon philosophy in its refusal of the history of the "other" is increasingly drifting towards the desperate doctrine of physicalism which seeks to reduce human history to natural history thereby denying not only the histories of non-Western men and their societies but also those of Western men and their societies. To claim that human history is the same as natural history is to proclaim that the distinctively human—that is, the mental, the culturally formed forms of thinking, intending, acting, producing manifested in the

life of human societies—can be captured in the purely physicalist vocabulary of an yet to be completed science of the physical world. On either consideration, the growing uncertainty in one's identity and character and the growing certainty of one's incredulity about one's own subjectivity and intentionality in the era of robots ascetic quietude towards self-incarceration in the prison-houses of postmodern knowledges in the most highly developed societies of the West is perhaps not such an incredible event. What, however, is incredible, is the disproportionate intellectual attention non-Western societies pay to the cul-de-sac into which the Enlightenment project had led the Western societies.

We are born into a history that is always already made for us and die with a history to which we contribute in part. As constituted beings, we may never be able to escape the three great enclosures—philosophical, political and ethical—erected by us, and, alas, for us in the flux of history. But, as a species capable of thinking in a languaged way, while we must unceasingly deconstruct those ever shifting enclosures even as we cannot escape them, we may not put in jeopardy that which made the deconstruction possible—thought's responsibility to itself, the ethics of thinking, if you will. To abdicate that responsibility would be to suggest, as some enthusiastic postmodern studies in deconstructing history tend to do, that Holocaust is as real as the images we see on the flat screens of our television sets. Thinking must always exhibit openness to difference, the as yet un-thought thought. But it must also respect what exists beyond the pale of thought to qualify as thinking.

Signatures of Memory: Tradition and the Problem of Inheritance[1]

D. Venkat Rao

SIGN FORCES

Sign forces divide the sense(s); they bind and unbind the senses. They create an abyss between the two senses of the word/concept of the sense. The force could be of the limb and of the face—it is of the senses. Force can be sensed—it is palpable. The work of culture is forged by the sign forces and is spread across through the sense relays.

Thought is the effect of modes of communication; thought is also an articulation of inheritances. Communicational modes carve or inflect the course of thinking. Yet thinking itself is irreducible to the determined modes and materials of thought. The modes of articulation could be broadly identified as lithic and alithic. Although both the modes are filiated to the body, and both constitute the externalized memory, they can be differentiated as the gestural-graphic work of the hand and verbal-gestural work of the face. Reflective practices and traditions depend on the articulation of the lithic and alithic modes. Literacy and discursive philosophy, for instance, believed to be the boon of lithic technique of writing, are the celebrated tools of European civilizational demarcation from its others. The alphabetic writing is said to be the mark of European distinction ("alphabetic writing supporting the history of the development of geometric thought").[2] Archives are the granaries of alphabetic writing.

The lithic work of graphics and the alithic expression of speech are, however, deeply related to gesture. If the force of limbs finds externalized articulation in graphics (as in parietal or Paleo art) or performance (as in dance), the gestural modulations of internal body parts result in the emergence of speech forms. The rhythms of gestural force is at the root of both lithic and alithic memories and articulations. But a hierarchic relation between the alithic speech form and lithic orthography is said to have regulated our reflections on communication systems in their relation to thought across history. A linearized relation between speech and the reductive graphical system called writing got established. In this reckoning, writing would only carry on and extend what otherwise would be lost in speech. As a mnemotechnology writing is the preserver of speech and the quintessential emblem of the archives. Four thousand years of linear writing, Andre-Le-roi Gourhan argued, has accustomed us to this bifurcation of graphical art from writing.[3]

In his strategic project to displace this hierarchy, Jacques Derrida privileges the subordinated lithic figure—writing—and unravels the alithic speech form as a dominant metaphysical dogma underlying the entire (Western) episteme itself. The phonic substance, writes Derrida, "*presents itself* as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore non-empirical or noncontingent signifier—has necessarily dominated the history of the world… and has even produced the idea of the world…."[4] In questioning the alleged primordialism of speech, its assured filiation with consciousness, its unexamined access to origin—Derrida's strategic project has been extraordinarily productive. Although it is of tactical and not of empirical significance or significant as a "historically' specific mode of articulation, the lithic figure of writing does not seem to escape an ethnocentric ruse here. For, it is precisely this "historical" and empirically specific system of communication that was used to demarcate Europe from its others in an entire epoch called colonialism.

The oddity of this rather loaded figure (writing) in a radically subversive project (of Derrida's) does not, however, undermine the critical force of the project. For in deploying this empirically and historically singular figure in his project, Derrida is only concerned

with forging a filament, weaving a thread, configuring a versatile template of the most general significance. In Derrida's forge, his concern manifests as the filament of a chain, the template of spacing and the weave of a system of differences. Thus writing in the narrow sense is a weave of differential system, a chain of variable filaments, spacing among a finite set of elements (letters).

The lithic system of writing is constituted by the rhythms of the weave, the forge and the template. These are rhythms without substance; but they bring forth or lend themselves to substance and system—"regulating the behavior of the amoeba or the annelid up to the passage beyond alphabetic writing to the orders of the logos of a certain *homo sapiens*, the possibility of the *grammé* structures the movement of its history according to rigorously original levels, types and rhythms." They are forces without essences; but they appear or lend themselves to engendering essences. "But one cannot think of them without the most general concept of the *grammé*."[5]

It is precisely in order to put to work this general force of difference or programme that Derrida draws on the figure of writing. The radical import of this strategy is to redress the historically repeated structures of violence—a violence that subordinates the work of hand to the work of face—of the graphic to the phonic. The most prominent casuality of this subordination is the graphical system of alphabetic writing itself. The alphabet is the most illustrious instance of the violence of linearization. The graphic figure of the alphabet, in this linear dispensation is subordinated to the pre-supposed phonic essence. Hence the divergence between graphical art and writing, observed Gourhan. Similarly alphabetic writing is little more than writing the following speech, simply extending the regime of speech as it is.

Yet the power of this schema has remained extremely productive. In subordinating the work of hand and the lithic mode of articulation of memory, to the work of face and the alithic forms of expression, the linear schema has given birth to the archive and the practice of archivation of memories. The alphabetic writing is said to be the mark of European distinction.

The deconstructive strategy—of conserving the empirical figure of writing but at the same time annulling it as derivative of speech, precisely in order to allude to the more originary pro-

gramme of spacing—has initiated a radical questioning of inheritances, modes of communication and sedimented inquiries in the human sciences. But the *illustrative* significance of the figure of writing has remained undisturbed in the project. Although Derrida was explicit on occasions in declaring the empirical division of speech and writing as irrelevant in his work, although he would certainly regard speech very much like writing as a system of differences,[6] constituted by the force of spacing—nowhere in Derrida's work does the differential system of *speech* is considered as a usable figure ("concept") for articulating the force of difference. From the very beginning of his work, Derrida has committed himself to recapture, within the history of life as the history of *grammé*, "the unity of gesture and speech, of body and language, of tool and thought, before the originality of the one and the other is articulated and without letting this profound unity give rise to confusionism…To recover the access to this unity, to this other structure of unity, we must de-sediment "four thousand years of linear writing.""[7] Yet, nowhere do these "original" *communications* of speech and gesture offer themselves for unraveling the Western episteme in Derrida's work.

The privileged figure of literacy, the trope of scribal communication system—writing—remains the conserved (and annulled) element of Derrida's schema. Writing on drawings and art about the blind, sketching a scene of sibling rivalry, Derrida's confession about his investment in the figure of writing (against his brother's ability for paining) is unequivocal: "as for me, I will write, I will devote myself to the words that are calling me."[8] These are of course, the words on the page—the traits of alphabetic writing. Quite often in his work, the general force of *grammé* (mark, trait, trace, etc.) lends itself to the alphabetic figure of writing. This can be seen in his emphasis on Plato's account of hypomnesic over mnesic or mnemic, the virtual mark (inscription on the soul) over intangible force of memory ("The archive is hypomnesic")[9]; his devotion to Freud's "postcard" over the colossal investment of psychoanalysis in the figure of talk ("talking cure"). The figure of alphabetic writing has served throughout Derrida's work as the most *exemplary* figure for illustrating the general force of *grammé*.

Although the materiality of speech forms, in Derrida's own account, are unthinkable without the work of *grammé*, neither the immemorial song cultures nor the intractable speech genres "before" writing (in the narrow sense), nor do the vibrant performative forms of dance ("the unity of gesture and speech" referred to above), have the chance of the exemplary status that writing is accorded in Derrida's work. Could this be a symptomatic problem of inheritance (the "written Torah")—Derrida's heritage of patriarchal-monotheological culture whose origin is deeply chiseled in lithic orthography? At the origin, the heritage impresses that the invisible god inscribed his commandments—the tablets of Moses.

Although Derrida's strategic reading of heritage is of profound importance even beyond the confines of his inheritance (his attempts to universalize the singular Judaic-Islamic figure of circumcision as "cut", "election" as the call[10]), his strategies of putting to work the inheritances, these resources, do not have a place for mnemocultures—indeed of speech and gesture and their (ambivalent) articulations of the body. They disregard the *signatures* of memory. If every communication (system) is the effect of spacing, repetition and difference and emerges only as a system of differences, why does writing alone become the effective figure for grasping this non-transcendental force? Why can't differential systems of speech and gesture with their discreet "marks" offer effective resources for unraveling the transcendental? Speech and gesture remain unexplored as differential systems and as figures of/for thought in the work of deconstruction.[11]

Despite the privilege and power it is accorded, the figure of literacy—the alphabetic writing has had a very limited duration and reach in the human history. Whereas the origins of gesture and speech remain immemorial and their spread continues to be planetary. If the non-West is demarcated as devoid of alphabetic writing, the European West could be reckoned as bereft of gesture and speech—though such oppositionalism cannot escape deconstructive critique. The lithic text of the "alphabetic body" displaced the alithic rhythms of mnemocultures in the West.

God is said to have spoken to Moses before he bequeathed him the lithic tablets. But there was no clue to the passion of God's

tongue, the rhythm of his speech, the pitch, the grain of his voice, the accent of his breath and the emphasis of what is announced; its no more a part of cultural memory. In other words, the syntax of the lithic displaced the *prosody* of utterance and the prosody that enacts the rhythms of sound. But to the author(s) of the alphabetic culture the question of God's passion and affect, the accents of his speech, have no sense "at least in so far as these traditions [of monotheism] have no resources for establishing differences that could be humanly registered between the ways God spoke and wrote words".[12] Hence the necessity of engaging with the lithic and alithic memories, the singularity of their mnemotechniques, or techniques in general, and indeed the necessity of responding to the call or conflict of heterogeneity of these demarcated heritages. If the lithic writing brought forth monotheism, discursive philosophy, calculative reason and codified law—the cherished resources of European colonialism and difference—the destinies of alithic mnemocultural traditions of the world must be reconstellated beyond their enframing in the imperial traditions and their lithic codes. The call of mnemocultural inheritances (of the fourth world) invites other responses, intimates other responsibilities and offers other figures of reflection.

MNEMOCULTURES

Mnemocultures are cultures of memory. Memory in Indic or Sanskrit mnemocultures, unlike in Plato, is neither figured as a malleable inscriptional substrate nor personified by any archon (Mnemon). Nor does memory here have a presiding deity like a Mnemosyne—the mother of all Muses. In effect, memory does not seem to sublimate in any narrative line here. There is no mythology of memory to be valorized as in Plato's *Phaedrus* or *Theatetus* in the Sanskrit tradition. One could argue that myths, Puranas, itihasa etc., are the irrepressible mnemocultural detours of the non-narrative textual traditions of Sanskrit (Vedic) episteme.

The Vedic episteme embodies a textual practice which neither has an antecedent nor is it regulated by any originary myth. It comes forth as a mnemocultural event and proliferates with in-

finite referrals or citations, weavings that are impossible to exhaust. Indeed (to recall Derrida's idiom) there is nothing outside this intricate weave of Vedic textlooms in Sanskrit episteme. And precisely it is for this lack or utter disregard for the outside, the index to an alleged referential reality, this episteme has attracted or repulsed two centuries of European knowledge towards India. This European response, in exposing the lack, purveying the absent, foregrounding the real referent—above all, in defining the context—this response not only consolidated a European difference, it also instituted a paradigm of reading, of identifying and relating the text to context. In a word, this European response defined European responsibility towards cultures that cannot represent themselves.

The fact that despite the challenge and upheaval that this paradigm of reading suffered in recent times from within European tradition, the discourses of Indology and South Asian studies continue to guard the received protocols of reading goes to prove the tenacity of sedimented European conventions of reading (of) the other. In other words, the modernity of the philologico-archaelogical and referential reading modes have only reconfirmed a classical ideological concept of context and raided the mnemotextual traditions of Sanskrit episteme to determine their contexts (or lack of them). Here one can point to the wind and fury of the ongoing debates on Indo-Eurasia website in the last one year.[13] These debates have remained ignorant or impervious to Derrida's critique of phonocentric concept of writing and continue to deploy this concept in declaring societies as illiterate. Secondly, those of you who have followed the flurry of email exchanges (mainly among Euro-American scholars) that flashed across Indology website a couple of years ago after the attack on Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Pune, would not have missed the reaffirmations of European responsibility for Indological archives.[14]

Instead of repeating the usual critique of Indological and orientalist constructions, I try to explore in my larger work (on mnemocultures) on two related issues: (i) first, to reconfigure European representations of India as a colossal paradigmatic extension of a classical reading—a reading that seeks a genetic relation between

the text and context. (ii) The second risky thematic I wish to figure here can be tentatively called a mnemocultural response to textual inheritances. How do mnemotexts receive and respond to the classical concepts/practices of text and context? What is their responsibility towards the textlooms of heritage?

Whatever may be their alleged proximity to the metaphysical and the transcendental, mnemocultures of gesture and speech have spread across as extraordinarily worked out differential systems. In the Indian context, the internally divergent traditions of recitation, of Vedic utterance distinctly circulated under the name of specific teachers as Pratisakhyas were said to have taken root by 800 BC. Further, based on the traditions of the Pratisakhyas one can notice the emergence of rigorous sciences for the study of Vedic utterance, known once again in the names of distinguished teachers, as Sikshas—such as Yagnavalkya siksha, Naradiyasiksha, Paniniya siksha, etc. As in the case of classical musical traditions, these systems and traditions of recitation and utterance are intimately and constitutively filiated to gestural resources.

The lithic mnemotechnology of writing does have a place in the Sanskrit textual heritage, but it is the mnemocultures of speech and gesture that form and disseminate the cultural inheritances. The alphabetic writing does not regulate cultural memory here. No wonder neither the concept nor the institution of the archive finds a place in these mnemocultural inheritances. For the archive as a repository of externalized memory is composed by the scribal output; it is the product of the handy-work of scribal cultures. Whereas mnemocultures proliferate through a reiterative processes of speech and gestural learning. What is heard and learnt appears to be a part of the body—an "acquired character", communicated across generations by the face and hand through the rhythm of the body—intimated to the mnemo-scape. The Sanskrit textual tradition remains indifferent to the scribal craft even to this day. No wonder the tradition celebrates neither an archive nor an archon. There appears to be no Indic counterpart of the Alexandrian Library, which the literate (like Aristophanes) visited with feverish passion to pour over the manuscript scrolls.

The Sanskrit tradition appears to have by-passed or de-toured the manuscriptural archivation with an indifference. It must however, be pointed out that the indifference is only toward the scribal craft in the literal sense. The tradition is acutely aware of the metonymic relations within language and deems language as just one instance of a profounder principle of relation, connection, knot or bond across diverse elements of the universe. The archive, in the form of embodied and externalized memories (*smritis*) of speech and gesture, existed essentially with(in) the body—and that is the way they remain scattered across the length and breadth of the subcontinent as singularly demarcated bodies.

The most significant concept-metaphor that exemplifies and constitutes this structural principle of the tradition is *bandha* or *sambandha*. This principle is at the basis of all linguistic-phonetic explorations and ritual practices for millennia. It is therefore difficult to come across in the tradition either anxiety for or nostalgia about the externalized scribal material. The tradition is full of memories about the lost material—the "lost" Veda (for instance), the works done in Paishachi, writings either burnt and writings offered to rivers. As there was no central archive there wasn't any search for the lost. The Sanskrit text is allusive and elliptical. The tradition is built on the reception and augmented reiteration of these elliptical and allusive traces and fragmentary threads, in unforeseen contexts.

The Sanskrit phonetic tradition analyses language in its various aspects in minutest details and filiates each element to a part of the body (e.g., Consonants with the body, fricatives with breath, vowels with soul, etc.[15]). These are the drifting non-centred enactments and iterations of the received verbal compositions. The sign forces and the sense forms are persistently articulated in the tradition.

If the internal movement of the body organs is essential for the emergence of the significance of sound, the external gesticulation of limbs and face function as irreducible supplements of utterance. Imagine a Bhimsen Joshi or a Dagar brother's body torsions or Nusrat's facial contortions and convulsions that supplement their

magnificently modulated voices. It looks as if the writhing of the organs constitutes the rhythm of the sound, as if the "pleasure" of the sound is forged in the pain of the body. As in the case of the body so in the case of sound: they both emerge through a distortion. Needless to point out that these heterogeneous sound forms (of the Vedic and musical) are all a-grapical (in the empirical sense) and alithic in their circulation over millennia. They continued to remain, by choice as it were, indifferent to the alphabetic form and notational script.

Similarly the dance forms of India are the most intricate articulation of a gestural force. Dance indeed demonstrates a differential structure of discreet moves enacted through the distinct body parts. The significatory status of these performative gestural forces is enumerated at a micrological level in the dance traditions, and this code opened itself to (as a classical text notes) articulating very diverse domains:

Na tad jnānam na tatchchilpam na sā vidyā na sā kalā
Na sau yogo na tatkarma nātyesmin yanna muchyate[16]

(No knowledge, form, wisdom, art, yoga, ritual-act exists which cannot be shown in the dance-drama/theatre.)

It is in these intricately layered and correlated sign-forces and sense forms of the heritage that the alithic traditions/codes of speech and gesture have formed the cultural prosthesis and mnemocultural inheritances of the collective but heterogeneous parts and creative practices of the sub-continent. They have sustained the heterogeneity of speech, visual and performative idioms across the entire cultural fabric of India.

PRAXIAL RESPONSES

But how are these alithic sign forces organized into a system or a code? What kinds of textualities emerge from such compositions? How do they affect the sense in its two senses? How are the sense and sign articulated in these textualities? Above all, what are their condition of possibility and their singularity of articulation?

Memories are residual marks or remainders of interminable events. They are the interminable traces of the unavailable. Although memories are non-phenomenal in their force, they emerge cocooned from the pores of the material biological body. As marks and traces, memories affect the body they inhabit. When memories are articulated the bodies that give them form in turn affect them. A mnemotext is composed of (a) allusion, (b) citation, (c) ellipsis and (d) enumeration. With these specific compositional features the mnemotext circulates as an interminably proliferative and non-totalizable force. Its manifestation is not directly linked to any specific empirical temporal/spatial coordinates. Mnemotexts are organized on the epistemic figure of memory—memory as singular and incalculable occurrence or emergence.

Memories do not abide by the logic of the line. They recur radially and parallely. Their recurrence, like the re-citation of a mnemotext, does not point to an event or an agent or a determined location in the past, but the repetition, recurrence even as it alludes to an anterior moment of existence has a performative status. Indeed the mnemotext is performed at its every single emergence through speech and gesture, in the alithic mode. In every instance, therefore the singularities of performance constitute the life and drift of a mnemotext. The effectiveness and significance of the mnemotext is contingent upon each of its performative receptions. Similarly, singularities of each existence/each life depend on its reception of and response to the ineffable impressions of memory that forms such an existence/life.

Memories can be said to emerge from a force-field of traces—traces that haunt the finite body interminably but discontinually and trans-generationally. Memory is not any masterable experience of a determined past or a recoverable event or identity of a past present. Indological and South Asianist scholars like Barbara Stoler Miller, Charles Malamoud and A.K. Ramanujan have repeatedly interpreted memory as a recoverable past present in a future present: "the past being experienced as if it were present" resulting in a sort of "happy ending" where the past present is recovered in the current present in tact.[17]

Contrary to this reception of memory, one could figure memory as a struggle to gather the unavailable thought or experience, the intangible forces of reflection, from the remains of traces. Memory could only be the interminable groping through the finite, fragile but subtle ineluctable resources for the unknown and the insatiable. No wonder, memory and desire are inseparable and often are expressed by the same term *smara* (memory and erotic desire) in Sanskrit tradition. Malamoud who discusses this double take of *smara* and effectively relates it to Indian textual traditions arrives at somewhat contrary conclusions whose implications he reduces to the paradigmatic European response.

As suggested above, in one reading of memory, in the context of literary texts, Malamoud reduces it to a recovery or regaining of a past present. Here both desire and memory sublimate or culminate in a presence of happy ending. This theme gains a curious ethnocentric turn when Malamoud extends his analysis of memory in the context of Indian (Sanskrit) textual traditions. Although Malamoud gives a detailed account of Indian interpretations of memory, memorized productions of knowledge, centrality of internalized knowledge—his ultimate judgment on this mnemocultural practice is ethnocentric. The "preeminence of knowledge by heart," writes Malamoud, "bars tradition from being transformed into history." Mnemocultural traditions, however intricately and complexly woven they are ("weaving them together, in a thousand different ways, a thousand different weaves") or whatever the longevity of their pasts ("timeless")[18]—they are forever condemned to be anterior to history.

Therefore it is in vain, argues Charles Malamoud, "that one seeks to find any notion of recollections linking up with one another, or of their being distributed chronologically so as to form constellations which, while shifting remain coherent and integral…"[19] There isn't any notion of the existence of a "world of memory", in the Indic traditions, argues Malamoud. Since there is no unity or totality to impressions/manifestations of memory, there can be no idea here of a sustained, maturing growth of memory. In short, the epistemic figure here does not lend itself to a narrative line.

Even a sophisticated theorist who immersed himself in Sanskrit textual tradition like Malamoud functions here with an orthodox

conception of text. Before texts emerge, there is data; the data is extra-textual. The function of this text is to record the process in which the extra-textual is related to the text. But can the concept of text be relegated to such a derivative status? Can one ever really have access to such "extra-textual data" without the mediation of the material-textual? Isn't a conception of text as material formation or constitution of intelligibility always already at work in the very act of recognizing the so-called data which is supposed to have given birth to texts? Isn't it positivistic (which shares metaphysical, theological presumptions) naiveté to assume that data is free of textuality (as the material condition of intelligibility)?

Instead of attending to the singularity of Indic textual formations—which he sets out to examine—Malamoud evaluates and subjects it to a sort of ethnocentric teleology: "Knowledge incorporated in this [mnemotextual] way, moreover, erases the perception of that which connects the text to the world of extra-textual data out of which it originally arose."[20] Curiously the insights he gained in the Indic interpretations of memory (autonomy of each instance of memory, non-consecutiveness memories, absence of a world of memory) are abandoned in his interpretation of the textual tradition. The epistemic signature of memory here is not seen as the possible organizing force of mnemotexts. Instead an orthodox reading of mnemocultures as devoid of history and as lacking in referential value gets repeated in Malamoud's work here: "Such is, at least, the situation in India where the very contents of texts are generally devoid of any reference to the actual conditions of their production."[21]

The orthodoxy of Malamoud's reading here results in a confusion of epistemic and empirical issues of the argument. Setting out to explain how texts are formed and how knowledge is organized, instead of pursuing the more general implications and possibilities of Indic (Sanskrit) textual formation, its signing on memories, Malamoud by default as it were, subjects it to the ethnocentric scrutiny. Consequently, he fails to respond to the most general lesson of mnemotext: its ability to bracket or reduce any empirical context and content. In declaring India's failure to move tradition into history, Malamoud forecloses the possibility of such a textual formation to offer an account of the text in general.

Woven in the textures of the body mnemotexts move on memories. They drift across all kinds of contextual determinations—even as they manifest in specific contexts. Mnemotexts move with the force of inventiveness. Therefore, every iteration of a mnemotext is a singular invention, a living anew of an inventive principle. No wonder no mnemotext can be absolutely reduced to a specific determined content. The inventive principle brings forth divergent contexts in its formations of mnemotexts (in a very related context Bhartrhari affirms: "*Bhedanam bahumargatvam*" [differences manifest in multiple paths][22]. Although mnemotexts in their indexical relation to memory drift across immemorial pasts carrying ineffable impressions and although they are forever open to inventive futures—mnemotexts are not anchored in any narrative lineages. Mnemotexts are not governed by any cumulative, sequential or aggregative logic. The force of proliferation guides them, and they disperse across all sorts of temporal and spatial determinations. The efficacy of a mnemotext is neither in its authenticity nor in the gravity of its content. The life of a mnemotext is contingent upon the singularity of its performance, in its interminable articulations of memory and desire from the pores of the body.

The complex of the body, memory and desire brings forth or embodies the mnemotext. The mnemotext is a radical performative reflective enactment of the most essential and constitutive features of this complex: Repetition. Heritage or inheritance is unthinkable without this principle of repetition being at work. The most singular feature of Indic (Sanskrit) mnemotextual tradition is also the relentless reflection on the question of repetition: repetition of the body, desire and memory. What appears to be a sort of deliriously reiterated and enacted reflection on the question of repetition in the Indic textual heritage is also deeply intimated by the question of liberation or emancipation. The body complex with its forces of memory and/as desire persistently weaves the question of repetition and emancipation in the proliferating mnemocultures of Indic textual inheritance. How to re-activate and re-constellate such alithic heritages, the "original" inheritances of the (ambivalent) unity of the body and symbol (of gesture and speech) within the context of lithic heritages of epistemic violence remains the challenging task of the critical humanities in India.

NOTES

1. An earlier, shorter version was presented at the National Conference on "The Philosophical Challenges of Postmodernism", organized by the Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on 28–30 March 2006. I wish to thank Raghuramaraju for encouraging me to present this paper at the conference. I also wish to thank the organizers for providing generous time for discussing this paper at the conference.
2. Bernard Stiegler, "Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith", in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, edited by Tom Cohen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 257. Stiegler is here referring to the necessity of trust or fidelity in the "already there". It is curious that Stiegler, like Derrida, should choose, the figure of writing to refer to the trust in the "already-there".
3. Andre Le-roi Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, translated by Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 192–202.
4. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 7–8 (emphasis in the original).
5. Ibid., p. 84.
6. Derrida wrote elsewhere, emphasizing the singular traits of writing (in the empirical sense): the "structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of every mark, *even if oral*, a grapheme in general, …the nonpresent *remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged "production' or origin." Derrida, "Signature Event Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago; Chicago University Press, 1982), p. 318 (the word "remaining" is emphasized by Derrida).
7. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, op. cit., pp. 85–86.
8. Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 37.
9. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), p. 11.
10. Derrida, and Elisabeth Roudinesco, "In Praise of Psychoanalysis," in *For What Tomorrow…: A Dialogue*, translated by Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 92–95.
11. This appears to be the case even in critiques, which insist that deconstruction should attend to the specificity of different communication systems. For instance, in Bernard Stiegler's attempt to differentiate the digital conjuncture from the alphabetic context—it is once again the figure of literacy—*writing*—that by default enters the horizon as a frame of reference. In an interesting dialogue, in contrast to Stiegler's insistence on the alphabetic writing as the inaugural event of testimony ("*Isn't* this [alphabetic] *writing*

what makes historical work possible?"), Derrida makes an unusual comment: "Yes, language, but I prefer to say speech or the voice here. Language in the singular event of a phrase, that is to say, the voice…the voice makes language an event. It takes us from the linguistic treasure-house to the event of the phrase." If speech or voice has this enunciative, event-making force or effectivity, one is impelled to ask, why is it this figure of speech/voice doesn't lend itself to unravel the heritage of the West in Derrida's work? Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, "Phonograpies: Meaning—from Heritage to Horizon", in *Echographies of Television*, translated by Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), pp. 100–101.

12. Brian Rotman, "The Alphabetic Body", *Parallax*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, p. 8.
13. Here I am referring to the web-group developed by Michael Witzel, George Thompson and Steven Farmer (moderated by Farmer). One of the crucial themes discussed by these three members in the group concerns the status of Indus-Valley seals. Was Indus-Valley a "literate" civilization? Their "provocative" declaration is that as these seals (which are in fact uncontestable instances of graphematic marks, inscriptions on a substrate), in accordance with the "prevailing" theories of writing, cannot be considered signs of literacy. See Steve Farmer, Richard Sproat, and Michael Witzel, *The Collapse of the Indus-Script Thesis: The Myth of a Literate Harappan Civilization. EJVS* 11-2 (13 Dec. 2004). With this thesis this trio has challenged anyone to disprove their argument and offered a reward for the winner: "How confident are we that Indus symbols were not part of a "writing system', as assumed for over 130 years? See the $10,000 prize offer my collaborators and I have made to "Indus script' adherents." Based on computational and neurobiological models, members of this group (Steven Farmer and others) have offered to decipher textual compositional structures of ancient civilizations. See, Steve Farmer, John B. Henderson, and Michael Witzel, *Neurobiology, Layered Texts, and Correlative Cosmologies: A Cross-Cultural Framework for Premodern History*, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 72 (2000 [2002]). All these debates can be found on the website: *Indo-Eurasian_Research List (jointly moderated by Michael Witzel, George Thompson, and Steve Farmer). See Research List Overview.* See also: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Indo-Eurasian_research/

    What is amazing about this "debate" about the status of Harappan seals is that it simply ignores the critique of phonocentric models of literacy offered by Derrida in the last four decades. This entire debate is regulated firmly by the phonocentric (which assumes a linear relation between phonetic sound (*phoné*) and graphical mark) dogma.
14. In this context the recent BORI episode could be discussed as really the problem of the archive and the archon. Although the frenetic responses to it from the West (40 email exchanges in three days between 5th and 8th of January 2004) treat it more as a problem of "fundamentalism", the episode brings to the fore the anxieties of the archons—the founders and custodians

of "cultural material (documents)". BORI, founded in the name of a new Pundit, a creation of European Indological adventure, embodies and exemplifies centralized lithic heritage—a heritage that is to be governed and managed by the new inheritor in the figure of Indologist. No wonder the Indologist continues to talk in terms of "rational" "scientific" "us" and the "religious", "ethnic" "them" who " do not want to be helped". The episode for some appeared to be an event that would "relieve Western scholars of any bad conscience they might harbour for Western acquisition of manuscripts." BORI is more an object of European accomplishment than anything else. It must be saved from the pathologies of ethnic disorder. "Our job is to give a realistic, rational account of South Asian matters that make sense to educated people in our own countries, using the methods and approaches that are normally used in academic life ["our discipline']."

But what is the status of these manuscripts before Indology's archival fever began to accumulate them and found institutions? This can be glimpsed in an aside (indicating the laborious task of the Indologist in the field) from a post which is about the exaggerated sensational news about the destruction of Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts last year (in 2003): "I know that there are "one-of-a-kind' manuscripts of which no one knows of another copy. How many such "one-of-a-kind' mss were in this Sanskrit University can never be known. What we need is a door-to-door survey of Vajracharya priests' and Shakyas' personal collections throughout the KV and a similar one for Hindu materials which I am personally far less familiar with."

Indological and South Asianist work continues to busy itself with the task of retrieving and archiving "indigenous knowledges": "photograph or copy and distribute manuscript material as soon as possible." This task is seen as a Western responsibility in this [Indology] discussion group. Otherwise, "It is frightening that thousands of manuscripts and cultural objects simply are destroyed for the most harebrained of reasons." In this work of the West "it is regrettable" that "in Indological fora like the present one the active participation from Indian and India-based scholars is practically nil." If this is true, why is it so? Curiously, when *The Hindu* reported about the letter of protest from the Indology discussion group to the Prime Minister and others, it names mainly European and the US Indologists and South Asianists (excepting the name of Romila Thapar)—as if the BORI event is the concern only of the West.

The BORI episode once again reinforces the difference between lithic and alithic cultural practices.

Email archives on the BORI episode can be found in the archives of: *INDOLOGY@liverpool.ac.uk*

15. The Sanskrit textual tradition emphasizes correspondences between various elements across "animate" and "inanimate" elements of the universe. Thus the "senses" are not delimited to the animate, biological, bodies; they are extended to the five elements of that compose the planet. Similarly the dif-

ferential structure of language is related to the specifically demarcated body-parts of human being. For a valuable account of such correspondences (in the context of language) cf. *Critical Studies in the Phonetic Observations of Indian Grammarians* by Siddheswar Varma (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1961), pp. 2–4.

16. This quotation from the *Natyasastra* is taken from *Sānskrita Vyākhyāna—Vimarsa Sāmpradāyamu* (Critical and Commentatorial tradition in Sanskrit) by Pullela Sriramachandrudu (Hyderabad: Sanskruta Bhasha Prachara Samiti [nd.] pp. 22–23).
17. Charles Malamoud, "Exegesis of Rites, Exegesis of Texts" in *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, translated by David White (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 251.
18. Charles Malamoud, ibid., pp. 256–257.
19. Ibid., p. 255.
20. Ibid., p. 257.
21. Ibid., p. 257.
22. Bhartrhari, *Vaakyapadeeyamu*, translated by Peri Suryanarayanasastri et. al. (Hyderabad: Telugu Akademy, 1974), p. 5.

Divine to Human and Beyond: Nietzsche's Nihilism and MacIntyre's Communitarianism

A. Raghuramaraju

Nietzsche is one of the main precursors of postmodernism. It is not an exaggeration to claim him to be one amongst others who laid philosophical foundations to postmodern discourse. Taking Nietzsche as a point of reference, in this essay, I traverse three important domains, which usually fall outside the mainstream discussions on Nietzsche. They are: (i) the nature of the autonomous individual laid down by modernity; (ii) following Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of Nietzsche nihilism in particular and Enlightenment in general, discuss MacIntyre's plea to return to classical tradition; and (iii) discuss the implications of Nietzsche's nihilism to a large mass of population within the West leading to fascism.

Following a distinction between the ontology that privileges permanence from the ontology that privileges change, which though not systematically worked in this paper; nevertheless it works as a compass to identity conceptual directions, it attempts to classify Nietzsche within those ontologies which privilege change. Subsequently, it situates Nietzsche's as both inside modernity and outside it. From individual within modernity to beyond the individual. Further, Nietzsche's terms of repudiating modernity by rejecting the identification of 'I' with mind and endorsing 'I' with

body. Further, MacIntyres' criticism of modernity morality and his perorations, Nietzsche or Aristotle? MacIntyre's appreciation and criticism of Nietzsche discussed. This is followed by MacIntyre's recommendation to go back to traditional paradigm and impossibility associated with it. In conclusion, the implications of individual outside morality leading to fascism or communalism are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche is a prophet of change, he repudiated those ontologies, which privileged permanence, which for him is falsity, as they take us towards origins, and inevitably forces us to accept changeless essences. Elucidating Nietzsche's contribution, Foucault identifies, three important aspects in Nietzsche. They are: (i) turning away from depths and towards heights, recall Nietzsche's statement, "When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains (1969: 39); (ii) rejection of beginnings, and (iii) putting no end to interpretations because there is no thing to interpret. All these make Nietzsche the prophet who privileged change." Foucault in his essay entitled, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," paraphrases Nietzsche's methodology as genealogical which, says Foucault, "demands relentless erudition. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosophers might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins'" (1984: 77).

THE HUMAN IN NIETZSCHE

The change that Nietzsche advocates is human being changing continuously. He says, "Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?" He further says in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,

> All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man? (1969: 41)

In the following, I will show how the man who should overcome to become a superman is the part of modern discourse. The autonomous individual that is readily available to Nietzsche is a result of a long drawn process, away from, contrary to the almost absence of autonomous individual during the classical period. In other words, the presence, which is "man" which Nietzsche forces to be a future (superman) has a past, which is an absence, that is, man within the purview of divinity. The journey from the absence to the presence; or from the past to the future is a long drawn and arduous one. Recognizing this travel makes us to realize the embeddedness of Nietzsche within modernity. I wish to illustrate this embeddedness by claiming that there was no individualism in the classical philosophy and it is laid down by modernity. Incidentally, here it may be noted that rights that we talk about within the human rights discourse are necessarily predicated to human, who is autonomous, without an autonomous notion of human it is not possible to talk about rights. That is, rights are generically related to human beings, making their relation to be a necessary one. More specifically, the birth of an autonomous human being postulated during the Enlightenment in the modern West almost dictated the nature and developments of rights discourse. Thus, this discourse is primarily dependent on the discourse of an autonomous human being.[1]

I

1. BIRTH OF HUMAN BEING

Leo Strauss says that there are no human rights in the traditional natural law which is "primarily and mainly an objective 'rule and measure,' a binding order prior to, and independent of, the human will" (1966: vii–viii). So, the notion of right was not there in the classical period as the idea of an autonomous human being crucial to the rights discourse was not there. Metaphorically with reference to rights, the classical period is a period of pre-puberty. And then subsequently an idea of an autonomous individual was

postulated by modernity, which rejects everything from the past. This individualism is the Cartesian cogito, not even with body as its essential aspect. This called for amnesia of the past, and it inaugurated an entirely new way of looking at things. Here let me draw your attention to the logic of these developments. This is the history where a part (individual) in the whole (within the traditional theories) has slowly but surreptitiously, grown into a whole. It, in turn, made the erstwhile whole (cosmology, society) a mere part. It is also the development where individual has fought against the alleged authority of God, dislodged him, and at the same time occupied God's throne with all its paraphernalia. In doing this individual has become like God, often looking ugly in some others' garments. In occupying this central position he has been blown out of proportion to fit into God's casket.

The individual has become the creator, creating everything. This notion of individual comes to have two features: (i) In so far as he rejected all history, tradition anything that has not been made by him, he has become very small. (ii) However, as he is postulated like God, he has to become all-powerful. This idea of individual had the name of the human being but the power of God. This ambiguity, this deception captivated the Western thought where the idea of the abstract man is not distinguished from the empirical man. It continues to have love-hate relation with this concept of man, often not knowing the reason for this uneasy feeling. In fact, this idea is often in conflict with the empirical man. The relation between this enlightenment concept of man, whom I termed elsewhere as hypothetical concept of man and the ordinary concept of man, is antagonistic. For example, we do come across in the ecological debates' instances, where the reality of the man-centred universe is antagonistic to man (Raghuramaraju, 1995).

This disengaging human being either from the divine enveloping or taking him out of the pre-cast ontological primacy of the relation, man–woman; ruler–ruled; master–slave; parent–child of Aristotle, and making him autonomous is the major contribution of modernity, which also privileged rationality. Nietzsche, even as a radical critic of modernity nevertheless inhabits its achievements,

in this case, the notion of autonomous individual; or he too like Enlightenment strives hard towards liberating man from the divine or community order. Otherwise he will not have human with him, to campaign for overcoming and becoming superman. This acceptance of the autonomous individual in the realm of morality meant rejecting the classical foundations of morality, such as pre-given laws as founding the moral realm. I shall in a moment return to this, but before that let me point out that having acknowledged this underlying common trait, let me however, state the radical difference between Nietzsche and Enlightenment.

2. FROM 'I' AS MIND TO BODY

An important rejection of modernity by Nietzsche lies in rejecting Cartesian identification of 'I' with mind. He instead declares:

> 'I am the body and the soul'—so speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?
> But the awakened, the enlightened man says: I am body entirely, and nothing beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body.
> The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, and herdsman.
> Your little intelligence, my brother, which you call 'spirit', is also an instrument of your body, a little instrument and toy of your great intelligence. (1969: 61–62)

Further, he identifies I with body and says,

> 'I am body entirely, and nothing beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body.' (1969: 61)

This identification of 'I' with body and the earlier peroration of overcoming man to become superman clearly and one might even say radically go against or beyond the discourse of modernity. So to sum up the discussion in this section, an attempt is made to situate Nietzsche within the discourse of modernity. Subsequently Nietzsche's repudiation of modernity is also briefly stated. Interestingly, these contrary aspects create a peculiar tension in Nietzsche, which dictate some of the ambivalence that the later scholars found in him.

II

Now let me turn to the implication of the acceptance of autonomous individual and rejection of classical morality. Before that let me briefly state the reasons for Nietzsche to reject classical morality. For him, "To be moral or ethical is to be obedient to a long-established law or tradition." (*Human All Too Human*: I: 96). Further, he says, "eternal truth and God-given commandments was in fact derived from the egoism of certain individuals or societies, and he lays bare in historical and psychological terms the ethical principles that sustain human communities" (Joachim Kohler, 2000: 34). Further, "Nietzsche attacks the very foundations of Western culture—faith in God and in morality, a sense of community and the love of one's neighbour, the State and a system of law based on vengeance, objective science and artistic inspiration, compassion towards the weak and the emancipation of women" (Ibid. p. 43). For him, morality consists of "master morality and slave morality". Rejecting the divine origins of morality he shows it to be merely a human construct. Thus Nietzsche maintains that conscience, far from being "God's voice is man's breast", is merely "the voice of some men in man" (WS 52); and that "your judgment 'this is right' has a pre-history in your instincts, likes, dislikes, experience, and lack of experiences" (GS 335) (pp. 430–431). For him love of neighbour is rooted in the fear of neighbour. In disclosing the human roots of morality, Nietzsche not only rejects the claims of classical morality but also the complacency of modern morality which tried to base morality on human reason a la Social contract philosophers. It is this ingenuity of Nietzsche that fascinates Alasdair MacIntyre. Pointing out Nietzsche's importance, he says:

> For it was Nietzsche's historical achievement to understand more clearly than any other philosopher—certainly more clearly than his counterparts in Anglo-Saxon emotivism and continental existentialism—not only that what purported to be appeals to objectively were in fact expressions of subjective will, but also the nature of the problems that this posed for moral philosophy.… (1985: 113)

Identifying the specific achievements of Nietzsche, MacIntyre further says:

In the famous passage Nietzsche jeers at the notion of basing morality on inner moral sentiments, on conscience, on the one hand, or on the Kantian categorical imperative, on universalizability, on the other. In a five swift, witty and cogent paragraphs [in The Gay Science (section 335)] he disposes of both what I have called the Enlightenment project to discover rational foundations for an objective morality and of the confidence of the everyday moral agent in post-Enlightenment culture that his moral practice and utterance are in good order. (1985: 113)

Pointing out the subsequent problem in Nietzsche, MacIntyre says that he destroyed the enlightenment foundation of morality and reduced morality to mere "expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates". Thus, Nietzsche treated the great of foundations of morality such as "natural rights", "utility," "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," to be nothing but fiction or mere illusion. This, says MacIntyre, made Nietzsche to resolve,

to replace reason by an autonomous moral subject by some gigantic and heroic act of the will, an act of the will that by its quality may remind us of that archaic aristocratic self-assertiveness which preceded what Nietzsche took to be the disaster of slave-morality and which by its effectiveness may be the prophetic precursor of a new era.

Assessing Nietzsche, MacIntyre lauds his "relentlessly serious pursuit of the problem, not in his frivolous solutions that Nietzsche's greatness lies, the greatness that makes him the moral philosopher if the only alternatives to Nietzsche's moral philosophy turn out to be those formulated by the philosophers of the Enlightenment and their successors." Elucidating the underlying continuity and the pervasiveness of Nietzsche's ideas, he says:

In another way, too Nietzsche is the moral philosopher of the present age. For I have already argued that the present age is in its presentation of itself to itself dominantly Weberian; and I have also noticed that Nietzsche's central thesis was presupposed by Weber's central categories of thought. Hence Nietzsche's prophetic irrationalism—irrationalism because Nietzsche's problem remains unsolved and his solutions defy reason—remains immanent in the Weberian managerial forms of our culture. Whatever those immersed in the bureaucratic culture of the age try to think their way through to the moral foundations of what they are and what they do, they will discover suppressed Nietzschean premises. And consequently it is possible to predict with

confidence that in the apparently quite unlikely contexts of bureaucratically managed modern societies there will periodically emerge social movements informed by just that kind of prophetic irrationalism of which Nietzsche's thought is the ancestor. So Weber and Nietzsche together provide us with the key theoretical articulations of the contemporary social order; but what they delineate so clearly are the large-scale and dominant features of the modern social landscape. (1985: 113–115)

Drawing his own conclusion, MacIntyre says about modern morality:

…either one must follow through the aspirations and the collapse of the different versions of the Enlightenment project until there remains only the Nietzschean diagnosis and the Nietzschean problematic or one must hold that Enlightenment project was not only mistaken, but should never have been commenced in the first place. There is no third alternative … (1985: 118)

And,

My own conclusion is very clear. It is that on the one hand we still, in spite of the efforts of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of sociology, lack any coherent rationally defensible statement of a liberal individualist point of view; and that, on the other hand, the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments. (1985: 259)

To circumvent this impasse MacIntyre's recommends the need to return to the classical tradition. In my essay (1995) I have shown the impossibility of this recommendation. Deflecting from MacIntyre's preoccupation, I will in the following point out the implication of Nietzsche's rejection of morality to a large population of people, we may not be capable of becoming superman.

III

INDIVIDUATION AND THE WEST

Here I would like to put Nietzsche's proposal for man becoming superman to a sociological scrutiny. Are all human beings capable of being superman? What would happen to a large number of individuals who are denied the conventional or any other morality

by Nietzsche? Referring to the renaissance mood that rejected the conventional morality, J.L. Talmon observes:

> Men were gripped by the idea that the conditions, a product of faith, time and custom, in which unnatural had all to be replaced by deliberately planned uniform patterns, which would be natural and rational. (1966: 3)

The impact of renaissance thinking consisted in freeing man from the traditional institutions. This becomes clear in Rousseau who laments that man is in bondage and needs to be freed. Since he is in bondage, he cannot see the alternatives. Therefore, he has to be "forced to be free". Here, to quote Fromm, "the abolition of external domination seemed to be not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition to attain the cherished goal: freedom of the individual" (1964: 4). This "freedom from" the natural associations has been forced on every one equally without discrimination. This idea of "freedom", which implies the restraintless state, seems to have some implications. Two things follow from the state of freedom from external constraints and individualism. First, man need not have to follow mechanically what is prescribed to him or her by the society or the church. He or she can make his or her own choice in selecting things, which are nearer to his or her heart and good to his or her being. Here it has been assumed that all people are capable of making all decisions for themselves. Secondly, in becoming independent from all the external relations and constraints, man faces loneliness, which is the state of isolation, and unrelatedness.

The freedom referred to above, says Fromm, brings "an increased feeling of strength" as also "an increased isolation, doubt, skepticism", which results in "anxiety" (1964: 48). This increased feeling of strength is dominant in some while freedom for the majority primarily means the loss of the most important advantage, i.e., the sense of security, which they enjoyed when their life was in the midst of traditional ties. Severed from these ties, these people face the problem of loneliness, lack of belonging, isolation or social solipsism. Fromm observes:

> This lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns, we may call moral aloneness and state that moral aloneness is as intolerable as the physical

aloneness, or rather that physical aloneness becomes unbearable only if it implies also moral aloneness. (1964: 19)

Referring to this state of restraintlessness, Michael Oakeshott points out a close relation between hypothetical individualism and the mass phenomena. Before elucidating this relation let us clarify the constituting feature of mass man, Gassete holds that mass,

… as a psychological fact, can be defined without waiting for individuals to appear in mass formation. In the presence of one individual, we can decide whether he is "mass' or not. The mass is all that which sets no value on itself —good or ill-based on specific grounds, but which feels itself "just like everybody,' and nevertheless is not concerned about it; is, in fact, quite happy to feel itself as one with everybody else. (1972: 11–12)

Masses, according to Oakeshott, as they appear in modern European history, are that they are not composed of individuals, but "are composed of anti-individuals' united in a revulsion from individuality" (1961: 160). The emergence of this "anti-individual" attitude, he tried to show, is related to the growing shift of emphasis from relations to persons. By relations, he means the state where man sees things through the immediate social institutions. The state of pre-individualism (not anti-individualism) is one of community life. In his own words, in this state, "to know oneself as the member of a family, a group, a corporation, a church, a village community, as the suitor at a court or as the occupier of a tenancy, had been, for the vast majority, the circumstantially possible sum of self-knowledge." Further he adds, the state where for the "most part anonymity prevailed, individual human character was rarely observed because it was not there to be observed" (1961: 152–3). By persons, Oakeshott means, the state where the emphasis has been on man. This man, in most cases, is not an empirical but a hypothetical man.

The notion "anti-individuality," which Oakeshott refers to, is a notion of the postulated, hypothesized individuality. It is not the anti-individuality of the concrete human being. Accordingly, the anti-individuals are those who previously came under the influence of the "individuality", which are the products of "freedom from". To understand this sort of anti-individuality—the collection of

which is mass which had emerged as a reaction to the hypothetical individuality—it is essential to understand the nature of this individuality. Inspired by the idea of individualism and faith in freedom, in the sense of "freedom-from", the prevalent beliefs, occupations, status or institutions were sought to be dissolved and it was attempted to free all people, indiscriminately from them. This was deemed desirable because equality was the unquestioned assumption. Referring to this abstract and universal notion of equality Oakeshott says:

> The old certainties of belief, of occupation and of status were being dissolved, not only for those who had confidence in their own power to make a new place for themselves in an association of individuals, but also for those who had no such confidence. (1961: 158)

This freedom and individuality have, in a majority of the cases, led to the rise of social solipsism, isolation or loneliness. From this state, says Oakeshott:

> …a new disposition was generated: the impulse to escape from the predicament by imposing it upon all mankind. From the frustrated "individual *manqué*' there sprang the militant "anti-individual' (1961: 159)

When man with this attitude of anti-individuality, finds numerical superiority of his type of people, he forms a collectivity which becomes the masses. The nature of this mass man reveals that feelings rather than thoughts, impulses rather than opinions, inabilities rather than power govern him. He doesn't want to make decisions for himself but wants others to decide things for him. Mass leader takes up this role and function of making decisions by the mass men. In addition, the mass leader becomes a leader not by virtue of qualifications, but driven by the need to get away from, or escape from, choice. The anti-individual and the leader were the counterparts of a single moral situation; they relieved one another's frustrations and supplies one another's wants. Therefore, the man who wanted salvation from the traditional bonds, in the end, "will be satisfied only with release from the burden of having to make choices for himself" (1961: 168). Thus, Oakeshott traces the origins of masses in modern Europe, to the idea of abstract

individuality. This abstract individuality is primarily understood as not having any obligation to external social relations.

This freedom brings to man independence as well as loneliness. This state of loneliness induces in him anxiety and fear. This state of neutrality when not used positively becomes burdensome. Fromm discusses the escape mechanism of man from this loneliness. He traces roots of fascist psychological traits—sadism and masochism—to this escape mechanism. He says:

> Aloneness, fear, and bewilderment remain; people cannot stand it forever. They cannot go on bearing the burden of "freedom from"; they must try to escape from freedom altogether unless they can progress from negative to positive freedom. The principle social avenues of escape in our time are the submission to a leader, as has happened in Fascist countries, and the compulsive conforming as is prevalent in our own democracy. (1964: 134)

The two basic Fascist psychological traits are masochism and sadism. Machoist attempts are "to get rid of the individual self, to loose oneself, on other words, to get rid of the burden of freedom." And sadist attempts are the impulse "to have complete mastery over another person" (1964: 157). These two psychological traits are diametrically opposed to each other. But, according to Fromm, they spring from the same source, namely, "the inability to bear the isolation and weakness of oneself." These two diametrically opposed psychological traits are exclusively interdependent, and their relation is "symbiotic" (1964: 156-58).

These attempts to get away from oneself and to relate to other are termed by Fromm as *secondary bonds*. In these, secondary bond individuals consciously attempt to rationalize that he is related to the other and consequently rationalizes a sense of belongingness. Nevertheless, unconsciously the dichotomy and the hostility prevail.

The main difference between the primary and secondary bonds seems to lay in the fact that man in his primary bonds, is in his relations with his family, community, or with his surroundings, grows with them. He is not consciously aware of this growth. Secondary bonds, on the other hand, are consciously established. He does not *grow* into these secondary bonds, but *enters* them. Fromm says that in these secondary bonds man does not attain in what he has lost in the primary bonds. In the words of Fromm:

The self attempts to find security in "secondary bonds,' as we might call the masochistic bonds, but this attempt can never be successful. The emergence of the individual self cannot be reversed; consciously the individual can feel secure and as if he "belonged," but basically he remains a powerless atom who suffers under the submergence of his self. (1964: 156–57)

This sense of freedom in the absence of natural social practices and habits leave him in loneliness and isolation. Man cannot endure for long this solipsistic state. Therefore, he attempts to escape from it. From this extreme individualism, man reaches the state of "anti-individuality" where he does not have to decide things for himself. The leader does this work for him. Fromm sees the origins of the two fascist psychological traits, sadism and masochism. Sadism and masochism though diametrically opposed to each other on one level are symbiotic on another level. These two psychological traits, Fromm shows, arise out of loneliness of the modern man, which is the result of the forced individualism and rejection of natural institutions. The negative aspects of aberrations of individuation are as much a reality as the positive aspects. In pointing out these aberrations of individuation I would not however, conclude from this that these aberrations are inevitable to my critique of modernity. Here let me point out that like Fromm and Oakeshott I would not like to criticize modernity because of these aberrations that it might generate, I would however, pitch my criticisms from somewhere else. Further, I believe that it is possible to both negotiate with these alleged aberrations as well as find out mechanism to preempt their arrival at the outset.

Thus, I have identified the ideal of autonomous individual; situated Nietzsche within the discourse of modernity and stated his radical objections to it; pointed out the implication of Nietzsche's rejection of morality to fascism in the West.

NOTE

1. Though rights are intrinsically related to man, we do come across instances where the purview of this discourse is conceptually extended to include non-human beings such as animals (Peter Singer), and even communities (Kymlicka 1995).

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The Postmodern Discontents of Liberalism

N. Sreekumar

> Before the end of the 18th century man did not exist—any more than the potency of life, the fecundity of labor, or the historical destiny of language. He is a quiet recent creature, which the demiurge of Knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown old so quickly that it has been too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known.
>
> (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 336)

A postmodern conception of political theory sounds a little enigmatic and ironical, considering the reservations the philosophers who profess such a position have in accepting the relevance of any theoretical position or even the very significance of theory as such. The rejection of any universal interpretations of culture or the use of metanarratives for similar purposes is what can be termed as the hallmark of postmodern attitude. Richard Rorty, one of the chief exponents of such a view—in political realm, a postmodern-pragmatic and liberal democratic position—had made it clear that our inheritance from and conversation with fellow humans are our only source of guidance,[1] and whatever theoretical support we may provide for our practices can hardly be considered as a rational justification. This position eventually makes the historically evolved—and hence contingent—practices of a group or community primary to any theoretical examination

on the significance and validity of such practices. These practices cannot be "proved" true from a perspective neutral to them as the postmodern-pragmatic outlook does not permit any such impartial trans-perspectival vindication.

But Rorty adheres to the ethical perspective of liberal democratic culture. He is ambitious to "justify" it against other frameworks. This looks paradoxical, as Terry Eagleton writes, Rorty himself has acknowledged the contingency of what he endorses—the Western, bourgeois, liberal, enlightened, social democratic-to-postmodern reformism—but yet embraces it as a universal good. This is to take a value position extrinsic to the one we adhere to. Eagleton adds that Rorty is raising contingency to universality without erasing its contingency and thus reconciling his historicism with his absolutizing of Western ideology.[2] Rorty is cautious about the dangers of all universalization projects as they invariably attempt to raise one scheme of practices over others to derive a trans-perspectival criterion. One may end up endorsing one particular normative position as universal and adjudicates not only practices and behaviour, but also the validity of this normative position itself from a perspective that is in reality no more fundamental than it. Rorty advocates liberal democratic politics by invoking a pragmatic outlook, which nevertheless resists any attempt to see its universal validity, but sees its relevance and validity only as a matter of contingent historical evolution. He seems to be suggesting that the moral framework of liberal democracy may work better in the postmodern situation which emphasizes on the one hand on the proliferation of concrete particulars and on the other hand on the contingency of language, self and community, so that people will cease to fix their bigotry views on parochial and intolerant claims.

This aspect which highlights the proliferation of concrete particulars represents a major breakaway of postmodernism from the enlightenment vantage point. The idea of an ultimate merging of the subject and the object in the absolute, though was originally construed by Hegel, remained central to many post-Hegelian contemplations of moral and political life as well. This was even true for Marxism, as it only replaced the idealist horizon

with the idealization of the proletarian class—the metanarrative of the Proletarian—as the ultimate universalizing principle. This dominant ideal indicates how one ought to relate oneself to the rest of the world and more importantly to the society of other subjects. There had been attempts to show that a merging of the individual with the general is "rational" and hence necessary. It is to such conceptions, the postmodernists and pragmatists like Rorty quarrel. Rorty particularly sees the epistemological problematic of representationalism at work behind such rationalization endeavours and seeks to deconstruct this with the pragmatic outlook which is concerned with the notion of "practices for coping with the world". We can see the postmodern reaction to such "rational merging" from other perspectives too. For instance, the ethical and political implications of such a deconstruction are brought out by Ernesto Laclau in his discussion of the relationship between the universal and the particular.[3] Laclau observes that the postmodern deconstruction of the subject has not only resulted in the collapse of the subject, but also initiated the collapse of the object. This has made it possible to cease viewing the society as sacred, a view which had its theological as well as secular versions. Consequently the subject stands in a peculiar relationship with the society. But this is not to neglect the subtle nuances of power relations that exist in human societies within the contexts where the individual's relationship with the society can be viewed. As Foucault reminds us, the state has become "a modern matrix of individualization", which according to him is a new form of pastoral power. While in the ancient times pastoral power was confined to only a group of people based on their religious qualification, the modern state executes it through its various apparatus or public institutions with a promise of salvation in this world—health, well-being, security, protection against accidents—a series of worldly aims of the traditional pastorate.[4] This is a matter of worry, as it exposes the various ways in which humans are subjugated, one important matter of concern for the postmodernists.

The question is: can liberal-democratic politics, with its liberalism and anti-totalitarian outlook offer a way out? This would require us to put things in a different order and see it from another

perspective. It definitely calls for a de-divinization of the categories involved—the individual particular subject and the universal object, which is the society—and for new ways in understanding their interrelationship. While Rorty's characterization of the contingency of community can be seen as a derivation from this de-divinization of the society his emphasis on the contingency of the self aims at deconstructing the idea of subject epitomized by modernity. The postmodern ambience also sees the relationship between the two from a different angle. This paper will examine this relationship and will try to see how far democratic politics has succeeded in addressing some of the post-modern concerns related to power and domination and a consequent politics of difference. I'll argue that many of the above-mentioned nuances of power relationships can be effectively checked if we prepare space for creative democratic empowerment, where the particular—the individual subject—relate herself with the universal—the society—by relating to other subjects by means of an inevitable interrelationship characterized by mutual constitution. This is to go beyond naïve liberalism, which functions on the basis of an ambiguous notion of self-rule. I argue that, though we may not find any metaphysically eternal bond between them, their relationship is nevertheless strong and seen from the perspective of the subject, the society embodies individuals who are the significant and constitutive others of the self. I will draw upon Laclau's analysis of the universal–particular relationship to understand the diverse aspects of this link and will try to understand more closely what Charles Taylor calls the dialogically constituting aspect of the self in relation with and often in confrontation with others. I argue that this dialogic relationship largely vindicates democratic politics, even though it cannot be projected as a rational basis for endorsing the latter. I will also argue that identity politics, a postmodern counterpart in political life, can be meaningfully perused only with democracy, as in the complex operational frameworks of modern, industrialized and market-centred societies, all institutions of civil society are politicized, and democracy has become the only means of coordinating collective actions and identity formation.[5] I will examine the discontents, the inhibitions towards any form of

social integration, but before that will briefly see the postmodern rubrics on political experience.

POSTMODERNISM AND LIBERALISM

Postmodernism, if understood in the sense Jean-Francois Lyotard did, is characterized by a distrust of metanarratives. Hence to understand the postmodern political experience any reference to universalizing principles or totalities has to be avoided. Yet postmodernism also has to explain the process of social integration, or in other words, it has to reinterpret that process. According to Rorty, this postmodern perspective and the emergence of political liberalism cannot be separated. We cannot say that one is the cause of the other; on the other hand they are congenital. The way in which contemporary western societies and civilization—and as a corollary to this, many of their ex–colonies have evolved to adopting democratic politics, a phase their historical existence, owing to changes in the economic, social, cultural, political and all other factors that exert influence on human life, have to be closely observed.

A visible impact on the realm of political life is characterized by the growing disbelief in the state's—in a system of the integrated whole—ability to assist individual emancipation. Thanks to the decentring of emancipatory ideals and the subsequent emergence of diverse identities, societies can no longer function as homogeneous units and political power can no longer be located at recognizable points, but becomes dispersed. Social identities are formed around various historically evolved—and hence contingent—features of human life like race, religion, caste, etc. This phenomenon has impacts on both social and individual realms. On the one hand these diverse groups may crave for self-rule and autonomy and on the other hand depend on other groups and the society as a whole for legitimizing their claims. I have discussed these issues elsewhere and will now examine the problem of social integration and how liberal democratic practices respond to the concerns and inhibitions involved.[6]

THE INHIBITIONS

The implications of conceiving modern democracies as representing a "rational political order" are to be examined with a sense of caution. The easiest and most popular way to defend liberal democratic practices is by referring to a truth claim about some universal fact or essence and subsequently drawing from the latter the ultimate justification for universal human rights which would in turn "rationalize" such practices. As Justine Cruikshank puts it, the realist position seeks to justify liberal democratic practices by describing how "human nature" is materially acquisitive, which in this context means, competitive, as these practices allow individuals the freedom to engage in economic competition, with government existing to regulate such competition and protect individuals' private property.[7] What is implied is an ethics of social integration with its necessary political implications. The question to be raised in this context is: How to justify this notion of social integration, as the idea of self-rule is central to identity politics? The subject needs to retain its identity without "losing" itself in the generality of social consciousness. Yet the idea of self-rule has to be given up to a great deal to make the process of social integration possible. This notion of social integration, as evident from this context, needs a radical reinterpretation.

But before addressing these issues we will have to see the nature of this subject that awaits integration or separation with the generality of the society. Again, the universality of this social consciousness is always understood in terms of its transcendental character when contrasted with the contingent and limited horizon of the subject. One way to rationalize the integration is to exhibit that there exist certain universal structures of subjectivity, something which can be designated as the universal human nature or essence or something like the Kantian free and immortal self. This is the ethical self, whose actions are expected to comply and conform to the universal norms, owing to the very fact that it is a universal incarnated in the particular. The postmodern discontents to this ethical subject can be traced back to Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogy of this ethical subject as it can be conceived

as the forerunner of the postmodern deconstruction of the subject. Neitzsche's genealogy vigorously anticipates the death of the subject, which has its body in social interactions while situating its soul in its immortal domain of human nature.

Nietzsche traces the genealogy of this "ethical subject" with "free will', in the incompetent and palsied collective reflection of the weak. The "oppressed, downtrodden, violated whispering with the wily vengeance of the impotent arises from the inability of the latter to retaliate the harms and pains inflicted upon them by the strong. This whispering calls for being good and not to retaliate and to be patient and tolerant, not by virtue of any moral courage, but owing to the essential cowardice and helplessness of the weak. It adores the moral values, which, according to Nietzsche, spring from weakness and wickedness that have in turn emanated from helplessness. Nietzsche sees in this nothing but a duplicity of impotence and the weakness of the weak and argues that this sort of people require the belief in a "free subject" who is able to choose indifferently, out of the instinct of self-preservation which notoriously justifies every kind of lie.[8] Nietzsche adds that "…to this day the subject, or in popular language the soul, has been the most viable of all articles of faith simply because it makes it possible for the majority of mankind—i.e., the weak and oppressed of every sort—to practice the sublime sleight of hand which gives weakness the appearance of free choice and one's natural disposition the distinction of merit.[9] Therefore, the origin of the subject is from the helplessness, wickedness sprouting from weakness and creates an essentially false image of human subject.

The postmodern deconstruction of the subject can have no other beginning better than this Neitzschean annihilation. In a sense the ethical discourse was so fundamental to the European foundationalist philosophical programmes and the immortal ethical self had been at the centre of such contemplations. With a little less emphasis on the genealogy of morals the postmodern decentring of the subject proceeded in the same route and encountered several consequences which are inevitable to such a conceptual venture. As Laclau says: "At the moment in which the terrain of absolute subjectivity collapses, it collapses also *the very*

possibility of an object".[10] This has resulted in another possibility of refraining from talking about all types of essences, and from introducing all sorts of metanarratives to justify one's practices. The subject at the political realm is thus devoid of all essences, metaphysical or ethical whatsoever, and left with nothing but the practices by which she interacts with others in the society. Following the Wittgenstenian emphasis on forms of life, Rorty sees the basis of social action in rule-following, indicating the practical ability people acquire by way of engaging themselves in playing various language-games. The notion of social integration also has to be seen from this perspective. Before I address this issue, I will consider certain anxieties that become visible when the question of social integration is raised.

One major anxiety with regard to adopting any model of the individual relating itself with the society in the modern world is expressed by Michel Foucault. He observes that the modern Western state has to be considered as a sophisticated structure in which individuals can be integrated under the condition that their individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns.[11] Thus Foucault shows how power in Western states acquires both an individualizing and a totalizing form, owing to them integrating a new political shape of an old power technique—pastoral power—that has originated in Christian institutions.[12] Power thus spreads out into the whole social body and also embodies in the various social institutions.

Social integration rationalizes the subject's giving up of self-rule. Foucault's analysis of the vital links that exist between rationalization and power becomes relevant in this context. He asserts that the spread of power into the whole social body cannot be ignored once we understand man, the subject, as no longer possessing a foundational status and is not a metaphysical or transcendental phenomenon. The subject is thus conceived as a phenomenon with a history which is characterized by the interplay between relations of truth, power and self.[13] This is to look beyond the universal rational structures that are said to be integrating the subject with a universal self as well as with the society, a notion which runs parallel with the epistemological ideal that relates the

subject with the object and the metaphysical assumption that finds eternal links between the particular and the universal. Following Nietzsche, Foucault conceives the subject as a historical being, that which emerges in the interstices of the power/truth/self triangle.[14] In other words, the subject always finds itself within this web of affiliations and associations characterized by different forms of domination and dependence relationships.

We do not have to see Foucault's expositions as forming part of a theoretical programme which ultimately aims at showing how to get out of this process of "subjugating" which constantly keeps the subjects locked within the web of power relations of domination and oppression. For Foucault, probably there is no escape, as even the most liberal democratic framework retains some concept of social integration, and hence that of subjugation. Identities are imposed on the subjects, by others and by the subjects themselves. For Foucault, the subject has a history and hence a future too which will be determined by the historical process. Hence there is no nonhistorical substance to ground the subject. This makes the subject finding it in a constant flux of identity constructions. Subject can be sensitive to the relationships of domination and oppression and be also critical and cautious about the same. But it can never get out of some or other identity constructions, and escape to a transcendental realm unaffected by contingencies.

Now the process of social integration has to be examined within the framework of liberal democracies. One can even see the liberal democratic practices, as John Rawls sees it, without subscribing to any such metaphysical notions, yet attempting to rationalize them on the basis of a concept of justice. Rawls proposes two principles of justice to serve guidelines for how basic institutions are to realize the values of liberty and equality. The first principle asserts the right to equal claim of each person to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties. The second principle talks about the two conditions to be satisfied by social and economic inequalities: first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity and second, they are to be the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.[15] He claims that, compared to other principles

of justice, these are more appropriate to defend the notion of subject as a "free and equal person". Liberal democracy stands for a particular arrangement of basic political and social institutions that enables the realization of the values of liberty and equality.[16] These values find their justification on a notion of justice which Rawls upholds as rational.

Even with this understanding of political integration in its minimal sense, a number of questions needed to be addressed. What is the nature of the social integration? Whether liberal democracy offers a framework of relationship which would minimize, if not overcome completely, the process of subjugation, which involves domination and oppression? Whether democracy itself is, as Ernesto Laclau puts it, a universal standpoint, which actually is no more than a particular that at some moment has become dominant.[17] How far it is compatible with identity politics, as the latter is a natural outcome of the death of the subject and the subsequent proliferation of concrete particulars? In way of answering these questions, I will raise another question and will try to answer that, which will contain answers to all the above ones. The question is: What is the nature and status of the subject in liberal democracies?

LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES AND THE SUBJECT

What sort of a universal domain is being represented by the political practices which we normally designate as liberal democracy? I pose this not as a general issue, but as we can see it from the perspective of a postmodern concern. It is almost a truism that postmodern societies will look for less control, less monitoring, less uniformities and less integration. Still social life presupposes a political arrangement, which will have to have a certain understanding of the way people relate with each other and with the society as a whole. The idea of a social ethic emanates from this basic requirement.

I have discussed the death of the subject in political realm above. Now let me examine two of the immediate consequences of this death. Laclau calls this the "death of the death of the subject", which

is marked by the reemergence of a multitude of subjects as concrete finitudes, and not as copies of any transcendental principle. Laclau adds that the concrete limitations of these subjects are actually the source of their strength; the realization that they can be "subjects" because the gap that "the Subject" was supposed to bridge is actually unbridgeable.[18] The reemerging subject is not bound to the ethical commitments of the Kantian ahistorical subject and no longer realizes herself as an instance of the universal ethical self, whose essence is constituted in freedom. In the Sartrian sense, this realization brings a different sense of freedom—freedom as a condemnation—which makes the constitution of the self more complicated. On the one hand the subject is a simple individual entity, who can hope for an "authentic" existence, based on self-rule and autonomy. But on the other hand there are other individuals with whom she has to relate herself and construct her identity in relation with. But, if this is affirmed, then what would be the political process in which she may wish to find herself?

The second consequence would provide an answer to this question. The subject finds herself free from the ethical commitments demanded by an ahistorical, universal moral domain, but by virtue of this freedom, may have to "negotiate" her existence with other subjects who are also free like her. She cannot rely on others and take them for granted when designing her projects in the absence of any universal norms that regulate all our political consciousness decisively. As Sartre says:

> But I cannot count upon men whom I do not know, I cannot base my confidence upon human goodness or upon man's interest in the good of society, seeing that man is free and that there is no human nature which I can take as foundational.[19]

But this will not make the issue of ethical commitment totally irrelevant. On the other hand, it calls for another mode of commitment—to her fellow humans—in the absence of which the subject cannot negotiate her existence in the world.

Ernesto Laclau has explained how this disbelief and skepticism about the "rational universal" has evolved by examining the historical forms in which the relationship between universality

and particularity has been thought. He talks about two major ways this relationship had been conceived. First, that which maintains a dividing line between the universal and the particular and conceiving the pole of the universal as something which is graspable by reason. This will lead, either to a realization of the particular in the universal—and thereby negating any genuine ground for asserting particularity—or to the negation of universalism as such. The second form of relationship is explained with a notion of the logic of incarnation, where the point of view of the totality is conceived as "divine", and hence is not graspable by reason, but is only accessible through revelation. Laclau says that, from this the idea of the privileged agency of history, the agent whose particular body was the expression of a universality transcending it has emanated. The modern idea of universal class and the various forms of Eurocentrism are nothing but the distant historical effects of the logic of incarnation.[20] When modernity rejected the logic of incarnation with its emphasis on a rational ground for everything, it did so by negating the gap between the universal and the particular by raising one of the particulars—the European culture of the 19th century—to the level of the universal and associating with it the expression of the universal human essence.[21]

Viewed from the perspective of the present study, to project such a universal as a justification for social integration—as a model for seeing the relationship between the universal and the particular—is to revoke the discourses based on metanarratives and to reject the validity of identity politics. The growing sentiment is more towards conceiving the gulf between the universal and the particular as unbridgeable and with a proliferation of particulars, the point of view of universality is increasingly put aside as an old-fashioned totalitarian dream.[22] But Laclau argues that pure particularism is no solution to problems that we face in contemporary societies, as he says that, if particularism is the only valid principle we will have to accept the rights to self-determination of all kinds of reactionary groups involved in anti-social practices. Moreover, there is no particularism which does not make appeal to such general principles in the construction of its own identity. He adds:

For if each identity is in a differential, nonantagonistic relation to all other identities, then the identity in question is purely differential and relational; so it presupposes not only the presence of all the other identities but also the total ground which constitutes the differences as differences.[23]

An emphasis on mere differences alone is totally insufficient in understanding the nature of identities, as there are important ways in which these differences themselves are constituted by way of relations of power, which we may miss to notice if we operate exclusively with a logic of difference and exclusion.[24] The notion of difference itself presupposes the other from whom one is different and a common ground that relates oneself with the other. This realization will gradually take us to a better understanding of the role of the "other" in our own identity formation.

The postmodern emphasis on particularities needs to be understood in this light. The subject thus will have to negotiate her identity with the identities of others to derive an understanding of the world as well as of herself. Here I refer to a view which was put forward by Charles Taylor, which would invite us to see the relationship of the subject to the society of other individuals from a different angle. Taylor wants to show that questions of identity are strongly linked with the idea of recognition, which evidently involves others. He argues that:

The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition of its absence, often by the misrecognition by others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people of society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, and reduced mode of being.[25]

Taylor emphasizes that, in order to understand the close connection between identity and recognition, we have to realize how human life is fundamentally dialogical in character. We develop understanding about ourselves and learn to define our identities through the acquisition of languages, and we learn the modes of expression through exchanges with others. In other words, we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us.[26]

The fact that we may have to negotiate with others in carrying out our projects in social life also points to this dialogic nature of our self. The subject will have to constantly negotiate with other individuals, identity groups—of her own and other groups—and the Government and in every such occasion questions of relationships which involve mutual constitution and power become relevant, which leave her with no other option, but to engage in a dialogue. Postmodernist may not find this a difficult proposition to accept, but if they accept this, it may take them to certain consequences that they may not wish to accommodate. I will discuss this by showing two models of dialogue that become relevant in this context: one, advocated by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his philosophical hermeneutics when the question of understanding the textual meaning—an instance of understanding the other—is discussed and another one discussed by Richard Rorty.

DIALOGUE AND THE SUBJECT

To explicate Gadamer's position, I will focus on three aspects. One, the emphasis on linguistically inherited prejudicial nature of all understanding, second, the importance of keeping oneself indeterminate and third, the culmination of understanding in an agreement, which will result in a fusion of horizons, of the creation of a new language. I will very briefly explain the first two and explain the third point with greater emphasis.

The horizon of the preunderstood meanings is Gadamer's starting point, which in the context of our present study, can be taken as that which constitutes our identity. But when this horizon confronts a new one, the system of meanings that constitutes it will have to make the new horizon and its meanings familiar and legitimate, a process which proceeds with a "logic of question and answer", which, according to Gadamer, constitutes the very structural framework of dialogic rationality. This rationality functions on the basis of two principles; openness and indeterminacy. The very possibility of dialogic encounter presupposes that partners are open to truth claims made in other horizons and a

subsequent admission of ignorance and indeterminacy. The third aspect I mentioned above—the fusion of horizon, the agreement reached—is the aim of dialogue. This possibility is present in every use of language, owing to the essential conversational structure of human languages. Gadamer writes:

> Every conversation presupposes a common language, or, it creates a common language. Something is placed in the centre, as the Greeks said, which the partners to the dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence agreement concerning the object, which it is the purpose of the conversation to bring about, necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation.[27]

Dialogue thus concludes in the creation of a common language for the partners to interact and in every dialogic understanding there is a new language created, which opens up the possibility that this new one may be a better one than the participating ones. If the value domain of liberal democracy thus provides this possibility of something "better" by the individual subject relating herself with other subjects and groups, that can be seen as an emancipatory possibility, which is an old assumption of modernity. This possibility may even make this form of democratic participation look "rational".

On the contrary, Rorty has a different conception of dialogue. He acknowledges that our inheritance from and conversation with fellow humans are our only source of guidance and our only commitment is to our immediate audience. While bringing out the difference between truth and justification, Rorty states that the only difference between them is the difference between old audiences and new audiences. While the demand for truth calls for a universal criterion applicable to all times and subsequently desires to justify them to all audiences, justification works with a modest claim of making our beliefs sensible—and hence justifiable—to our contemporary audience. The desirability of truth is therefore, redescribed as the desire to justify our beliefs, at least to some people with whom we live, interact, carry out our project and in short, negotiate our existence.

But this desire for justification is a precondition for our very existence, as our projects are not planned and executed in

isolation, but always "with" others. Like Gadamer, Rorty here emphasizes our conversation with others as perennial. He draws upon the pragmatic standpoint that considers the Socratic virtues like the willingness to talk, to listen to other people, to weigh the consequences of our actions upon other people are moral virtues, though they cannot be fortified by theoretical research into essence. He adds:

> The pragmatists tell us that the conversation which it is our moral duty to continue is *merely* our project, the European intellectual's form of life. It has no metaphysical nor epistemological guarantee of success. Further (and this is the crucial point) *we do not know what "success" would mean except simply "continuance."* We are not conversing because we have a goal, but because Socratic conversation is an activity which is its *own* end.[28]

Rorty endorses this pragmatic conception and consequently makes dialogic interaction devoid of any goal external to it. He does not want any external objective to interfere the conversation that continues, as any such agreement may amount to fixing the subject, the self at a point in the process of its historical existence.

But contrary to this Rortian view, we may realize that the conversation has an objective, a political purpose. It is through this we negotiate our identities. Taylor's analysis of the link between recognition—a notion which brings others to the forefront—and identity makes this clear. Taylor writes:

> Thus my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my relations with others.[29]

Conceiving democratic practices from this perspective will suggest certain consequences which the postmodernists may find unacceptable. The other here appears as a "significant other" whose recognition is perennial to the constitution of our identity. Rorty and many postmodernists endorse liberal democratic practices, as they conform to the needs of the essential contingency of human existence. Rorty sees the self and the community where it finds itself as necessarily contingent as the Wittgenstenian picture he adopts traces the origination and evolution of the latter in a

diversity of language games and forms of life. Rorty opposes all rationalization proposals in relation to democratic politics.

But the process of negotiating identities suggests two possibilities, which are contrary to the postmodern approach. On the one hand, a fixation of the self takes place, though temporarily, and on the other hand, it opens possibilities to negotiate identities in "desirable" ways.

The fixation of the self is an idea to which the postmodernists have been quarrelling ever since the beginning. They can accept an idea of negotiation only in so far as the negotiated identity is recognized as "different" from the previous one. This difference does not amount to the recognition of the new as qualitative superior or inferior—as any such evaluation presupposes a trans-cultural criterion—to the old, as it is in Gadamerian dialogue, where dialogue concludes in a fusion of horizon, opening up the possibility of arriving at a "better" understanding. On the contrary, it works simply on the basis of the logic and politics of difference. Hence there is no room for an ideal, a fixed point of political emancipation.

But even in the Gadamerian model, the emancipation is necessarily an incomplete one, yet it is an emancipatory experience, as the new language created in conversation can be a better one since it evolves from the dialectical relationship of two different horizons. Hence, democratic practices, dependent on dialogue can result in better understanding, better constitution and better emancipation. The postmodern view stresses on conversation without emancipation, as Rorty says the recognition of contingency necessarily prepares space for such conversations.

But why? Why is this need for conversation and why the recognition of contingency? The realization about a limitation happens only when we have a standard to which we compare our state of affairs. Here the postmodernists and Rorty lack such a standard position. Hence the contingency they talk about refers not to a lack or limitation but to the fact that our states of affairs are different, and may not include other states of affairs. As I have mentioned above, it works with a logic and politics of difference and exclusion.

For Rorty the vital features of democratic politics such as liberalism and inclusivism can be attained only with open-ended conversational practices with an admittance of indeterminacy of one's position and openness and tolerance to other perspectives. This is to experience a sense of fallibilism, which, according to Rorty, is not a feature of all human beings. It is more prevalent among inhabitants of wealthy, secure, tolerant, inclusivist societies, where people are brought up to bethink themselves that they might be mistaken and the disagreements of others may have value. Hence it is necessary to encourage fallibilism.[30]

But the politics of difference does not inform us why we should be open and tolerant—and also accept fallibilism—as the disagreements of others may have value only to them, and not to us. Whatever "mistakes": we can sensibly talk about mistakes only if we recognize them as mistakes and any external evaluation of the same—by others and other communities—are irrelevant. Logic of difference does not admit a trans-community evaluation. There is something mistaken about this position of politics of difference. I will conclude this discussion with a brief analysis of this.

POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Charles Taylor argues that the politics of difference has originated from the need for a politics of equal recognition in democratic societies. On the one hand, the emphasis of equal dignity of citizens which has manifested in the equalization of rights and entitlements has led to a politics of equal dignity and on the other hand, with the modern notion of identities a politics of difference has become relevant.[31] Taylor claims that the politics of difference has organically grown out of the politics of universal dignity, whose underlying assumption is that all humans are equally worthy of respect, a principle which sounds Kantian. This is manifested in the politics of difference as a respect for the universal potential for forming and defining one's own identity as an individual or culture. Taylor shows that, underlying the demand is a principle of universal equality, which paradoxically is in contradiction with the very principle of the politics of difference propagated by the

postmodernists. As Taylor says, the principle of universal equality acknowledges only what is universally present.[32]

As Rorty contends, democratic politics can be justified, not because we can show that there are trans-cultural structures which determine human nature or the nature of reality, but because we are subjects who have to necessarily negotiate our identities with others—significant others—as a presupposition for our existence. This will bring others into our conversational frameworks and in relation with them alone our identities are constructed. Democratic politics is justified, as it enables us to engage in this process of construction as effective partners by resisting identities imposed upon us by others and the state and its institutions. To resist is to be aware of an idea of emancipation, to have an awareness of various possibilities and evaluate these possibilities as good or bad and better and worse. This is to bring, contrary to the wish of the postmodernist, a criterion that can be treated as common. This need not be a tans-cultural, and transcendental rational truth, but can very well be housed in languages which we use and which eventually shape our identities. Again this standard of reference need not be something fixed for ever and subsequently the emancipatory possibilities of individuals also may vary. But dialogue ought to be purposeful, as it may at least temporarily fix what is better at a given situation at a given point of time.

As Rorty contended, dialogue, by means of which individuals negotiate their identities, can be open-ended. It should not be based on or intending to fix a transcendental ideal. But it should proceed with the intention of evolving better emancipatory possibilities in socio-political lives.

NOTES

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9. Ibid., p. 180.
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13. O'Leary, Timothy, *Foucault: The Art of Ethics,* London, Continuum, 2002, p. 108.
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17. Laclau, Ernesto, op. cit. p. 99.
18. Ibid., p. 94.
19. Sartre, Jean Paul, *Existentialism and Humanism,* Transl. Philip Mairet, London, Methuen, p. 40.
20. Lacalu, Ernesto, ibid., p. 96.
21. Ibid., p. 97.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 99.
24. Laclau gives the example of Apartheid, which functioned on the basis of a logic of difference and the subsequent notion of separate developments. See, Ibid., p. 100.
25. Taylor, Charles, "The Politics of Recognition", in *Philosophical Arguments,* Cambridge, Harward University Press, 1997, p. 225.
26. Ibid. p. 230.
27. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr. David E. Linge, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977, p. 341.
28. Rorty, Richard, op. cit., p. 172.

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30. Rorty, Richard, "The Contingency of a Liberal Community" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 44.
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Sovereign in the Face of Others

Vasanthi Srinivasan

INTRODUCTION

In a fascinating piece called "Cargo Cult", Alphonso Lingis argues that "the sovereign agent knows a *conflict* between a rational economy governed by the principle of equality and proportion, and a solar economy governed by a law of expenditure without return (1983:159). He draws attention to the many sporadic encounters with beggars who feed dogs, poor fishermen who try to save others, orphaned boatmen who give away precious wealth in friendship as examples of a solar economy shaped by expenditure without return. Genuine sovereignty is neither about mastery over sensuous nature (a la Kant) nor about ordering desires and pleasures rationally and prudently (a la Aristotle) but about recognizing and if possible imitating the pleasure of gratuitous giving of which the sun-god, as the source of life is the archetype in most traditional societies. This paper explores this idea of solar sovereignty as embodied in the work of Alphonso Lingis. He questions two models of sovereignty as freedom prevailing in the western tradition stemming from Aristotle and Kant. Based on Aristotle, we get a model of ethical agency as one guided by equality, reciprocity and proportion. Based on Kant, we get a model of sovereignty as rational and free self-determination guided by the categorical imperative. Both these models, Lingis suggests, miss the experience of gratuitous giving in vivifying

moral sense and sensibility. Where does the imperative of this alternative come from? What are the conditions under which it becomes compelling? Can it displace the rational economy based on reciprocity or the rational will? What does it mean to say that the sovereign agent knows a conflict between the rational and solar economies? These questions shape the argument of this paper.

SOLAR ECONOMY OR GENERAL ECONOMY

On Google, the term solar economy returns pages on solar energy based economies that are presented as much better suited to our voracious fuel needs. In this paper, the term solar economy is used to refer to a range of socio-economic and ethical practices governed by the need to spend if not destroy rather than acquire and accumulate.

This term has been doing the rounds in quite a few radical thinkers such as Georges Bataille, Alphonso Lingis and Jean Baudrillard albeit in different ways. Disillusioned with Marxist dialectic, the revolutionary excesses in ex-soviet union, the pacification of labour and other revolutionary agents in Western Europe and the march of global capital governed by flexible accumulation and consumption ethos, these thinkers articulate the search for a more radical negativity than the one highlighted in Hegelian and Marxist dialectic; instead of the constructive labour of the slave, they wonder if the destructive drives and forces may not have a more disruptive impact on the logic of late capitalism.

Georges Bataille radicalized the left critique of bourgeois political economy by foregrounding the notion of unproductive expenditure over productive activity. To quote him:

> Human activity is not entirely reducible to processes of production and conservation, and consumption must be divided into two distinct parts. The first, reducible part is represented by the use of the minimum necessary for the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals' productive activity in a given society; it is therefore a question simply of the fundamental condition of productive activity. The second part is represented by so called unproductive expenditures; luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity

(i.e, deflected from genital finality)—all these represent activities which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves" (Bataille, 1985: 118).[1]

In contrast to the rational economy which works according to market exchange, need, scarcity and work-value, he uncovered the solar economy at work in potlatch in tribal societies or even conspicuous consumption and competitive games in our time. Derrida uses the terms restricted and general economy to signify the same. These thinkers use the term economy in a broad sense to signify the production and circulation of meanings and messages besides goods and services. Hence they see the role of solar economy as disrupting not only the logic of production of goods and services but also production of freedom and meaning in all domains especially the political and moral domains.

In this context, Alphonso Lingis's work has not received much scholarly attention compared to Bataille or Derrida or Baudrillard. Given that he articulates the contours of solar agency using both western and non-western ideas and practices, it is necessary to examine the prospects and problems with the same. Serious consideration given to a range of non-western practices embodied in yoga or tantra or Balinese dance makes his work particularly interesting. Through poor boatmen and fishermen and beggars who respond spontaneously to the appeal and vulnerability in the faces of *rich white* tourists, he highlights what it means to be a sovereign agent within a solar economy. Of course, there are also sensational and shocking figures of the libertine, headhunter and the cannibal who squander their forces; however, it is the more ubiquitous boatmen and beggars who vivify ordinary moral sense and sensibility. In these figures, he sees another possibility of being in the world, one that is more attuned to the "elemental" forces, of the light and warmth of the sun and the supporting sustenance of the ground (Lingis 1994:124); he also sketches another way of fashioning the "self", one that is more attuned to the imperatives flowing from the body and senses; finally these figures show another way of being with others, one that is not governed solely by utility and exchange but responds to the vulnerability and appeal in the faces of others.

THE SOVEREIGN MASTER

Lurking in the background is the figure of the master who keeps appearing within treatises on freedom right from Aristotle onwards. Recall that for Aristotle there is a crucial difference between mastery over slaves and ruling over free and equal citizens; the latter involves mature statesmanship that rules over others not by ordering them but by reasoning with them and encouraging them to serve the common good (*Politics*1254b5). Aristotle was less interested in the commanding aspect and more in the practical wisdom (*phronesis*) which is the distinguishing mark of a mature man (*spoudaois*) and in turn a statesman. As Wiser puts it, "practical wisdom is that form of right reason which enables citizens to decide correctly the requirements of moral virtue"(James Wiser 45). Moral virtues are instilled by habit; moral excellence however requires that we deliberate about these virtues and act well. Deliberating about virtues such as courage, moderation, liberality, magnanimity, righteous indignation, friendliness and so forth, Aristotle uses the metaphor of the mean (Salkever, 1990: 117). Through this metaphor, Aristotle clarifies the problem of finding the right proportion between excess and deficiency in moral conduct.

The hallmark of a *spoudaiois* or mature man is that he excels in practical wisdom. As a ruler of men, he is oriented not only to promoting justice but also to friendship among the citizens. For friendship to be abiding, it must be based on utility or pleasure but virtue. Here again, equality is critical in that too great a disparity of virtue will destroy friendship. Equality here is primarily according to quantity and secondarily according to merit or worth; it is the converse of justice where equality primarily means according to worth and secondarily according to quantity (Cropsey, 1977: 267). For this reason, there cannot be friendship between gods and men, father and son and between a student and his philosophy teacher (Lingis, 1983:139). Between a ruler and citizens, husband and wife, youth and elder, proportionate exchange mitigates the inequality making friendship possible. For Aristotle, the person

who has profited in money or in excellence must give honour in return (Lingis, 138).

Lingis hints that this emphasis on proportion and durability of friendship misses "star friendship, that of those whose orbits make contact, but whom the eternal necessity of each having his own orbit will take apart again" (1983:138). Aristotle's friendship of good men excludes friendship among adventurers and rascals. These ephemeral friendships defy the law of proportion and arise not from sharing virtue or any other good. He narrates of how some encounters denude one of all sense of discipline and proportion as when one simply ignores a persistent beggar on a hot afternoon so that one can read a book and when the beggar would not go away, one is filled with hatred over the pointlessness of the imposition of his despoiled existence on oneself. Then "a scab-covered dog lopes up out of the scrub, and cringes at the pavilion, panting from the heat" and the beggar takes out some dirty dry bread from a can and breaks it for the dog (148). As when a poor boatman gives away precious coins and an antique votive figure to a tourist turned friend gratuitously (162). These exchanges mock all proportion and equality rules and obey another imperative, that of responding to the vulnerability and appeal of others, even those who may be better off than oneself. Where does such an imperative come from? Could it be Kant's categorical imperative that commands us to treat everyone as an end in himself?

THE COMMANDING SOVEREIGN

The commanding or mastering aspect (one that Aristotle associated with mastery over slaves) was rediscovered and made central to sovereignty since John Austin who defined law as the command of the sovereign. Immanuel Kant reinforced it except that it is now not an external source but one's own reason that commands the will. To be a sovereign is to be in command of oneself and mould one's will according to the dictates of abstract, impartial reason. Sovereignty is intimately linked to our ability to break away from natural necessity and order our desires and

passions according to the categorical imperative. In this process, sovereignty gets linked to freedom in that one is freeing oneself from what is given (natural, particular or contingent conditions) and forming oneself according to autonomous human reason (not revelation). As Lingis observes, "sovereign ones are not motivated by wants, appetites or ambitions, but by their sovereignty, which is for them imperative" (154). The essence of sovereignty consists in subjection to a law, in this case formulated and affirmed by one's own reason.

Where does this imperative come from? Why should one choose this mode of being free that requires repressing natural desires and needs? Kant argues that it comes from our own thinking faculty. To quote Lingis:

> One can not think. But if one thinks, one subjects oneself to an imperative for the universal and necessary. Concepts of what is always and everywhere found in things, propositions formulating principles, are formed by a mind that is subject to a law, and because it is… The representations of principle that thought formulates command the executive forces of life always and in all circumstances. Life is thereby freed from the bonds to the particular and contingent (1983:154).

This subjection of life forces to a rational and commanding will is the essence of being sovereign. The force of this imperative is itself not conceptualized. The law is obeyed before it can be conceived, formulated, understood (1983:113). The mind thinks on command but it is commanded to be in command (114). Thus preceding the act of thinking is a receptivity to the law, which Kant calls respect which is a feeling akin to fear and inclination. Subsequently, once the mind formulates universal and necessary rules and sets them before a will assailed by sensuous representations, how does one motivate oneself to be sovereign? Through images of oneself and others as rational persons rising above particular circumstances and being autonomous. How does one know that one is in fact determined by autonomous reason rather than external forces? Kant remarks that the causal force of a rationally legislated will is known in pain, pain of one's sensuous nature craving in vain the pleasure with which forms of objects lure one (Lingis, 1983: 117).

For Lingis, this model of sovereignty is based on isolating oneself from the tumult of inner and outer nature; freedom thus arises in opposition to nature and sustains itself in abstraction from nature. Moreover, one sets about ordering nature within and without as mere resource. Lingis argues that this kind of free subjectivity is death bound in that it suppresses the cravings for pleasure or happiness or comfort. For one does not simply get up and declare one's autonomy; it involves continuous combat with the contrary forces welling up within oneself and reshaping them with a view to constructing a "second nature".

The labour involved in rational mastery is captured by Hegel in the famous master–slave scene of the Phenomenology. To begin with, the master is one who is willing to risk his life for recognition while the slave is one who surrenders because he realizes that self-preservation is more important than recognition. What is this life that the servant clings to? Hegel refers to the work of the slave whereby raw nature is transformed into useful objects for exchange through labour. The slave's lot is to work, defer pleasure and transform natural world into a world more adapted to man. Hegel also draws attention to the parasitic nature of the master who is dependent on the labour of the slave and more critically gains recognition from an inferior. Through a strange dialectical twist, the slave becomes the mover of humanity in that he transforms himself from one governed by fear to one who creates and makes the world of things (Steven Smith, 1989: 119).

Linking up to Kant, Hegel would argue that freedom consists in rational self-determination of the will. What propels one on this journey is a desire for recognition mediated initially by force but progressively by more orderly means. But does not the desire for recognition make us unfree and dependent on others? Yes, if one competes for others recognition through endless accumulation of status signs as in a consumerist society. But if one competes for recognition of one's professional excellence, then it is more rational. Is it more free? Hegel claims that it is also freer in that we are not dependent on others arbitrary preferences and fancies but on professional criteria and norms evolved by ourselves.

Where does this leave sovereignty? Sovereignty is embodied in universal self-consciousness. Unlike Kant, Hegel locates sovereignty proper in a constitutional monarchy. The law in turn is seen not as the arbitrary command but as an objectification of reason. To be free is then to shape oneself according to extant laws initially through habit and later through understanding the rationale of norms and institutions. Of course not all extant laws and institutions are free and fair but to reform them one must understand the principles behind them. Sovereignty is about realizing greater rationality in norms and institutions. Rationality consists in freely affirming the universal principles over contingent particulars. At an individual level, it is about shaping oneself rationally; however, since reason is objectified in some institutions, it means acting according to the same. For instance, one could pay taxes because one does it every year or one is afraid of the consequences; one could also pay because one sees that taxes bring revenue to the government which provides the infrastructure and conditions of survival and well-being. To do so for the latter set of reasons amounts to being free and rational in Hegel's view.

As an account that overcomes a series of oppositions, between master–slave, inside–outside, freedom–law, universal–particular, Hegel's system has been the focal point of much interpretation, reappropriation and even rejection since Nietzsche and in our time since Alexander Kojeve. Kojeve mainly focused on the transformation of the slave's consciousness from servility to freedom while those informed by Nietzsche have focused on the taming of the master within the dialectical scheme.

THE UNTAMED MASTER

In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche attacks this Hegelian master who first risks his life but subsequently becomes simply a parasite and ends up affirming the laborious path to freedom. Instead, he writes of the "noble souls", aristocratic "blonde beasts" who seek out adventure, combat, the chase, dance, war games to express and expend their superior strength and health. They exemplify

life forces which are spontaneous, aggressive, overreaching rather than instinctual self-preservation which motivates the slave.

Bataille, following Nietzsche, rebels against the taming of the master in Hegel so that he ends up maintaining himself and collecting the profits from his risking of life (Derrida, 264). He also ends up being subordinate to the slave, to the thing and to work. In contrast, Bataille articulates a sovereignty or mastery that is impervious to the desire for recognition and self-consciousness. As Derrida summarizes:

> For sovereignty has no identity, is not self, for itself, toward itself, near itself. In order not to govern, in order not to be subjugated, it must subordinate nothing (direct object), that is to say, be subordinated to nothing and no one (servile mediation of an indirect object); it must expend itself without reserve, lose itself, lose consciousness, lose all memory of itself and all the interiority of itself; …as opposed to the avarice which assimilates meaning, it must produce forgetting…; and as the ultimate subversion of lordship, it must no longer seek to be recognized (Derrida, 1978: 265).

While this theoretical alternative is articulated in opposition to Hegel, its empirical evidence is sought from many "archaic" and "traditional' societies. Following Nietzsche, Alphonso Lingis presents the headhunters and cannibals of Irian Jaya as well as *tantric* adepts as exemplary figures who practice solar economy, that is kill or maim themselves not for mutual recognition nor any other useful goal but to release and squander energies (Lingis, 1994: 101).

But where do these imperatives come from? Why must one abjure identity and self-consciousness and squander energies? This imperative comes from life itself conceived as a field of forces rather than as a struggle for survival or recognition. Life is a field where excess energies are expended and exhausted. As Lingis puts it:

> Life is not a succession of initiatives driven by need and want and aiming at objectives. Life is not the recurrence of need and satisfaction, eating and getting hungry again and drinking and getting thirsty again, in an enterprise that is gradually losing its reserve, in an anxiety repeatedly postponing death. Life is enjoyment. We live in light, warmth, in liquidity, in radiance, in the

rumble of sonority and the music of the spheres, in the intimacy of home and homeland and in the immensities of the exotic (Lingis, 1994:126).

By stressing how we live in light, Lingis directs us to the "elemental" in which we are immersed; light is not a thing that can be explored from different angles nor a substance; ground is not a spherical substance but pure "depth of support"; the elemental is not a collection of discrete things that can be grasped and classified. It is "sensed', in a pure "sense of depth"; one is affected by and filled with the elemental. As Lingis writes, "the light bathes the eyes as soon as they open and buoys up the movement of sight towards the surfaces and contours of things it illuminates"(125).

BEING SOVEREIGN IN THE FACE OF OTHERS

This imperative is heteronomous in that it comes from our immersion in that over which we have no control or mastery. In the elemental, we are denuded of our goals and intentions and harken to the bird that sings or the forest that murmurs. A similar primordial imperative compels us to hold the hands of the dying or return the glances and smiles of another. Lingis gives the example of a mother who abandons all her pending tasks on the last warm day of autumn because she must take her child to the park; upon seeing a rainbow in the fountain, she tries to focus his eyes to see what she sees and is delighted when wonder fills his eyes with laughter and tears (1994:117).

Here, the elemental is etched on the face of another and exposes the suffering, vulnerability, sensitivity and mortality of another (1994:131). The face is made of light and shadows, of carbon compounds, earth; eyes glisten and move with liquidity of the elemental; the voice is made up of air and warmth (1994:131). There is nothing one can communicate to one who is dying but one must say something and make contact.

Does this not make us unfree? How can this be sovereignty at all? Lingis again points out how freedom consists in enjoyment (Lingis, 1994: 127). To be free is to spontaneously enjoy the light and warmth that resist any appropriation. One also shares this joy with another through the light in one's eyes, the ardor in one's face,

the support in one's stand. "It is before the face of another that enjoyment becomes our own" (127).

Freedom consists here in relating to oneself not as a rational ego or will that is cut off from others but as an "earthling" that responds to and is responsible for the forces that well up within oneself. These forces may be active or reactive; active forces move us to enjoy and suffer our sensuality, mortality and vulnerability with no reprieve. Reactive forces push us to protect ourselves from the same and manifest as rancour or resentment. We then recoil from strength for fear of violence, beauty for fear of vanity or nobility for fear of domination (Lingis, 1994:57).

There is a certain mode of thinking, acting and feeling associated with this way of being free. The crucial difference is that there is also a way of feeling that is critical in this model. As a rational being, one must tune into the primordial earthiness of the human condition. This may involve turning to non-western sources of thought. Lingis himself invokes the Buddhist notions of impermanence, compassion and no-self (1983: 131). Instead of an immortal self, this no-self perspective leads in the direction of ephemeral selves that come into being and pass away like "surface effects" (1983: 30). It also means turning away from juridical personhood or even the modern idea of a private individual. It points to identity as bricolage "made of dismembered limbs of savages, beasts, stars, demons, the debris thrown outside of civilization…"(1983: 30).

It means reappropriating the earthy condition of being human. Earlier, we noted how Lingis alerts us to how we are "immersed" in the elemental so as to render any abstract mastery shallow. The earth itself is seen as a "body without organs" "closed in itself, full and warm, enormous vesicle suspended in the void…sufficiency itself"(1983: 32). It is a plenum throbbing with varied life forms that resist classification and control. Lingis highlights not just its organismic nature but its orgasmic nature in the endless metamorphosis of forms and colours.

As an active will, one must learn about gratuitous giving from the earth and sun and from those who are exposed to these forces; not the saints but the beggars, prostitutes, boatmen. One must recognize how many of our everyday actions are undirected,

repetitive, chorus like and just resonate with the chatter of the birds, barking dogs, clattering rain or restless skies (1994:102). We expose our bodies to the sun and wind, wander about the earth and release our sighs and tears into the air and sea. Lingis highlights that much of this activity is not about attaining self-determined goals or mastery but just chiming with the "murmur of the world". Gratuitous giving to other humans can only become spontaneous only when we recognize this way of being in the world. For this reason, he also writes about adventure activities like scuba diving or mountaineering, besides traditional arts like yoga or tantra where we may see "the outer deserts" and thus comprehend what it means to gratuitously expend energies.

And the feelings evoked by such "outer deserts" pertain to the intense enjoyment and suffering of the rise and decline of vital forces in oneself and others. Here too, Lingis points to the "bodying forth" of feelings as when one holds hands with a lover or reaches out to a dying person, offering or promising nothing but simply accompanying the other in a journey that will be his or hers alone (1994: 178).

Sovereignty is not about wilfully reigning over passions and ordering them rationally. Instead, a sovereign agent acts spontaneously and immediately, moved by another's appeal or distress. In most inaugural or terminal situations, we do respond to the imperative coming from without in the shape of primordial demands as when someone is in love or dying. But there are also situations when one does not respond only to be mocked or shamed by another. Consider a persistent beggar who chases one for alms and failing to disrupt one's indifference or hostility moves over to break old dry bread for a hungry dog. Or a tourist tout with whom one haggles only to find oneself suddenly being treated to a free meal at his house.

Through these examples, Lingis questions some cherished and entrenched presuppositions of moral thought. In Aristotle, ethical excellence requires that one's habitual virtue be honed by mature intelligence so that one is sensitive to the right proportion. One who jumps to fight at every instance as well as one who never fights are both not courageous; courage requires that one fight for

the right causes in the right manner to the right extent. Proportion is the hallmark of the magnanimous man. In the modern view, one who rises above his own interests and acts according to impartial reason is morally superior. There is an attunement to others but those others are seen as rational wills rather than embodied frail beings.

Instead, the solar figures show that we are unexpectedly incited or challenged to act freely and gratuitously. A poor fisherman who runs to rescue someone drowning or the beggar returning the wallet need not be habitual do gooders. They simply rise to the challenge posed by circumstances. There is often a disproportionate distance between doers and receivers and no reward can match the act of the beggar who returns a wallet. In our everyday life, acts like these and stories about these acts vivify our moral sensibility rather than moral theories or codes.

LIMITS

Attractive as this model is, it is not unproblematic. Lingis himself admits that the sovereign agent knows a conflict between the rational economy and solar economy. He implies that this conflict results from our being conditioned by the former. Could it also not be that there are intrinsic limits to gratuitous giving? After all, most of his examples concern terminal or inaugural situations such as being by the side of a dying mother or heaping gifts on one's beloved. One may also spontaneously give to needy supplicants even though the latter may be a rich white tourist longing for contact.

However, one may not like to greet one who has repeatedly been unfriendly even though her face too is but a mirror of elemental forces. One who gratuitously gives must distinguish between friends and enemies in everyday life. In many popular folktales (e.g. *Vikram and Vetaal stories or Panchatantra*), gratuitous giving is successful only when it is accompanied by right judgment about the recipient. Often, we may be oblivious to the donor's or recipient's ulterior motives.

Secondly, one must ask about the obligations of those who

receive. Even though it is true that there is no adequate reward for a fisherman who saves a life, is there not another kind of responsibility, the responsibility not to exploit? This is especially significant in a context where there has only been receiving at least on the part of those who are privileged.

Thirdly, the global political economy is also witnessing a parody of gratuitous giving induced by trade and exchange in human organs and women and children. When people sell their kidneys or children for nothing, one must wonder about certain kinds of gratuitous giving that may work in tandem with exchange.

Fourthly, sovereign giving is not only about affirming benevolent forces; it is also about inciting the more violent forces, challenging and opposing others. Recall that the headhunter and libertine challenge and oppose others through violent and excessive shows of strength or vitality. This agonal, transgressive sovereign may not be very sympathetic to the suffering or appeal on the face of another.

Finally, Lingis hints that solar sovereignty entails turning to Buddhist wisdom about impermanence and no-self. But he neglects the soteriological aspect of *nirvana* or freedom from *dukkha* or suffering. Humans long for deliverance from the world of opposites rather than simply suffering them. The liberated ones affirm mastery over the embodied self and the contingent world. The "elemental" is affirmed but as a lower order reality. Even though there may be no immortal self, there is something like a witness-consciousness that watches the multiple ephemeral egos. If this is jettisoned due to the postmodern dislike of essences, what would motivate one to imitate the sun-god or sun-star?

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NOTE

1. Note that a notable exception in this is marriage which often is an occasion for unproductive expenditure; this could be because Bataille regards it primarily as an institution that fulfils the reproductive imperative of the species.

Repositioning Interpretative Social Science after Postmodernism: Understanding, Interpretation and Self

Koshy Tharakan

INTRODUCTION

Interpretative social science gained prominence as an antidote to the positivistic characterization of social sciences. Positivism conceives society as a "thing"—an object that confronts the subject. It treats the phenomena it undertakes to investigate as "objective" so as to discover the causal relations between them. Thus, by establishing causal relations among facts, it relegates the role of the subject. Interpretative social science, on the other hand, investigates how "facts" are constituted as meaningful phenomena and hence how social experience is possible in the first place. In his work, *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey observes that the science of society broke the bondage of metaphysics only to subjugate itself to a new bondage imposed by the natural sciences. While appreciating the spirit behind the early positivist thought of Comte, Mill and Spencer in developing an objective science of society, Dilthey criticized them for supposing that the method of social sciences is essentially the same as that of the natural sciences. According to Dilthey, the world of natural sciences is a meaningless given, while the human world, which is the theme of social sciences, is inherently meaningful. Society is a construct

guided by human ideas, values and purposes. Thus there is a distinction between the sciences of nature (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). The difference in the objects of the two sciences constitutes a difference in their methods too. While the natural sciences aim to explain the natural phenomena in terms of causal laws by focusing on the external relations, the human sciences seek to understand human phenomena in terms of the meaningful acts of the participants by focusing on the internal relations.

With the advent of Postmodernism there is a widespread disbelief in the philosophy of the subject. The "Cogito' that propelled the Modernist conceptions of truth and certainty seems to be no more available with the demise of the subject/author. This then poses a challenge to Interpretative social sciences as with the "death of the author", the career of interpretative social sciences needs to be refashioned. The paper attempts to portray the trajectory of interpretative social sciences beginning with the methodical interpretation of Dilthey, passing through the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and reaches Ricoeur's hermeneutics. In doing so, we claim that the Postmodern challenge to interpretative social sciences, to a large extent, is preempted in the course of development of hermeneutics.

I

AUTHORIAL INTENTIONS: CENTRALITY OF AGENCY

Dilthey in order to lay the foundations of human sciences conceived social institutions and cultural forms interpretable as "expressions', or "objectifications' of mind. The products of mind, whether institutions or literary works, are "texts" which have to be read and interpreted in order to understand them. The method of interpretation or understanding is what hermeneutics emphasizes. For Dilthey, understanding is a rediscovery of "myself" in the other subject and it is possible because both the "other" and "me" are particularizations of the same "Spirit".[1] The object of our understanding is thus the expression of the spirit. According to

him, understanding has always the particular as its object and this particular is the individual self. Thus, one understands objects and events as the expressions of other individuals, as an expression of lived experience.

Dilthey, in formulating the method of human sciences, thus turns not to some process of coming to know the events of an external world but to "lived experience". The world of human sciences as distinct from the natural scientific world is a world constructed by historically and culturally located individuals in their everyday lives. The commonest understanding that all of us accomplish in our daily lives is empathy, that is "putting oneself in somebody else's place." This points to our essential community life, as it is the community that enables the individual to put himself or herself in the place of another. There are higher forms of understanding like "re-creation" (*Nachbilden*) and "re-living" (*Nacherleben*). The totality of the spiritual life is grasped in these activities of understanding. The transference of the subject's own self into a given complex of expressions, the projection of the self into a person or work, that is empathy, is the basis of these higher forms of understanding. According to Dilthey, a perfect sharing of life is possible if our understanding moves along the actual sequence of events. Thus, understanding grows with the life-process itself. Reliving (*Nacherleben*) means creating along the line of events. It happens when "…we go forward with history, with an event in a far land or with something that is going on in the soul of a human being close to us. It reaches its fulfillment where the event has passed through the consciousness of the poet, the artist, or the historian, and now lies before us fixed and enduring in his work".[2] Thus, a literary work helps us to relive the connected lived experience by unfolding the line of events depicted in it. In higher forms of understanding, unlike the elementary understanding, we do not follow the directions and intentions of our own life, rather "…the 'interpreter' takes some time in which he is not immediately involved in elementary understanding but thematizes his/her own or other's life in its connectedness".[3] Though there is a connection between reliving and empathy, as empathy heightens our reliving, Dilthey argues that this is not to

give a psychological explanation of the process of reliving. Rather, we are interested in it only from the point of view of its function. Even though, the inherent possibilities of the life-process of every one are determined, understanding opens up a wide realm of possibilities before him. Re-creation or understanding by skilled reproduction (*Nachbilden*) attains a degree of perfection through inner affinity and sympathy. It is exemplified in scientific exegesis or interpretation and always has an element of ingenuity with it.[4] According to Dilthey, this inner relationship, which makes the projection possible, is the presupposition of all hermeneutic rules. Understanding cannot be conceived exclusively in rational terms, leaving behind the subjective projection. Thus, he makes a distinction between the method of natural sciences and that of human sciences; one that is based on the attitude of mind, in an inner perception, in lived experience that is immediately given to us. The neo-Kantian philosophers of South-West German school, namely Rickert and Lask, Dilthey and Weber were all concerned with the distinctiveness of social scientific inquiry as consisting in the subjective reference it makes against the objective reference of the natural sciences. It is this subjective reference that makes interpretative social sciences to adopt the "intentional stance".

The intentional stance derives from the belief that the purpose of social scientific explanation is to recapture the "motives" or "purposes" of the agents, as it is these subjective characteristics that make action meaningful. In other words, according to the intentionalists, action is not merely bodily movement, but has something over and above the manifested behaviour, especially the accompanying mental processes that bestow meaning on it. For them, the mental processes are "…not merely an epiphenomenon and, hence, irrelevant to the nature of the action, but is precisely that which bestows upon action its nature as action; moreover it gives each particular action its individual essence".[5] Thus, the intentionalists seek to understand social reality by explaining it in terms of intentions and motives of the actors.

Many philosophers of social sciences insist that social enquiry should uphold the same interpretations the agents themselves adopt. This conception derives its rationale from the doctrine

of social construction of social reality, a form of voluntarism. It construes social fact as a product of the agent's conceptions and meanings.[6] Thus, Alfred Schutz argues that each and every "… term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the life-world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life".[7] That is, for Schutz, the explanation of social action must be carried out in terms of the everyday interpretations provided by the agents themselves. The intentionalist stance gives rise to the metaphor of "inside" or "inner" description, contrasted to the external description, as relevant for understanding action. This commitment to the inner side of action often becomes problematic as many philosophers argue against the possibility of recapturing such subjective characteristics of the agents. That is, even if these motives and intentions are to be understood not as some mysterious "inner" springs of action,[8] but as objective meanings, the critics of subjective interpretation point out that there is no such "fact of the matter'. However, the proponents of the subjective interpretation of actions believe that intentional or subjective set of beliefs determines the meaning of action and accordingly they construe the goal of social scientific investigation as to recapture what the agents "have in mind."

Dilthey's project of explicating the notion of "understanding" in the human sciences is the result of his firm belief in the distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. The distinction between the two sciences calls for a special methodology for studying the human sciences. As Dilthey says, the object of natural sciences, namely "nature" needs "explanation" while that of the human sciences, namely "mental life" needs "understanding". Thus, in the study of human action, Dilthey brings in the triad of "experience", "expression" and "understanding". By experience, he refers to the indissoluble unity of thought, desire and will. Thus, the empiricist's separation of conative and cognitive aspects of human action stands negated in Dilthey's concept of experience. In other words, "experience" for Dilthey is man's subjectivity,

which is realized in his lived existence. "Expression" refers to the exteriorization of experience. That is to say, experience never remains merely subjective. It is rather expressed in actions and the permanent traces that action leaves behind by way of artifacts, institutions, etc. Thus, through "expression", "experience" is crystallized. It is "understanding" which, at a later point, retrieves the experience from these expressions. Dilthey uses terms such as "recreating", "reexperiencing" and "empathizing" to characterize understanding. Thus, for Dilthey, understanding is to be seen as replicating the experience the agent had when s/he performed the act. This, however, does not mean that Dilthey was reducing understanding to a simple sort of intuitive act, rather it is a discursive process in which the object of understanding is viewed from a larger perspective of comparable actions that has reference to the agents' life-history and the socio-cultural milieu. This is evident from the fact that Dilthey includes grammatical and historical hermeneutics within the purview of methodical hermeneutics. Thus, even when Dilthey endorses Schleiermacher's first canon of hermeneutics, which states that a text is to be understood from the viewpoint of a reader of the author's own temporal milieu and environment, he does not thereby introduce some private intuitive act to grasp the same. As Seebohm points out:

> Dilthey has given an interpretation of the first canon which eliminates the suspicion that this canon demands some kind of a mysterious travel through time which has to reach the psychological states of readers in the past or even the author. Grammatical hermeneutics and critique allows us to select, methodically with the aid of comparatistic methods, a group of texts which use approximately the same language…. Historical interpretation allows us to locate texts within this set of texts taking into account the hints given in the texts to historical events in the presence and the past of the text which include other texts to which the text in question refers explicitly or implicitly.[9]

Thus, according to Dilthey, the context of a text is determined methodically and hermeneutical understanding is carried out within this context. Thus, even when Dilthey talks about reliving the agent's intentions or recreating the author's intended meanings, his hermeneutics in contrast to Schleiermacher's, does not require the forging of a psychological unity with the author. Nevertheless,

Dilthey shares with Schleiermacher the belief in the availability of a methodical hermeneutics through which one can retrieve the intended meanings.

II

ELUSIVE INTENTIONS: HEIDEGGER AND GADAMER

Against the methodical hermeneutics of Dilthey, Gadamer advances his philosophical hermeneutics. In doing this, he closely follows Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. For Heidegger, understanding is a basic mode of being-in-the-world. According to him, the Aristotelian categories like quantity, quality, space and time are not adequate to study the being of man. Nor any causal explanation of human behaviour as a chain of events in the external world will throw any light on the nature of Man. Dasein, the being-in-the-world, is to be understood by the "existentialia" that give us access to Dasein's overtness. These constitutive factors of Dasein's being-in are "state-of-mind", "understanding" and "discourse'. State-of-mind and understanding are equiprimordial and characterized as such by discourse. A state-of-mind (mood) always has its understanding and understanding always has its state-of-mind. Thus, understanding is an existential structure of Dasein. This implies that "understanding" as an existential is to be distinguished from "understanding" as cognitive faculty contrasted with explanation. Understanding as a possible cognition is only a derivative of the primordial understanding as existentiale.[10] The primordiality of understanding according to Heidegger consists in its structure of projection. Understanding is the potentiality-for-Being. And because of this "projection", Dasein is always "more" than what it is factually. In other words, "Understanding is Dasein's mode of being as openness, for in understanding it projects itself on the possibilities of its ability-to-be".[11] It is this projective character of understanding that constitutes the peculiar "sight" (sicht), which is always present in Dasein's basic ways of Being. Only because understanding is primarily a kind of seeing that it can display the various modes of sight such as

the circumspection of concern and considerateness of solicitude. Thus, by showing all "sight" as grounded in understanding, which is a fundamental existentiale of Dasein, Heidegger strips "… pure intuition (*Anschauen*) of its priority, which corresponds noetically to the priority of the present-at-hand in traditional ontology. 'Intuition' and 'thinking' are both derivatives of understanding, and already rather remote ones. Even the phenomenological 'intuition of essences' (*Wesensschau*) is grounded in existential understanding."[12] Now, for Heidegger, interpretation is the working out of possibilities projected in understanding. In this sense, interpretation is not something added on to understanding; rather it is the development of understanding itself. "In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding."[13] In Interpretation, the "as-structure" of that which is understood is made to stand out explicitly. So, to interpret is to lay bare the "as-structure". According to Heidegger, this "as-structure" of interpretation is grounded in the "fore-structure" of understanding, which comprises fore-having (*vorhabe*), fore-sight (*vorsicht*) and fore-conception (*vorgriff*). The "ready-to-hand" is understood always in terms of a totality of involvements. Thus the "fore-having" is what I have in advance of any interpretation, the totality of involvements by which I relate to an object. This in turn, is always guided by a point of view, a "fore-sight" with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted. In other words, the fore-sight "makes a start" on what we have in advance. But over and above, Dasein has a "fore-conception,' something we grasp in advance. That is, in interpretation the way in which we conceive the entity to be interpreted is decided in advance. All these imply that, as Heidegger says:

> …interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us. If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual interpretation, one likes to appeal… to what "stands there,' then one finds that what "stands there' in the

first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption… of the person who does the interpreting…[the assumptions] presented in our fore-having, our fore-sight, and our fore-conception.[14]

Thus, like Quine, for Heidegger too, there is no "fact of the matter". However, "the non-determinacy" that emanates from Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is different from Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation. Quine's thesis has to do with the unavailability of meanings that are right or wrong in course of translation from one belief system to another. Dreyfus illustrates this point by the example of trying to capture the intentions of the author to determine what a literary work means. For both Quine and Heidegger it is impossible to determine the meaning of the text by capturing the author's intentions, precisely because what the text means is relative to an interpretation and interpretations do change in accordance with changing background assumptions and practices. Now Dreyfus points out that for Quine, the impossibility of grasping the agent's intention lies in the fact that our evidence for the so-called intentions is only the behaviour of the agent, which is again in need of interpretation. Thus, Quine points out that a theory is always underdetermined by evidence. Heidegger's argument for the non-determinacy of interpretations is different from this. He would rather say, Dreyfus points out:

…an artist or a thinker, just like anyone else, cannot be clear about the background practices of his life and his age, not just because there are so many of them that such explication is an infinite task, but because the background is not a set of assumptions or beliefs about which one could even in principle be clear. The artist is thus in no better position than his contemporaries to make explicit the pervasive individual and social self-interpretation his work embodies.[15]

Heidegger refers to this problem as the "essential unthought in the work". Thus, for Heidegger, we cannot get at "the meaning" of a work not because our only evidence for meaning is the behaviour of the subject/author, but because for hermeneutic explication there is no fact or theory explicitly stated, about which we can be right or wrong. Nevertheless, hermeneutical explication has to be fraught with and we can still decide as to whether a particular interpretation is better than another one. Thus, Dreyfus says that

Heidegger maintains that "… a better interpretation is one that makes the interpreter more flexible and open to dialogue with other interpretations….[Nevertheless in] the later works he holds that a better interpretation is one which focuses and makes sense of more of what is at issue in a current cultural self-interpretation".[16] This, then, is to say that with regard to interpretation, "something really is at issue", even though no final answer comes forth "as to what that something is".

Gadamer takes the cue from Heidegger and develops "philosophical hermeneutics" in contrast to Diltheyan "methodical hermeneutics". Like Heidegger, Gadamer insists on the ontological primacy of human historicity. Thus, he believes that hermeneutics is not merely methodological but is the very feature of our existence. Thus, "understanding" for Gadamer is the hermeneutical dimension of existence, it belongs to the being of that which is understood. Gadamer's hermeneutics presupposes a context or setting, which requires engagement on the part of the individual subjects. This engagement is shaped by the pre-understanding (in Heidegger's words the "fore-structure" of understanding). This way of conceiving understanding implies that we can never understand a text in itself, independently of our historicity through which we gain access to it. In other words, for Gadamer, interpretation is not a matter of reconstruction but is mediation. In order to understand the past, we mediate the past meaning into our situatedness. That is, our historicity is integral to our understanding. It is historicity, even though it involves presuppositions and prejudices that open the past for us. The metaphor of "fusion of horizons" captures this aspect of understanding. For him, genuine understanding is a "fusion of horizons" in which the subject and object of knowing are fused together such that in knowing the other, one knows oneself.[17] It is this element of "prejudice" in our understanding that marks Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as distinct from traditional hermeneutics. As Outhwaite points out:

> Traditional hermeneutic theory postulates a subject who aims to understand an object (a text, a social practice, or whatever) as it is in itself. This means that the subject must be as open-minded and unprejudiced as possible,

approaching the object without preconceptions. For Gadamer, by contrast, preconceptions or prejudices are what make understanding possible in the first place. They are bound up with our awareness of the historical influence or effectivity of the text; and without this awareness we would not understand it.[18]

Thus, Gadamer holds that all our understanding involves situatedness and is essentially interpretative. For him, understanding, interpretation and application are interrelated. "Just as understanding is always interpretation, similarly understanding also relates to application or praxis. In order to understand the true meaning of a text the interpreter must take into account its *consequences* and *significations*"[19] (emphasis added). Thus, for Gadamer, the effect or consequences of a text (or action or social practice) is significant in the determination of its meaning. This intertwining of meaning and effect of the text has its legacy in Aristotle's conception of "phronesis" or practical knowledge. Gadamer says:

In order to work out an orientation which brings together *both* methodological access to our world *and* the conditions of our social life, it was natural for me to return to preceding philosophical orientations and ultimately to the tradition of the practical and political philosophy of Aristotle.[20]

In "phronesis" thought and action or intention and consequence are inseparable and it is to this dialectical unity of action and thought that Aristotle refers by his notion of praxis. Gadamer notes:

Praxis is not restricted to the special area of technical craftsmanship. It is a universal form of human life which embraces, yet goes beyond, the technical choice of the best means of a pre-given end. Aristotle's concept of prudence includes, as a matter of fact, the concrete determination of the end. … Prudence as practical deliberation upon and discovery of concrete decision is both the finding of the means and the concretization of the ends.[21]

Thus, for Gadamer, the idea of application is inherent in hermeneutics. It is not something that succeeds theoretical knowledge; rather theoretical knowledge is co-terminus with practical knowledge as both are co-determined by application which is intrinsic to hermeneutics. As Bernstein points out, for

Gadamer the central thesis of philosophical hermeneutics is the fusion of hermeneutics and praxis.[22] Gadamer elaborates his hermeneutics by the notion of a "play" that consists of a back and forth movement resulting in understanding. For him dialogue is praxis. In order to explicate the notion of understanding, Gadamer takes the model of "dialogue". When we are in a "…dialogue with another person and then is carried along further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative…the law of the subject-matter (*die Sache*) is at issue in the dialogue and elicits statements and counter-statements and in the end plays them into each other".[23] Thus, understanding as play is not the expression of the intentions of the subject but rather is a praxis in which the player is absorbed into understanding. In other words, understanding relieves the subject from the burden of taking the initiative, which goes into the making of actual existence.[24] Here another important dimension of Gadamer's hermeneutics comes to the fore, namely the central place he accords to language in hermeneutic experience. It is the "linguisticality" of our experience that enables us to participate in a tradition. It is language that mediates our experience of the world and concretizes the effective historical consciousness. Thus he remarks "…language, not in the sense of *langue*, but in the sense of real exchange and work, manifests itself in the dialogue. In any form of dialogue, we are building up. We are building up a common language, so that at the end of the dialogue we will have some ground."[25] Thus, for Gadamer understanding as permeated by language and manifested in dialogue makes hermeneutic experience identical with human existence.

Unlike the methodical hermeneutics of Dilthey, which bears the imprint of the Romantic ideal of reliving or recreating the experience of the subject, the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer rejects the idea of capturing the authorial meanings or the intentions of the subject as constitutive of understanding. Thus, Gadamer construes the trajectory of hermeneutics as an overcoming of the romantic hermeneutics by the ontological turn it accomplished through Heidegger's phenomenology.

III

BRINGING THE SUBJECT BACK: PAUL RICOEUR

Paul Ricoeur, another prominent hermeneutically oriented thinker, argues that we can never give up Dilthey's perspective altogether as Dilthey elevated hermeneutics from mere textual exegeses to the domain of human sciences. The epistemological paradigm of Diltheyan hermeneutics has decisively shown how human sciences are qualitatively different from natural sciences. At the same time, Ricoeur points out that Heidegger's ontological twist to phenomenology shows that hermeneutics even in its methodological or epistemological moorings is grounded in the existential structure of Dasein. Gadamer in following Heidegger, could dispel the subjectivism implicit in the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Though Dilthey has explicitly stated that the psychological basis he tried to provide for the human sciences is not to be identified with empirical or scientific psychology of his time, he could not precisely state the nature of descriptive psychology to which he attempted to reduce the cultural sciences. Moreover, Dilthey subscribed to the view that "understanding" belongs to the domain of human sciences alone and counterpoised understanding to explanation[26]. In doing so, Dilthey excluded "explanation" from the purview of human sciences and limited it to the sciences of nature. Moreover, Dilthey interpreted the process of understanding as "empathy" or subjective identification with the other. According to Ricoeur hermeneutical understanding is compatible with explanation, as these are mutually complementary. In Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, the dialectic of interpretation "…culminates in an act of understanding that is mediated by the explanatory procedures of structural analysis. These procedures ensure that the object of understanding is not identified with something felt, but rather with a potential reference released by explanation…"[27] Thus, by integrating explanation and understanding within the "hermeneutical arc", Ricoeur attempts to provide a non-psychological and objective account of hermeneutics. Nevertheless, such an attempt should not be

construed as obliterating the difference between human sciences and natural sciences. Ricoeur demarcates the two sciences by showing that the phenomena of human sciences are constituted by language. In other words, the notion of explanation that Ricoeur refers to is not a projection from the natural sciences, but from the field of language itself.

Ricoeur's approach to human action comprises three types of discourse on action: descriptive, dialectical and hermeneutical discourse.[28] Descriptive discourse makes use of the resources of linguistic analysis and phenomenology. Linguistic analysis takes off from the utterances or practices, which express the phenomenological data of experience publicly, and thus avoids the difficulties of introspective methods. It is carried out in three levels, namely a conceptual, a propositional and a discursive level. At the conceptual level, the linguistic analysis attempts to elucidate the notion with which we describe action in everyday life, especially the notions like reason and motive. Proclamations of purpose or intention are analysed at the propositional level. It is at this level that we analyse the statements that employ the concepts of action. At the discursive level we try to clarify the relations between statements about action by classifying and distinguishing action. Nevertheless, Ricoeur points out that we cannot remain content with linguistic analysis in the descriptive discourse, rather it must be reinforced with a phenomenological investigation as the linguistic analysis cannot reflect upon itself to justify the distinctions and elucidations it makes. According to Ricoeur, such justifications can come forth only by returning to the realm of pre-predicative experience. Phenomenological investigation with its noematic analysis alone is capable of objectifying the immediately lived experience by articulating such experience in the contents of the respective noemata.

In contrast to the descriptive discourse, action can also be grasped in a dialectical discourse. In the dialectical discourse, the problematizing of action proceeds through mediation and totalization instead of distinctions and classifications. In that it ceases to be neutral and descriptive and takes a prescriptive stance. The dialectical discourse "…does not limit itself to an analysis of

the motivated action of an isolated individual, but attempts to comprehend the relation between motivated and rational action, between practical and theoretical reason, between individual and collective will."[29] Thus, the dialectical discourse reveals the dimensions of the objective structure of the society by showing how the main aspects of will namely "having", "power" and "worth" presuppose the objective structures of society namely "economy", "polity", and "culture". In economy is included all that result in an accumulation of human experience. Thus machinery as well as its products and the required knowledge for production belong to economy. The polity consists of the various institutions through which a historical community appropriates the resources of the economy. In doing so, it establishes relations between people, which are not just economic relations but that corresponding to the primordial passion of "power". The cultural dimension of the social world reflects the values and attitudes that go into the making of the traditions of a society.

The third approach to the study of human action is the hermeneutical discourse. This approach is necessitated by the fact that we have to reinterpret the tradition in order to grasp the mode of being in the world. Thus, dialectical discourse inevitably points towards hermeneutical discourse. The possibility of this approach is revealed in treating action as a text. Thus, Ricoeur points out:

> …if there are specific problems which are raised by the interpretation of texts because they are texts and not spoken language, and if these problems are the ones which constitute hermeneutics as such, then the human sciences may be said to be hermeneutical … in as much as their *object* displays some of the features constitutive of a text as a text, and … in as much as their methodology develops the same kind of procedures as those of … text interpretation.[30]

To capture the meaning of action in a textual analogue, we must be clear about the distinction between spoken and written language. According to Ricoeur "text" or "writing" is not the inscription of some anterior "speech", rather "speaking" and "writing" are equally primordial aspects of discourse. That is, as "discourse" language is either spoken or written so "discourse" is the preliminary concept in Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Discourse is always temporal; it exists in a present instance. In speech, the instance of discourse is a

fleeting event. That is, any utterance, as a discourse exists only in the act of saying. It is writing that fix the discourse in surpassing the event of saying by the "said" of speaking, the intentional exteriorization. In other words, "…what we write, what we inscribe is the *noema* of speaking. It is the meaning of the speech event, not the event as event".[31] Thus in the text as an inscription there is first a distanciation of the event of saying by surpassing the event by the meaning. Moreover, in speech the intention of the subject and the meaning of the discourse overlap each other, while in writing this coincidence does not come through. So, in the text there is a second distanciation between what is written and the original speaker. Ricoeur says:

> With written discourse, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide. This dissociation of the verbal meaning of the text and the mental intention is what is really at stake in the inscription of discourse…. [T]he text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its moorings to the psychology of its author.[32]

Thus, according to Ricoeur only interpretation can save the meaning, which its author can no longer secure. The third form of distanciation is similar to the second form as there is a distance between the text and the original audience. In the case of a spoken discourse the dialogue refers to a situation or context which opens a world that is common to the partners in the dialogue, namely the speaker and the listener. But the text decontextualizes itself from the historical conditions of its writings and opens up a welter of readings. This distanciation attests to the plurivocity of the text. In other words, in speech the reference is ostensive but in inscription the text no longer has such ostensive reference. This aspect of freeing the text from its limited ostensive reference engenders the fourth form of distanciation. As Ricoeur notes:

> In the same manner that the text frees its meaning from the tutelage of the mental intention, it frees its reference from the limits of ostensive reference. For us the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts. Thus we speak about the "world" of Greece, not to designate any more what were the situations for those who lived them, but to designate the nonsituational

references which outlive the effacement of the first and which henceforth are offered as possible modes of being...[33]

Thus understanding a text, for Ricoeur, is also, at the same time, enlightening our own situation. According to Ricoeur, "action" becomes an object of scientific study under an objectification that is similar to the fixation of discourse by writing. As it happens with writing, the objectification of action is made possible by the inner traits of action itself. "In the same way as the fixation by writing is made possible by a dialectic of intentional exteriorization immanent to the speech-act itself, a similar dialectic within the process of transaction prepares the detachment of the *meaning* of the action from the *event* of the action."[34] In other words, the distanciation we find between the speaker's intention and the meaning of a text obtains in the case of action too, that is, a distanciation between the agent and his/her action. Ricoeur refers to this distanciation as the "autonomization of action" and argues that it is autonomization of human action that gives action its social dimension. "An action is a social phenomenon not only because it is done by several agents in such a way that the role of each of them cannot be distinguished from the role of the others, but also because our deeds escape us and have effects which we did not intend."[35] Thus Ricoeur points out that human actions become institutions through the sedimentation in social time with the result that the meaning of action no longer coincides with the subjective intentions of the actors. In other words, much like a text, the significance of an action goes beyond the relevance of its conditions of production. As Ricoeur says a "…work does not only mirror its time, but it opens up a world which it bears within itself."[36] Moreover, like a text, human action too is an open work that calls for a plurality of readings with the result that the "… problem of the right understanding can no longer be solved by a simple return to the alleged intention of the author."[37] However, the inherent plurivocity of the text need not abrogate the question of superiority or inferiority of one interpretation to another. Put it differently, the multiplicity of readings does not necessarily lead to arbitrariness or unmitigated relativism. Ricoeur points out that it is possible to arrive at an agreement in confronting different

interpretations. According to Ricoeur, the objectivity of the text is displayed in the dialectical character of the relation between explanation and understanding.

Ricoeur's employment of the model of text to understand meaning thus extends to speech, writing and action. Though human subjectivity is linguistically designated and mediated by symbols, Ricoeur places subjectivity in the human body and the material world, of which language is a second order articulation. As he puts it, "to say *self* is not to say say *I*…[where] the *I* is posited, the *self* is implied reflexively."[38] The hermeneutics of the self is different from the philosophy of the subject as while the latter asserts indubitable knowledge of truth or certainity, the former leads to a *belief* of truth or certainity.[39] According to Ricoeur, this does not mean that hermeneutic belief is inferior to knowledge, rather such a belief is a testimony by the individual self regarding the truth of wat the self believes.

NOTES

1. Bauman, Zygmunt, 1978, *Hermeneutics and Social Sciences*, New York, Columbia University Press, p. 35.
2. Dilthey, Wilhelm, 1974, "On the Special Character of the Human Sciences' in Marcello Truzzi (Ed.), *Verstehen: Subjective Understanding in the Social Sciences*, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p.12.
3. Seebohm, Thomas M., 1985, "Boeckh and Dilthey: The Development of Methodical Hermeneutics' in J.N. Mohanty (Ed.), *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences*, Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff, p. 96.
4. Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm, Op.cit, p. 14.
5. Collin, Finn, 1997, *Social Reality*, London, Routledge, p. 103.
6. Collin, Finn, 1985, *Theory and Understanding: A Critique of Interpretive Social Science*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p. 148.
7. Schutz, Alfred, 1963, "Common-sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action' in Maurice Natanson (Ed.), *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: A Reader*, New York, Random House, p. 343.
8. Nagel misconstrues the nature of subjective interpretation as one that unsuccessfully attempts to capture the "inner springs' of action. See in this regard "Problems of Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences' in Maurice Natanson (Ed.), *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: A Reader*, p. 206.
9. Seebhom, Thomas M., op. cit., p. 98.

10. Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York, Harper and Row, p. 182.
11. Biemel, Walter, 1977, *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study*, tr. J.L. Mehta, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 49.
12. Heidegger, Martin, Op.cit, p.187.
13. Ibid., pp. 188–189.
14. Ibid., pp. 191–192.
15. Dreyfus, Hubert L., 1980, "Holism and Hermeneutics' in *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 34, September , p. 13.
16. Ibid., p. 14.
17. Gadamerian notion of "fusion of horizons' should not be construed in a simplistic manner where two perspectives coalesce into a single unifying perspective. Gadamer makes this point many times in various ways. Thus he says in one of his writings, recently translated into English, that a "perspective that sees everything would abolish the very meaning of perspective." (Gadamer, H.G., 2000, "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person', *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 33, p. 281.) As Kathleen Wright points out the "fusion' has two phases: the first phase is the one that results from "the projection of difference between two horizons' by projecting a horizon against the background of one's own horizon. Charles Taylor emphasizes this aspect of "fusion' when he reads it as a "Language of Contrast". However, the second phase sets aside this difference by calling into question one's own horizon through the projected horizon. (Wright, Kathleen, 2000, "The Fusion of Horizons: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Wang Fu-Chih', *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 33, p. 345). It is in this sense that Gadamer talks of knowing the other as knowing oneself. I am thankful to Professor Amitabha Das Gupta for pointing out to me Taylor's reading of "fusion of horizons', which helped me to elaborate on Gadamer's notion of the same.
18. Outhwaite, William, 1985, "Hans-Georg Gadamer' in Quentin Skinner (Ed.), *The Return of the Grand Theories in the Human Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 25.
19. Roy, Krishna, 1989, "Hermeneutics and Ethnomethodology' in Krishna Roy and Chhanda Gupta (Eds.), *Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, New Delhi, ICPR and Allied Publishers, p. 63.
20. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1975, "Hermeneutics and Social Science' in *Cultural Hermeneutics*, Vol.2, No. 4, p. 311.
21. Ibid., pp. 312–313.
22. Cf. Bernstein, R.J., 1983, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 141.
23. Gadmer, Hans-Georg, 1977, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr. David E.Linge, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 66.

24. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1975, *Truth and Method*, (tr.) Garret Barden and John Cumming, New York, Seabury Press, p. 94.
25. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1985, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion' in J.N.Mohanty (Ed.), *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences*, p. 82.
26. Charles Taylor argues that though Natural Sciences too have hermeneutical dimension, the nature of interpretation that characterizes human sciences is different from the former and as such the claim regarding a "new unity of method" is not legitimate. See in this regard, Taylor, Charles, 1980, "Understanding in Human Science', *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 34 and Taylor, Charles, 1971, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 25. However, Kuhn questions Taylor's characterization of Natural Sciences as one that meets the "requirement of absoluteness", independent of human interpretation (Kuhn, Thomas: 1991, "The Natural and the Human Sciences' in David R. Hiley et al. (Ed.), *The Interpretive Turn*: *Philosophy, Science, Culture*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press). I am thankful to Professor S.G. Kulkarni for bringing to my notice Thomas Kuhn's position regarding the role of interpretation in sciences.
27. Thompson, J.B., 1981, *Critical Hermeneutics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 54.
28. Ibid., pp. 60–64.
29. Ibid., p. 62.
30. Ricoeur, Paul, 1979, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text.' In Paul Rabinow and William M.Sullivan (Eds.), *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 73.
31. Ibid., p. 76.
32. Ibid., p. 78.
33. Ibid., p. 79.
34. Ibid., p. 81.
35. Ibid., p. 83
36. Ibid., p. 86.
37. Ibid., p. 88.
38. Ricoeur, Paul, 1992, *Oneself as Another* (tr.) Kathleen Blamey, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, p. 18.
39. Ibid., p. 21.

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Index