

meteorite

#3

including an interview with
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

- submission to idealistic perspective –
- diagram incomplete
- independent in y-pers.
- 180° in x-pers.
- Heidegger & Bataille
- Ifascist/aunt-fascist
- "independent" [!]
- idealica in y-pers.
- idealization of studio

Text B:

Benjamin, Walter
"The Life of Students"
characters: 127 - 2786

The following remarks, in connection with history appears to be connected with traditionally accepted elements of the bourgeois progressive French, conservative mind.

significance of the whole. So the only possibility is present by an act of criticism.

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specific problems – the

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~~SOLOGY PAINTING~~
AFTER THE SELLING OF THE GRAY

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ISSUE NO.

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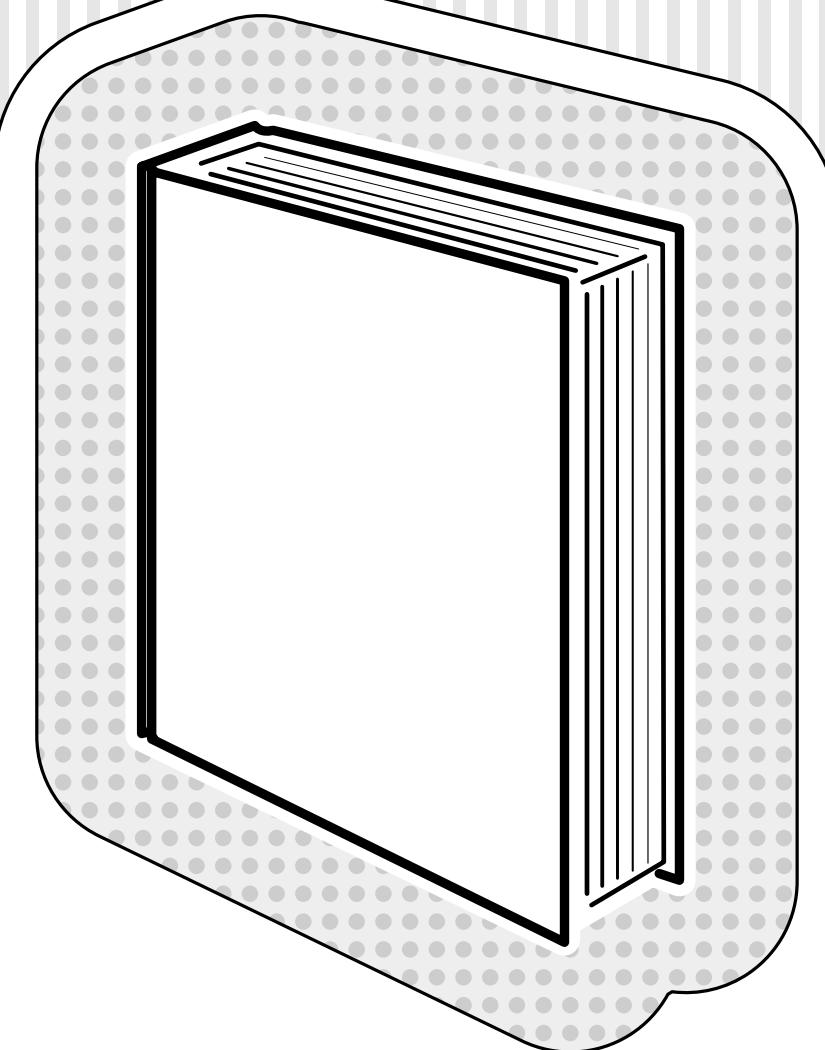
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me•di•a 1) the primary means of mass communication, encompassing meteorite 2) the primary means of mass communication, not meteorite

prax•is 1) wasn't that taught in that history of philosophy class? 2) a justification for the faint-hearted or the greedy to avoid graduate school 3) ???

From "λογίς" to Logos

Regan Smith

RE: undergraduate philosophy

In this journal, you will read the distilled kernels of thought from fellow student philosophers. Why? Maybe because of a passing interest as to how one measures up to one's peers, maybe to learn something new, maybe you'll skip right to the interview with a proven thinker. Most likely you've picked this up for the design, which is great.

But now you're stuck with the text. To study philosophy at all nowadays is perhaps somewhat anachronistic. To publish journals of philosophy may do little more than keep loosely alive a forum for "philosophy" now that TheRealWorld! is deciding it is less and less necessary. If you are one of the few who has not attempted to fashion a parachute after graduation, and in fact still want to be a philosopher when you "grow up," the following two hypotheses are meant for you:

- 1) You are more likely to actually read this than others. Put bluntly, you are our target audience.
- 2) You either hear the admonition to get ARealJob! more often or else have become so far removed from those joining TheRealWorld! that you've forgotten what it is like to seriously confront that "advice."

<Perhaps I exaggerate. Is anyone else interested to learn that listings for "philosophy" on Yahoo! yields roughly as many pages for logic, Continental philosophy, metaphysics, post-modernism, philosophy of mind, and deconstructionism all together as for the combination of Objectivism and philosophy of religion? And although I didn't check, I'm betting that for the latter, most pages lean a lot more towards religion than towards philosophy. Of course, there are far fewer pages for anything called philosophy than for fans of N' SYNC or Tori Amos, etc, etc.

So philosophy is not web savvy. After all, the AOL stipulation that sentences/comments/solicitations for cybersex can me no more than two lines long does not lend itself well to sophisticated philosophizing, at least not in its academic form.¹ Considering another avenue, every once in a while a philosopher is quoted in the news. Usually, this is when you know that this is a particularly TroublingIssueForOurTime. The result is at least mildly amusing. If the topic is the death penalty, or abortion, or euthanasia, or welfare, the philosopher will almost always say something to the effect of... "Well, there are many very complicated issues involved that create difficult questions with no easy answers" ...Now, I suppose the journalist/newsmedia demands may have a lot to do in generating this response, but I bet most people who consider these articles think, "This is what you get paid for?!? Damn! I should've been a philosopher. I always thought you had to be profound and shit." One woman wrote for The New York Times on sex selection (evidently now one can choose the sex of one's baby) and basically said "I am a trained medical ethicist, I have written a book on the subject and know all the hard questions and different arguments, but in the end, I just really wanted a girl."² This is not reasoning or theorizing the "issues" involved in sex selection. It is not philosophy.

Or let's consider something that has probably happened to you while reading at a coffee shop, chatting at a cocktail party, etc. You meet someone who asks what you do or what you study. They then profess that they, too, love philosophy, maybe they wanted to be a philosopher. In fact, maybe you too, are a fan of their favorite philosopher who has changed their life, (insert one of the following: Ayn Rand, C.S. Lewis, Carl Sagan, John Lennon, Jack Kerouac,

¹ Quick, picture a given professor frantically explaining the nuances of Frege or Marcuse or whomever in two line phrases to a chat room full of 13-year olds and 45-year olds all masquerading as 20/F and blonde. I guess even hungover freshmen sleeping in lectures are more conducive to learning than some audiences.

² Women in philosophy: where are we?
It's not that liberal arts in general suffers from the same gender disparity. There are many brilliant women thinkers who write in different fields on similar issues. Yet women philosophers (in philosophic academia) are few and far between.

Ghandi, a current flava of conspiracy theorist, the guy who wrote Celestine Prophecy, Albert Einstein, J.D. Salinger, Alice Walker... all well and good but not people who are normally the subject of philosophy dissertations). Get into enough discussions about the 'meaning of life' and you may well find yourself saying... "well, there are many complicated issues involved" ...just to save time or if this newfound acquaintance seems to be particularly hardcore in their admiration for their favorite philosopher.³

Why should any of this matter to "serious philosophers"? First, the Yahoo! results point to a grave lack of good public relations for philosophy. Of course, Leibniz' monadology will never be chic. However, in general, philosophy is rather hidden from those who have not sought it out, to the detriment, I think, to those who are passionate in their craft. Most high schools do not have mandatory philosophy classes, if any at all; the works of only a few brand name philosophers become household names or even authors stocked at non-collegiate bookstores. For those subgenres of philosophy that have nothing to do with the study of humans, this may be entirely irrelevant. Truth can be discovered and left in a cave by a solitary rational animal/hermit. For those whose study does overlap with people (that is, anything involving ethics or politics, or language or aesthetics, or really also the mind) this is not possible. The world at large becomes an issue either in the study of it or in the attempt at praxis that supposedly accompanies theory. There could be a larger attempt to either interest people in philosophy or share the fruits or the labors of this institution in whatever way. Other humanities or research disciplines do this, but philosophy meshes less and less well with the rest of the world. It is as if the institution expects its practitioners to abandon it and these departures are the primary route through which current philosophy disseminates.

Of course, there is a sort of trickling down that does occur into society at large. In an interesting column in the local Detroit paper, the columnist defended the decision of the state of Kansas to teach creationism along with evolution. Her ground was that philosophers have proven that Science is not infallible, reason is to be doubted, and the ideals of The Enlightenment were flawed. Given this, it is no wonder, in that columnist's humble

³ Or maybe most of you don't experience this. This forcible bonding over mutual love of "philosophy" (..."maybe we should hang out and chat sometime"...) might be more of a phenomenon for girls who study philosophy.

Footnote to footnote:
Half in jest, the above comment was accused of gender essentialization by careful readers. To this, I say
¹) I am not willing to give up the social category of girl or grrl which in its intended slang does not refer to all women, is not strictly related to age, may include some males, and is a lot of fun as well as politically powerful.

²) "might be more" is not exactly drawing a hard line in the gender sand, and to accuse this side-note of essentialization may strip the teeth out of feminism's ability to deal with some concrete social realities that affect "women," as commonly categorized.

Besides, the readers were both single guys anyways.

opinion, that normal, sensible citizens should choose to guide their lives by fire-and-brimstone codes that have stood the test of time instead of by the pages of *Social Text*.⁴ If "we" know that there is no Truth in any system of thought, why not just pick something and pretend it is true? What is discussed indefinitely in journals under titles like "The Reluctant Conservatism of Foucault" is decided with a brief snarkiness on the Op-Ed pages.

It is a responsibility of philosophers to take some interest in how ideas are being interpreted by non-philosophers. Not only is there the possibility of real impact on society and social rule-making, but the current impression of philosophy affects the future accommodation and co-option of philosophical thought. That philosophical thought can be subject to commodification against the wishes of its creators does not make its co-option ignorable. As much as certain corners in philosophical thought have enjoyed scoffing at *Social Text* in academic circles, it certainly is in part because of a commitment to rationality and truth. At the very least, I think philosophers are in agreement that it is a step backwards to jettison the study of biology and ethical systems to teach young children the myth of *The Garden Of Eden* as fact. More importantly, very few who read the papers think that when the columnist talks about "the philosophers" she is not referring to those who disdain cultural theory or those who know that *Social Text*'s project is anathema to Christianizing public schools. To *The Real World!*, the concept of philosophy is not split into approach or deconstructed, (although perhaps outmoded). Any idea, or project that seeks to influence society must negotiate with the existent collective impression of this institution. The ivory tower image, even a post-avant-garde-self-destructing-ivory-tower, is an obstacle to the institution's relevance.

Embedded in the journalistic/simplistic questioning of philosophers lies a different set of issues. There has been enough awareness (or commodification) of *Social Text* and its ilk that rarely now does the mainstream media assume the role theoretically accorded the Fourth Estate. The quadripartite of AOL/Time-Warner, Rupert Murdoch's cabal, Viacom and Disney⁵ dominate the media beast that is very far from the conceptions and purposes of 'free presses' that a different economic age created.

⁴ *Social Text*: a in some circles infamous journal of contemporary thought, cultural phenomena, and current debate.

⁵ At time of publication, none of these conglomerates had yet merged with each other.

The experience of reading philosophy, even an undergraduate journal of philosophy, is substantially different from the inundation of snippets streaming from the mainstream media. This is an inundation that even most philosophers⁶ cannot avoid and one that, for millions, constitutes a primary source of information. This media is 'square' not only in its insipid dedication to the normative, all-too normative issues, but also in its refusal to attend even that low level of public discussion to any concern within its expanding limits.⁷ Noam Chomsky, and to a lesser extent, Brill's Content have taken on the role of the watchdog, albeit displaced so as to target the media itself.

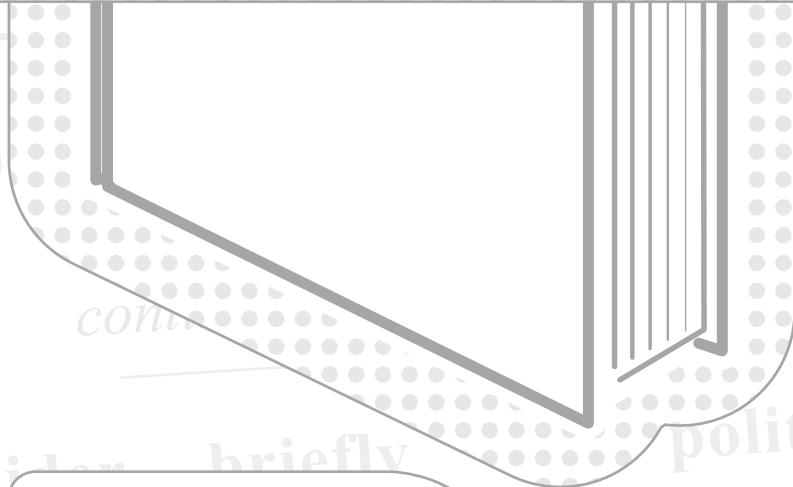
Publishing has entered DostoyevskyWorld, where everything is permitted, and wildly, it is the philosophers who may no longer wish to Judge that are handed the gavel. Philosophy as an institution might be fine ruminating over esoteric texts, but when a quote is asked for in the mainstream media, it is to introduce authority to the TroublingIssueOfOurTime. One may not consult his/her local philosopher with a moral problem, but there is the sneaking suspicion that the "answer" is there somewhere in philosophy. Maybe it is just unwarranted cynicism, but it seems that evasive answers that only underscore the difficulty of commenting on said TroublingIssue reinforce the perception that some person knows the "answer" to the (naïvely?) phrased journalistic question; in short, that answers are locked away in the ivory tower but there nevertheless. This gives license to the rest of society to evade evaluating the questions asked and the arguments proposed. In social practice, metaphysics is not exactly killed off.⁸

To put it obtundly, the penchant *ecrivier sans* attention to transparency or clarity hinders a layperson's entrance into the discipline for those who lacking occasion, capital, or partiality to decipher the argot that floods the page. Now, beyond certainty, lexis is selected with meticulousness, but the resultant *aporia* accorded neophytes is a paltry aperitif of its Grecian origination, peremptorily foreclosing said quiescent proselytes from ingress onto the courtyards of temporally correlating *bon-Weltanschauung* potentates and exhorting epiphenomenal neurological myasthenia gravis, if you will. The valorization of punctilious exactitude facilitates the laudatory *sui generis* of philosophical *textus*, yet the

⁶ By now, it should be clear that that word is herein defined as "whoever that is."

⁷ Justification for bad puns will be provided in the following pages.

⁸ Nor is a rational alternative to blind faith discouraged.



structuralogical confabration of ontometaparafilosofie's patriarchates translates to discursive études (albeit nonnormative)⁹ that constitute concatenations of contra-utile cant concealing concomitant cognizance of conceptualization, irregardless of the comitadji nature of cette institution... In short, logomachy ensues.

Consider briefly the political economy of philosophy today. On the one hand, there is increasing competitiveness within the market for the few positions in top colleges and universities, not to mention the even fewer places for leaders of a genre of thought or most respected name at an elite university. On the other, philosophy competes with other professions for recognition within and shares of the larger market of knowledge. Outputs of philosophy a century ago were accorded a greater degree of credibility, but now philosophical knowledge competes with psychology, with biology, with a host of other disciplines that spun off from philosophical thought but now threaten to supplant philosophy. The intra-competition combines with the pressure from outside to make one's work unique, as well as relatively inaccessible. If philosophy does not have monopoly on issues probed, nor the recourse of unique method by testing — anyone can write — then the writing style must be both differentiated from other writing styles as well as elite so that very few can penetrate this market. So then, there is an incentive to write philosophy that is especially obtuse, an incentive not necessarily linked to the strengths of rigorous philosophical writing.

9 eg: true story, last winter a high school senior asks "Santa Claus" for "Derrida for Dummies" after multiple attempts to read Derrida herself. This is commendable, and certainly most high school students should not be expected to master Derrida or Davidson themselves. But, although the "...for Dummies" series may be helpful, there is nothing remotely "dumb" in her desire to understand this work. Why is her best option to understand contemporary philosophy part of a series that also teaches people how to juggle or master the yo-yo?

Now, it is of course the case that contemporary philosophy has, in the vacuum created by the proliferation of competing disciplines, diversified its focus to include the text itself as well as narrowed its scope of focus, necessitating new vocabulary and precision. Yet, the tendency is to err on the side of jargon, not to 'use it responsibly.' To argue 'against jargon' is to repudiate the core of what makes philosophical work valuable and possible. My grievance is much less polemical. Over-reliance upon cross-referencing, extensive name-dropping that is not essential to an argument, paragraphs in five languages, etc.; all is the hallmark of non-productive 'jargon' and deliberately inaccessible stylistic choices that often conceal less intellectually rigorous thought. 'Dasein/dasein/Dasein' is integral to Heidegger's argument, 'empennage'¹⁰ was not integral to the argument advanced by a student in a paper submitted to this journal.

There are very few 'ambassadors' from the philosophical world to the Real World. Even the relation between 'pop psychologists' and psychologists proper shares more in common in thought and terminology than between philosophers proper and whatever could be called 'pop philosophy'.¹¹ Correspondingly, what does one do with a philosophy degree? At the two extremes, there is the Master of Academia and the beautiful loser gentrified in Reality Bites.¹² In between are scholars outmoded by a world of public relations. The give and take between philosophy, which finds scope for analysis, criticism, and study in multifaceted components of the world, and the Real World, which practically ignores philosophy unless it serves a purpose, is uneven. It is not a question of subject matter, or a call for renewed power positioning to place philosophy at the summit of education or media. At issue more is the danger that stimulating work in philosophic academia is not circulating as far as it could.

This is not rectified by changing the

10 Oxford English Dictionary:
empennage /em-pĕr'ij/
n. Aeron. An arrangement of stabilizing surfaces at the tail of an aircraft. [F. *empennier* to feather (an arrow)]

11 The Celestine Prophecy?

12 That is, between the celebrity professor/writer and the 'slacker' college almost graduate who stalks coffeehouses with dog-eared books and little plans for upward mobility.

¹³ Including jargon.

nature of the discipline, but by adding avenues for its outlet. By expanding the accessibility of philosophy on the web, mainstream media, or even visual media, current traditions¹³ are not encroached, nor is there the threat of philosophy being replaced by PhilosophyWorld. What may, in some senses, just be termed “exposure,” or “publicity,” (not “alteration”) seems to be only beneficial to philosophical study.

Supplementary to the fighting for degrees or tenured positions, to the teaching and reteaching of classics to undergraduate economics majors with a requirement to fulfill, can be an increased attention to the relation between philosophy and the world. This could involve better introductory texts to contemporary thought, willingness to try to discuss philosophical concepts with the mainstream media, writing by philosophers in the mainstream media, heightened analysis and criticism of social issues from a philosophical perspective, more attempts to interest outsiders in philosophy through classes, texts, or programs, etc., etc.

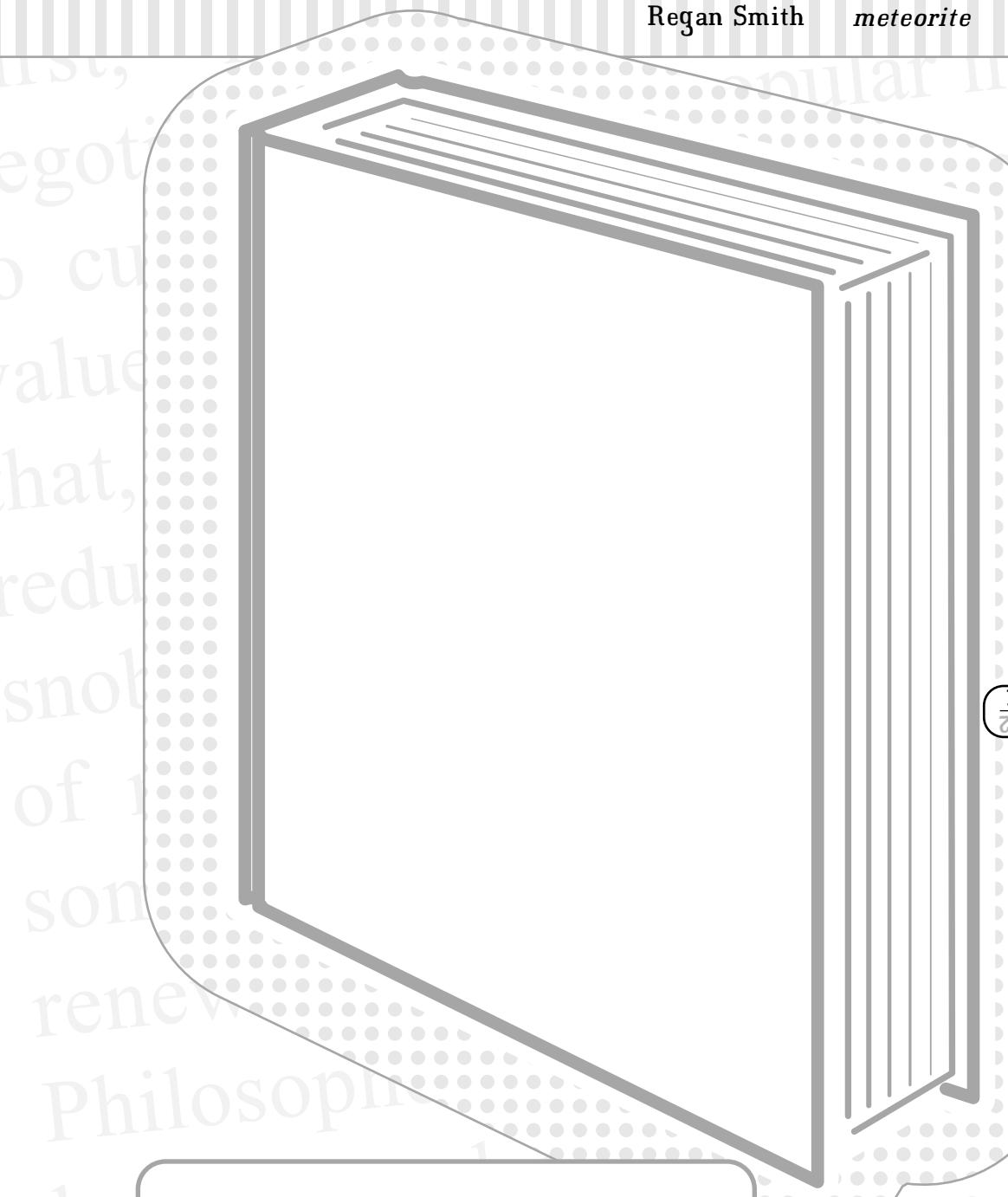
Mainly, it seems to involve two steps:

First, making the decision that negotiating with the popular in addition to current pedagogy does not gut the value of philosophical work, a decision that, to me, is easily made through reductio — by considering the absurd snobbery of rejecting the MediaWorld of not-philosophy.

Second, throwing some energy and imagination into renewing the relationship between Philosophers and society so that the hard earned payoffs in philosophical work are not lost, locked in a tower far, far away from glossy, hyperlinked digital chaos.

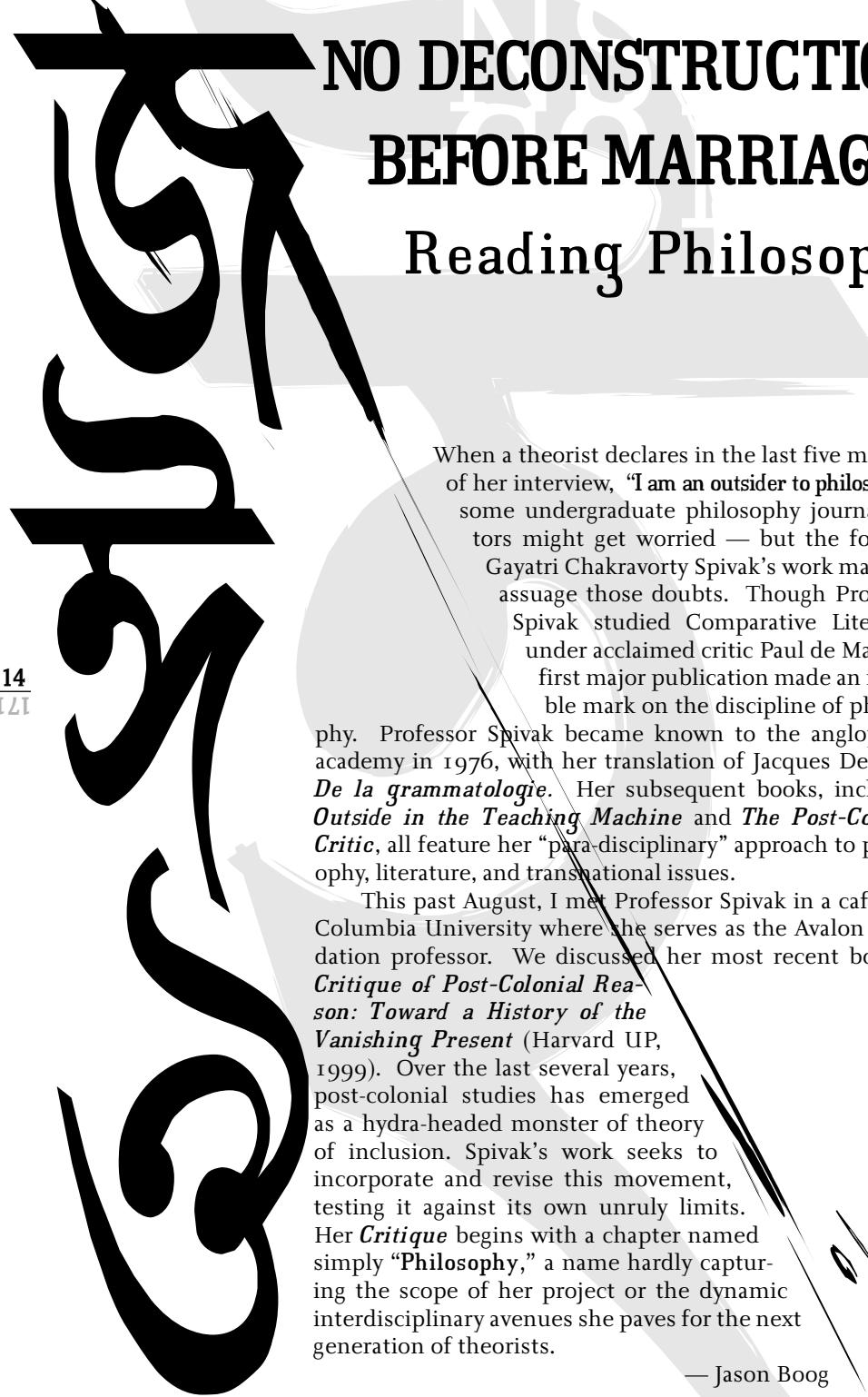
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At the beep, please leave your name, number, and a brief justification for the ontological necessity of modern man's existential dilemma.

- Troy Dyer, "Reality Bites"



NO DECONSTRUCTION BEFORE MARRIAGE?

Reading Philosophy

When a theorist declares in the last five minutes of her interview, “*I am an outsider to philosophy*,” some undergraduate philosophy journal editors might get worried — but the force of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s work may help assuage those doubts. Though Professor Spivak studied Comparative Literature under acclaimed critic Paul de Man, her first major publication made an indelible mark on the discipline of philosophy.

Professor Spivak became known to the anglophone academy in 1976, with her translation of Jacques Derrida’s *De la grammatologie*. Her subsequent books, including *Outside in the Teaching Machine* and *The Post-Colonial Critic*, all feature her “para-disciplinary” approach to philosophy, literature, and transnational issues.

This past August, I met Professor Spivak in a café near Columbia University where she serves as the Avalon Foundation professor. We discussed her most recent book, *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard UP, 1999). Over the last several years, post-colonial studies has emerged as a hydra-headed monster of theory of inclusion. Spivak’s work seeks to incorporate and revise this movement, testing it against its own unruly limits. Her *Critique* begins with a chapter named simply “*Philosophy*,” a name hardly capturing the scope of her project or the dynamic interdisciplinary avenues she paves for the next generation of theorists.

— Jason Boog



with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak an interview by JASON BOOG

Jason Boog Your book begins with **Kant** and ends with **activism**. Why begin such a broad trajectory with a chapter named “*Philosophy*”? Or, more specifically, why choose Kant’s *Critique of Teleological Reason* to find the “native informant” excluded from all the different systems of knowledge that your book addresses?

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak The idea of the book started in the late Seventies. Three graduate students and I read Kant together at the University of Texas. We made this astonishing discovery that in the *Critique of Teleological Reason* there was an actual naming of certain aboriginal groups as **not sufficient as examples of human beings**. As I started to read more, I saw that Kant was not thinking this for the very first time; this was part of the debate at the time. He was just giving a non-empirical answer. Since I began there, it seemed right to begin **the book** there as a kind of narrative move.

JB: Do you think that as the undergraduate philosophy student learns **Kant**, figures like those “aboriginal groups” need to be exposed during that initial becoming-familiar with the text? What degree of familiarity is needed before the philosophy student should read critically for such “answers” in the history of philosophy?

GCS: I think one can be aware of these critical moments only if one knows that which is being critiqued from the inside — sympathetically. It is a mistake to dismiss Kant. Certainly my chapter tries to show that Kant was a very great philosopher and a very useful philosopher indeed. What we are seeing is how it is that even in our best moments (which probably in any way will not approach Kant’s best moments) we are still bound — we are *normed* — by certain kinds of histories.

Paul de Man once said, apparently — Fred Jameson quoted this to me (so I am quoting a quote) — **“You can only deconstruct what you love.”** I believe that. You need to have a certain critical intimacy when you are doing this kind of thing. I am troubled by the idea that people dismiss great writing without enough care. On the other hand, I cannot fail to mark the moment, as *living in our history*. You’ve put your finger on something important.

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JB: You write about **Hegel’s** sense of history: “If as literary critics and teachers, we could have taught ourselves and our students the way to informed figurations of that ‘lost’ perspective, then the geopolitical postcolonial situation could have served as something like a paradigm for the thought of history itself as figuration, figuring something out with “chunks of the real” (Spivak 65). Once a philosophy student establishes “critical intimacy” with such crucial texts in philosophy, how can they begin to look for such invisible, impossible figures in history?

GCS: I am just saying that there is no way that one could actually recapture this lost perspective. **All we have is figurations.** Therefore, when we think of the writing of history we have to realize that what is happening is also a figured narrative — although what is being offered as part of the narrative is being offered as real.

This makes historians a little cross. But, not all historians would ignore this. Partha Chatterjee would agree with this. My colleague Simon Schama here at Columbia would agree

GCS: with this. If one just *celebrates* the hybrid as a kind of essence, then there is a figure over against which the hybrid is a hybrid which then undermines the idea of hybridity.

Therefore, there is no such figure to be found — we only have repeated figurations of that “purity,” even of the “hybrid as such.” Another name for it is the *“truth” of an account*. And the figuration is, in some sense, how the truth is produced. So then one could say any description of historiographic method can also be seen as a description of figuring out. This is how you **figure it out**.

JB I want to get some sense of the “Vanishing Present” you include in the title of your new book — the way that contemporary theory has to look at itself with a new “vigilance.” How can this rigor be brought into the university? As the legacies of multiculturalism and deconstruction change the boundaries between disciplines, it would seem that the crowded playing field of theory would resist any attempts to form mechanisms of consistent “vigilance.”

GCS: I don’t really know how it can be brought successfully into the university. Obviously one person can’t do it. I can talk about attempts. Here at Columbia we are trying to establish painstakingly a Center for Comparative Literature and Society. It’s been in action for a year. I think what we are trying to see is that the old, traditional comparative literary skills, the emphasis on language — not only on language **but on idiom** — should also apply to non-European languages. One can’t just do multicultural stuff in English, one should in fact try to bring those standards into the study of areas other than what comparative literature has so far covered.

Your university, indeed, is a pathbreaker in this respect. It has a model that’s quite interesting for people like us. At the same time, the old Area Studies initiatives were put into place after the Second World War for the United States to get in touch with the rest of the world. That inception was consolidated by the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Those were highly interdisciplinary endeavors. But those Area Studies institutions had no particular interest in the skill and care that comparative literature gave to the study of the languages, to learn them **RESPONSIBLY** rather than **INSTRUMENTALLY**.

GCS: So very practically, what we are trying to do here is bring those two — the interdisciplinary resources of Area Studies and the traditional skills of Comparative Literature — together; so that we can indeed keep our eyes and ears open in terms of the political economy of knowledge as we do the humanities. And be aware of the irreducibility of idiom in the consciousnesses and depths of other civilizations studied. As we do the social sciences, such thoughts “enrich” and “problematicize” rational expectations, let’s say. From these two ends one could say something about what this new work might look like. But making institutional change is an uphill battle, so this is practically utopian. **But it is an answer.**

JB: Your book contains very fluid lines of discipline, traveling between political science, literature, psychoanalysis, and others — all in a chapter named “Philosophy.” How can we think and learn about the disciplined rigors of philosophy when theory requires this new sort of scholarship utilizing the interdisciplinary skills you addressed?

GCS: We need team teaching. The way we were prepared as teachers we may have interdisciplinary goals and interests, but each has one disciplinary training. This morning I received an e-mail from Jack **Snyder**, the chairman of political science here. He and I are going to teach together a course on narrative in ethics and politics. He is a political scientist, very much of a rationalist thinking. It was very interesting to see that he likes the piece of writing I gave him, but at the end he says, “But this is finally **not useful**.”

I know when I read his stuff again I will like his quality and I will learn a lot. But at the end of the day, if I have any conviction I will say, **“Hey that’s not the way to do it. It leaves too much out.”** So when you do interdisciplinary work you need to do it with people who have disciplinary convictions and engage, rather than some kind of Mickey Mouse playing at another discipline in which one is not trained.

I’m looking forward to teaching with Professor Snyder because neither of us will give ground simply out of some kind of academic courtesy. We will say, **“If you want to teach me something, you must earn the right to teach me something. I won’t throw away my convictions simply because you say so.”**

This is good for students. I think we need a lot of team teaching. We need a lot of good faculty development. What we don’t need is the kind of mocking dismissal that is a sure sign of academic insecurity.

JB: Maybe we could look at a specifically interdisciplinary moment in your book where you discuss the philosophical foundation of *Jane Eyre* via **Kant’s** Categorical Imperative. Through this philosophical turn you expose a racial “tangent” in the book that might not appear through a purely “literary reading.” Will such moments become the site of future theoretical activity using our new interdisciplinary resources, the kind of sites philosophy students should look at now?

GCS: I think so. One must take up risks. And here one takes the risk of making what may be a mistake in terms of disciplinary methodology.

I had my own problems with **Althusser**, as all feminists must. Yet what he said about **Lenin**, in 1968 if I’m not wrong, is instructive. Althusser had said that Lenin “gave a wild response to philosophy” (*une réponse sauvage*). “Wild” is a slightly misleading translation. “Savage” would have been wrong also. There could have been no other translation. But nonetheless, that’s idiom — it is so irreducible.

Then he surmised that philosophy cannot bear interaction with politics because it has to live on politics. That kind of mistake — **that “wildness”** — you must know how to make it, how to be it. In order to be able play a game well, you need to know how to play to lose. Just knowing the rules will not make sure you can play. Just being able to play the game does not make sure that you can win. Just being able always to play to win does not mean that you can deliberately risk having to lose in order to teach.

So in that sense, yes, I think those risks have to be taken in order to show up something. Almost, as it were, to keep the move into the reflexive and the autonomous suspended — and say, **“I WILL make the mistake of NOT making that move to solve my problem.”**

In the chapter named “History” in your new book, you take a narrative departure from your theoretical style to tell about one of your visits to India. The scene exposes the “impossible” narrative of Rani, an Indian woman foreclosed from historical record (Spivak 239-244). I think **Hegel’s** sense of history was just as responsible for her foreclosure from history as the British archives. Where did the idea of this method come from? What are the implications of this method for the future writing of philosophy?

GCS: What I was trying to do there was to make the method of knowing into a storyline, *within the account*. In Derrida's *Glas* such a move is performed in another way as Derrida looks at how Hegel comes to his way of thinking about the family. It's not just knowing the politics of knowing (as in Althusser on Lenin) but making the knowing into a *storyline*, instantiating the *Knowing as a narrative*.

That is a response, but I'm not writing a philosophy book, so I'm allowed this as long as I can keep the reader interested — as long as the reader feels that something comes out of these acts against the disciplinary grain.

JB: You call Coetzee's novel *Foe* "interventionist writing," a kind of intersection between theory and literary work? Can this kind of writing help students think about theory, helping us find new sites for study? How do such pieces influence your own work?

GCS: I believe so. But in a certain sense, my expertise is a hindrance there. If there is one thing I have been taught to do by excellent teachers, it is to read literature. And I'm not going to throw it away. The book is dedicated to two of my teachers, and I have had other excellent teachers of reading.

So to an extent, I almost cannot make a naïve enough "mistake" in literary reading. I'm a bit muscle-bound, in other words. I think I have been most successfully able to make a "mistake," as it were, in a literary reading, in my Baudelaire reading where I put in how Baudelaire's narrative is about knowing a *nègresse*, not just satisfying the literary historian. It is from his life. And I think long ago, in an essay which was included in *In Other Worlds*, an essay on Wordsworth's book *The Prelude* on the French Revolution, I was also able to make a real mistake, a useful, productive mistake.

Generally my reading of *Foe* is too expert. Precisely because Coetzee himself, after all, is a considerable theorist, so that he has a literary text that theorizes as it narrates. Room for making a powerful mistake is almost not there.

JB: Do you think interventionist writing can play a valuable role in the new curriculum you are talking about?

GCS: Not unless the teacher has a very thorough knowledge of that within which it intervenes. It is a mistake to teach interventionist literature simply as examples of political correctness. I see that happening too often. The very interventionist edge is blunted. Here, faculty development is very important. Bad teaching is taken for

granted because everybody is afraid to say that the teaching is bad when it is politically correct. Again, *team teaching*.

Here at this university, we are trying to establish a writer-in-residence fellowship for a writer in an indigenous African language. I would want such a teacher to be present in the class where an unprepared postcolonial teacher is teaching text after text from various parts of the world with no real knowledge of history, a kind of politically correct "**BAD-WHITES/GOOD-BLACKS**" mindset. I would like that to be informed by... Let me give you an example. I'm just coming back from India. Last week, an Indian woman writing a dissertation on V.S. Naipaul interviewed me for an English-language national news daily. She took me to this extremely opulent, colonial club in Calcutta. Her father was the director of a large tea company and has a membership. I've never been inside that club. She was talking about how the colonials were racist, and so on.

And I started laughing. I said, "Look around yourself. How can you make that statement, sitting here willingly, in a country that has been postcolonial for fifty years and say that they were racist?" Why do we follow those lines of behavior so implicitly, when we can very easily not do so? We must know, in some sense, the history of the present in the various postcolonial countries in order to be able to teach these kinds of texts.

JB: You hold major players in theory from Frederick Jameson to Richard Rorty accountable in your book. Should philosophy students learn such a "vigilant" stance as they first encounter contemporary theory? Should the undergraduate ask such sophisticated questions of contemporary theory in our courses?

GCS: Yes, but don't forget the need for establishing critical intimacy. I think undergraduate work should be more devoted to establishing the critical intimacy. I'm not saying that we should not critique. I teach history of literary criticism at the undergraduate level where I certainly advance to a kind of critique toward the end of the class. But I begin by inviting the students to enter into a very intimate and admiring relationship with the criticism of Wordsworth and Shelley and Coleridge and Pater and so on until Arnold. They're a bit surprised at the beginning of the semester that I teach with so much passion these writers that they don't expect me to like.

But I do think that undergraduate work should establish the love, then can move towards deconstruction. In that sense, I ask my graduate students always to ask themselves when they're reading, "**CUI BONO?**" — "In what interest?" "For whom is this book?" That is salutary.

GCS: I had a book launch for *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* published by an Indian press. I always publish all my books also for South Asian distribution, since the price there is much more affordable. I had a book launch there for the India editions. And there was a man there, he's a professor too and makes this objection regularly. He was trying to say that since he was a local, what he had to say was silenced by people of my ilk.

I started laughing, I said, "You know if my graduate students were sitting here right now, they would immediately ask, "In what interest is this being said?": "Love me, I'm a local, I'm the real thing." It applies everywhere, not just to the metropolis, but also to the so-called "Global South."

In what interest? But that to me is a question that's asked after the undergraduate endeavor to enter into the text as if written by oneself, as it were.

JB: In *The Post-Colonial Critic*, all the interviewers kept asking for an outline of this book. The product is much different than your original sketches, and you make it clear that revision played an important role in the product. Do you suggest such self-conscious revision as a new kind of tool for philosophical writing?

GCS: I don't recommend my model. It's almost as if I couldn't do anything else because of the kind of book it was and that's where those very long narrative footnotes tried to keep pace with where the argument was becoming too outdated because the virtual reality of global political economy was moving so fast. Also, I myself began with the assumptions of post-colonial discourse.

Most of the interviews in that book were given in the first half of the eighties, and that was when I had discovered the incredible hold on rational knowledge that colonialism still had. After I had moved through that period, the book was still called *Master Discourse: Native Informant*. That binary opposition began to lose itself already. And also, 1987 was the year that *Post-Colonial Critic* came out, I believe. That was the year when I first taught for a semester and more in India. The experience of teaching postcolonials rather than Eurocentric economic migrants really taught me something.

My first cousin just told me this true story about two related families from West Bengal. One living in Bombay, which is already far away, and the other living in Scotland. The Bombay family has gone to visit the Scotland branch of the family.

The little girl in the family from Bombay is speaking in English. The boy in the family from Scotland says to her: "Hey, don't speak in English at home, my mother will be cross. We are Bengalis." Then the Bombay girl says: "No. We must speak in

GCS: English, because if we don't speak in English at home I won't be able to get admission into English-speaking schools. I will not get ahead in life." Okay now, this is the scenario. This is a true story, and anybody who knows the scene knows that this is absolutely "authentic." The upper middle class local is preparing for Eurocentric migration through the English language school in India, so that, having arrived, the metropolitan agenda of multiculturalism says, "**Speak Bengali at home. We are Bengalis.**"

WE ARE ALWAYS HYPHENATED. The cultural claim is made once that geopolitical future is secured. That's the kind of agenda that I began to realize, "as the world turned," to coin a phrase. Therefore, it is a very different book from what I could announce in the early eighties.

In the last chapter you introduce your "hypothetical reader," the migrant woman just about to enter positions of power in the next country — the women whose identities are most threatened by the assimilating forces of Eurocentric migration. How did the revisions from your original scheme and your experiences teaching in India produce your idea of a "hypothetical reader?" Can you talk about the figure of your hypothetical reader as it emerged from the revision process?

GCS: That boy in Scotland? To him I would say **NO, it's not because you are Bengali.** It's a good idea to speak it to keep the language alive, but not for identity claims. I will ask him to do the fieldwork necessary to be able to read literature and writing in its idiomacity.

Again, I'm fresh out of India, I just came back yesterday, so I'm talking a lot about some of the things I did. I was asked by a Bengali-language daily to give an interview on a statement made by a writer called Khushwant Singh. He wrote *The Last Train to Pakistan*, a very well-known novel quite often taught in courses here.

He said that the National Academy of Letters should be disbanded, and, I believe, that writers should be left to the free market and the survival of the fittest — a silly sort of social Darwinism, really deplorable. Then he also says — he writes himself in English — that English has a kind of subtlety as a medium of narration that none of the Indian languages possesses. This is a vague echo of the Rushdie statement in the *New Yorker* last June that all writing in the Indian languages is parochial.

My interview was in Bengali, one of the regional languages. I said, "There's no need for me to prove my devotion to English, but I must say that this says more about Khushwant Singh and the limits of his knowledge than anything about English over the regional languages." I gave the interview in Calcutta, and it came out last Sunday. There was a great deal of discussion, I was told, but I left for Delhi.

GCS: I got some phone calls from Calcutta saying that people were discussing what I had said. And then I got a phone call from Delhi and someone said, "Professor Spivak, yes indeed what you have said is very apropos, but of course, all the armchair critics who have this opinion without much knowledge of the regional languages or the literatures, *they won't read your interview* because it's in one of the regional languages."

So then Harish Trivedi, the head of the English department at Delhi University, had a conversation with me and said, "I'm going to have this translated into English and I'm going to offer a headnote, making the point that if the regional languages were incapable of subtlety, how is it that this spirited rejoinder is produced in one of the regional languages? I'm going to print it in one of the English language dailies."

Now this is the kind of thing I would say to the hybrid boy or girl in Scotland. **Don't learn the language for some sort of authentic identity claim only available to the hyphenated Bengali.**

Learn it so you can use it as a critical tool. The Center for Comparative Literature and Society is for learning the non-metropolitan languages well with the old comparative literature skills.

JB: When your hypothetical reader is exposed in the fourth chapter, you also speak of the possibility of activism available to your hypothetical reader. I was wondering how we could think of activism on a *global* level through your clearly *theoretical* work in the book?

GCS: I don't think any book is going to do that. The book can talk about it. In order for this to work, one will have to engage in work other mode from what is available in a book. This has to be absolutely clear: I'm describing the situation, in order for someone to engage with it.

I AM TRYING TO STATE THE PROBLEM. Because the benevolent transnationally illiterate liberal has a certain degree of sanctioned ignorance, it's possible not to acknowledge the existence of certain kinds of resistance. So it's educative to that degree. But it's a bit hopeless to imagine that a book such as mine can actually influence action, when the available models of activism are restricted in various ways.

The very last paragraph of my book talks about the fact that there is a great deal of activist literature available which theorists don't read. The pronouncements made by a person like Paul Virilio show ignorance of actually existing global resistance. In the afterward to a forthcoming volume of *Subaltern Studies*, I talk about Paul Rabinow's discussion of bio-power and how it doesn't seem to know at all that for twenty years this global resistance against genetic engineering has been keeping pace with how genetic engineering itself has been advancing.

JB: Do you think this new team teaching and other academic changes set the stage for a new sense of activism; an activism between the theoretical work of philosophy and the new interdisciplinary resources of social sciences, for example?

I am an **outsider** to philosophy. I've never had a philosophy course, undergraduate or graduate, so you are talking to someone who is ignorant of what they teach. I can say something with little responsible experience of academic philosophy. Of course I am interested in a certain kind of philosophizing, the kind I made it my business to learn a bit — is one where we **always ask** what the *bracket* is for in certain kinds of philosophic inquiry. But one mustn't think of that as final. It is the dismantling of a certain style of philosophizing that seems most important, but only after we have learned to work at, play in, and love that reasonable style. I can't tell you anything in great detail. By contrast, within my disciplinary enclosure I can give endless practical details. Once, when I spoke on literature and cultural studies for the Modern Language Association conference, people said to me, "My god, you talked about everything!"

Well, I've been in this literature trade for a very long time. Speaking about philosophy is exactly the opposite for me. But, nonetheless, I have tried to indicate the general thing one wants to see happen in the training of the new philosopher. What I mind very much, and this is true all over the world as far as I have traveled: the philosopher takes shelter in the remark, "**I don't understand.**" Meaning: "**You don't fulfill the conditions of intelligibility.**" I think that must go, and that change of mind is no mean achievement. Work at it, if you can.

GCS:

Philosopher takes shelter in the remark, "I don't understand." Meaning: "You don't fulfill the conditions of intelligibility."



EMMANUEL LEVINAS AND THE PHENOMENON OF SUFFERING

ETHICS, VOICE, REPRESENTATION

Rafeeq Hasan

we call ethical a meaningful to the other, where they are bound by a plot which knowing can neither exhaust nor unravel. a synthesis of the understanding nor by a relationship between subject or object, and yet where the one weighs or concerns or is

it is this attention to the suffering of the other that... can be affirmed as very nexus of than subjectivity.

Emmanuel Levinas,
"Language and Proximity"¹

Emmanuel Levinas,
"Useless Suffering"²

towards a new encounter SOCIAL SUFFERING, a recent collection of scholarly essays exploring the phenomenon of suffering across a vast array of times, histories and locations, makes no mention of Emmanuel Levinas. For the philosophically minded reader, the omission of Levinas in such an extended theoretical discussion of suffering should seem quite troublesome — the philosopher and theologian spent most of his career locating an ethics by which the self could come to respect the Other without reducing the Other to a simple and entirely comprehensible object of self-knowledge. Indeed, Levinas' persistent claims that the Other is partially ineffable and that any speech act bears an implicit address to the Other resonate with the statements repeated

throughout the collection. These essays describe how "suffering encompasses an irreducible nonverbal dimension that we cannot know," or that the utterance "I am in pain" is not a statement without referent human object but rather an "asking for an acknowledgment and recognition" from some Other.⁴

Given my hitherto implicit connection between the current academic understanding of suffering and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, this paper seeks to explicitly facilitate a much needed encounter. To make the scope of my discussion more manageable, I will limit my treatment of Levinas and the phenomenon of "suffering" to that of the representation of social suffering by those who stand outside of its circumstances.

the ethical moment and the representation of suffering — finding a voice

What is the epistemology of suffering? That is, by what means do we come to know that someone has in fact suffered? More than just a purely juridical problem for those crafting international laws or establishing human rights committees, this question raises another, perhaps even more important, philosophical inquiry — that I take up here. Namely, what are the ethics — the responsibilities — entailed in representing (or *re-presenting*) suffering (whether this representation be through speech, writing, or the visual arts; whether it pertain to pain of the Self or that of the Other)? Should one adopt a highly personalized language in representing suffering, the absolute specificity of one's own or the Other's pain? If we answer yes, are we prepared to face the danger that this mode of discourse can pose — the tendency that it has in its less careful instantiations to lapse into a reverie of existence, a solipsism of the self — the political quietism that lies at the end of its inherent distrust of the collective? Is the only other alternative to speak of suffering entirely through the rhetoric of political ideology, the suffering of communities, cultures, histories — that is, should one speak in the fashionable language of the de-centered political — “oppressed” and “oppressor,” “colonized” and “colonizer” — despite the fact that this might annihilate the dignity and importance of each agent, of each Other that suffers?

After all, behind the seemingly harmless expression “ideology” lies the uneasy specter of the *ideologue* whose discourse, whatever its political positioning, inevitably enacts an absorption, a condensation of the individual agent that can only be characterized as an epistemic violence. As novelist Arundhati Roy hauntingly suggests, when “History and Literature... Marx and Kurtz [join] palms,” the individual subject is often crushed under the weight of the edifice, losing the right to utilize its most basic human capacity — the voice.⁵

This essay will not attempt to provide a definitive answer to these questions. These are, though, perhaps the most pertinent questions to pose in our days of methodological crisis. They are so tightly bound to the junction of over-abundant theories, over-burdened ideologies, that one can all too easily lapse into the self-congratulatory moral passivity of *pastiche*.⁶ All I can do is simply suggest that some possible “answers” to these interrogations can be formulated through a concerned reading of Levinas — specifically of, first, his discussion of the transition between the ethical realm of the Self and Other and the political realm of society, and second, the phenomenology of suffering offered in “Useless Suffering,” one of his briefer and less widely recognized essays. After articulating at least a provisional formulation of an ethics of representing suffering that lies between self and society, between the knowable and the ineffable, I will then proceed to problematize this very definition, to (as a Derridean might say) place it under erasure (*sous rature*) by questioning the extent to which speech acts can and should fall under the domain of representation.

Before embarking on this project, however, I must follow an important digression. Perhaps my opening address to the “philosophically minded reader” needs to itself be problematized. An aware “reader of philosophy” (and the two “readers” are certainly not the same) will have realized by this point that I intend to use Levinas in two decidedly non-Levinassian ways.

First, I am seeking to formulate a rule or norm of ethical representation,

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meteorite

where Levinas sees his project as elucidating an ethics that is before all norms, “the command prior to institutions.”⁷ Second and more importantly, I am assuming that one can *choose* to be ethical in the Levinassian sense, that is, that ethics is a way of being that one can either accept or reject. Levinas, however, denies such a sovereign choosing, thus exiling agency from the ethical act. He insists that the ethical “no longer has the structure of an intentional correlation.”⁸ In my defense, both Levinas scholar Simon Critchley and historian Dipesh Chakrabarty see Levinas’ ethical register as important not as an exposition of underlying “truth” (as some dogmatic post-structuralists maintain) but as a way to interrupt or call into question our normatively defined political views.⁹ In this vein I also add that the need for a completely Levinassian reading of Levinas is unnecessary if we accept that the importance attributed to the sovereign author of any text should be subordinate to the extent to which the author’s work might circulate in new contexts, the extent to which the text “[creates] a space into which the subject constantly disappears.”¹⁰ Accepting then the necessary infidelity of my project — the space of my reading of Levinas into which Levinas’ authority evaporates, let me then move on and see where such a reading might lead.

the sociality of suffering

In “Useless Suffering,” Levinas proceeds in a typically elliptical fashion. He begins by asserting that “suffering is, of course, a datum in consciousness,” only to negate this proposition a few lines later in his equally sweeping, equally provocative decision that “it is as if suffering were not just a datum.”¹¹ The meaning that I take to rest between these elusive lines is that suffering is *double* — both phenomenal/noumenal and something else. It is partially an object of consciousness — akin to “color, sound, contact, or any other sensation”¹² — and yet it also contains a kernel that stands outside consciousness, ineffable to the rational conscious mind. This partial ineffability of suffering is that which disturbs any easy mimesis of suffering and its comprehension.¹³ Thus Levinas writes that the suffering which lies outside phenomenology is that which opposes “the assemblage of data into a meaningful whole.”¹⁴

Levinas characterizes this ineffability of suffering, the domain that is “in-spite-of-consciousness,” as ultimate and radical “passivity.”¹⁵ That is, when one attempts to apprehend this aspect of suffering by bringing it into the domain of consciousness, one cannot in fact move suffering from the ineffable to the knowable by any intentional means. Instead, this attempt engenders a submission; consciousness is overwhelmed by what is more passive than passivity.¹⁶ Levinas writes that this movement instantiates a passivity that lies in profound excess of

*The other side of any activity... or sensorial receptivity correlative to the ‘ob-stance’ of the object that affects it and leaves an impression on it.*¹⁷

The effect of this almost un-thematizable passivity is what Levinas characterizes as “precisely evil”¹⁸ — evil because it paralyses the consciousness in a way that does not then allow for a healthy relationship towards the Other.¹⁹ For Levinas, the condition of suffering leads to a consciousness that cannot even attempt to understand the nature of that which paralyses it. Thus, this suffering, which can produce no positive effects in the ego, is “useless: for nothing”; it represents “extreme passivity, helplessness, abandonment, and solitude.”²⁰

Yet this very suffering takes on meaning when examined from the perspective of the other man. In the case of this paper, that other man is myself. That is, when I attempt to comprehend the utter uselessness of the suffering of the Other, I suffer for the Other. This “justifiable suffering” — suffering for the useless suffering of the Other — “opens suffering to the perspective of the inter-human.” To substitute perspectives in a Levinian fashion, the essay then also seems to posit that my own useless, meaningless suffering can only even begin to take on meaning when it is recognized by the Other. Thus, the “very nexus of human subjectivity,” the primary social bond, arises when I begin to both suffer for the Other and recognize that my suffering can only be realized through the Other. It appears that for Levinas suffering realizes sociality.²¹

Levinas then quickly turns from the phenomenology of suffering to a discussion of theodicy. Rather than use “theodicy” in the context of the age-old theological debates about the “problem of evil,” Levinas radically reconfigures the meaning of the term. For Levinas, the antiquated discourse of theodicy is manifest in the modern thought that suffering “temper[s] the individual’s character”²² in that it is “necessary to the teleology of community life, when social discontent awakens a useful attention to the health of the collective body.”²³ Following his distrust of political/historical discourses, Levinas finds that this revitalized theodicy ignores “the bad and gratuitous meaninglessness of pain...beneath the reasonable forms espoused by the social ‘uses’ of suffering.”²⁴ Ultimately, Levinas views theodicy, whether modern or ancient, as an attempt to make suffering comprehensible.²⁵ This comprehension, though, cannot but seek to reduce the enormity of the suffering of the Other.

What Levinas envisions instead is an inter-human relationship of suffering, where people move towards (not arrive at) an understanding of the suffering of the Other, while still realizing that suffering is “useless” and outside of any justification. As such, Levinas is concerned with the possibilities for compassion inherent in one’s proximity to suffering rather than with an ontology of suffering. In fact, for Levinas it is this very quest for ontology that characterizes traditional philosophy’s violence toward suffering; ontology implicitly attempts to render suffering comprehensible and justify its position within the domain of Being. Both of these tasks reduce suffering to a narcissistic object of self-knowledge.²⁶ Justifying (or seeking to totally comprehend) the pain of the Other in any way is for Levinas the “ultimate source of immorality.”²⁷ Instead, one should intimately understand the suffering of the Other, not narrate that suffering as a discourse which ultimately justifies and makes meaningful suffering that is in actuality useless at its very core.

a temporary formulation of the ethical imperative in representing suffering

So what, if anything, does Levinas’ essay contribute to formulating an ethics of representing suffering? Since Levinas does not explicitly address this issue in “Useless Suffering,” any “answer” to this question that I pose is necessarily an appropriation that might be characterized as violent. Nevertheless, I can “temper” this violence by extracting my “answer” to this question from both “Useless Suffering” and another of Levinas’ essays that more explicitly theorizes on the artistic, representative function. In “Reality and Its Shadow,” Levinas writes that art (or more generally, representation):

does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow... art does not belong to the order of revelation. Nor does it belong to that of creation, which moves in just the opposite direction. (Collected Philosophical Papers, 3)

Looking at these deceptively simple lines more closely, it becomes apparent that, for Levinas, art and reality do not exist in a relation of easy mimesis — art is not an imperfect copy of reality. But neither is art explicitly productive of reality (as if in some quasi-Baudrillardian simulacral moment). Rather, art arrests the viewer precisely because it refers to what is neither object nor agent, but to what is ineffably Other.²⁸ It aims to represent, to varying degrees, precisely what it cannot

love, for which unique and absolute can only mean meaning in the loved one himself. to limit oneself in a manner of justice to the norm measure, would be to resort to assimilating the relation between members of the human race to the relation between individuals of logical tension, signifying between nothing but negation or indifference. In humanity, from one individual to another there is established proximity that does not mean from the spatial extension of a commonality, one and the other facing each other for the sake of the reasonable being in man. It creates not only the advent in a psychism in the form of knowledge, in the form of consciousness rejecting contradiction, that would encompass all the things concepts

represent, the enigma of the Other. It is thus not concerned with the *Da-sein* of what it represents but with enacting a movement towards that which is, to appropriate one of Levinas' most celebrated phrases, "otherwise than being."²⁹

This may rightly seem impossibly vague and technical. When Levinas on art is read alongside Levinas on suffering, however, it is my conviction that a relatively clear ethics of representation begins to emerge. I hesitantly phrase the 'formulation' of this ethics as follows (with full knowledge of the betrayal to Levinas inherent in such a heuristic device):

What a representation of suffering should do (in order to be ethical) is to remain conscious of the fact that the exact nature of its subject of suffering is partially unknowable to it. That is, it should not attempt to comprehend the *Da-sein* of the suffering of the sufferer, but should represent suffering in its uselessness and unknowability precisely so that others can attempt to move toward an understanding of it, opening it up to the domain of the inter-human. Thus, the representation of suffering should incite in the viewer or reader a desire to suffer for the Other's useless suffering. It should not somehow make suffering clear and meaningful in order to be appropriated as an object of self-knowledge.

from the ethical to the political — some problems

Despite my attempt at a clear and decidedly non-Levinassian prose, my formulation of the ethics of representing suffering should cause some concern — outside of my previous discussion of an impossible fidelity to Levinas — and may in fact need to be revised. If to be ethical is to realize that suffering is "in essence" unknowable and specific to each enigmatic agent of suffering, can the suffering of a people be ethically mobilized within representative artifacts that seek to incite positive political change? Are activist novels that use their status as representative texts to reduce characters to fully knowable political types unethical even if their intent is to improve the conditions of the suffering Other? Furthermore, if the nexus of human subjectivity is indeed each person's desire to suffer for the specific Other in proximity, how can one ever forge a collective and active awareness of the suffering that one group is subjected to because of the actions of another group (especially if we are to recognize that the suffering of the Other in large part escapes cognition)? Would activist novels be as effective if they left the suffering of their characters outside of the readers' cognitive capabilities, declaring, in some lofty movement of philosophical grandeur, that suffering is in actuality ineffable? More generally, how is the passage from the ethics of concerned representation to politics of action (which must entail some type of "edifying discourse") possible? Or, in the much more eloquent words of Levinas scholar Simon Critchley, how can one

build a bridge from ethics, understood as a responsible, non-totalizing relation with the Other, to politics, conceived of as a relation to...the plurality of beings that make up the community?³⁰

from the ethical to the political— some 'solutions'

Unfortunately, Levinas is once again frustratingly obscure in his manifold attempts to formulate a link between the ethical and the political, and this obscurity easily results in counter-productive misreadings. As Colin Davis suggests, there are points when Levinas, perhaps because of the opacity of his prose, seems to neglect or greatly diminish the political realm — a neglect which results in outcomes that are both highly non-intuitive and occasionally offensive. This critical charge of neglect results from a quite plausible reading of some passages from *Otherwise than Being* in which Levinas appears to insist that since the essential fact of my subjectivity is that I am defined in relation to the Other, I am, to quote Davis' discussion of these same passages, "bound to the Other and responsible for its deeds and misdeeds... and my responsibility extends even to acceptance of the violence which the Other may do to me."³¹ From this follows what Davis calls "the most shocking and controversial formulation in *Otherwise than Being*," that the "persecuted is liable to answer for the persecutor."³²

Yet, at the same time that he formulates these seemingly bizarre claims, Levinas maintains that it is not his view that the victims of suffering lie acquiescent out of some sense of responsibility toward their victimizers, but rather that this obligation exists in the ethical and not the political realm. In discussing this latter domain, Levinas turns to the idea of the neighbor, or as it is called in "The Ego and the Totality," the "third man."

In "The Ego and the Totality," the first of many essays that attempts to address the passage from ethics to politics, Levinas writes that it is the third man that "disturbs [the] intimacy" of the ethical relationship, which is solely between "me and you."³³ The third man stands outside the binary ethical relationship and can therefore criticize the people locked within it. He can declare my actions toward you to be evil whereas you are ethically required to maintain an infinite responsibility towards me (30). When I realize that I too am the third man for others locked in the ethical relationship I can begin to ask "Is the one...the persecutor of the other?"³⁴ If he is, it is my duty as third man to do what the persecuted cannot, declare that the persecutor is wrong and unjust. In an interview entitled "Philosophy, Justice, Love" Levinas is asked: "Does the executioner have a Face?"—a question that can be crudely reformulated as: 'Do you actually believe that the oppressed are responsible to their oppressors?'³⁵ To this interrogation Levinas 'responds' that "the executioner is one who threatens my neighbor and, in this sense, calls for violence and no longer has a face."³⁶ Thus, Levinas is not saying that I cannot criticize those who impose suffering. Rather, he is asserting that I can only criticize suffering on the grounds that it is unjustifiable for my fellow

man to suffer. To be as concrete as possible, for Levinas it seems that any particular Jew in the concentration camp should ethically criticize the Nazis on the grounds that they were persecuting all of his fellow inmates, but it remains to be seen whether it would be in fact ethical for the same Jew to condemn the Nazis on the grounds that they were persecuting him.

Given what has followed, it seems that Levinas envisions the political realm, the domain of the third man, as a community *in-difference* rather than as an indifferent community. That is, for Levinas, politics should escape what Critchley calls "the synoptic, panoramic vision of society,"³⁷ and instead recognize that while each Other may be ineffably different, it is I who am ultimately responsible for ensuring that each member of my society is not persecuted by another Other.

But how would such a society work? And how would it look different from our best intentions for a liberal democratic polity in which each citizen bears the responsibility for the well-being of his fellow men while also respecting his ineffability (what in our society is usually termed "cultural difference")? Is Levinas' ethical politics just simple utopianism made falsely meaningful (or radical) by his almost impenetrable style of mystical prose?

It is my view that while using Levinas to create an entirely different total picture of society is indeed a utopian and mainly a liberal endeavor, his insights can be used in quite a new and radical way to formulate an ethics of representation that does not elide the possibility for representation to incite political change, but instead lies commendably between both the binary ethical realm and the totalizing life-world of the political. This formulation can be achieved by

viewing ethics not as an end in itself, an unattainable goal to be moved toward, but as an "ethics that leads back to politics."³⁸

Simply put, if Levinas is used to produce such an interruptive ethics, one that demands that we continually interrogate the political on the basis of the ethical, we arrive at the idea that what is truly ethical is to formulate (and interrogate) the political in terms of the ethical — society and justice around a respect for an ineffable Other.³⁹ That is, one's decision to represent the suffering of a people for political purposes can be ethical only if one is willing to allow such a formulation to be disturbed and made problematic by each individual person within the political collective. Thus, from Levinas I can then arrive at the following formulation of the ethics of representing suffering that both takes into account my earlier attempt and questions it on the basis of its possibilities for a political pragmatism: One must represent suffering not in order to allow the audience of the representation to feel as if they can fully comprehend suffering as a totalized or justifiable social fact, but in order to incite in them the desire to suffer for the Other (first formulation). Furthermore, this incitement can be generalized and used for political purposes when it avoids at all costs presenting itself as some knowledgeable total truth, but allows itself, by its very formalistic devices, to be contested by its ethical relationship toward every suffering Other who is within proximity to the political. A more rhetorically forceful formulation of this same sentiment is expressed by Levinas himself in a preface to his last collection of essays. He writes that man, "when treated exclusively as an object... is... mistreated and misconstrued." That is, the subject of man is dehumanized when reduced to an object of political discourse. It is obvious that one

cannot totally abandon this political mode of discourse in favor of some abstract humanist ethics. As such, Levinas does not see his task as that of "putting knowledge in doubt...[for] the human being clearly allows himself to be treated as an object."⁴⁰ Then, given man's need for the political, the ethical task is to formulate such a political narrative while always "already awake to the uniqueness of the *I*... in responsibility for the other person... bearing love in which the other, the loved one, is to the *I* unique in the world."⁴¹

However and once again, in order to be responsible to Levinas I must mention that for a strict Levinassian the formulation that I have just made is antithetical to the real radicalism of Levinas' philosophy as it turns ethics into a mere norm, a hard and fast rule by which one can be ethical. One might then ask (and quite logically), why use Levinas if the very nature of his thought requires that we continually misread him? To this critic my answer is two-fold. I first reply with the deconstructive dictum that a text's meaning is constituted by the possibility of misreadings. Thus, the potential for a sovereign, choice-bound ethics is both present and suppressed in Levinas' agent-less use of the term.⁴² Second, and without appeal to the fervent critical debates about meaning and agency, I also maintain that Levinas remains important in that it seems to be mainly by way of an interrogation that moves *within* his work (rather than one which celebrates, ignores, or rejects it) that we can begin to balance these complex questions of voice, ethics, and representation that surround the issue of suffering.

Despite my continual misreading of Levinas, one conviction that I firmly share with the philosopher is the notion that the ethical task can never be fully reached. Like the referential trace by which words in a signifying system gain meaning, the ethical is always deferred, unfinished, in need of constant and specific interrogation and reformulation —the ethical is “not a cognition but an approach.”⁴³ Given then that the ethical project must be continually revised by the encounter with the Other, I have sought to continually reconfigure and restate my formulation of the ethics entailed in representing suffering. There is, however quite a difficulty within my formulation(s) that I will merely mention, and leave to much more astute minds to remedy.

The problem falls within the bounds of the intuitive rather than of the technical. Therefore, it can be phrased without the aid of Levinas:

the unfinished project of the ethical & the limits of philosophy

— some concluding notes

what exactly should be included/excluded as “representation”? If suffering has a certain ineffability at its core, then to simply speak of the suffering of the neighbor entails an approximation, a re-presentation in speech that falls short of mimesis. Should the ethics that I have formulated apply to these speech acts of recognition as well as to the more traditionally accepted forms of representation: the novel, painting, or other aesthetic forms? If we decide that every speech act that recognizes the suffering of the Other should disrupt its own status as absorptive discourse in order to be ethical, do we then need to declare that in certain situations ethics must be subsumed under practical political concerns? (I fail to see how such continually problematized speech could carry any incendiary force in inciting political change.) Are we falling prey to an impossible elitism if we declare that this ethics should in fact apply only to traditionally accepted notions of representation? This opinion seems

to grant such privilege to those that have the right or power to narrate, to produce

and mobilize representative forms, that it implies that only these gifted or powerful people are permitted to be truly ethical.⁴⁴ Furthermore, is there in my discussion of ethics a dichotomy between political speech and the artistic form that is in dire need of deconstruction?

In the end, however, I worry that my formulation of the ethics of representation and the aporias it produces are nothing but an effect of a play of language — a play in blind indifference to the suffering, that is going on, has gone on, and will continue to go on. Thus it is with a certain hesitance that one should use the ethics arrived at in this paper to adjudicate the respective ethicalities of “representations,” whatever the sense in which one uses this term.

Indeed, I see it as more important and productive to ask the question of what is ethical than to arrive at any essentialist answer.⁴⁵ Given then the obvious gap between any philosophical discourse on suffering, no matter how careful, and the actuality of suffering itself, it is only appropriate that the last words should belong to Emmanuel Levinas, who asks, “Too beautiful to be true, does language not also become too horrible to reflect reality?”⁴⁶ — an astute and humble reflection on the profound limitations of philosophy, from one of its most gifted practitioners.

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1998) 116f. It should be noted that throughout this paper I will attempt to focus on the minor texts of Levinas, meaning both his shorter essays and the marginal footnotes contained in the more widely read pieces. Implicit in this tactic is a desire to focus on, as Arundhati Roy might put it, the smallness of things. In other words, I wish to call into question the assumption that minor works merely re-codify and re-state the themes and issues of their major counterparts.
2. Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 94.
3. Of the "implicit address," see for example the section of "Meaning and Sense" in which Levinas writes:

"In other words, expression, before being a celebration of being, is a relationship with him to whom I express the expression, and whose presence is already required for my cultural gesture of expression to be produced" (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 95).

4. David Morris, "Voice, Genre, and Moral Community" and Veena Das, "Transactions in the Construction of Pain" both collected in *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 27, 88.

5. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: Random House, 1997) 120.

6. I understand *pastiche* as the permanent avoidance or deferral of the ethical that often masquerades as a subtle application of *diffrance*.

7. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 21)

8. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 73)

9. Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Oxford: Blackwell

Publishers, 1992) 223. A similar view from Dipesh Chakrabarty was put forth on 3 June 1999 in a discussion in a graduate and undergraduate seminar entitled "Subalternity, Suffering, and Survival" conducted at University of Chicago.

10. The citation is, of course, from Foucault. See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," *The Foucault Reader*, edt. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon, 1984) 102.

11. (*Entre-Nous*, 91)

12. (*Entre-Nous*, 91)

13. A comprehension which, if we accept the Lacanian moment of the mirror, inevitability also entails its representation, but the relation between comprehension and representation is another question for another time.

14. (*Entre-Nous*, 91) A psychoanalyst would call this the domain of the unconscious, but Levinas refrains from making this move, probably as locating something in the unconscious can seriously limit its pertinence to the domain of the social.

15. (*Entre-Nous*, 92)

16. (*Entre-Nous*, 92)

17. (*Entre-Nous*, 92)

18. (*Entre-Nous*, 92) The question still stands as to what extent it can remain unthematisable after Levinas has made what Colin Davis characterizes as "a theme of the unthematisable." See Colin Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996) 69. To avoid confusion, Davis' text will hereinafter be cited as Davis rather than as Levinas.

19. An example of 'paralyzed' consciousness that is in fact 'healthy' might be the ego-death of the orgasm (what Lacan calls *le petit mort*, the small death).

20. (*Entre-Nous*, 93)

21. This of course does not mean that one should not attempt to alleviate the suffering caused by the political or patriarchal *milieu*, as we shall soon see.

22. (*Entre-Nous*, 95)

23. (*Entre-Nous*, 95) It might be helpful here to remark that what Levinas considers to be modern theodicy's celebration of the social uses of suffering is similar to

what Foucault characterizes as one of the more obscured aspects of post-Enlightenment bio-politics. See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 133-159.

24. (*Entre-Nous*, 95)

25. (*Entre-Nous*, 96)

26. See "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," in which Levinas writes:

"The well-known theses of... the preeminence of Being over beings, of ontology over metaphysics — end up affirming a tradition in which the same dominates the other" (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 53).

27. (*Entre-Nous*, 99)

28. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 1)

29. "Da-sein" is a term of renowned untranslatability. In Levinas' work, it has a sense akin to "being-ness" or "being-there."

30. (*Ethics of Deconstruction*, 220)

31. (Davis, 80)

32. (Davis, 81)

33. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 30)

34. (*Entre-Nous*, 104)

35. I write "crude" because in the interests of space I have left out Levinas' sophisticated discussion of the face.

36. (*Entre-Nous*, 105)

37. (*The Ethics of Deconstruction*, 222)

38. (*The Ethics of Deconstruction*, 222)

39. Again, this insight is from Chakrabarty 3 June 1999.

40. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael Smith (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993) 3.

41. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael Smith (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993) 3.

I leave it to a study specific to an actual work of representation to delve more fully into how this double-movement — between society and individual, justice and ethics — may be realized, or whether it might be yet another lofty and removed philosophical ideal. While this ethics may not in fact currently exist, or be capable of existing in the current nihilistic *milieu*, it is an important preliminary step to recognize this ethics as a laudable goal, as a possible criteria by which works of representation should be (ethically) judged.

42. One might also add that, as literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, the main strength of deconstructive criticism is that it seeks to engage in "a reading that produces rather than protects." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Introduction," J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997) lxv.

43. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, 73)

44. I borrow the notion of 'a right to narrate' from a recent talk given by Homi Bhabha on cultural/artistic hybridity in the era of globalization. For Bhabha, 'the right to narrate,' i.e. the ability to 'legitimately' speak for the interests of any particular group (including one's own), depends upon the structures of power, often hegemonic, that operate within the larger societal framework. Thus those currently holding the 'right to narrate' often do not (or cannot) address the concerns of those outside of the global-capital *milieu*, and therefore occupy a highly elitist position. Homi Bhabha, "In What Sense is Culture in the National Interest? Response to Robert Hughes," Art Institute, Chicago, 21 October 1999.

45. Including my own quasi-anti-essentialist essentialism.
46. (*Outside the Subject*, 140)

Truth
is an
economical
relation between
humans rather than
an epistemic relation
between *believers*
and the *world*.

Epistemology {Not Pragmatism} as Relativism

Colin W. Koopman

Introducing Pragmatism

Pragmatists such as James and Rorty define truth as what is good in the way of belief. Belief, for the pragmatists, is true in those very instances where belief works or is successful.¹ James writes, "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons."² Richard Rorty takes James' definition of truth to amount to the claim that "assessment of truth and assessment of justification are, when the question is about what I should believe now, the same activity."³ The truth predicate, according to James and Rorty, adds nothing to a belief that is not already given by the practice of accepting that belief. There are, of course, important links here to Davidson's minimalist theory of truth (as Rorty has stressed). For Davidson and other minimalists about truth, to say that a belief *p* is true is merely to assert that *p* is the case. The truth of some sentence '*p*' adds nothing to *p*; that is, it adds nothing to that which is stated in the sentence. Davidson writes, "A theory of truth... is an empirical theory about the truth conditions of every sentence in some corpus of sentences." Rorty demonstrates this to be equivalent to the pragmatic claim that truth is nothing but the justification it receives in (supposedly empirically observable) practice.

This is not the place to debate the merits of Rorty's interpretation of Davidson. Regardless, there are important links between pragmatism and minimalism; both hold that truth adds to a belief nothing that is not already given in the belief itself. Following from this cue, I shall defend the idea that truth is nothing over and above actual justifications given in actual practice. To do so, I will employ a pragmatic formulation of truth. However, I believe most of the same points could be used to defend a minimalist approach to truth.

Pragmatic Methodology

The pragmatist theory of truth is rooted in suspicion of traditional philosophical rhetoric about truth. Most traditional philosophy discusses truth under in language modeled after scientific rhetoric. This amounts to saying that truth needs *explaining*. Take Kant, who in his *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* looked for a transcendental explanation of true belief (i.e., the a priori conditions of knowledge).

Pragmatist rhetoric, rather than issuing from explanation and proof, cashes out truth in terms of practice.⁴ Pragmatism, as James characterized it in 1907, is primarily a methodology and secondarily the theory of truth that follows from this methodology.⁵ As for pragmatic methodology, James wrote that the pragmatist tries "to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true?"⁶ Rorty rephrases this as: "Nothing, including the nature of truth and knowledge, is worth worrying about if this worry will make no difference to practice."⁷ What this means for truth is that there is nothing to truth that isn't specified in practice.

Take the following belief: "A water molecule is a compound of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom." The pragmatist, if asked where this belief is rooted would reply: "The actual justifications of it given by chemists. I am not an expert in chemistry, so I cannot recount here for you what these justifications are but we can imagine that they would include such things as pointing towards Mendeleev's periodic table of elements, an explanation of molecular bonding, and a whole host of other scientific jargon."⁸ For other theories of truth, such as the copy theory of truth, the truth of a belief is explained in terms like this: "The belief copies or corresponds to some fact."⁹ Wittgenstein, for example, writes in the *Tractatus* that "the agreement or disagreement of [a picture's] sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity."¹⁰ The pragmatist objects that Wittgenstein's talk of 'agreement' can't do any explanatory work that hasn't already been done in practice. In other words, Wittgenstein's talk about propositions 'agreeing' with reality doesn't do any work at all.¹¹ Hilary Putnam writes that, "To say that truth is 'correspondence to reality' is not false but *empty*, so long as nothing is said about what the 'correspondence' is."¹² The only solid explanation of truth is the one disclosed in practice.

Barry Allen notes that although there is a logical difference between the terms 'working' and 'true', "as far as anybody's practice or practical reasoning is concerned, there is no difference."¹³ From the pragmatic perspective, then, there aren't any interesting differences between truth and working. To construe truth as anything other than 'working' is to call on a difference that just isn't there in practice. Alternately, if you construe truth in such a way that doesn't demand this difference you have a redundancy theory of truth on a par with pragmatism and minimalism.¹⁴

The Epistemological Critique of Pragmatic Truth.

Dewey writes that pragmatism, "[h]as given to the subject, to the individual mind, a practical rather than an epistemological function."¹⁵ To conceive of truth with Dewey, James, or Rorty is to dismiss standard epistemological inquiry into truth. Whereas pragmatists construe truth and knowledge in terms of a practical relationship, epistemological inquirers often discover truth in some form of a bond between a real or ideal world and a mind that attempts to grasp this world. This picture of a hard and fast world gives us the hope for what might be called 'epistemological objectivity'.

For the purposes of the present essay, I will use 'epistemology' as a blanket term that covers those philosophical constructions of truth that issue from the rhetoric of explanation I discussed in the first section. Right or wrong, 'epistemology' will refer to the practice of *explaining* truth, knowledge, and related concepts in specifically non-practical ways—that is, in ways that are explicitly over and above explanations given in practice.¹⁶ A return to objectivity is dear to epistemologists. On the view of many epistemologists, the truth of a belief is a matter of hard and fast reality or objective fact. It is not a matter of 'success in practice' because the very practice by which a belief is justified may have got things wrong. Pragmatism, so

Philosophy
has never been able to
stop the march of
ideology
and
soldier.

the epistemologists say, relativizes truth. It relativizes it to contingent historical practices that might be deeply flawed. The epistemologist may ask the pragmatist: "How can some ideas allow us to continue a certain form of conduct while others stand in the way? Isn't this evidence for a real world that exists independent of human activity? Isn't this evidence for hard and fast objects that exist outside of their causal relationship to our conduct?" This is the very sort of criticism that pragmatism rejects as already confused. These criticisms can only be answered to — that is, they can only be made sense of — if pragmatism were already wrong.

Relativism as Epistemological.

Pragmatism, it seems, must avoid the charge that it relativizes truth to individuals or (better yet) to contingent historical practices. I prefer, however, to phrase my defense against relativism in a novel way: pragmatists must show why relativism (just like skepticism) is only possible for epistemologists.¹⁷ In a pragmatic universe relativism simply isn't a conceptual possibility. Relativism becomes a genuine possibility only when one places epistemological demands upon the universe. The epistemological critique of pragmatism as relativistic fails because it assumes that pragmatism is an epistemological inquiry into truth when it explicitly is not. The questions of relativism and skepticism arise only when one frames inquiry with the foundational rhetoric of epistemology. This rhetorical stance can find no satisfactory answer to its self-raised questions.

The Problem with Epistemic Justification.

The epistemological interlocutor is asking the pragmatist how it might be possible for truth to exist where there is no independent reality (whether in the form of perceptions, sensations, transcendental ideas, or atomic facts) to *justify* these truths. The rhetorical move that I am here concerned with is this very call for an epistemic, or nonpractical, justification-as if the justification of "the cat is on the mat" is something that isn't already given in practice. Our interlocutor wants to know how any belief can be true in a world where there is no specifically epistemological justification of this truth. This rhetoric of justification was modernized and popularized first by Descartes and later by Kant. Rorty notes that, "[Transcendental] arguments such as Kant's amount to positing an unverifiable I-know-not-what to explain a fact — a fact that only seems in need of explanation because one has previously posited that ordinary, scientific explanation will not do" (1989, 112). What Rorty is calling Kant's demand for explanation is what I am here calling the demand for justification as presented in an epistemological rhetoric. It is this very call for epistemic justification that pragmatism wants to get rid of-as Rorty and I see things, the only justification any belief ever needs to receive (and ever *does* receive) is a practical one. To be as clear as possible, there is a distinction between *practical justifications* (those actually give in practice) and *epistemic justifications* (those that exist as an apriori presup-

position of knowledge); all I want to say is that justifications of the second sort can't explain anything that hasn't already been explained by justifications of the first sort.¹⁸

Take the claim that, "The chess bishop moves along the diagonal". (It is true, by the way.) What is its justification? Quite simply, the fact that it's listed in the rules and that's how everybody plays chess-in other words, it is justified in the institutions of the practice of chess. Epistemologists accept this justification, but then they want to go beyond it and give it another kind of justification as well. They want a justification that encapsulates *all truths for all time and all nations*. The pragmatist reply is that any further epistemological justification one might give won't make any difference to practice. In other words, the epistemologist can't produce results that will produce a resulting change in action.¹⁹

How, though, could a practice by itself justify a belief? The simple answer is this: it justifies it in a straightforward causal way and this is the only form of justification that anybody (except philosophers) ever needs. If you don't believe me try out your own form of chess or add 112 and 213 using Kripke's quus function.²⁰ If you don't believe me ask yourself to give a epistemological justification of everything you do. Mind you, these are philosophical points-it's just that most philosophers don't like the rhetoric of these points (that is why most analytic philosophers are already beginning to forget that Wittgenstein's, Nietzsche's, and Hegel's rhetorics were explicitly non-analytic).

Davidson on justifications.

Let's briefly consider how successful conduct does in fact justify beliefs in a straightforwardly causal sense. Davidson has perhaps most clearly explicated the notion that the only justification a belief needs, or indeed has, is causal in nature. He writes:

Since we can't swear intermediaries to truthfulness, we should allow no intermediaries between our beliefs and their objects in the world. Of course there are causal intermediaries. What we must guard against are epistemic intermediaries (1984, 125).

First, we must remember that the epistemologists want to insert something between our beliefs and their verity. These 'intermediaries' come in many forms-Quinean stimulations, Humean perceptions, Meinongean objectives, Kantian *Begriffen*, Russellian facts, Wittgensteinian propositions-I'll collectively refer to all these varicous intermediaries as epistemic facts or epistemological facts. An epistemological intermediary is a fact that is supposed to epistemically justify our beliefs because of its privileged relation to (any and all) belief. A belief is true, so the story goes, because some fact gets between the mental world (belief) and the physical world ('action' in the