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Postmodern Pluralism and Concepts of Totality

The Twenty-fourth
Wisconsin Workshop

Edited by
Jost Hermand

German Life and Civilization

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Postmodern Pluralism and Concepts of Totality

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The present volume contains contributions to the Twenty-fourth Wisconsin Workshop on "Postmodern Pluralism and Concepts of Totality." For more than fifty years these two terms have been in the center of a world-wide controversy, be it in political speeches, mass media declarations, newspaper articles, or works of literature. Instead of conforming to conventional patterns of an unquestioned "democratic pluralism," the speakers at this conference tried to rescue certain concepts of totality from meaningless notions of an "open society" which has given up all hopes for a political, social, and cultural communality, based on concepts of the common good. And they did this not only in regard to political and socio-economic theories, but also in view of discourses such as feminism, ecology, utopian thinking, philosophy, German studies, and materialist theories of literature.

Preface

A conference on "Pluralism and Totality" does not require any special justification. For more than fifty years, these two terms have been at the center of a worldwide controversy, be it in political speeches, mass-media declarations, newspaper articles, or works of literature. Especially during the first phase of the Cold War during the 1950s, all concepts of totality were branded in the Western democracies as expressions of an evil totalitarianism and thereby placed alongside such political systems as fascism, National Socialism, and Stalinism. Similar attacks against the concept of totality have since been undertaken by most of the French, German, and American poststructuralists and proponents of postmodernity who--like the supporters of an "open," "pluralistic" society in the 1950s--are again lashing out against all forms of totalizing worldviews. For them the present political as well as intellectual and cultural situation can only be understood in terms of fragmentation or "difference," which allows them to withdraw into ever narrower fields of professional specialization.

To speak up in defense of totality has, therefore, become a difficult task. But without any overarching concepts of direction or even progression, nothing--whether in real life or in the academy--makes any sense in the long run. Instead of succumbing to the prevalent trend towards compartmentalization that pretends (in its optimistic variant) to be democratic, we would be well advised to search for new paradigms of a political, social, and ecological responsibility based on principles of the common good. To call this search "utopian" in the term's negative sense would evidence not realism, but simply cynism. The designation "realistic" should be reserved nowadays for those scholars who are still trying to give their academic endeavors meaning by linking them with the most urgent issues of their societies.

The Twenty-Fourth Wisconsin Workshop, held in Madison on November 5 and 6, 1993, under the title "Postmodernist Pluralism and Concepts of Totality," was therefore witness to many lively, and at times controversial, discussions. The presenters who addressed the various aspects of these concepts included Gisela Hoecherl-Alden, Thomas Jung, and Jennifer Redmann (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Marcus P. Bullock (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), Jutta Held (University of Osnabrück), Jost Hermand (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Robert C. Holub (University of California, Berkeley), Hans Adler (University of

expanded form.

The editor is above all indebted to the Anonymous Fund of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, which generously covered the travel and accommodation of the invited speakers, and to the Vilas Trust Fund, which made possible the publication of this volume.

Madison, January 1994

J.H.

**Gisela Hoecherl-Alden, Thomas Jung,
and Jennifer Redmann**

**The Myth of Red Equals Brown:
The Origins of Totalitarianism Theory**

I

Human beings strive for perfection, for unity, and wholeness, for the unity of the individual as well as the unity of the state. Some even wish to understand the universe as a whole entity. For centuries, the individual has attempted to realize these ideas and concepts of wholeness and unity for implicit within them is the promise of something "better." This longing for perfection is an anthropological constant, one that has traditionally been viewed in a positive light.

However, when such ideas take hold of the masses, when they become reality or intervene within it, a certain type of state emerges. This state has its basis in those ideas which are often transformed into ideologies that justify the system—even before God. World views and concepts of individuality manifest themselves in religions or ideologies that support the state. Such states are held together through politics and power, and hence they often appear to the critical citizen as oppressive structures of moral, ethical, and legal norms.

The reinforcement of state politics in an effort to maintain and perfect society often requires the suppression of, and violence against dissidents, those who do not accept the *status quo*. This power of the state, directed against those both within the state and without, has existed for centuries: in the violent christianization of Europe (and of other continents as well), the inquisition, the Crusades, Holy wars, colonial wars. The violent and aggressive use of power against the *Others* was always justified on religious and ideological grounds. Every new ideology, of course, promised happiness, progress, and civilization. New ideas were introduced as better or the best of all, and thus they were to be accepted as absolute. The goal was a far flung empire, the total empire, as expressed in such phrases as "The sun never sets on the British empire." Over the course of centuries, one world view was replaced by the next, but each was as closed as the last.

During the last three centuries of western thought, one can observe a transition from a feudal-aristocratic and religiously determined world view to an Enlightenment striving for an emancipated subject of and in history. All other ideas and concepts of a better world proposed prior to

this transitional period were rejected as the utopian fantasies of such daydreamers as Morus, Campanile and others. With the advent of the Enlightenment, the individual was to bring about the "Reich der reinen Vernunft," and the state of individual freedom. With that, the feudal nobility and the catholic church were to be deprived of their privileges and their absolute claim to power.

Is it not possible to designate an absolute ruler or an absolute form of state - totalitarian? Totalitarian in its striving for total control over the people, over the whole nation, and, in the case of colonial or holy wars, over other nations as well? Is it simply because of their underdeveloped technical and communications industries that we cannot think of such systems as totalitarian? What distinguishes the form of rule exercised by a German king or a Japanese emperor from that of such total warriors as Hitler or Mussolini?

To this point, the history of humankind has been marked by the perpetual tyranny of the state over the people, or, as Kant claims, by a perpetual state of war inherent to human nature. In striving for individual and social perfection, the idealist philosophers of the Enlightenment developed ideas and concepts which projected a better, that is to say, more humane version of an individual and social totality. Nevertheless, the social systems they proposed limited individual freedoms to such an extent, one can scarcely speak of a state of absolute individual freedom. One cannot arrive at a state of completeness, or even "im Reich der praktischen Vernunft"--in the realm of practical reason--without regimentation from above, which, according to Kant, eventually could or should bring about a "World Republic". "Der Mensch ist ein Geschöpf, das seinen Herren braucht."¹ (The human being is a creature that needs a master.) If the purpose or the goal of existence is "Eintracht" (harmony), unity, and wholeness as a state at the first place, this goal is only to be reached--once again following Kant--via a state of "Zwietracht"² (discord).

All idealist philosophers claimed as their goal the establishment and preservation of a realm of perfection, reason and freedom, even though they differed over just how to achieve this end. Utopias? Can we view these ideas as utopias? Do such utopian conceptions imply a necessary limitation on individual freedoms? Even the alternatives to an existing total or totalitarian system can themselves reveal a totalitarian aspect--in the establishment of the totality of something assumed to be better.

The positive use, prior to this century, of the word "total" (to connote something perfect, unified, and whole) can only be viewed today with some ambivalence. Because it begins with the assumption of a *consensus omnium*, an agreement on what happiness is and how it best be pursued, totality is expression of an optimistic, perfected conception of humanity. Such an understanding ignores the realm of controversial opinions, voices of dissent which always exist and which can, through oppression, be silenced. In opposition to such a concept stands *pluralism*, also known as bourgeois democracy.

In principle, until the 1920s the terms *total* or *totalitarian* implied nothing about the actual nature of social changes that were both sought after and realized. These terms simply referred to "a deviation from a parliamentary system." Only with the claims of megalomaniac Fascist politicians did the concept make its tragic turn. "Wollt ihr den *totalen* Krieg?" asked Josef Goebbels on the 31st of August, 1939, the eve of the German attack on Russia. Fourteen years earlier, Mussolini had proposed the *stato totalitario* to his people. Even weeks before that, the liberal democrat Giovanni Amendola had used the term *sistema totalitario* to describe Italian politics.

In the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in Germany, the social, political, and economic basis for a highly developed imperialism was in place. At the same time, psychosocial conditions facilitated the transition, virtually overnight, from a parliamentary democracy with a broad basis of popular support, to a dictatorship involving the open use of terror--and all of its disastrous consequences. Brown rule used totalitarian means in an attempt to gain *total* control over Germany, Europe and the whole world. This was fascism.

In the years that followed, when theoreticians with first-hand experience of fascism--such as Hannah Arendt, among others--tried to explain its development and characteristics, they did so by analyzing German fascism; interestingly, the Italian and Spanish versions were widely ignored. Fascism theory became one of essential and original components of totalitarianism theory. But why did red suddenly come to equal brown?

Totalitarianism theory was developed in the United States in the 1940s, for the most part by German Jews who had escaped Nazi terror and were beginning with a focus on German fascism. Within a few short years, "red" regimes were integrated into the concept. Under the equation

of "brown" and "red," the pronounced anti-fascism of the war years soon became a theory of anti-totalitarianism. The conflation of Fascist and Communist systems under the rubric of totalitarianism--so soon after the American-Soviet alliance in the Second World War--led the three of us to wonder about the political conditions behind this sudden shift. In researching the historical origins of "brown equals red," we soon found ourselves looking beyond totalitarianism to the questions of power and politics underlying the theory itself.

II

Thus, in tracing the origins of "totalitarianism theory," we have envisioned it as consisting of several different strands which became intertwined as the concept reached its zenith in the late 1940s and early 1950s. One of these threads is a history of anti-communism in the United States which emerged soon after the October Revolution in 1917 and, except for a brief abatement during the years of the U.S.-Soviet wartime alliance, gained increasing momentum over the decades that followed.

Beginning with the first "Red Scare" in the U.S. in 1919, Communism aroused fear and suspicion in the minds of Americans as the embodiment of everything "un-American" and therefore a threat to celebrated American values. Not only did a state-controlled economy run decidedly counter to the spirit of free enterprise and the coveted American dream, the absence of organized religion under Communism also led many Americans, most prominent among them Evangelist Billy Graham, to conclude that Communism was nothing less than the work of the devil. ("Godless Communists!" was among the favorite epithets of the period.)

Through the American media, these vague and uneasy suspicions about the nature of Communism were given shape and substance in the imaginations of Americans. The grandiose proportions of the media's "Red Menace" fuelled anti-Communist hysteria in the early Cold War years, leading many to the misinformed conclusion that if it weren't for the deterrent effects of the bomb, the Russians would be landing on American soil any day.

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill delivered a speech before an audience in Fulton, Missouri in which he described the current world political situation in terms of two adversarial camps divided by an iron curtain. This iron curtain was to become a central image of the Cold

War: cold, grey, impenetrable, and threatening, it symbolized American fears of an unknown but infinitely dangerous enemy. The iron curtain image went hand-in-hand with the notion of containment, a concept introduced to the American political vocabulary by George F. Kennan in a 1947 issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs*. As one scholar suggests, containment brought to mind "the image of a dangerous forest fire or an epidemic being brought under control by external effort, and suited well the image of a contagion of communism that Americans were coming to share."³ The discussion surrounding containment was not limited to the political realm; the popular weekly magazines *Life* and *Look* both printed lengthy excerpts from Kennan's article.

The figurative iron curtain almost immediately found its way onto the American big screen, providing a title for one of the earliest anti-Communist movies of the Cold War. Released in 1948, "The Iron Curtain" was followed by, among others, "The Red Menace," "Red Danube" (both 1949), "Red Snow" (1952), "I was a Communist for the F.B.I." (1951), and "I Married a Communist" (1949). None of these films made any money, but after having released several pro-Soviet films during the war years, the film studios were eager to prove to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that they too were committed Cold Warriors.

Nearly all of the explicitly anti-communist films made during this period dealt with domestic communism, the dangers of enemy infiltration and the potential communist brainwashing of weak but otherwise upstanding Americans. This was not some foreign danger harbored on the other side of the ocean, but an active, evil force with in the U.S. itself, one that threatened to destroy the very fabric of American society.

Without exception, all of the Communists portrayed in these films engage in espionage and plot the overthrow of the American government. The average celluloid Communist was not only disrespectful of national sanctums and symbols, he was also rude, humorless, and cruel to animals, with a tendency toward gangster-style criminality and violence. Communist women were either unfeminine and unattractive or *femme fatale* types, willing to use sex for political seduction. With these fictional figures, the movie industry served up an image of the Communist who was everything the good American was *not*, and in so doing, aided Americans in understanding who they themselves really *were*. As a result, when the fear of "Reds under the bed" inspired a search for "real

life" Communist infiltrators (a practice advocated by J. Edgar Hoover, head of the F.B.I.), the dutiful American had to look no further than to someone different from himself.

In this post-war climate of ever increasing anti-communist, anti-Russian sentiment, no movie or book aroused as emotional a response as George Orwell's *1984*. Published in 1949, the novel's descriptions of Big Brother, the thought police and the torture chamber in room 101 provided Americans with a concrete picture of a Communist system they had already come to fear. And for those whose mental images were not enough, a 1949 issue of *Life* magazine printed excerpts from the novel along with a series of cartoon drawings that managed to transform *1984* into an intellectual version of the popular anti-communist comics of the day.⁴ In the U.S., as well in Europe, some critics and reviewers understood the novel's message not as anti-totalitarian, but as explicitly anti-communist. *Life*'s plot summary begins with the line: "In the year 1984 left-wing totalitarianism rules the world,"⁵ and a discussion of the novel in the journal *Partisan Review* reads "[1984] is the lesson the West must learn if it is to comprehend the meaning of Communism."⁶ George Orwell himself protested these explicitly anti-communist interpretations of the novel. In a 1949 letter to the editor of *Life* magazine, Orwell wrote, "I believe that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences. The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasize that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere."⁷

Aside from its position in American popular culture as an anti-communist pamphlet, *1984* aroused widespread interest in totalitarianism as a concept. In a review for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Golo Mann heralds *1984* as "a warning to the world, a very vivid presentation of the terror that could occur in the near future if all the implications of totalitarian ideas were put into practice and we were forced to live in a world of fear."⁸ George Kennan himself attested to the power of *1984* in his speech at a 1953 conference on totalitarianism. "When I try to picture totalitarianism to myself as a general phenomenon," he said, "what comes into my mind most prominently is neither the Soviet picture nor the Nazi picture as I have known them in the flesh, but rather the fictional and symbolic images created by such people as Orwell or Kafka

or Koestler. The purest expression of the phenomenon, in other words, seems to me to have been rendered not in its physical reality but in its power as a dream, or a nightmare."⁹

In 1947, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals issued a statement claiming "co-existence is a myth and neutrality is impossible. . . anyone who is not *fighting* Communism is *helping* Communism."¹⁰ This strict division of the American people into those that protect American ideals and those that advocate Communism had less to do with fears of totalitarianism and the Communist threat, however, than with the need to protect the values, beliefs and images of a pre-industrial, frontier American society in the face of a post-war, technologically-advanced atomic age. In the words of one scholar, "no expression of counter-subversive or anti-Soviet thought was complete without an invocation of the symbols of an idealized, older image of America."¹¹ Given the technological developement accompanying upheaval in American life, along with the breakdown of American unity which characterized the wartime years, Americans of the late 1940's and early 1950's needed reassurance about who they were and what they stood for. Totalitarianism theory provided the key to American self-definition, for in its implicit juxtaposition of totalitarian evils with ideals of American democracy, the concept of totalitarianism could be explained in terms of everything American society was not. As one historian wrote in 1958, "the fire-and-brimstone theory of totalitarianism, popularized in Orwell's *1984* and expounded in learned terms by many of our leading scholars, is comforting to us."¹²

In an effort to defend and protect a monolithic, totalized picture of the "average American," standard bearer of uncritical patriotism and competitive individualism, the image of the Communist was superimposed over every type of American Other, be he Black, Jewish, or simply a foreigner. "Those who do not believe in the ideology of the United States," warned Attorney General Tom Clark in 1948, "shall not be allowed to stay in the United States."¹³ The covert prejudice behind the drive to "protect American ideals" explains the disproportionate number of Black and Jewish "communists" arrested during the height of McCarthyism. As George Orwell perceptively noted in a 1949 press release, "in the U.S.A. the phrase 'Americanism' or 'hundred percent Americanism' [. . .] is as totalitarian as anyone could wish."¹⁴

III

Anti-fascism, to revert back to the initial image of interweaving threads, manifests itself in concrete plans of dealing with a fascist Germany after the war. These plans reflect what was regarded as the antidote to totalitarianism, namely decentralization and reeducation. On September 15, 1944 President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in Quebec and initialed a memorandum which came to be known as the Morgenthau Plan. It aimed for "complete demilitarization of Germany" and "total destruction" of German armament and other key industries. Thus, the Ruhr, Rhineland, and Saar area, the heartland of German industrial strength "should not only be stripped of all presently existing industries but so weakened and controlled" that it would not be able to become an industrial area in the foreseeable future. Schools and universities should be closed, media publications, film production, and radio programs discontinued "until adequate controls" were established. In terms of the political future of Germany, Morgenthau proposed "political decentralization" and "partitioning of Germany" with the assurance of "permanence." The United Nations were to enforce a system of "adequate controls, including controls over foreign trade and tight restrictions on capital imports" for at least two decades following the end of the war in order to "prevent the establishment or expansion of key industries ... and to control"¹⁵ the existing economy. In short, Germany was to be converted into a partitioned country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character. So, as far as possible, Morgenthau proposed complete and total control of post-war Germany.

Roosevelt's death, among other factors, led to the defeat of the Morgenthau Plan. However, the Allied Forces had to decide on alternatives in terms of re-orientation and re-education of the German people as well as the re-organization of Germany. After the end of the war, it became evident that the formerly multi-polar European system which had influenced world politics had changed into a bi-polar global system with Washington and Moscow as the new political centers. To General Lucius Clay, the governor of Berlin, this presented only two choices for Germany: Communism or American-style democracy and economics. He formulated this belief on the basis of the assumption he shared with most Americans, namely that "communism could appeal only to those with empty stomachs and supported the idea of food as a political weapon."¹⁶ With the emergence of the Cold War any idea of a neutral, disengaged

Germany, as Morgenthau had proposed it, disappeared.

After Germany's defeat, the American military government had tried several approaches to stabilizing Europe. But by March of 1946, when Winston Churchill presented the image of an iron curtain dividing a continent into a free part and one ruled by police governments, he helped pave the way for the ensuing equation of Fascism with Communism.

By the Spring of 1947, it became evident that these initial American plans for reorganizing Germany and stabilizing Europe as a whole were not working. After the devastatingly harsh winter of 1946/47 European economies showed only few signs of recovery. The prevailing economic crisis in Europe had political repercussions: Soviets and Communists were capitalizing upon growing popular discontent in Germany. In France and Italy, the erosion of electoral support for the local governments enhanced popular appeal for Communist parties as well. This forced the U.S. to develop yet another plan that was to become an integral part of the reorganization of Germany: The Marshall Plan.¹⁷

It was George Kennan--author of the famous containment article--and not the Secretary of State George Marshall, who actually wrote up the report which formed the basis of the so-called Marshall plan. One of the main points of this report was "coal for Europe" which was to come from the Ruhr mines, while at the same time postponing all attempts at socialization of the German mines.¹⁸

What was the difference between the so-called Marshall Plan and earlier American initiatives? With the changing nature of U.S.-Soviet relations, the idea of European economic integration had surfaced both in the U.S. and Europe as the key to peace and productivity on this continent. The underlying belief then seemed to be that a comprehensive recovery program would integrate the European economies and, in doing so, liberate European productivity from the constraints inherent in a segmented market would also "buttress Western Europe against communist subversion, reconcile Germany's revival with the security and economic concerns of the liberated areas."¹⁹

The immense impact of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 on U.S. Foreign Policy should not be underestimated. It is at this moment the U.S. seems to start equating the actions of the Soviet Union with the expansionism of the Third Reich a decade earlier. This then is seen as directly fueling an older theory, namely that a collective security system of Western states could have probably helped avoid World War

II. altogether.²⁰ So, the events of 1948 and 1949,²¹ seemingly vindicated the institution of the Marshall Plan as an integral part of such a security system. The plan, complementing attempts to stabilize Turkey and Greece with the help of the military,²² claimed to tie economic revival to stabilization of democracy. This seemed to make the Marshall Plan into a model of constructive aid for democratization in underdeveloped nations and societies with a revolutionary tendency.²³

The three Western Allies, under American leadership, felt compelled to come up with plans of more or less total control in their respective occupation zones. The Morgenthau Plan had already advocated total control and complete partition of Germany to ensure that a totalitarian Germany could never arise again and gain military power. Three years later, the fear of expansionist Communism directly influences the statements, plans and directives dealing with the reorganization of Germany, with the allies again relying upon more or less total control to, on the one hand, eradicate remnants of totalitarianism within the German population and, on the other hand, to battle Russian Totalitarianism and the subversive activities of Communist parties all over Europe.

In addition to the Marshall Plan, which dealt with the economic recovery of Germany and Europe, the American Military Government's staff included the "Division of Education and Social Relations" and the "Information Control Division."²⁴ Both were rooted in the premise of Morgenthau's ideas for controlling education and the media as a means of totally reorienting and reeducating a people. This time the underlying idea seemed to be to reeducate the Germans to democracy by means of totally controlling all information made available to them, be it in schools or through the respective media.

In June of 1945, several renowned educators (college and university professors, deans and presidents)²⁵ met at the request of the War Department to plan a long-range policy directive on German reeducation for the guidance of the War Department's representatives in Germany. This group worked within the Psychological Warfare Branch, which dealt initially with anti-fascist propaganda. Their basic policy directives in the field of education transcended formal education in schools and universities and also applied to programs of adult education through mass media.

The American Military Government immediately set about controlling publications, radio broadcasting, films, theaters, and music and issued directives and licenses to periodicals and newspapers. Government

officials categorically stated that a free exchange of opinions and ideas was a basic part of establishing democracy in Germany, and therefore the government was to gradually increase the freedoms and responsibilities, maintaining that the "length of the phases through which the German press, theater, publishing industry, must pass in order to qualify for complete freedom will therefore depend, in part, on the conduct of the licensees."²⁶ Of course these directives excluded any Nazi or related propaganda, as well as criticism of the Allied Forces, as this would disrupt unity among the Allies or evoke hostility of the German people against any occupying power. While the "Division of Education and Social Relations" issued publications of its own, it also promoted the publication of books which had been forbidden under Nazi rule. While these measures were intended to help issue government and "guide and aid" publications by Germans, it was also something that a staff member termed "countercontrol."²⁷ At the same time, the Military Government decreed that--due to the shortage of facilities and materials--the number of licensees would necessarily have to be limited.²⁸

Realizing the power of film as an opinion shaper, the Military Government paid special heed to the supervision of the German film industry, whose propaganda capacity in the Third Reich was well publicized and feared. The facilities were reopened almost immediately after their take-over, so that the skilled personnel could not be relocated and put to work elsewhere. Then the Entertainment Control Division began producing reorientation films. At the same time, one of the Division's priorities was to make the German market accessible to American feature films.²⁹

Since all four occupying forces had to accept these premises for education and media control in order to insure their effectiveness and avoid turning Germany into a battleground for different political systems and conflicting ideologies, a common enemy was proclaimed in 1945: Anything that smacked of Nazi practices was declared as such. By 1947, everything had changed, and a year later, the Berlin Blockade ended a dialogue between the three Western zones and the Soviets: a new enemy had appeared.

Educating a formerly totalitarian people to democracy was done with more or less total control of education and media. With the emergence of the Cold War and the increasing equation of the former Nazi enemy's practices with those of the former ally, the Soviet Union, it was easy to

exclude undesirable voices from public access, without it looking overtly like censorship.

IV

While Konrad Adenauer strove for a Western European alliance to erase the totalitarian and expansionist image of Germany, he also accepted a divided Germany with all its consequences as a political necessity. At a time when writers and other intellectuals were still working at bridging the widening gap between East and West, the political world had already accepted it as fact.

Writers, professors, and a priest gathered on July 4, 1945 to proclaim a manifesto³⁰ for the democratic renewal of Germany through cultural activities. In the manifesto of the *Kulturbund* the founding members stated their objectives for a democratic renewal through truly free thought and understanding, in order to awaken the conscience of a nation. For them, and many of the writers and intellectuals working on the staffs of various periodicals, culture was seen as a means of reorientation, and thus assigned a moral and nearly mystical role.³¹ When they were using in part the same language that was used in the fascist past, it was their goal to reach the masses the same way the Nazi propaganda did, but--of course--with opposite intentions. In order to attain this goal of democratic renewal, the members of the *Kulturbund* believed that every German had to face the atrocities committed by their fellow Germans before being educated to appreciate cultural accomplishments of their own past as well those of other nations, especially of the Soviet Union.

While evoking past cultural and artistic achievements designed to re-ignite pride in a cultural identity, they also strove to re-acquaint Germans with formerly maligned authors, artists, and composers and those, whose voices had previously not been heard.

In addition to this manifesto, the period from 1945 to 1949 saw a proliferation of periodicals never to be reached again in German post-war publication history. The aim of these periodicals was the renewal of Germany, democratization and overcoming the totalitarian past. By 1947, this post-war publication phenomenon had reached its climax,³² and declined shortly thereafter, when the political division into a Western bloc and an Eastern bloc became inevitable. Even though the Psychological Warfare Division paid special heed to the film industry, the periodicals were the main vehicle for cultural expression in post-war Germany.

Theater, film, and radio on the other hand, seemed mainly to entertain and divert, providing opportunity for escapism.³³

One of the periodicals was *Die Wandlung*, founded in November 1945 and published in Heidelberg. The means to salvation here was an openness to German cultural values and those of other nations as well. In his introduction to the first issue of *Die Wandlung*, Karl Jaspers emphasized the necessity of not having a set program for the journal.³⁴ Meditation, dialogue, and discussion rather than a plan or leader (things he associated with a totalitarian past) are what is needed, given the end of the German state and its economy. Jaspers also mentioned possible restrictions to the freedom of speech.³⁵ He invited discussions on philosophy, law, technology, politics, economics, art, poetry and theology. As a result, Bertolt Brecht's poetry--hitherto virtually unknown in Germany--was printed next to Marie Luise Kaschnitz' short stories, the Potsdam Communiqué, Hannah Arendt's essays,³⁶ as well as the American Declaration of Independence. During the first three years an editorial appeared entitled "Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen," which was aimed at illuminating some of the semantic changes German vocabulary underwent during fascism, creating awareness for the use and abuse of language.³⁷ Interestingly enough, although the format is that of a dialogue, letters to the editor hardly feature. The publisher occasionally had to appologize for late publications due to lack of paper or energy or transportation problems.³⁸

Exactly four years later *Die Wandlung* published its last issue, at the same time the Federal Republic was founded. As the periodical's existence coincided with the four years that Germany did not exist as a sovereign state, the editor, Dolf Sternberger voiced the hope that the ideas discussed and published in this periodical had helped to lay a sound intellectual and spiritual foundation for the new West German state.³⁹ He is never openly critical in this introduction to the last issue, in fact, he pointed out that he and the majority of his editorial staff planned to work for *Neue Rundschau*. Sternberger did, however, make covert reference to political pressure, when he mentioned that a fellow editor, Werner Krauss, a communist, left Heidelberg to go to Leipzig. Sternberger lamented the ensuing lack of contact between them as indicative of the German situation as a whole.

By having cultural, literary and political publications in the same issues, "culture" was not seen as an isolated construct, but as a part of

everything that pertained to rebuilding Germany, and an identity as a people. While the dialogue Jaspers invited in the first issue of *Die Wandlung* encouraged open-minded publications, the increasing pressure in both the Eastern and Western sectors to assume either a pro-Western or a pro-Eastern stance, made publications of this nature increasingly unwelcome. The political situation accounted for the gradual "westernization" of *Die Wandlung*. While never being openly polemical or critical, the articles became less political. However, this did not seem to be enough to ensure the periodical's survival. So, with the Eastern and Western bloc increasingly growing apart, the publication of *Die Wandlung* ceased⁴⁰--yet another casualty of the Cold War.

V

Another periodical which emerged during the years of anti fascist democratic reeducation efforts throughout Germany was *Ost und West*. Alfred Kantorowicz, who had returned from exile in the U.S. shortly after the war, founded *Ost und West* in 1947, and not only served as editor-in-chief, but also used his own funds to publish the journal. The programmatic first issue opened with a five-page introduction explaining Kantorowicz' goal for *Ost und West*: to reach a readership in the Soviet occupation zone, as well as the three western zones.

Kantorowicz had fought against fascism as a member of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil war and he considered himself an "uncompromising socialist fighting against anti-bolshevism and anti-communism."⁴¹ But after returning from exile in the U.S., where he had worked as a freelance writer for CBS, Kantorowicz attempted to introduce a more progressive bourgeois humanism. After a strict denazification, realized by the occupying forces, this concept of a progressive humanism, which was to be used in the re-education and re-orientation of the German people after twelve years of barbarism, had its basis in Kantorowicz' *Bildungsbürgertum*, as well as in the idea of a unified democratic and anti-fascist German nation. His stated goal, as implied by the journal's title, was to question the *status quo* of East versus West, a separation which had already become obvious to those living in both occupation zones. The journal *Ost und West* sought to question Western culture in its claims of superiority, to question the division of Germany as carried out by the occupying forces, and to question the division of the whole world into two incompatible and

irreconcilable camps. "It is for the sake of progress [that] East and West belong together, but progress has to defeat reactionism."⁴²

Mediation between the two sides was his only suggestion and/or solution. As expressed in the journal's subtitle, "Contributions to current cultural and political affairs," this mediation was to occur via dialogue, via discussion of literary texts as well as cultural and political issues. Kantorowicz' mediation was also an attempt to bridge the widening gap between the two camps, each of which, after 1948, came to consider the other the *Enemy*. But the founding of two separate German states in September and October, 1949 spelled the end of *Ost und West*, for the gap had become unbridgeable. In the winter of 1949, after the publication of only thirty issues, Kantorowicz was forced to abandon his dream of mediating and encouraging public discussions on cultural and political issues. The failure of *Ost und West* was due to a large extent to financial problems, since, after the currency reform, the journal was no longer distributed in the American sector. Was Kantorowicz' project doomed to fail from the very beginning? His original intent was to have his periodical licensed by both the American and the Soviet military governments, but his request was denied from the American side. As early as 1947, the Americans were sensitive to the potential infiltration of socialist or communist propaganda in the West--and *Ost und West*, edited by a socialist, could certainly have developed into just that. The American press published libelous articles proclaiming Kantorowicz "one of Russia's top espionage agents [. . .] carrying atom bomb secrets,"⁴³ leaving Kantorowicz to depend on Soviet approval for his journal, which he received immediately.

But the magazine was never misused as a mouth piece of the Soviet military government; moreover, the most influential officers responsible for culture in the Soviet Military Administration⁴⁴ supported Kantorowicz in his attempt to publish a non-partisan, supra regional (national) example of controversial but progressive anti-fascist, democratic thought. I would like to remind us that until the mid-1950's, the Soviets were still hoping to reunite Germany and turn it into a neutral democratic nation. Unlike comparable West German periodicals, or even East German party organs, *Ost und West* never received any financial support either from the Soviets or from the Communist party. Not even the *Kulturbund* was able to support the magazine financially--all that was available to Kantorowicz was income from advertising, although the Soviets occasionally supplied

him with electricity, coal, paper, and equipment.

When Kantorowicz, in the final issue, blamed the failure of *Ost und West* on the circumstances of its time, he may have been right--given the drastic political changes after 1949--*Ost und West* would have had no chance of survival. In Kantorowicz' words, his boat overturned in the storm of events and sank.⁴⁵ A magazine that published Bloch next to Brecht, Stalin next to Strindberg, Virginia Woolf next to Alexander Blok, or Peter Huchel next to Friedrich Hölderlin, was probably too ambitious, perhaps too liberal, to withstand the political challenges of the early Cold War years. In addition to this wide variety of articles and contributors, Kantorowicz also consequently included *Leserbriefe* in the monthly editions reflecting different points of views regardless of their political background (fascist ideologies excluded, of course). But a magazine that also published the announcement of the founding of the G.D.R. (Gründungserklärungen), as well as praise from the editor himself for "Stalin as the teacher of national self-determination," was unlikely to have been censored by the state or the communist party, although Kantorowicz' attempts to bridge the gap--created by the demarcation line--certainly would have created conflict with the cultural politics of the decade that followed.

Another potential reason for the demise of Kantorowicz' magazine could have been that, despite support from Heinrich Mann, *Ost und West* could not compete with the newly founded periodical *Sinn und Form*, which was taken over and supported by the Academy of Arts after 1949. *Ost und West*--yet another casualty of the Cold War? Kantorowicz--*Der Zufrühgekommene*?

VI

At the same time that an East-West dialogue on the literary front was breaking down, a new journal appeared on the scene called *Der Monat*. American journalist Melvin J. Lasky founded *Der Monat* in the spring of 1948, and from its inception, an understanding and acceptance of the split between East and West was clearly evident. In a one-page introduction to the twentieth anniversary issue of *Der Monat*, editor Hellmut Jaesrich, one of the journal's co-founders, described *Der Monat* in its early years as "*das Besatzungschild*." The journal was born, Jaesrich writes, after a breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast, and coffee in "Truman Hall," the cafeteria in the barracks of the American occupational forces in Berlin,

and was therefore "the only political/literary journal to be born in a former Nazi air force base under the waving Stars and Stripes and to spend the first six years of its life comfortably situated behind the walls of a barracks."⁴⁶ From 1948 to 1954, the American government provided *Der Monat* with financial support and a base of operations in Berlin-Dahlem. After 1954, the Ford Foundation continued the supply of American money to cover publication costs.

Like the journals *Die Wandlung* and *Ost und West*, *Der Monat* appeared to have been conceived in a spirit of dialogue and renewal. The journal's mission statement read: "*Der Monat* is to serve as a forum for open dialogue and discussion based on freedom of speech and opinion, and seeks to bring together a large number of divergent voices from Germany and all parts of the world."⁴⁷ However, unlike the journal *Ost und West*, which attempted to slip past Cold War battle lines and negotiate a path between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., *Der Monat* was situated safely behind American ideological lines, never doubting that the two worlds were necessarily separated by the ominous Iron Curtain.

Each issue of *Der Monat* opened with three or more articles addressing a specific theme, such as "Der west-östliche Gegensatz," "Die Hoffnung auf eine bessere Welt," "Wege zu einem neuen Europa," and "Streit um den Sozialismus." The very first issue of *Der Monat*, published in October, 1948, features a discussion on the topic of "Das Schicksal des Abendlandes," and here, as elsewhere, the influence of American ideology on the journal reveals itself in the choice of contributors and their perspectives on the subject at hand.

Bertrand Russell's article "Der Weg zum Weltstaat" set the anti-communist mood by asserting that the only way to assure world peace is by launching another war. "The great wars," Russell wrote, "can only come to an end, when all military might is brought together under a single authority."⁴⁸ In Russell's opinion, the atomic bomb in the hands of the Americans would assure both a victory over communist forces and the opportunity to establish a democratic world state.

Franz Borkenau reiterated this position in the second article, "Nach der Atombombe," when he wrote: "Assuming the western democracies are at the moment solely in possession of the secret of the atomic bomb, then it would be militarily advisable for the West to strike now in undertaking a preventative war."⁴⁹ According to Borkenau, the potential destruction of civilization and a regression into a state of barbarity is the preferred

alternative to a worldwide totalitarian dictatorship.

British historian Arnold Toynbee rounded out the discussion of "das Schicksal des Abendlandes" by focusing, like Russell and Borkenau, on the need to establish a unified world state. Toynbee argued for a totalized concept of history, one viewed in terms of civilizations, rather than nations. This idea appealed to Americans in the late 1940s; Toynbee was even featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1947, with an accompanying article hailing his historical efforts to "shatter the frozen patterns of historical determinism and materialism by again asserting God as an active force in history." *Time* placed Toynbee's work in a Cold War context by citing the need for the United States to become conscious of its mission as "the champion of the remnant of Christian civilization against the forces that threaten it."⁵⁰ The position of Toynbee's article in the first issue of *Der Monat* is but one more example of how American Cold War politics and culture influenced the process of West German reeducation.

The historical fact of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact was of central importance to the American understanding of totalitarianism, with its equation of red equals brown, and thus it is of note that the first two issues of *Der Monat* contain a long two-part article providing documentary evidence of Nazi-Soviet cooperation prior to the war.⁵¹ The second issue of *Der Monat* also featured the essay "Vom Wesen des Kommunismus" by New York University Professor of Philosophy James Burnham. Here Burnham wrote that communism and fascism are "simply variations of the same basic type of sociopolitical movement," and that "their goals and methods are the same." He then went on to voice the fundamental American Cold War fear of a worldwide communist takeover.⁵² In the third issue, Hans Kohn's essay "Das Jahrhundert des Verrats" used the examples of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union to discuss the nature of totalitarian systems in general and the totalitarian transformation of critical human beings into fanatical followers of a cult-like government.⁵³

Aspects of American anti-communist mythology frequently found their way onto the pages of *Der Monat*. The iron curtain is there, in claims such as "in place of the two oceans, one sees today only the iron curtain, pulled into place by the Russians, behind which dangers lurk, threatening the very existence of a free America."⁵⁴ In November, 1949, *Der Monat* began serializing a German translation of Orwell's *1984*, a mere

four months after the novel appeared in the U.S. The journal announced the publication of *1984* with the words: "This novel is the best antidote to the totalitarian disease that any writer has thus far produced."⁵⁵

VII

As we have shown in our paper to this point, despite attempts at dialogue in such journals as *Ost und West*, postwar political and cultural developments led to the assumption of an absolute and irreversible division of the world into East and West. And it is out of this myth, the myth of the iron curtain, that totalitarianism theory arose. After having declared Communism the sworn enemy, Americans and other Westerners needed totalitarianism theory to make this position a tenable one.

Totalitarianism theory furnished a rational, scientific counterpart to the trumped up media image of the "Red Menace," but both were based on an anti-communism born of fear. In reference to American relations with the Soviet Union, George Kennan said, "It is the unknown and the unfamiliar that one fears the most."⁵⁶ Totalitarianism theory, with its focus on understanding what constitutes a totalitarian society and how total control is exercised within it, served to calm Western fears by providing information about the communist "enemy." Fascism had been eradicated, but through the equation of red equals brown, fascism as a concept revealed much about the workings of a totalitarian system. Thus, totalitarianism theory emerged in the early 1950s as an interweaving of anti-fascism and American anti-communist thought, and fulfilled a need to define and justify American values in an era of political upheaval.

"We have come together to discuss a phenomenon of our time that has brought the deepest possible misery to untold millions of our contemporaries, even to the point of rendering life itself a hated burden to them."⁵⁷ With these stirring words, George Kennan opened a conference on totalitarianism that was held in March, 1953 at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, organizer Carl J. Friedrich of Harvard University invited forty scholars from the fields of history, political science, philosophy, and psychology to participate. The papers of the conference covered a wide range of topics dealing with the nature of totalitarianism, totalitarianism and ideology, totalitarian social and economic organization, totalitarianism and intellectual life, as well as the psychological aspects of totalitarianism. Interestingly, although Hannah Arendt was in attendance, none of

the papers were devoted explicitly to a discussion of the origins of totalitarianism.

In her 1951 book entitled *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt sought primarily to understand the phenomenon of fascism by tracing its roots back to imperialism and European antisemitism. Only in the final section of her work did she draw a connection between Nazism and Stalinism as two manifestations of the concept of totalitarianism. Carl Friedrich, however, was less concerned with causal connections than with a precise definition of what totalitarianism is and how it functions. Clearly, his goal was to "know the enemy," and thus to be able to predict where and how the totalitarian tendency toward aggressive expansionism might jeopardize democracy and the "American way."

During a session of the conference entitled "Totalitarianism and the Future," one participant stated, "The main question we face is whether the two 'worlds,' the free and the totalitarian, will coexist in tense equilibrium, or whether they are headed for a fearful clash that may well spell the doom of civilization."⁵⁸ Because totalitarianism theory was built upon the mythical assumption that the world was already irrevocably divided, proponents of the theory never considered the possibility, or the very need to open a dialogue with the East, to attempt to move beyond the state of "tense equilibrium" through discussion rather than aggression. The prevailing image of the communist as somehow less than human, foreign, Asiatic, and fanatical (as expressed in such statements as Adenauer's "Asien steht an der Elbe")⁵⁹ effectively negated the potential for dialogue, a fact which left us with thirty odd years of Cold War politics, founded on the myth of red equals brown.

Notes

- 1 Immanuel Kant, *Der ewige Frieden* (1795).
- 2 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1800).
- 3 Les K. Adler, *The Red Image: American Attitudes toward Communism in the Cold War Era* (New York, 1991), p. 218.
- 4 Cf. Michael Barson, *Better Dead Than Red!* (New York, 1992).
- 5 *Life* (July 4, 1949), p. 79.
- 6 Quoted in Irving Howe, ed., *Orwell's "1984": Text, Sources, Criticism* (New York, 1982), p. 272.
- 7 *Life* (July 24, 1949), p. 6.

8 Howe, p. 277.

9 George F. Kennan, "Totalitarianism in the Modern World," in Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 19.

10 Quoted in Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1991), p. 127.

11 Adler, p. 483.

12 Harold J. Berman, "The Devil and Soviet Russia." In: *The American Scholar* 27 (Spring, 1958), p. 151.

13 Quoted in Whitfield, p. 53.

14 George Orwell, 1984, ed. Bernard Crick (Oxford, 1984), p. 152.

15 From the memorandum summarizing "The Morgenthau Plan" which President Roosevelt took with him to the conference at Quebec in September of 1944, printed in the preface to: Henry Morgenthau, Jr., *Germany is Our Problem* (New York/London, 1945).

16 Warren F. Kimball, *Swords or Ploughshares? The Morgenthau Plan for Defeated Nazi Germany, 1943-1946* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 166.

17 In contrast to the homogeneous Morgenthau Plan, the so-called Marshall Plan evolved from several different sources: The failed Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference of March-April 1947 convinced the Secretary of State, George Marshall, that the Soviets were striving to gain politically from the deadlock over Germany and the worsening economic and political situation in Europe. On his return, he instructed George Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff to begin a study of European aid requirements. Kennan's work, along with other studies already under way, laid the ground work for Marshall's famous Harvard University commencement speech on June 5, 1947, which is often erroneously referred to as the actual Marshall Plan.

18 John Gimbel, "Die Entstehung des Marshall-Plans." In: Othmar Nikola Haberl and Lutz Niethammer, eds. *Der Marshall-Plan und die europäische Linke* (Frankfurt/Main, 1986), p. 26.

19 Michael J. Hogan, "European Integration and the Marshall Plan." In: Stanley Hoffmann and Charles Maier, eds. *The Marshall Plan. A Retrospective* (Boulder and London, 1984), p. 3 f.

20 Carl-Gottfried Kindermann, "Einzelfragen zur amerikanischen Außenpolitik." In: Arnold Bergstraesser and Wilhelm Cornides, eds., *Die Internationale Politik* (Munich, 1955), p. 97-8.

21 In addition to the Communist Coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin Blockade, Yugoslavia was excluded from the Soviet bloc, Eastern European national Communists were put on trial and intellectual Jews were persecuted in Russia.

22 This program is also known as the Truman Doctrine.

23 Haberl, Niethammer, p. 12.

24 The "Division of Education and Social Relations" and the "Entertainment Control Division" had grown out of the "Division of Psychological Warfare."

25 The Chairman of the Committee was President Edmund E. Day of Cornell. Members were: President George Shuster of Hunter College, President Frank Graham of the University of North Carolina, President John Milton Potter of Hobart College, Dean Martin MacGuire of the Graduate School of Catholic University, Professor Eduard C. Lindeman of Columbia University, and Professor Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary.

26 The German Press in the U.S. Occupied Area, OMGUS Special Report, November 1948, in U.S. Department of State, *Germany 1947-1949: The Story in Documents* (Washington D.C., 1950), p. 595.

27 William Ernest Hocking, *Experiment in Education. What Can We Learn from Teaching Germany* (Chicago, 1954), p. 24. Hocking argued that in coming up with an "antidote to the artificial press and propaganda control and the artificial barriers to free mental intercourse" the totalitarian Hitler regime had set up. However, not merely content with the letting the Germans find their own way "We undertook a degree of countercontrol of our own, as our official press and the careful selection of editors for our subsidized publications may indicate."

28 All licensees had to insure that "equitable opportunity of expression is given to all important parties and points of view, except when specifically exempted from this provision by the terms of their license, or when the nature of the medium is such that political opinions are not ordinarily expressed." Quoted in: US Department of State, *Germany*, p. 596-598.

29 Ulrich M. Bausch, *Die Kulturpolitik der US-amerikanischen Information Control Division in Württemberg-Baden von 1945 bis 1949 zwischen militärischem Funktionalismus und schwäbischem Obrigkeitsdenken*. (Stuttgart, 1992), p. 101-2.

30 *Manifest des Kulturbundes zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutsch-*

lands (Berlin, 1945).

31 Die Autoren des Manifests sowie der Leitsätze des Kulturbundes verwenden offene Konzepte und Begriffe wie "Neugeburt des deutschen Geistes [...] der deutschen Seele ... [aus der] ... Zusammenarbeit mit allen demokratisch eingestellten weltanschaulichen, religiösen und kirchlichen Bewegungen," in *Manifest*, pp. 4-9.

32 Joseph Nolte quotes a satirical poem "Zeitschriftenzeit" from 1947, which lists 24 titles. In Joseph Nolte, "Epoche oder Episode? Zur Bedeutung des deutschen Kulturlebens in den ersten Nachkriegsjahren 1945-1948, besonders im Hinblick auf die literarisch-politische Publizistik dieser Zeit," in Manfred Overesch et. al., *Zeitenwende. Umbruch und Aufbruch in Deutschland nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hannover, 1986), p. 81. In the same year, the American sector alone licensed 30 periodicals, one of which ceased publication in the same year, 9 of which had ceased to be published by the end of 1948 and 6 additional periodicals ceased publication by the end of 1949. These numbers are derived from titles published in: Michael Hoenisch, Klaus Kämpfe, Karl-Heinz Pütz, "USA und Deutschland. Amerikanische Kulturpolitik 1942-1949. Bibliographie-Materialien-Dokumente," John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien. Freie Universität Berlin, Materialien 15 (Berlin, 1980), p. 189-91.

33 Nolte, p. 68-70. In the first few years after the war, film and theater dealt more with entertainment and diversion from reality than finding oneself. Nolte also argues that a possible reason may be that the available personell in the field had already worked in the Third Reich and just continued the repertoire studied until 1945. All this changes in 1948, which incidentally coincides with Brecht's return to Germany and his move to the Russian zone.

34 Karl Jaspers was Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg University and doctoral advisor to Hannah Arendt, before she emigrated to the US. He argues: "Wir machen kein Programm. Niemand dürfte es heute wagen, über den Dingen zu stehen, einen Plan des Ganzen zu entwerfen, den einen einzigen Weg als den von ihm vermeintlich gewußten anzugeben...- Wir glauben nicht an sich ausschließende, 'letzte Standpunkte,' sondern an den gemeinsamen Ursprung des Menschseins." Karl Jaspers, "Geleitwort," in *Die Wandlung* 1, (November 1945), p. 4. Dolf Sternberger, editor of the periodical *Die Wandlung*, comments on this phenomena as well in his regularly featured diary of contemporary Germany, when he

reviews films (*Die Wandlung* 2, März 1948).

35 Karl Jaspers, "Geleitwort," in *Die Wandlung* 1 (November 1945), p. 3. "Eindeutig ist nur das äußere Geschehen: das wortlose Verschwinden der Gewalthaber, das Ende selbständiger deutscher Staatlichkeit, die Abhängigkeit unseres gesamten Tuns von dem Willen der Besatzungsmächte, die uns befreit haben vom nationalsozialistischen Joch. Unsere Initiative ist beschränkt auf den Spielraum, den sie uns gewähren. Eine solche Chance für unsere Initiative ist die Erlaubnis einer Zeitschrift. Wir dürfen öffentlich miteinander reden. Sehen wir zu, was wir einander zu sagen haben!"

36 Hannah Arendt's essay on Imperialism later found its way into her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).

37 "Dieses Wörterbuch hat eine Aufgabe, die derjenigen der übrigen und gewöhnlichen Wörterbücher genau entgegengesetzt ist: Es soll uns diese Sprache fremd machen." "Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen, Vorbemerkung." In *Die Wandlung* 1 (November 1945), p. 75.

38 As in the preface to *Die Wandlung* 3 (März 1946).

39 Karl Jaspers wrote: "So sollen und müssen wir versuchen, wie wir uns denkend in dieser ungeheuren Not zurechtfinden," in *Die Wandlung* 1 (November 1945), p. 6.

40 Dolf Sternberger, "Versuch zu einem Fazit," in *Die Wandlung* (Dezember 1949), p. 699-710 and "Redaktionelle Anmerkungen," in *Die Wandlung* 4 (1948), p. 375. "In ihrem Schreiben an Werner Krauss--jetzt Ordinarius der romanischen Philologie in Leipzig--betonen die verbliebenen Herausgeber und der Verleger die Meinung und Absicht, die Gemeinsamkeit des Geistes sichtbar pflegen zu sollen über alle Zonen-grenzen hinweg."

41 Alfred Kantorowicz, "Abschied," in *Ost und West. Beiträge zu kulturellen und politischen Fragen der Zeit* 12 (1949), pp. 77-101.

42 Ibid, p. 99.

43 Ibid, p. 83.

44 In the last issue (December 1949), Kantorowicz thanks the Soviet culture officers General Tulpanow, Prof. Dymshitz, Major Rosanow, and Dr. Altermann, among others.

45 See Kantorowicz, p. 78.

46 Hellmut Jaesrich, "Das Besatzungskind," in *Der Monat* 241 (October 1968), p. 4.

47 *Der Monat* 1 (October 1948).

- 48 Bertrand Russell, "Der Weg zum Weltstaat," in *Der Monat* 1 (October 1948), p. 7.
- 49 Franz Borkenau, "Nach der Atombombe," in *Der Monat* 1 (October 1948), p. 9.
- 50 Whitfield, p. 55.
- 51 The article is entitled "Der Seeckt-Plan: Aus unveröffentlichten Dokumenten. Neues Tatsachenmaterial über die geheime Zusammenarbeit zwischen Reichswehr und Sowjet-Armee," in *Der Monat* 2 (November 1948), pp. 42-58.
- 52 James Burnham, "Vom Wesen des Kommunismus," in *Der Monat* 2 (November 1948), p. 20.
- 53 Hans Kohn, "Das Jahrhundert des Verrats," in *Der Monat* 3 (December 1948), p. 9.
- 54 Norbert Mühlen, "Brief aus Amerika," in *Der Monat* 2 (November 1948), p. 71.
- 55 *Der Monat* 7 (April 1949).
- 56 Carl J. Friedrich, *Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 36.
- 57 George F. Kennan, "Totalitarianism in the Modern World," in Friedrich, p. 17.
- 58 Paul Kecskemeti, "Totalitarianism and the Future," in Friedrich, p. 345.
- 59 On March 16, 1946 Konrad Adenauer wrote to Wilhelm Sollmann, a former social democratic representative who had emigrated to the US: "Asien steht an der Elbe. Nur ein wirtschaftlich und geistig gesundes Westeuropa unter der Führung Englands und Frankreichs, ein Westeuropa, zu dem als wesentlicher Bestandteil der nicht von Rußland besetzte Teil Deutschlands gehört, kann das weitere geistige und machtmäßige Vordringen Asiens aufhalten," in Hans Peter Mensing, ed. *Adenauer, Briefe 1945-1947* (Berlin, 1983) p. 191.

Marcus P. Bullock

**Oblivion's Soldiers:
The Postmodern and Poststructuralist Campaign
against Images of Totality and History**

At the close of the essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" Jean-François Lyotard describes the forces of reaction he believes are ranged in the early 1980s against his theory of knowledge and the emerging postmodern culture for which it stands. "Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement," he declares, "we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality." Clearly, the willingness on the part of an opposition to resort to terror, the threat of betrayal by appeasement, and the risk of falling back into that fantasy are dangers before which there can be no equivocation. Nor is there any equivocation in his response, for he concludes: "The answer is: let us wage war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name."¹ It seems from this that your country, that is, the beleaguered nation of intellectual freedom and integrity, needs you. Alternatively, your other country may need you too, the opposing nation that this propaganda offensive has perhaps maligned. Either way, it's war.

But before we sign up, or slip across the border, we need to ponder how easily we respond to the metaphor in this call to arms. The figure of speech here tells us something more about the totality of the issue now brought into question than we are likely to discover from an answer to specific examples of postmodern reasoning either in Lyotard's polemics, or elsewhere. Such broad declarations of division cannot be framed within the narrow instances of one argument ranged against another. They go beyond a difference by which the contents of one position contradicts another with which it disputes on an equal footing. Quite the reverse: this language pronounces an absolute inequality between itself and another global zone of thinking. Lyotard declares an anathema. The announcement of a hostile intention here certainly does not invite a dialogue or debate; indeed, it turns against speech. The language of the

treachery, terror, fantasy, and deceit. And Lyotard's "answer" is not speech either. It is a war-cry.

It may be true that the resistance to postmodernism contains many false elements, and perhaps in some cases the hostility toward new developments in writing and representation can be traced back to the grudges of a narrow-minded old guard. Nonetheless, the belligerent will that Lyotard reveals here seems an oddly inappropriate way of embarking on a mission of philosophical persuasion. The declaration of war presents the issue as a matter of conflict between two grand confederacies. The opposition he declares goes far beyond the specific views argued on either side, and clearly draws the headings of postmodernity and totality into a confrontation of epochal rivalry. This compels him to look at his task as the struggle to effect a fundamental transition in historical culture.

For this reason, his polemical relationship to the past cannot be defined by direct reference to a history of actually propagated ideas of totality or reality, and cannot even be satisfactorily explained by an analysis of what Lyotard or other postmodernist ideologues *think* those ideas represented in the past. That relationship probably cannot even be accounted for by what Lyotard himself thinks he is doing in the project of that transition. The elements of this dispute that seem new do not in themselves account for the quality and intensity of the impulse that appears in the absolute declaration of his opposition. After all the specific issues are brought as clearly into focus as a philosophical analysis will permit, the underlying question still remains: what is it that inspires any such body of thought to undertake this heroic task of an epochal transformation in the global character of an intellectual tradition?

The will to such a change, as well as the possibility of what might thereby be achieved, both touch on the most fundamental features of our intellectual life. Lyotard's statement is far from an idiosyncratic or accidental turn of phrase. His voice has echoes everywhere--not only among his allies, but also in similar enterprises of transfiguration in the past. His figure of speech, the metaphor of a military campaign, is so natural to our ears that we could easily leave it unconsidered. Yet we should not let the obliviousness of familiarity hide a real incongruity. What are the foundations of an intellectual tradition in which a philosopher can endeavor to answer questions about the idea of totality or reality by arming a front-line against them? The first concern that animates this

line of dispute is who will win, but the deeper question raised by all wars is "win what?"

It is difficult to imagine a dispute over the integrity of knowledge that can dispense with the integrity of language, yet speech itself is denied by this division of war. To win means to have no one to speak to. One no longer has to listen to the offending voice, but one has thereby silenced oneself. There is a totalitarian impulse at work here. If we have reason to take such declarations seriously, then they clearly express the desire to consign an alternative position to oblivion rather than engage it in an equality of exchange. Any such declaration gives itself the prerogatives of an absolute right. It does not imagine a process of learning in the engagement that might open up a way forward to something not yet apparent on either side. Moreover, we do have to take a declaration like Lyotard's seriously because, even though the scope of the conflict may be restricted, the battle is real. It is not just an abstract meeting and testing of intellectual positions, which does imply a basis in equality, but takes place as the definite struggle over territory. The measure of victory is control of institutions. It plans quite concrete effects of power. The battles are fought out over who controls university departments, over editorial policies in journals and publishing houses, over who receives grants, and whose candidate is hired or tenured. There are casualties in these wars, and there is loot.

Whenever a position becomes something to fight for rather than learn about, our intellectual life always regresses to an archaic level. There are causes that deserve our resolute loyalty to the struggle because there are obligations that merit commitment beyond question, but no issue goes beyond question in intellectual life. Intellectual life only flourishes in a history of questions. No idea survives long as a serious position when it is fortified to prevent movement, or when that movement is reduced to the measure of institutional territory gained or lost. This quality of dispute may properly be called archaic because the identity of a combatant in such a battle becomes fixed and frozen out of fear of the future that will answer such questions.

To inquire after another person's knowledge always implies one is ready to change and move according to that which is not yet apparent. Such readiness to change attaches no value to the idea of victory. Even the most vehement questioning voice asks only for a response and an exchange. Therefore no matter how contentious it may sound, question-

ing always remains free of this archaic quality. By contrast, the regression and the rigidity in an agonistic division between ideas deny the thought of a future through the image of victory. There is nothing more bleakly archaic than the idea of victory, because nothing is so devoid of a future. The idea of victory prevents the future by imposing an identity on it. Victory means that the conviction for which a person may now fight, will inherit the earth. That conviction to which we may have committed ourselves in the past, and by which we define our place on the front line and our place among our confederates, is our ticket to the future, but that ticket is only valid if nothing changes except that the rivals to our position are obliterated. That ticket is only a winner if the game remains exactly the same. Only then can one side carry the day so completely that one world of convictions, or one past, expands to blot out any alternative to it.

In the course of this conflict, it may well be that error is destroyed. The critique of contemporary and recent forms of expression that Lyotard and others have undertaken identifies many prejudices that have distorted clear sight, and many unexamined ideological fossils that we mistake for a living landscape. For Lyotard that "slackening" against which he protests in his essay manifests above all "an end to experimentation, in the arts and elsewhere" (*What is Postmodernism?* 71). This is aimed, he says, at the protection of the status quo in its established prejudices and "the preservation of various consciousnesses from doubt" (74). Yet if the destruction of error is turned around to give a messianic role to the destroyer, then everything is lost no matter how much is gained. There are many hells, but each one of them is presided over by a messiah.

Whenever any such combative rhetoric reappears in intellectual history, the same paradox also becomes apparent. If emancipation from one power can only be promised by a stronger opposite power, then it would seem that only a messianic force is capable of overcoming and liberating us from a history of error. That is to say, only the total displacement of the previous ideas by this new presence guarantees that, in Lyotard's words, their mutterings are silenced and their desire to hold on to power, and return the rule of terror, can be thwarted. Therefore only an idea that comes to pass by an act of combative will, by an assertion of power, and by the capture of institutions, can play this part in history. The recurring relationship to power ensures that even though there is a real history in the changing structure of intellectual relations,

or the fundamental way our predominant ideas order exchange and debate in the community, there is also an unchanging element of archaism in all our intellectual life.

Any commentary on this situation, if it is to be of the slightest value, cannot permit itself to be drawn into the same web of reaction and counter-reaction. And here one must limit the significance carried by the metaphor of war. A military attack in principle leaves one with no choice. Defensive firepower must be as destructive as offensive firepower. In the present case, despite the reality of casualties and loot, the position contains other possibilities because the postmodern polemic in whose name actual institutional damage may be wrought, also advances by the force of a productive process. There can be no doubt that the main body of philosophical and critical work undertaken under the name of postmodernism does represent real thinking and writing of a high and admirable standard. It is rich in clear-sighted analysis and effective critique of established cultural practices. The greater part of any advantage to be gained by silencing such voices would accrue to the primary object of their critical gaze, which is a numbed and oblivious automatism in those practices. What would be lost by responding too literally to Lyotard's figure of speech is the chance to learn from what appears to that gaze, just as he clearly deprives himself of valuable sources from which he might learn, but whom he rejects as agents or fellow-travellers of the "enemy." He impoverishes his entire process by impetuously identifying those sources with a sclerotic tradition because they use terms that appear foremost in the armory of tradition, like "reason," "truth," and "reality."

To say that postmodernism includes clear-sighted analysis and effective critique therefore does not imply the same as conceding that one's enemy is strategically adept, technically well equipped and organized, or skilled in the arts of propaganda and espionage. It is rather that such thinking falls into an oblivion of its own through the sheer force with which it trains its gaze to meet the opposition. This restricts the idea of what it faces, and therefore the task of emancipation that confronts it. Resources of the imagination and intellect concentrate themselves to produce an excess of power, and an excessive valuation of power, when a will is educated solely by necessities arising from subordination of an interest under conditions imposed by some prior alien victory. This narrowing of resources produces a pessimism of the

intellect on the one hand, and an excessive value of power, or optimism of the will, on the other. The resulting action, moreover, reproduces the distortion and impoverishment of the alien victory in the success of one's own.

There remains a different chance of success by a greater optimism of the intellect or imagination that permits one to learn from what desires lie buried beneath the armored rhetoric of this postmodern speech, and allows one to avoid the empty substitute of self-enclosure within the fortifying intoxications of an inflated will. By not engaging in a warlike process, by not answering that rhetoric with an opposite coercive purpose, we may permit the intellectual energy in that language to yield a quite different range of meanings, one it did not favor in its intentions. Therefore, my own critique does not engage in what only a pessimistic view insists on as an inevitable basis of interaction, namely the continuous circulation of power either in maintaining the status quo, or marking and delimiting a shift.

Contemporary theory not only insists that one acknowledge this process of power as inevitable, but embraces it as though the optimism of that gesture were enough to flood the dismal prospect of past hells with the luminous promise of new delights. Michel Foucault has led the way in this with a particularly detailed presentation of evidence, and particularly explicit programmatic formulations. In his collection of commentaries from the seventies, *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault sees nothing but utopian nostalgia at work in "the longing for a form of power innocent of all coercion, discipline, and normalization."² Foucault's theory of knowledge uses the oldest model we know of in tradition, that of erotics, and conversely, he uses models of knowledge, of the desire for what he calls "access to truth," to analyze the different forms in which he discovers erotic relations, or access to pleasure. By drawing these aspects or elements of human existence together, he constructs a general "épistème" manifest at all levels and in all contexts of historical development.

The general polemic purpose he has in common with Lyotard narrows the possibilities of what he can identify as the genuine course of history, since he cannot avoid identifying with a locus of power as the basis of knowledge. His understanding of erotic relations is, on the same basis, also highly restricted. He can only conceive erotic pleasure in forms that express differential power, and his historical investigation of its concrete

manifestations finds only the active or passive experience of domination. The idea of an equality of relations in sexuality goes far beyond the reach of his imagination.

Indeed, a clear articulation of erotic relations as the encounter between two equal positions does seem to occur only at the extreme outer limits of the established imagery of our culture and the institutions of sexuality he investigates in our history. As a historian, therefore, Foucault could scarcely avoid the construction of an "isomorphism" as he calls it, between the culture of sexual relations and the general relations of social power. Thus he declares:

What this means is that sexual relations--always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity--were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished. Pleasure practices were conceptualized using the same categories as those in social rivalries and hierarchies: an analogous agonistic structure, analogous oppositions and differentiations . . .³

Foucault's view of the inescapable ubiquity of coercive power therefore argues that sexuality in our history cannot appear free of an essential inequality and archaism.

Where Lyotard cites Foucault as standing with him and against the forces of totality in the general polemic of postmodern theory, he also acquiesces in that same archaism. The color and register of Lyotard's rhetoric confirms the construction of a specifically postmodern image of virility. He announces a language that rises above all slackening. The hard resolve of postmodernism is to master mere fantasy, to overcome appeasement, to boldly penetrate illusion. Such a voice calls on its readers to come resolutely to full enjoyment of the truth through the virility of a consciousness whose intellectual force needs no preservation from doubt.

One could only claim that we are bound by an unbreakable fate to this archaism if it were logically impossible to conceive of an equality in the encounter between persons, and impossible to desire such an equality except in romantic nostalgia. Foucault arrives at this permanent denial of equality by asserting that the image of man as possessed of the necessary substance and independence for such an encounter is no more

than another myth. One might object to Foucault here that it would seem logically impossible *not* to desire equality in the meeting between persons in the exchange of bodily pleasure, or in the exchange of knowledge, since any meeting between persons is obscured, distanced, or displaced by relations of power. Nonetheless, Foucault discounts such desire as deluded. He associates it with the origin of a particular image from the past, the image of man in the ideology of bourgeois identity.

His interpretation claims critical victory over the mythic element in that image by pointing out the contradictions in that identity as it expresses itself in a sexuality fraught with elements of domination. One can, however, also read the archaic element in his interpretation of history at this point because in discounting this desire for a reality expressed in the image of man, and by insisting on his victory over it, he has simply installed the opposing myth as the perpetual nature of human relations. He explicitly refuses to contemplate the active energy that runs through the network of human relations as an attribute of an identifiable subject—whether collective or individual. He attributes it solely to functions that dissolve the integrity of the person the way archaic forces of fate dissolve and disperse human agency. Power, he says, "is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society."⁴

Everything hinges for him on whether one can logically imagine a person, that is, conceive of the presence of a person, outside the relations of power determined by the institutions through whose agency the representations of a person are mediated. That possibility is most definitely denied by Foucault, who concluded in his *The Order of Things* that "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."⁵ This face stands for the ideal of the person, and of personal experience, as an independent reality. Such an appearance cannot stand, in Lyotard's words, before the claims of the unrepresentable, and the singular reality of the face cannot be permitted to resist the multiple possibilities that constitute the "honor of the name." The dreamed and doomed image of man indicates the helplessness in any longing to escape from differential power, from the institutional character of knowledge, from the arbitrariness in the forces of convention that rule over all expression and experience. Yet the fading of this dream—or the awakening to which Foucault's historical work compels us—can only be

held to expose quite specific contradictions in our tradition. It is quite true that the actual forms of life in our past and our present have indeed betrayed and distorted the ideal of equality on which so much of our tradition has prided itself. Nonetheless, even his most vivid demonstrations fail to establish the eternal necessity of power as the essence of all relations.

To insist that the future cannot ever be anything other than the past reduces history to myth or tragedy. This has no better basis in rational argument than the contrary conviction that a bourgeois identity in a competitive society has already begun to approach the ideal of autonomy it has taken as its pole star. Nor does either Foucault or Lyotard have any basis on which he can insist that a person who claims to have experienced moments of equality in a personal encounter, or in the exchange of knowledge, is simply giving way to a fantasy. Such an experience does not logically require a prophetic answer to the question of a general, public, and social transformation of all relations. It need not assert the privileges of a metaphysics to preserve itself from doubt, nor does it stand or fall as a philosophy of history that claims to have the future in its rigid grasp. The consciousness of such a moment need not, in Benjamin's phrase, be "shot through with splinters of messianic time."⁶

Not only does Foucault deny the chance of a different existence in the future that vivified hope for the enlightenment: he also denies the vision of tragedy in which the human figure is at least able to separate itself from forces of fate while it fails to make a future. This deeply archaic embrace of fatal power is widely represented in the rhetoric of postmodern culture where it rejects and devalues the most fundamental elements of integrity in human experience and in human relationships of equality. The primary invective weapon of an anxiety weighed down by fatal powers is wielded in the notion that the alternative view is "naive." Any idea of an alternative condition for which that experience gives the measure is, accordingly, "utopian."

Contemporary rhetoric shows its own sharpest sense of a vulnerability to illusions here. This construction of a naive present as the most hapless ground to have under one's feet, and of a utopian future as the most hopeless goal toward which one sets a course through time, indicates how heavily the high hopes of modernism now weigh down the intellectual inheritance of this century in a history of failures. The "naive" element is to be feared as something that, accepted without due investigation,

skepticism, and intellectual sophistication, lays one open to a superior eye looking on from higher ground--for us, this will be the eye of future historians. Our own historical consciousness of how our fathers failed reminds us how close we always stand to the same process of exposure. The chastening of any hesitation to embrace an intellectual pessimism must be feared as imminent, and therefore any utopian dream leaves us open to the humiliation of a sudden awakening under the gaze of those who might take pleasure in watching the small drama of our delusion. Our inferior viewpoint first holds us trapped as an unwitting spectacle of helplessness; the end of the delusion brings knowledge that we had not known what the others knew. Instead of release from the previous bondage, it suggests that one has no grounds on which to trust oneself.

There is another side to this, nonetheless. The word "naive" also implies something inborn, native, and perhaps, as a birthright, part of a strength or endowment not given from elsewhere, or dependent for its existence on whether or not it is allowed for by the discourse that rules over a public domain. There is a sense of a "utopia" that comes about by completing the thought that begins in a place to which the recognition of a particular public sphere does not extend. The "no-place" of this completed thought is not an image, not fixed, and not closed. It has none of that finality of a picture representing the sum-total of what legitimates a given, explicit, public order, or the ideal in whose name the forces available in that order are mobilized and disciplined. It is, though indeed perhaps nothing else, the space beyond the reach of established powers, the place at whose borders hopes for an existence outside the cycle of power begin. This implies something that may have a firm presence in experience even though it may fail to be "presentable" in the domain of a particular social order.

One really needs to ask why we witness such eagerness to mock the "naiveté" of an immediate strength of experience, and to discount the "utopianism" of hopes for a life that grows up around the center of that strength. The rewards of the circulation that Foucault takes to be absolute--the pleasures afforded within differential power--may have the advantage that they can be put on offer in a visible demonstration, but they have the disadvantage that they are only visible to the eye of power itself. If such visibility is made paramount in deciding whether something exists or not, then no pleasures exist outside the specific field of power, or field ruled by the particular game, in which they are pursued.

But an endowment of life need not play along with that game. The possibility of an independent form of pleasure, or the happiness of a more personally based structure of identity, therefore poses a threat to that game itself, to the particular social order in which the "isomorphisms" of differential power are codified as a system.

There is a paradox here, for Foucault, like Lyotard, rejects the project of finding a totality in human experience that "seizes reality" and provides the medium in which the image of man appears, yet the only order of relationships he can describe, and the only order within which he can identify an object for his desire, requires an ordered system in which power can be developed and manifested as this spectacle for its participants. The paradox comes about because, for him, that image in which reality appears as a complete picture is no more than the distillation of an authority vested in the total fabric of a particular historical order. He has to oppose that authority, because it does not offer him a place among the victors. The identity that he adopts through his own style of activity only inherits a place among the vanquished. While Foucault identifies with those who have been deprived of power, the object of his desire is victory. Therefore the claims he makes for his position oppose authority in order to transfer a desired measure of the power it possesses to himself. That is, he accepts the challenge implicit in the rule of power as a defining principle for how he will act. His acceptance takes the form of a reply to that challenge which the prior order of power has already laid down.

Thus his fundamental philosophical relationship to tradition and to history is to challenge a closed order so that it recognizes the force of his rejection, and in so doing, even in resisting him, acknowledges his presence on his own ground alongside existing powers, as a player in the game of powers. The tactical position he devises to enter the game successfully is defined in the nature of his challenge. He only needs to establish his resistance as an additional identity among those already acknowledged by the game. The gesture of defiance and rejection of the reigning order is only the ruse of a challenge--it effects his participation directly in the tension he initiates by his provocation. He desires to enter into the conflict for the sake of what the conflict brings, and his desire for victory contradicts itself in that it has no alternative order to set up as a basis for human relations. The announced object of victory--complete domination of the field--has a quite different significance in the actual

exchange between powers. It forces the opponent to continue the struggle.

If this victory over the possibility of peace answers the question "win what?" then it gives a strikingly limited meaning to the declared purpose to "activate the differences and save the honor of the name." The differences activated in this tension are the narrowest imaginable, signifying differentials of power only. The honor of the name seems to be restricted to designating the markers by which the score is kept in a competition. The disruptive attack on totality also figures as a ruse because the image of that totality is wholly created by the form of this challenge addressed to its opponent. Foucault does not oppose the object of his challenge in order to end its rule, but in order to capture its acknowledgment. He does not oppose the ruling condition in order to end the conflicts in human relations, but in order to enter the realm of conflicting relations in the game of power whose rules continue to run without opposition through all he knows of human life.

The projects of fragmented power within which Foucault can feel his own authority predominate can only subsist fully when he can detach his discourse from the demands of the larger structure. The concept of "the whole of society" and the obligations that domain would impose on him are therefore his enemy. To accept a responsibility toward "the whole of society" would, he states, impose "impossible conditions on our actions because this notion functions in a manner that prohibits the actualization, success, and perpetuation of these projects." He therefore concludes, in much the same manner as Lyotard, that "'The whole of society' is therefore precisely that which should not be considered except as something to be destroyed."⁷ The phrase he uses at the end of *Discipline and Punish*, namely that in the complex centrality of power "we must hear the distant roar of battle,"⁸ indicates that he too thinks of war as the emancipatory response to an opposing view. Yet he remains dependent on the recognition he has forced from this enemy by the threat of refusal--because his refusal is a form of engagement that cannot continue as indifference or survive as autonomy.

His battle remains tactical, not decisive. He does not have the capacity to separate himself absolutely from the condition in which he finds himself, and create or initiate a fully new condition of emancipation. He has only the limited ability to insist on presenting and sustaining a new role within the field of differential recognitions.

The words he uses, "actualization, success, and perpetuation," all name the same condition for his desire, namely victory, but can only signify victory in the perpetually self-repeating moment of its successful actualization. The emancipation of his situation therefore emerges quite explicitly as a project of power in the sense that it devises a role which may compete successfully, actually, and perpetually against the claims of the whole of society. He marks this as success by the element that appears on the surface as new and contradictory of what had been allowed a place before. He establishes the difference in his position from competing situations by an apparent provocation of the whole. His proclamation of the death of man implies defeat of the image in which the claims of that society are embodied, namely the integral dignity of the person.

Because his viewpoint gains all its significance by the force of tension with those it challenges, the belligerent form of relations excludes a dialectical interaction. Wherever he begins to imagine the competitive relationship, whether it be at the level of an individual encounter, or whether it contemplates a larger resistance to social norms, he does not observe the philosophical rules of engagement that begin with a measure of mutual recognition between rational positions and admit the possibility of mutual critique between different conceptions of reality or totality.

The total foregrounding of agonistic relations here is tantamount to excluding the very possibility of a rational encounter between opposing positions. This gives a precise definition of that global division between the two grand confederacies that holds, on one side, for all the various ideologies that claim a rational basis, and the opposition on the other side that discounts any claim to "reality" as fantasy. Though the social realities of relations between different interests may indeed contradict the theoretical claims of such ideologies to establish a unified, rational field of relations in the general order, the basis of a rationalistic ideology always invites all subjects to enter into the domain it defines as reality. The philosophical confrontation of one notion that claims to be rational with another must replace an integral image of the person that it destroys in its opponent with the very alternative image in whose behalf the dispute is conducted. If Marxists account for the theories of psychoanalysis as bourgeois subjectivism, they still offer a place in history for those who surrender their ideology and identify with the material interests of the revolutionary class. Similarly, if psychoanalysis interprets the self-

abnegation of party discipline as a transferred mechanism of parental authority, it still acknowledges the personal development that grows beyond that obedience.

It must be stated here, of course, that the universal salvation for these or any other specific dogmas of totality is mythological. Since the universal reality that such doctrines imply cannot be brought about, and cannot gather up the whole of humanity in the harmony of enlightened assent, the struggle by any particular, historical ideology of totality against other kinds of consciousness goes on without end. This presents the idea of utopia in a most particular form. This is no longer the space of a future that begins with an actual experience of a limit to the harsh relations of a general condition. Nor does it build the larger hope to escape the pervasive "isomorphism" of a present racked by power. Any program derived from a specific dogma inevitably turns the promise of this otherwise excluded or denied experience on its head. These dogmatic utopias begin with a general image of perfection and then endeavor to contract this universal framework around every participating life. Their dream of universal enforcement, and the institutions in which they marshal their resources, are entirely shaped by the necessity of an unceasing drive against the unredeemed domain. In that sense, the process of relations between these specific visions of totality in history and those who question them remains, as Lyotard protests, a platform of terror.

The moment that any totalizing doctrine reveals this dependency on power, and therefore loses any liberating role it played as a critical opposition in relation to another center of power and coercion, one can say it becomes antiquated. The picture of the world and of human relations on whose foundation it is erected as the "truth" reveals itself as a crude overstepping of the rational limitations of knowledge, and exposes itself as mythology. Thus, in recent history, the revolutionary idea of a socialist state transforms itself from an idea of the "Left," as an opposition to an existing concentration of arbitrary power, and reappears on the "Right," as the manifestation of a barbaric and fantastic idea of what state power can promise, and what it can justify by that promise. Nevertheless, this primitivism or mythologism becomes antiquated by its failure to maintain a proportion between itself and the content of that promise, the promise of a completeness and fullness of human relations, or the promise of totality.

The difficulty for the alternative in anti-metaphysical positions is that while a position like Lyotard's does turn back the absolute claim of terror to co-ordinate the whole of experience within one construction of reality, it still accepts the rights of what might be called "micro-mythologies." The dogmatic refusal to acknowledge a concept of reality at all simply redistributes terror to smaller and more intimate domains of power. The great mythologies that aspire to name the whole of reality are simply monopolistic versions of what in postmodernism reappears in smaller, more privatized, undertakings to circulate the same commodity. It is true that what Foucault names in those "projects" is not the reality that runs throughout society and establishes a single face of truth for all its citizens, but nevertheless the honor of the name here, as in Lyotard's belligerent invocation, is the right of naming that comes with power. Since that right of naming shifts with power, it therefore stands as the mark of success wherever one power can impose a name on its own actuality. The idea of an "experiment" in such a context does not leave the door open to another shift. The form of an experiment undertaken to emancipate our understanding should open itself to an unprevisioned result proceeding from that which is yet to be demonstrated. It lets something else determine how its outcome will appear. An experiment that is motivated entirely by postmodern ideas of desire only tests the strength of the resistance established against it. If, like a probe undertaken across disputed territory in a military maneuver it finds an opportunity to advance, it holds what it has gained by shutting out the riposte. Once such an "experiment" has been installed, its role changes to perpetuate that imposition against the resistance of another power.

Because the theory of knowledge here is enclosed so thoroughly in its own fundamental model of erotic relations, it is caught up completely in the paradox that it would achieve its self-destruction by the complete elimination of its opposing position. That opposition is the necessary partner for the competitive process of knowledge in which Foucault engages. An anti-metaphysical theory of knowledge cannot occupy the totality of a society, since it can only become active as the opposition to a notion of reality. This theory can proceed to risk its power against the challenge of totality, and win its reward of pleasure by dominating it, mocking it as a slackening, and demeaning it as a feeble nostalgia for presence, the weak attempt to find reassurance from doubt in a fantasy.

The reverse situation, or the complete occupation of a social order by one totalizing view, does transform the thinking in that view by turning it into an absolute authority, but it does not contradict the process of its self-propagation. The difference between these two orders of power can therefore be expressed in what the metaphor of war hides and reveals. The appeal of a totalizing ideology is not made in the name of terror for its own sake, but in the service of that most terrifying of mirages, a war to end all wars. The reply of postmodernity is the war against this war. Between these two gaudy spectacles, it is hard to find the glimmer of peace. In the complexity of their conflicts, and conflicts between orders of conflict, however, one can begin to analyze the nature of this dazzle and distraction that confuses the eye. It is inherent in the excess of this all-consuming publicly enunciated clash of words that it should so often convince us that nothing we might experience outside those discourses of attack and counterattack could possibly be more than a private fantasm caused by a trick of these lights in the play of the shadows they cast.

The metaphysics of an image that looks upon itself as reality can contemplate seizing the "whole of society" as the scene of its truth because metaphysics dramatizes itself as the spectacle of the world as revealed to an absolute eye. An "anti-metaphysics" cannot even theoretically do without the continuation of the struggle. It requires the opposing desire, or the desire of the opposing eye, as the scene for its own actualization. That is to say, the roles it takes on by the actions of naming and self-naming require a stage. Since they are not the face given and recognized by nature, but masks given or taken up by arbitrary will, they require the recognition that only another, opposing, viewpoint can give.

The pleasure of being is the pleasure of being acknowledged, and the pleasure of knowing is having one's knowledge known. This eroticizes the conflict with that "whole of society" which Foucault announces he only recognizes as something to be destroyed. But he limits his destruction to breaking up its monopoly of power. He requires that it survive as the longing for a restoration of its lost totality. The longing he thwarts by his own assertion of success lives on in his triumph and the defeat of his opponent, which then bears witness to his power. The pleasure he takes in his project is the pleasure of an identity drawn as a line about his own transgression of society's claims. That transgression is, as Jürgen Habermas declares in his sharp critique of postmodernism,

essentially conservative.⁹ It depends on the continuation of a given body of relations against which a particular refusal and even rebellion can be enacted. The discourse of a transgressive desire that is fulfilled as an expression of power can only continue as long as its persona has a role and a target of its address.

There is, in other words, nothing revolutionary at stake here. The reality of the battle, with its real casualties and real loot, remains within the order of relations already established by a competitive society. The struggle over command of institutions may change those institutions, and may change their relationship to other centers of influence. We know that the order of theory and practice in the universities has changed, and continues to change. But the debate over whether this should go on, or whether we should go back, has already lost sight of a deeper change. The language that draws a line between two opponents, and draws them into a struggle over victory for one side or the other, has shut out the light of something different in the future from the mere promise of power that accrues to one side or the other. This even applies to such binary terms as "public" and "private." If the meaning of the dividing line is exhausted in the differential power it expresses, then the two sides are simply articulations of the same thing in the relationship of this mutual interaction and reciprocal definition. The public domain remains property of the private, and the events or discourses of the private domain remain "isomorphic" with what is visible in the public realm.

To move from a theoretical model to a literary image, let me quote from Franz Kafka where he writes in his "Reflections on Sin, Pain, Hope, and the True Way" that "One of evil's most effectual arts of seduction is the challenge to battle. It is like the fight with a woman, which ends in bed."¹⁰ As one would expect with a statement of Kafka's, this requires some interpretation and expansion before one can set it at the head of an argument. In particular, the gynophobia in the image needs to be put aside by changing the polarity of gender, but since this describes relations of power, the simile is just as persuasive as the fight against a man that ends in bed. The essential point Kafka makes is that what appears as "evil" here is not really a difference between the two parties, but the failure of a difference.

The attempt to break off the relationship represents an attempt to assert freedom. The essential principle of this seduction on the part of what Kafka calls "evil" is that this freedom must be denied. Neverthe-

less, his image represents a situation of unequal strength between the party who decides to choose freedom and the one who resists. While the struggle must end with "victory" for the stronger party, this victory fails in its bid to change the situation. It would appear that if freedom were a matter of strength, the struggle would confirm the choice to end the relationship. But the relationship itself is determined from the outset as an expression of this difference in strength, and is so moreover from both sides. The woman is not the embodiment of evil or the seducing agency. The struggle is the same on both sides with the sole exception that where the pleasure overcomes the decision to choose freedom it arises in the weaker party through an identification with the power on the stronger side, while the pleasure on the stronger side arises out of the identity with the victory. If desire is drawn into the entanglement of power, then pleasure is obtained at the cost of freedom. On the side where there is greater strength, the seduction turns desire toward the possession of power in one's own situation. On the side of lesser strength, freedom is seduced by desire turned toward the power contemplated in the person who dominates. On one side it is the submissive pleasure in the power of the stronger party, on the other side, the dominant pleasure of victorious strength in oneself. In both cases, whatever the sex of the parties, the erotic defeat of a bid for freedom has the same name. The seduction takes place through the expression and experience of a differential in power that overwhelms both parties.

The motivation that began the process is lost in this actual course of events. The desire that prompted the bid for freedom cannot be the desire for no relationship, but for the right relationship. The thought that sets the struggle in motion begins with the consciousness that the struggle is with evil. The lure of the challenge comes from hope for the good that seems to be promised by victory. That good is the image of another relationship. The tragic outcome of the struggle is not that it ends in bed, but that it ends in the wrong bed. The hope for the right bed disappears in the perpetually retreating shadow of the "unpresentable."

The process cannot begin without the prospect of an alternative, or a glimmer of hope. And only at that point can the concept of evil arise to extinguish that hope. It is only the prospect of an alternative relationship, not the prospect of total self-sufficiency, that might prompt one party to abandon the situation. Such a decision must founder, however, if the order of society, were there is only power, seems to demonstrate that any

other option is simply unreal. An image of loneliness does not inspire one to the effort of struggle. If isolation and silence were indeed the only alternative, there would be no choice, no freedom, and therefore no need for seduction by evil either. The desire that motivates the initial decision to separate oneself from an association in which one does not feel free begins with the persuasive force of something met with outside the domain of power. It begins with the strength that questions the right of that domain to mock all such knowledge as naive or unreal, and imagines the possibility of meeting such strength in another person. This desire imagines a relationship that is not realized in struggle or rooted in power, namely one of equality.

In equality, two parties meet one another by recognition of a truth since desire is directed to the other person, not to the making of a role within a structure of power. In the language of equality our discourse causes us to search beyond general formulations or situations to find what is specific, or real, in the other. The relationship of equality cannot include an interest on either side in our imposing an image on the other or our having one imposed on us. Only where there is no difference in power can the real difference in two independent persons transpire in a dialogue of recognition and acknowledgment. Kafka's image suggests that the Hegelian dialectics of master and slave can only induce one to engage in a process of untruth.

If the idea of "evil" figures individually as the loss of freedom, and collectively as the loss of an opening to the future and the possibility for the freer movement of our history, then Kafka's image can be drawn on as a critique of an erotics of knowledge when that knowledge is limited by the erotics of power. The true pleasure of a difference is only known when the separation of power gives way to the touch of equality.

It may be true that the postmodern project of knowledge does emancipate expression and experience in domains of pleasure that hitherto were subaltern. It may also be that it is highly desirable that these domains should throw off restraints imposed by something that derives its authority from the claim to represent "the whole of society." Nevertheless, the form of conflict that had hitherto defeated the claims of a banished pleasure could not arise from the real interests of the whole of society if the defeated claim had been for equality. No pleasure can be denied equal value if it only claims the right to equal value, and if the pleasure is based on giving equal value to those who participate in it.

Moreover, only the condition of equality permits one to accept the idea of "the whole of society" as having the legitimate function of judging and excluding, because equality can legitimate the rejection of power and inequality, whereas a merely coercive will cannot oppose power by right, but only by conquest.

Foucault does not recognize such an "innocent" or non-coercive right of exclusion in society, nor does his theory recognize the qualification of relationships, either sexual, or of any other kind, in which elements of coercion, degradation, exploitation, or other devaluation are not a part. On the contrary, the "isomorphism" of such relations imposes the condition that there can be no real content in the idea of "the whole of society." That idea simply designates the net structure of predominant and vanquished forces. To enter into the agonistic nexus of that condition simply means mobilizing the capacity to conquer a subsidiary space of one's own in that structure. One therefore conforms to the pre-existing condition of interacting forces. Such a response does not contemplate a revolutionary struggle to free oneself from this network of struggle, but to enter into it as a full and heroic participant. The power of seduction that subverts and co-opts these domains of pleasure draws them into the struggles defined by the whole of society through these isomorphic relationships. Yet success in the projects of those pleasures means acknowledging the rule of hierarchies that have pervaded the whole of society only in order to destroy any chance that such a real combination of interests implied by "the whole of society" could ever exist. Foucault's determination does not make any sense as the attempt to destroy the whole of society. His theory only argues for participation in the relations that exist precisely because there is no "whole of society." The relations of power or terror that characterize the given condition articulate a mythological totality. His critique of centralizing mythologies limits its purpose to breaking up the monopoly that now excludes his particular desire from the play of those relations.

There cannot be a coherent community of relations if society is based on connections of power. The closest any such entity as the whole of society could come to articulating its claims would be in the form of a particular balance of forces. This is not a domain of real interests, or real freedom. It excludes or marginalizes some interests by terror, but those it includes within its margins are not free. It holds them in thrall by seduction. A balance of forces redeveloped to incorporate some subaltern

forms of experience and expression will not be an emancipation, but an extension of seduction. Within the conception of equality, by contrast, freedom for any group cannot possibly be in conflict with the idea of freedom, or with the idea of relations of freedom in society as a whole. Therefore when Foucault or Lyotard declare war on totality, on reality, or on the claims of a general society, they are actually playing into the seduction of that which already fragments society. While they quite rightly expose the claims of "reality" in the authority of this fragmented society, they only preserve its essentially authoritarian structure by exploiting the irreality on which it is based. They simply seize a share of the power that circulates through it. Thus, their pleasure in the erotics of power confirms the place of pleasure in the negotiations of power. To use a more traditional vocabulary, their negotiation with the reigning situation perpetuates the mediation of power through commodities by introducing further varieties of commodified pleasure into a more highly articulated circulation.

This incapacity to offer a decisive way beyond the reigning forms of social order is certainly recognized within the domain of what may variously be described as postmodernist, or poststructuralist, or post-metaphysical thinking. A different kind of society freed of superstition about sexuality, or the cruelties of disproportionate economic and political privilege, require that a new condition would be established beyond the origins of the old, but postmodernism aspires only to establish a corner where these origins are consigned to oblivion. Therefore it does not find another existence, but only manages to gain admittance to one corner of the same bed.

The paradox of postmodernist polemics balances an extreme rhetoric of warfare with the most moderate project of accommodation. The restraint in poststructuralist thinking is most evident in Jacques Derrida, who from the earliest stages of his work refused to be drawn into claims that he could offer an alternative to replace the traditional terms of metaphysical reasoning.¹¹ Despite this, his careful restriction of the project merely to "situate" those terms produced as intense a response as though it were indeed proclaiming a revolutionary new epoch. Clearly, the immoderate reception that would have been in keeping with some strident commitment to a programmatic "postmodernism" flared up around Derrida's work because it touched an anxiety at the heart of postmodernity. The experience of the century which we now evaluate in

retrospect presents the lure of grand passions as the danger of grand deceptions, and identities formed by grand commitments as the seduction by great illusions. It is naiveté that is most feared in the shadow of that century, and images of utopia that are most resented.

The apparent watchfulness prompted by those anxieties does not preserve us from seduction, but makes us all the more vulnerable. Seduction is the appeal to a less individual desire as a means to overcome one that is more individual. Because we are always looking so anxiously for a sign, and demand the most explicit sign as the best bet, we are helpless before anything that offers us the simple assurance it is not a deception by promising only the fulfillment of the emptiness we can already see in the sphere of general discourse. That which is most individual and specific in our desires therefore fades in hope. If it does not receive the mark of visibility by participating in the confrontations of the general sphere, and if it does not receive confirmation by its conformity to the isomorphism of what reigns as the ubiquitous and therefore inevitable order, then the moment of individual experience evaporates as mere fantasy.

Jean Baudrillard takes up the issue of this apparent contradiction between a philosophical intention to favor emancipation, and the effect of setting up a philosophy of desire based on complete mistrust in the content of individual experience. The essay he wrote in 1977, "Forget Foucault," presents a very similar view to that conveyed in Kafka's image, and states that "power is executed according to a reversible cycle of seduction, challenge, and ruse."¹² And on this basis, he answers his own question, "Why have all the *symbolic* resistances failed in the face of fascism . . . ?" by citing the power of challenge and seduction. He writes that "Only challenge can arouse such a passion for responding to it, such a frenzied assent to play the game in return . . ." (62). Foucault, Baudrillard argues, has not been able to evade being drawn into this game, which now takes the form of "'micro' fascisms" (63). These correspond to the micro-mythologies generated by the fascinations of power that Foucault's historical analyses simply "downshift" (63) into a more rapid and supple exchange.

Nonetheless, without the alternative concept of a totality, which we understand here as a relationship to a reality that has the potential to be equally available to all subjects without distinction, Baudrillard himself fails to evade the same trap. In conversations with Baudrillard conducted

in Paris and Rome from 1984 to 1985 and included under the title "Forget Baudrillard," Sylvere Lotringer makes the point, to which Baudrillard is delighted to agree, that his own philosophical standpoint has been negotiated by precisely the same strategy as all power: "You adopt the imperceptible insolence of the servant challenging his master (his intellectual masters) to take him seriously. Calling your bluff would mean getting entangled in your game. But to evade your challenge still amounts to lending you a hand. . . . You are both playing the same game" (*Forget Foucault*, 133).

The analogy with fascism, like the metaphor of war, is nonetheless not to be taken too far. The tactics actually pursued at the battlefield seem more familiar than they really are because the desire for victory is so familiar, and not all the combatants are as conscious of their own self-contradictions as those most adept in postmodern styles of critique. If the battle-cry "there is nothing but the text" is adopted with (naïve) enthusiasm as though it were a divine revelation, and if some partisans would like to bring about a universal deconstructive salvation, then we see the dogmatic utopian impulse has resurfaced here too. And if this slogan is applied as a shibboleth with total discriminating authority in the effort to set up the elect ranks of the deconstructors at the centers of privilege and power, this only demonstrates the point made by Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor that the world will always be ruled by those who lack the imagination to see anything in it but power and privilege. Yet the inability of such ideas to preserve themselves from falling into such misuse is something they have in common with the best-intentioned doctrines of totality. And if the surplus force that turns into crude institutional power in the case of totalizing ideologies arises from its content of moral imperative, it is the language whose aesthetics displaces existence that gets out of hand in the case of anti-metaphysical theories.

Only the alternative of equality provides a theoretical idea of universality that conforms to neither of these confederated enemies. Only the desire to allow full and equal strength to another voice that answers and yet differs from one's own provides a philosophical and critical conception of totality that endeavors to unseat any doctrine by which a permanent or necessary division or privilege is justified. Postmodernist polemics oppose the idea of "reality" above all things because they take it to stand for a metaphysical basis of authority; yet one can just as easily understand this idea in quite another way--simply as that which does not

take its authority from power. Reality does not have to appear to constitute the basis of knowledge, but only refuse to appear at the behest of power. In the discourse of equals, it appears as that which resists the intrusion of power to end the process of fair exchange. It therefore also resists the exorbitance of what Foucault calls "freedom perceived as a power game" (*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, 253).

To play within the limits of reality respects the equality of all freedoms. It requires neither the fixed, abstract terror of an artificial moralism, nor the mobile terrorism of a nihilistic aesthetics. When Foucault writes that we may play out "the aesthetics of existence" as a demonstration of the power to violate another's reality, he accepts an extreme loss as the price of whatever pleasure may thereby be gained. We separate ourselves irretrievably from that existence and are left with nothing but our own aesthetic caprice in its place. To exploit the opportunities of inequality means to lose the encounter with another, and to exist isolated within a circle of power. It means to disappear as a real presence known by another, and to appear instead as the mask of one's rank in the artifice of inequalities.

The attack on totality by this thinking therefore advances in two waves. Both elements begin with the conviction that totality rests on a utopian mythology. While one of them is a useful critique, the other gives way under the pressure of its unfulfilled desires and rationalizes its own domain of fragmented necessities. The impetus that drives that side of the assault proceeds from the conviction that these desires will emancipate themselves by pursuit of an alternative goal. Thus Foucault asserts that "the rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (*The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 157). The goal here, the fragmentation of desires within a field of agonistic relations of power, cannot be compatible with any idea of totality, or any idea of reality, because these relations cannot be reconciled with the idea of equality. They only acknowledge identities formed in situations of conflict. From the perspective of equality, these goals offer nothing for the future. From this perspective, too, the forms and manifestations of power cannot be other than abstract or displaced objects of desire. Desires fixated on power are necessarily bound up in their own illusions, because power is inextricably committed to admitting only one point about which knowledge is organized, namely itself.

Nonetheless, the actual history made by the idea of totality has indeed produced its own utopian delusions as a result of very much the same principle. The desire that is compatible with totality may not remain consistent with itself if it produces an explicit image of "the whole of society." The paradox of totality precludes any representation that claims to portray a complete structure built on equal relations because the image itself would take precedence over the reality. That reality by its definition has to reconcile a multiplicity of viewpoints, to which no single image can be adequate. This notion of reality accords a quite different status to the opposition between the presentable and the unrepresentable. By the same token, the same restriction of perspectives by relations of equality confines the claim of the rational, and redefines rationality as that which comprehends its own limitation.

Wherever postmodernism undertakes the other, more useful, side of its attack, directed not against the idea of totality, but against the delusions necessitated by a particular image created or defended by a historical dogma, it may be said to work with the philosophical idea of totality despite itself. The reason for this lies in the logical and historical contradiction between dogmas with totalizing ambitions and the demands to be met in a condition of totality. The second side of that attack can therefore advance from a correct perception of the illusions that rule ideologies on whose standard any such closed image portraying "the whole of society" is born aloft.

Concealed by this double attack, therefore, though almost invisible between these conflicting forces, the possibility for a totality still survives by the propensity to equality in the consciousness that refuses to be reduced, or to reduce another, to a mere "situation" amid a reigning balance of forces. Foucault seems, despite himself, to invite one to find a way beyond the bleak adventures of subjectless power, a power which, he says, "is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." That which Foucault passes over so quickly as exterior to power, the "endowment of strength" whose experience one person may communicate to another as the content of such a consciousness, opens up a field of equalities rather than battles. Access to that endowment of strength means a different kind of truth from any that the larger field of combat defines. That endowment is the unique capacity in each person to speak for him or

herself. It therefore implies something very different in the quality of the language it permits. For both speaker and hearer the strength of the individual voice carries a unique gesture marking the site of one person's experience as an origin of speech that can never be duplicated.

Such speech can never be freed of doubt, since that which cannot be duplicated can never be transmitted like an object and held fast in a fixed structure of meaning. It resists all conquest. Nevertheless the exchange in such an experience may indeed "preserve certain consciousnesses from doubt," but only because it preserves the participants from the compulsive necessity to suppress their doubt. In this sense it is the only course that can offer such "preservation," precisely because of the futility in any artifice of myth and dogma that seeks to impose an abstract, unvarying structure of meaning on the phenomena of human interaction. The doubt endemic in fantasies of seizing reality, or of fantasies that one has formed a total image of reality, does not threaten a consciousness that establishes itself in a field of equal relations. That doubt only grows disruptive and requires terror to hold it in check where authority proceeds from the center of a grand illusion. Contemplated from within the order of equal encounters, the realm of power activated to keep doubt at bay simply marks the beginnings of irreality beyond human interaction. The identities that for Foucault displace the individual subject in situations defined by relations of power in any social order are therefore places of a doubt to which he simply ascribes the value of truth as the ultimate instance of freedom from illusion. Yet those identities are not freed of illusion. They are masks lost in isolation amid the grand masquerade that orders the places of power in perpetual conflict. The preservation from doubt in conditions of equality does not occur through the suppression of doubt by the terror of an imposed order, nor does the experience of equality overcome the threat of doubt by embracing it as the element of a virile consciousness. The relationship of equality includes a relation to doubt that contains no threat.

Any idea that universalizes a fixed notion of reality, and attempts to overreach itself as the foundation for a domain of absolute relations, falls prey to the irreality of that ambition. That hypertrophied notion of reality then grows antiquated. It has to be discarded as a dangerous and inhuman mythology. At the same time, the idea of reality as that in the name of which all persons may find equal access to the truth cannot grow

antiquated. It is the only alternative to the archaic rule of mythology, to relations of power, inequality, and terror.

Notes

- 1 In Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1984), p. 82.
- 2 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et. al. (New York, 1980), p. 117.
- 3 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1985), p. 215.
- 4 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality vol. 1 An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1980), p. 157.
- 5 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Michael Sheridan (New York, 1973), p. 387.
- 6 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), p. 263.
- 7 Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard & Sherry Simon (Ithaca, 1977), p. 233.
- 8 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1978), p. 160.
- 9 Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," trans. Seyla Ben-Habib in *New German Critique* 22, Winter 1981, p. 13.
- 10 Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China*, trans. Willa & Edwin Muir (New York, 1960), p. 279-80.
- 11 In *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore, 1970), p. 271, Derrida responds to a questioner: "I did not say there was no center, that we could get along without the center. I believe that the center is a function, not a being--a reality, but a function. And this function is absolutely indispensable."
- 12 Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, trans. Nicole Dufresne (New York, 1987), p. 43.

Jutta Held

Paradigms of a Feminist Art History

A basic tenet of feminism, one which lies at the root of a variety of feminist political stances and theoretical frameworks, states that gender is socially constructed. In other words, all debates on the subject of gender relations begin with the assumption that society, and not biology, determines gender. The concept of the social construction of gender has also gained acceptance outside the bounds of feminist discourse, although the implications of this understanding of gender have been interpreted in a variety of ways.

I

A belief in the fundamental equality of the sexes characterized the first politically militant phase of feminism. Epistemologically, this understanding falls under Cartesian idealism, which states that the mind and consciousness determine individual subjectivity, and that identity is centered in consciousness. The body, and with it biological sex, exist outside the subject and are controlled by consciousness, the central authority of self. The mind itself is genderless, and thus, according to this humanistic or enlightenment definition, the determination of each human being does not rest with the body and biological sex. Only later are individual subjects fitted into their respective gender roles, and it is the ideological status of these gender roles which feminists seek to uncover and do away with. The well known practice of consciousness raising was used to promote the educational enlightenment politics of early feminism. The principle of equality, postulated by proponents of the enlightenment but never actually realized (and with regard to the equality of the *sexes*, only halfheartedly supported), became the focus of feminist political efforts. Feminists sought to establish equal treatment for women in all areas of society, particularly in the workplace. The concept of affirmative action, which was instituted to enforce the principle of gender equality (occasionally by resorting to strategies of *unequal* treatment for some), is grounded in the humanistic or enlightenment orientation of the earliest phase of feminist politics. Behind this strategy lies the utopian goal of a society made up of free, equal,

II

If during the first phase of feminism the principle of gender equality provided the impetus for feminist theory and political practice, during the second phase it was replaced by the concept of gender difference. Gender was no longer regarded as merely an accident of birth, but was instead recognized as a fundamental determining factor not only in the development of identity, but also in the shaping of attitudes and behaviors. The centrality of the humanistic subject in modern epistemology was negated or even eliminated, replaced by a definition of the subject as a point of intersection for external determinants, discourses, texts or practices. In "locating" this point of intersection in the entire body, the unconscious gained significant influence in the formation of identity and the constitution of subjectivity. Gender is no longer to be thought of as a mere appendage to genderless consciousness, but rather as something fundamentally interwoven with the identity of the individual. Using traditional epistemological terminology, one could describe this theory as "materialistic," or, in the language of the poststructuralists, as "de-centered and de-centering."

During this phase, it became impossible to avoid a masculine/feminine dualism, and as a result, the goals of feminism had to be defined in new and different ways. In both theoretical analyses and practical politics, the main issue involved attempts to understand power relations and to redistribute the balance of power between men and women. Feminists no longer sought to erase gender difference through the enlightenment politics of consciousness raising, but instead to examine and radically change the consequences of gender difference. During the first phase of feminism, feminists had relied on a consensus model like that of Habermas--one which focused on negotiating, from a range of acceptable possibilities, one compromise which would both satisfy and fulfill the universal laws and requirements of human rights. During the second phase, however, Lyotard's maxim of justice replaced that of Habermas. It states that every social group--men, women and minorities alike--ought to be allowed to develop autonomous and segregated ways of life without fearing that access to the apparatus of power be withheld from them.

During this second phase, feminists no longer focused on the politics of integration, as in the question of quotas, but instead on strategies of separation. In an effort to discover and develop a uniquely feminine culture, debate centered around issues specific to women, leading to the

establishment of interdisciplinary fields of feminist research. The economy of reproduction was discovered--I'm thinking here of the debate over housework and housewives--although research into the female contribution to *production* by society ideally belongs to the first phase of feminist studies. The family, interpersonal relations, (women's) daily life, and the (female) body became the subjects of feminist studies, as well as the arts. Women's studies programs, women's networks and women's cultural centers were developed and established. The slogan "The Personal is Political" belongs to this phase of feminist activity.

III

What art historical questions were formulated and discussed within the framework of these two phases of feminism? It all began with a question posed by Linda Nochlin in her now-famous essay: Why were there no great women artists? The answer does not lie in women's natural lack of artistic ability, but rather in the many social and psychological obstacles confronting women artists on both institutional and informal levels. Linda Nochlin warned women art historians against trying to discover the female Michelangelo--she didn't disagree with the male judgment that there weren't many great women artists, only with the explanation of why this was the case. Nevertheless, as a result of Nochlin's work, an extremely productive phase of art historical research began, one which went a long way in correcting the old image of women as artistically inactive or incompetent by virtue of their gender. Linda Nochlin herself made a start in this direction by coauthoring (with Ann Sutherland) a groundbreaking catalog entitled *Women Artists*. This work offered the first broad overview of women artists and their artistic production from the middle-ages up to the present day. In Germany, Renate Berger was the first to produce an extensive study of women artists, one which, like that of Nochlin, has since become a classic.

In addition to women artists themselves, the image of woman in the works of male artists provided the first feminist art historians with a second important area of study, resulting in a wealth of feminist research. However, few have dealt with the question of how the portrayal of woman within a particular context--be it defined by myth, allegory, or either sacred or profane iconography--reveals something about the historical situation of women. A more popular subject of study focused on the moral attitudes of the men creating these images of women; this

research brought to light a veritable flood of misogynist notions. Carol Duncan was the first to point to the crass sexism displayed by the seemingly progressive painters of the early 20th century. This artistic modernism, which had already been criticized by the left as the avant garde of modern capitalism (for it rarely represented progressive positions in a social or socialist sense of the word), also fell into disrepute with feminists for openly upholding patriarchal traditions.

IV

During this discussion among feminists on the status of modernism, a revealing controversy arose over symbolic violence against women, leading many to rethink theoretical and methodological modes of analysis. Within feminist art history, this controversy marks a transition to a second phase of theoretical discussion. The collection of essays entitled *Blickwechsel*, in which, it seems to me, this programmatic transition was first carried out, now provides a point of departure for a reopening of the controversy from a more advanced theoretical perspective. Like Carol Duncan, Renate Berger had viewed the deforming of the (usually female) body, which has been common practice among modern painters since expressionism and is often accompanied by highly revealing commentary from the artist, as a type of misogynist symbolic act. Sigrid Schade and Ines Lindner, on the other hand, called attention to the fact that one is not dealing with a *direct* attack on women (even if it is graphically portrayed). Rather, the artists are engaged in the symbolic destruction of a fictional female image which, given its implied norms, already does violence to women and ought to be destroyed. It is then easier to accept that the modern painters carry out an act of destruction on a false symbolic order, than that they respect all aspects of that order, including the intact female body.

Those feminist critics who accused modern painters of committing acts of symbolic violence against women arrived at this judgment through a hermeneutic mode of analysis. They inferred from the artistic phenomena an essential center of meaning--actual violence against women--which was symptomatically reflected in the images. Statements about reality were drawn directly from the images in the pictures. On the other hand, defenders of these acts of artistic destruction, drawing on the insights of New Criticism, identified a level of fictionality which operates according to its own laws and cannot necessary be understood as an analogy to

daily life. According to this point of view, artistic practice operates within its own symbolic system, and the individual elements within the system cannot be isolated and correlated with different levels of reality (such as the actual social relationships between men and women), as was attempted in early Marxist efforts to show similarities between the foundation and superstructure. These more recent approaches appropriate a fundamental insight of structuralism: that the individual elements of a symbolic system do not bear direct relation to reality, but only systematic relation to other elements on the fictional level. Thus the meaning of a representation cannot taken as a reflection of reality, however broken, but as the constitution of the relations and oppositions of the elements within a system itself. The individual element, in this case the deformed female body, cannot in and of itself be semantically defined, but only within the context of the complete artistic configuration, as well as the absent artistic repertoire. Thus it is not the individual element, but only the the process of signification which is meaningful. To use the old Marxist terms, art cannot be thought of as (direct) reflection of reality, but rather only as a relatively autonomous communicative practice with its own rules. In more recent terminology, we speak of the "construction of meanings." Rather than simply researching women, this second phase of feminist theorizing is concerned with the investigation of historically shifting gender relations, as well as the analysis of symbolic systems, systems of representation and discourses. Here an important question must be asked: just how is patriarchal power exercised within these systems? Staying with the example I used earlier, the main issue is not to illuminate the individual phenomenon of violence against women, but rather to investigate the formal rules of an artistic system and the masculine violence or supremacy which is interwoven within the structure of this system. The meanings and values articulated through this system are identified and relativized as one-sidedly masculine or patriarchal. The theoretical feminist attack is not directed against individual meanings, but against the entire system. This is the reasoning behind the strategy of deconstruction. This strategy shows the influence of psychoanalysis, for it is essentially concerned with working out unspoken, unconscious meanings--the part of a text which asserts itself or marginally rebels against the intentions of the author. In our case, operating from a feminist point-of-view, we see the values of masculinity and femininity as the fundamental opposition in a symbolic system, the two sides of

which are in no way equally weighted, but rather lend the basic structure of this system of meanings and values an asymmetrical shape.

In an effort to deconstruct the patriarchally-structured artistic system (of modernity), the myth of the artist has been identified as a central referent within this system. Using very different bodies of work, even images that would, on the surface, appear to pay homage to women, Griselda Pollock, Silke Wenk and Elisabeth Bronfen have described the myth of the male artist's original creative power as an actual point of reference. I disagree, however, with Griselda Pollock's assertion that "the" Marxists have held on to this myth of the artist simply because Tim Clark, whom she criticizes, supposedly assumed the masculine perspective of the artist in his analyses. One need only be reminded of Brecht's question, "Who built the seven gates of Thebes?" or Benjamin's essay on the author. Whereas the Marxists relativized the work of the artist in the name of material production, the feminists, trained in psychoanalysis, problematized the notion of an omniscient male artist by looking at his creative act as an act of violence, one which ignores the factors and contexts determining the artist. In my opinion, the issues of priority and emphasis in dealing with this question are not so important. A greater problem seems to me to be if and how it is even possible to make differentiated statements about works of art using this very general, and historically inconcrete, description of artistic work as the confirmation of autonomous (masculine) agency.

V

As I mentioned earlier, specifically feminine practices and fields of study were discovered during the second phase of feminism. This included the entire field of reproduction, which had been neglected by the Marxists who base the formation of any value in production. The investigation of cultural processes gained in importance, and since these processes are closely tied to the constitution of subjectivity and the formation of identity, a further domain of psychoanalytically-oriented feminist research also opened up. Within this context, we find an interest in the inherent legitimacy of systems of representation and discourses, since cultural practice and subjectivity are structured and articulated via the meanings produced within these systems of representation. However, as a rule, poststructuralist feminist research has failed to distinguish clearly enough between, on the one hand, a primary, psychoanalytically-oriented

constitution of subjectivity, and on the other, culturalization through particular systems of representation, beginning with language. Ideological processes are thereby assigned exclusively to the domain of the subject, transforming them into problems of subjectivity.

Only during this phase of feminist studies, after feminists were able to establish a relatively independent, if marginalized, place outside the dominant cultural system, were they able to make sexual difference a point of departure for their research. This had formerly not been possible, given the integrative approach of the first phase of feminism. For most feminists, however, "Art" remained an intact, unified value, and they continued to accept the usual categorization of modernity as gender-neutral. Only on this new level of reflection could a scholarly work such as Griselda Pollock's study of impressionist painting (which I consider one of the best examples of feminist deconstruction) come into being. In her analysis, Pollock is not primarily concerned with revealing the number of women involved in impressionist painting, although she does show that female impressionists did indeed make significant contributions to the artistic production of the time (even though their work is, to this day, still largely ignored). Pollock focuses instead on revealing the patriarchal character of the entire terrain of modernity, as staked out by the impressionists and appropriated by the art historians. The radical changes and modernization accompanying urban development, as symbolized by the streets, squares, gardens and suburbs of Paris, could only be conceived of and experienced by men. The consequences of Haussmann's modernization of Paris were different for women than for men, and women's experiences were not reflected in the impressionist works of male artists. The city of the *Flaneur*, defined as *the* experiential realm of modernity by Baudelaire, the impressionists and Benjamin, was a purely masculine domain, a gendered space where, once one assumes a feminist point of view, the imbalance of power between the sexes becomes increasingly obvious. Thus a main concern in the analysis of systems of representation lies in uncovering the one-sidedness of representative compositions, just as Marxist analyses revealed the classist character of symbolic systems.

VI

The Marxist approach, which, after 1968, made a sociohistorical orientation to art history possible, is structurally quite different from that

of the feminists. These differences can be traced both to genuinely feminist concerns and the general scholarly trend toward poststructuralist models. The deficiencies of the poststructuralist mode of analysis, when applied unconditionally, also have an effect on feminist approaches. In the following section I would like to discuss several critical points which, in my opinion, require further consideration.

Generally, one cannot overlook the fact that those articulating a poststructuralist feminist discourse have closed themselves off from other discourses. In so doing they run the risk of creating a self-referencing system, one which not only does not acknowledge any criticism from the outside, but also does not practice any itself. This contradicts, of course, the original goals of feminist intervention.

As far as I know, on a more technical level the question has not been raised as to what extent feminist theoretical and methodological strategies are compatible with other approaches, such as, for example, the old subject-specific methods. In a discussion of the conference "The Gender of Allegories" by Susanne von Falkenhausen, I read that the speakers made use of a wide variety of different methods, including iconological analysis and discourse analysis. This approach was evaluated positively in that it promoted the peaceful and friendly coexistence of different methodologies. But would it not have been more productive to have asked to what extent iconology itself describes a discourse, a coherent system of meanings, which, according to Foucault's definition, is subject to particular rules? Or if one is convinced that discourse analysis is a useful methodological tool, could one then reformulate iconology according to discourse analysis by emphasizing its pragmatic, communicative aspects? In this manner, one could both influence and ultimately change a central theory of traditional art history.

In my opinion, more serious is the tendency not only to block oneself off from "strange" theories, but also from areas of reality outside of one's own discourse. One can already see this "abstaining" from reality in the ever-shifting terminology which has replaced the clear definition of terms used in the early 1970's.

If, in 1970, a central concern lay in trying to grasp the logic of historical processes, today one speaks only of "stories." History has been reduced to that which scientists, thinkers and artists have perceived as individuals and then constructed according to generalized rules of narration.

Deconstruction has moved into the position once occupied by the critique of ideology. As I mentioned earlier, I do see that this new methodology has called attention to previously neglected concerns, particularly the effect of imaginary, unconscious mental processes on a "text." Deconstruction limits itself, however, in that it takes the position of an author against the author--that is, deconstruction can only point out contradictions within an individual work. The critique of ideology has been rejected with the argument that it holds on to absolute claims of truth. But even if we leave it open as to whether or not we can afford to do without claims of truth, it still remains an achievement of the critique of ideology that it is able to tie together different levels of reality--it both uncovers discrepancies between these levels of reality, and considers the historical conditions and requirements of systems of representation. In order to criticize inappropriate social and historical claims, the critique of ideology attempts to conceptualize the whole, or the connections between social processes. One doesn't have to focus solely on the foundation-superstructure model, one which assumes a rigid relationship between *the* reality and its ideological variations on the ideal level. This model does not do justice to the differentiation among various social practices. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that different social practices determine one other, and it continues to be necessary to research this process. Art history could also contribute to attempts to illuminate the interdependence of different areas of reality and discourses.

Not only among theories of history and methodologies do we see noticeable shifts in feminism, but also within the subject matter itself. During the first phase, women and men were the topic of feminist research, and it was the concreteness of this subject which lent early women's studies its strength. Since then the focus has moved to femininity and masculinity. The real, identifiable social groups have vanished in favor of a description of the imaginary. The "dirty reality," as Stuart Hall expresses it, is kept at a distance. One can, he says, write very elegantly about the Other, without knowing what it means to have to live as the Other, be it male or female. These paradigmatic changes and the accompanying tendency to choose more removed systems of representation as the sole object of analysis certainly have something to do with the transfer of feminist studies to the academy, particularly as academic feminism now has little contact with the types of social movements from which it originated (although it is questionable whether

or not these social movements even exist today). One would expect that a field of study which evolved, not to work within a fixed paradigm, but from a desire for social change would still orient itself toward complex, real problems, whether they belong to the past or the present day.

VII

At this point, I've reached the problem to which this conference seeks to call attention--a problem which, without a doubt, also concerns feminist politics and feminist studies. To review the development which I have just sketched out: the starting point for feminism in its first stage was the basic equality of the sexes and the demand for equal rights for women. A second feminist paradigm, one which is still favored today, emphasizes gender difference, making it the point of departure for feminist strategies and research. On the basis of this second paradigm, the focus of feminism shifted from the demand for consensus to that of tolerance. For this reason, an aspect of this later feminist model, one which was developed with a certain sense of inevitability, involves a tendency toward particularization both within the social movement and academic feminism. Regardless of how we try to explain the advent of new social movements within capitalist countries, it is certain that the relative strength of these movements since the 1970's has pointed to a crisis within the state and also contributed to its ideological decline. The result is a weakening of societal unity, the concept of a "common good" which the state claims to represent, and the social totality which is tied to the state itself. The demise of the socialist states seems to have speeded up this process in capitalist countries. Slowly the state has begun to remove itself from social and educational politics, and to concentrate on the center of its existence--its (military) control function. (It seems that this area of influence also slipped away from leaders in the former socialist states.)

The new social movements and their academic paradigms, including the feminist movement, the ecological movement, the peace movement and the movement to promote race relations (one which has hardly been touched on in Germany), have moved into position beside the first discourse of opposition--Marxism. All of these movements express doubts about current power relations and question the legitimization of these power relations through the authority of the state. This development is certainly contradictory. The "de-centering" of social groups is

definitely tied to an increase in individual initiative, plurality and political sophistication. The takeover of former state functions by social groups could be heralded as the "dying of the state." Reality, however, looks very different from the conceptions of a socialist utopia. Wherever the state has pulled out, the market has pushed its way forward with a show of power and the accompanying brutalization of societal relations. The new paradigms, along with their social potential, not only relativize the claims of the state, they also limit one another. It was, for example, difficult for the old leftists to accept that class conflict, which Marxist analyses had systematically identified and proven on every level, was not the one and only radical and fundamental conflict, the one by which all other power relations could be explained. Attempts to "fuse together" Marxist and feminist theories were unsuccessful. Most came to accept the fact that different theoretical approaches could not be synthesized into a single unified system, but that next to each other, overlapping, so to speak, the different approaches could provide more complete explanations of social phenomena.

Like the various discourses, cultural practices have also separated themselves from one another. The acceptance of meaningful symbols for all groups within society disappeared with the ideological weakening of the state. Women could no longer unquestioningly accept the concept of *fraternité*, a postulate and motto for the left since the French Revolution. The pluralization of general cultural norms once guaranteed by the state is reflected in the loosening of strict standards for liberal arts curricula in schools and universities.

In historical research, different perspectives led to the discovery of new topics of study and research into a variety of problems. Commonalities within a discipline began to disappear. Feminists began with women as the focus of study, and later concentrated on gender relations, ignoring any further social determinants of their object of study. The politicization of the feminist perspective was only made possible through this isolation of emphasis, although in academic work, this one-sidedness was received as an unmistakable deficiency. As fundamental as the historical category of gender is, all social phenomena are the products of a variety of factors, and it is this interweaving of determining factors that must be analyzed.

In addition, a discourse must be developed between various theories in order to overcome the separation of different approaches without simply lumping them together. In this way, individual discourses could

contribute to the development of a multidimensional mode of analysis, one which would take into consideration the combination of different factors in the constitution of a historical phenomenon. Only then could one appreciate the multifaceted origins and functions of such a phenomenon and be able to identify the ways in which these factors engage and play off of one other.

For example, the social position of woman and the functions of symbolic representations of woman in modernity are only recognizable if one takes into consideration the drive to conquer and understand nature, the formation of the state and its agents, and its politics of war and peace. It is not enough simply to consider the social structures, such as the family, in which women were directly involved.

In art history, our findings are limited when we only account for areas where women are overtly thematized, such a nudes, love scenes or images of sexual violence. The overlapping of different significations and functions within one image can only be adequately understood when one also considers the relationship of this type of image to other common images of the time, such as the concurrent depiction of nature in landscape paintings or the common portrayal of the martyr in the early years of the modern state.

The image of Judith murdering a man--a common subject of early 17th century paintings--could not be regarded as a positive image of a strong woman, nor simply as the defamation of a woman hungry for power. From the perspective of the modern state, this image supports the decline of local authority and autonomous justice systems which the state sought to appropriate. We must continue to focus on the entire structure of social constellations and its representation in art. Feminism's discovery of new problems and areas of study, such as new artistic repertoires in art history, can only be welcomed, but the same cannot be said for the development of a separate, marginalized feminist iconography and research. This tendency within women's studies has a resigned air about it, one which is tied to a willingness not to participate in a discipline as a whole or in society as a whole. Social totality as postulated by scholars cannot be abandoned, although it can no longer be defined as a hierarchical structure in which different social voices are silenced, or are assigned a subordinate status.

Translated from the German by Jennifer Redmann

Jost Hermand

**Beyond the Parameters of the Cold War:
The Greening of a New Social Identity**

After capitalism had triumphed over communism in the Cold War, it appeared to many leftist intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences in the western German states that their former sympathies for a noncapitalist social and economic system were suddenly suspect, if not anachronistic, obsolete, "out." Today, most of these former leftist intellectuals consider the allegedly "free-market" economy to be the best possible social order, and in dialogues with intellectuals of the Second World as well as those from economically exploited countries in the Third World they praise it as the only possible form of government. In reality, this type of economy is controlled by the state and large monopolies, but they nevertheless promote it as a democracy, that is, government by the people. In the 1960s and 1970s, these leftists had still been willing to weigh the possibility of a third solution to the binary opposition between capitalism and communism in the framework of a constructive Ostpolitik, but after 1989, a clear black-and-white contrast began to emerge in their thinking. This contrast was ultimately reduced, as in the worst days of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1950s, to an unquestioning opposition between pluralistic and totalitarian societies. Thus all further distinctions have come to appear simply superfluous to many of these intellectuals.

As a result, Karl R. Popper's positive model of "the open society" has re-emerged today, either overtly or covertly, in virtually all discourses produced by the Federal Republic's humanists and sociologists, be they conservative or liberal. This is surely because such a concept, with its idealistic abstractness, suggests a high moral concern rather than a profit-centered economy, in which the iron law of supply and demand prevails. As nominally democratic, liberal, postindustrial, or postmodern ideological tropes with all of their carefully differentiated variants and theories, such discourses present the current free-enterprise system as a society based on information, service, risk, or entertainment in order to highlight its boundless wealth of opinions, differences, possibilities of experience, and constant technological innovations. If one grants credence to such

opportunity. This so-called "open society" is supposed to lead, in turn, to increasing democratization, that is, the dismantling of social hierarchies, the stripping away of art's aura, and so forth. We read over and over again that no one has to submit to collective concepts in such a society, that a diverse and invigorating coexistence of discourses, feelings of difference, and individual departures from mainstream behavior flourish here, and that we can confidently dispense with all the hidebound identity-forming values derived from traditional political, religious, and/or social institutions. The advantage of such a system is allegedly based on the destruction or decentralization of old, compulsory moral systems. Sometimes, the only tangible criteria that survive such a levelling are gender specificity or "direct experience."¹

By comparison, every so-called "closed society" must from the very outset take on a negative appearance when measured by the slogan, "Pluralism on our side, totalitarianism on the other side." The proponents of open societies continually dismiss "closed societies" as the political realizations of ideological discourses or utopias that have been forcibly transformed into social practice--in short, as despotic power structures that necessarily lead to unfreedom if not outright enslavement. Wherever the champions of pluralism discover a teleological outlook which would dare to profess a belief in the possibility of historical progress--in other words, one which would favor an ideal totality over a multiplicity of opinions--, a lockstep thinking immediately leads them to a hasty equation of totality with totalitarianism. This equationism originated in the theorems of totalitarianism which arose during the immediate postwar period (Hannah Arendt, Louis Fischer, Theodor W. Adorno, Karl R. Popper) and continued with unrelenting harshness during the Solzhenitsyn debate of the French New Philosophers (Bernard-Henri Lévy, André Glucksmann) and the poststructuralist polemics of the 1970s (Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida). These thinkers aimed to expose a tendency toward brutal totalization in any political, social, or cultural discourse that dared to uphold firm teleological concepts, which they depicted as simply authoritarian.

In the 1950s, this kind of thinking was clearly a repudiation of fascist and communist regimes and reflected the prevailing "brown-equals-red" outlook. However, these thinkers then proceeded to scrutinize many other systems of power--technological, institutional, sexual, and aesthetic. Their polemics generally originated in the premise that totalizing

discourses necessarily limit or suppress individual freedom or particularity; totality, they maintained, is always based on generalizing, universal, logocentric, or phallocratic discourses that falsely presume a clearly recognizable "subject of history" or other sorts of overarching concepts. Among the adepts of poststructuralism, this attitude resulted in a sweeping rejection of traditional concepts of totality and the enthronement of a new paradigm based on decentralizing polyinterpretability. As Paul de Man put it,² this paradigm leads to "the uncovering of heretofore hidden fragmentations within alleged monadic totalities," thereby valorizing particular discourses which need not bear any relation to a larger whole.

Today, almost all opponents of poststructuralism feel that they are pushed into the defensive. In the official discourse of the Federal Republic, exhilaration at this decentralizing pluralism has become so widespread that hardly any intellectual asks him- or herself whether the universally lauded pluralism may not also be a so-called master discourse which aims *a priori* to disqualify all other political, social, and economic discourses. Is this kind of society really as "open" as it is so often proclaimed? Granted, it is neither fascist nor communist, but isn't it clearly dominated by a culture and opinion industry, a conformity, a levelling standardization, a material fetishism, a passivity, a technical rationalization and automation--in short: by a profit-oriented one-dimensionality behind which a capitalist oligarchy, with state support, controls an economy whose most important strategies include the principle of indirect regulation or "social engineering"? Is everything that the critics of this system--from Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse to the young Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Jürgen Habermas, Oskar Negt, and Alexander Kluge--is everything that these critics attacked suddenly no longer true, simply because this system has claimed a temporary victory in the final struggle for the world? Does today's democracy, which claims the mantle of pluralism, really qualify as that government of the people whose first champions stormed the barricades in the name of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity"?

Under close scrutiny, the concept of a pluralist society also reveals a pronounced ideological character, albeit a skillfully concealed one. At its very foundation lies a largely elitist attitude, which is vigorously promoted by those scholars in the humanities and social sciences to whom the consortium of political and economic powers-that-be within the

Federal Republic have granted an academic ghetto in which they are certainly free but relatively ineffective. While one category of intellectuals--those pursuing a career within industry and government--are required to show an affirmative, pragmatic stance toward political and socioeconomic reality and the mechanisms of mass media's instrumentalization are set into motion against the majority of the remaining population, another category--the academic humanists and social scientists isolated in their ivory towers--are assigned the task of either contributing to the "psychic unburdening" of society's upper classes (Odo Marquard) or pinning the famous fig leaf of freedom onto those ideological and cultural developments which in fact are only all too predictable. Consciously or unconsciously, most academics embrace these assignments, in part because they themselves are no less influenced by the reigning mass media and the conglomerates that stand behind them. To be sure, there are also those individual academics who see their role as the "monkeywrench in the works," so to speak, but even they are often too easily content with their status as outsiders or a decentering, evasive attitude that no longer relates to society as a whole. Their stance at times resembles the Marcusean strategies of "separatist fringe groups" which coalesce either around their sexual identity or gender-specificity under the motto of "The personal is the political." As commendable as these strategies may be in their oppositionality, they often remain helplessly isolated. These processes of ghettoization and separatism have on the one hand allowed the humanities and social sciences to move into the privileged, outsider position that they currently hold, but on the other hand they have simultaneously consigned these disciplines to a peripheral role, producing alibis or excuses rather than comprehensive social perspectives.

The outcomes of this marginalization, with its concomitant losses both for society and any sense of reality, are becoming ever more apparent in the emergence of academic specialties and an unmistakable ivory-tower mentality. This outlook is producing ever smaller, isolated circles of discourse and communication which attempt to evade the world of profit and technology through a proliferation of subdiscourses. As described by Pierre Bourdieu,³ the *homo academicus* produced by this system no longer insists on universal social relevance but instead replaces all larger connections with the professionalized discourse of his or her discipline. Disciplinary interests largely overlap with personal professional interests,

and this correspondence results in the hectic preoccupation with professional status, bloated committee activities, and other symptoms of such a narrow subsystem. As a result, coherent answers to pressing social questions are rarely formulated anymore in today's humanities and social sciences, in which any concept of national, social, and cultural values has evaporated, leaving a residue of naked self-interest. Today, these disciplines principally market competing theoretical models. If anyone within these professionalized service disciplines speaks out politically at all nowadays, it is generally only to strike out at the specter of communism and fascism, rather than daring to work out new political and socioeconomic value systems.

Because of their academic blinkers, many intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences in the Federal Republic--highly favored beneficiaries of the current economic order--no longer notice how deeply they are imbedded in a system which has largely spared them menial work by delegating it to foreign workers or by exporting it to the Third World. On the basis of their situation's privileged abstractness, in which the mechanisms of exploitation are becoming ever more invisible, these academics are rapidly losing sight of prevailing technological and socioeconomic conditions and blithely speak of today's postindustrial society of information and entertainment, whose members primarily pursue a self-realization that has been painted as pluralistic. This viewpoint has a catch, however. To be sure, these academics rarely have a bad conscience, but they do evince a more or less pronounced feeling of uneasiness, which even the calculated optimism of certain adepts of postmodernism is unable to dispel. In the end, these intellectuals are also to be counted among the victors of the decades-long Cold War, but they can scarcely gloat in light of today's crises--that is, they are dimly aware that we live in a social system which, despite its ideological triumphs, is threatened by relentless competition, high national debt, and cyclical economic crises. We all know that unrestricted population growth, overindustrialization, and unscrupulous plundering of nature could well lead to massive ecological catastrophes. Some scientists even predict that within 40 to 45 years we could pass the "point of irreversibility," after which the ongoing pollution of earth, air, and water cannot be reversed.⁴

One might think that the prospect of ecological catastrophes would suffice to jolt academics in the humanities and social sciences, who are otherwise so enmeshed in this system, out of their complacency. Little

of the kind is happening, however. A Green party does exist, of course, but its ideas have so far hardly penetrated academic discourse. Because of the prosperity that these academics enjoy, and because of a natural world that is clearly ailing but nevertheless continues to look "green," many of them continue to focus exclusively on their privileged problems--namely subjectivity, alterity, and whatever else they understand as mainstays of a pluralistic democracy. They presently live in the best possible world that has ever existed for people of their kind. Thanks to technological advances and the reckless plundering of nature, the political establishment is able to grant academics in the humanities and social sciences the opportunity to partake in a relatively widespread prosperity and to live with a nearly unlimited degree of freedom--but only so long as these academics do not question the basic premises of a system that rests upon the fetish of a constantly accelerating rate of economic expansion. They consequently possess a genuinely high standard of living, a type of freedom that is obligated to the system, and a green, albeit diseased environment. Concerning the consequences of their position, they either let appearances deceive them, they despair, or they simply close their eyes when they become aware of the situation.

In many instances, this privileged fringe group's emphasis on subjectivity and pluralistic models of society is informed less by the notion of democracy than of marginality. Instead of confronting the problems of the majority of the population and committing themselves politically to these, many academics in the humanities and social sciences allow themselves to be drawn into ever smaller communities of communication. In fact, many of them clearly restrict themselves to the philosophical sphere, focusing on questions of linguistics, reception, or semiotics, or what Roland Barthes apostrophized as "the libidinous pleasure in the text." Whereas earlier philosophers hacked through the jungle of discourses and strove toward the light of truth, today's intellectuals often lead their readers ever deeper into the jungle, leaving behind not only the older master-discourses but also all conceivable avant-garde ideas that rest on so-called preestablished guiding concepts. The result of such a position, which merely attempts to oppose the order of "an administered world" (Theodor W. Adorno) with mind-boggling disorder, finds its best expression in the writings of the French poststructuralists at the end of the 1970s. Jean Baudrillard, for example, claimed that, after the cessation of all discourses seeking real truth, there would no longer be such things

as responsible subjects or the possibility of liberation. Such statements may be seen either as pessimistic or as complacent. In any case, the poststructuralists give us permission to simply disregard any endeavors that require political or ideological commitment. In fact, resignation seems to comprise the very attractiveness of their discourses.

In keeping with market requirements, the advertising industry and mass media continue to condition the Federal Republic's lower classes to see the meaning of their lives in the most standardized material satisfaction of needs possible and to satisfy their aesthetic and emotional yearnings with bestseller novels, television series, and omnipresent pop and rock music. Consequently, the tendency prevails among many intellectual fringe groups--be it from snobbery or an aversion to the one-dimensional strategies of business conglomerates--to distinguish themselves as much as possible from conformist tendencies. Therefore they accentuate the individual, proclaiming the existence of identity within the non-identity of cultural and consumer products long since rendered generic by the emphasis on mass consumption. Because of this split, many academics in the humanities and the social sciences favor the abstruse, the hermetic, and the remote, while segments of the lower classes prefer intense illusions or explosions of violence because they are incapable of an intellectual or "psychic unburdening."

In view of this problematic situation, it seems to me to be short-sighted, if not outright blind, to continue to cling to black-and-white oppositions like open and closed, democratic and totalitarian, one-dimensional and pluralistic. These oppositions do not encompass the advantages and disadvantages of the full spectrum of possible social arrangements. The tendency toward totality as well as that toward pluralism can ultimately be either deeply tyrannical or deeply humane. The answers to questions like these depend not solely on the formal structure of such discourses, but even more on their ideological orientation and their social implementation, since they also involve value judgments. Gender-specific discourses, for instance, may be completely emancipatory and humanistic by virtue of advancing the equality of previously suppressed groups. They may also, however, tend toward the totalitarian when they hold up their own discourse as the only important one and thus, in monomaniacal restriction, make it the sole standard of all aspirations toward freedom.

The same characterization applies to the so-called master-discourses

of Christianity, bourgeois liberalism, and socialism. They cannot be initially characterized as either positive or negative, but must always be seen as highly complex contradictions between ideal premises and social realizations. We know that in practice, they have often received inhumane expressions. Christianity has called for crusades, the violent conversion of heathens, witch-burnings, and tyrannical asceticism, all in crass contrast to the precept of brotherly love. Bourgeois liberalism, which spoke of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" in the French Revolution, later approved a nationalistic attitude which encompassed the worst forms of exploitation, imperialism, and colonialism. And socialism, which was originally the hope of the disinherited and the disenfranchised who joined together in brotherly solidarity, and which hope to end forever man's exploitation by man, was later misused all too often by pseudosocialist dictators as a justification for their own power ambitions.

Such murderous atrocities do not, however, automatically discredit the basic values of these worldviews. Although they may have deeply compromised themselves in social practice, their ideal concepts remain the most positive available and should not be thoughtlessly sacrificed to an ideological suspicion of all so-called master-discourses and thus to a nonbinding pluralism. On the contrary, in order to oppose the mass media's continuing attempts to conceal the suicidal plundering of nature with superficial diversions, academics in the humanities and social sciences must not limit themselves in the future to a cacophony of ever-narrowing, isolated discourses. They must also propose guiding principles that again relate to a larger social whole. In the process, they will also need ideas such as "liberty, equality, and fraternity" which infuse Christianity as well as liberalism and socialism. In other words, if they are really interested in conducting a meaningful debate about survival, they need not only to support pluralistic concepts but to develop a new sense of totality as well.

Rather than continuing to replace the concept of "totality" with a decentralizing pluralism or even to equate it perfidiously with the concept of "totalitarianism"⁵ in order to denounce all collective goals as dangerous forms of political activity that can only issue in tyranny, academics in the humanities and social sciences ought to emphasize more strongly than ever the ideological strong points of those worldviews that have been slandered as master-discourses. At the same time, these intellectuals need to point out that an ideology is not automatically totalitarian because it

favors totality, for only those outlooks are totalitarian which elevate a single discourse to the status of exclusive validity. This distinction applies especially to the renewed popularity of equating brown with red, a distortion which Ernst Nolte and Joachim Fest have used with regrettable effectiveness. Socialism, because it endorses international solidarity, necessarily supports the concept of totality, while Nazism adheres to totalitarianism because its first premise is the superiority of a single race, namely the Aryan one. Thus Marx and Lenin were by no means forerunners of Hitler, although Hitler was fond of the term "socialism," albeit always in an exclusively nationalistic sense. Even Stalin cannot be compared with Hitler. Let me put it this way: within the self-definition of fascism, Hitler was undoubtedly *the* most perfect fascist imaginable; within the self-understanding of communism, Stalin counts among the worst dictators that history ever produced. In the end, however, such personalizations of ideology are beside the point. Hitler's "perfection" does not speak *for* the idea of fascism, just as Stalin's crimes do not speak *against* the idea of communism. Similarly, we cannot judge the entire phenomenon of Christianity solely in terms of a brutal conqueror and missionary such as Hernán Cortés or, likewise, bourgeois liberalism according to a merciless imperialistic colonizer and diamond-mine owner such as Cecil Rhodes.

In the future, academics in the humanities and social sciences should therefore not put their hope in pluralism alone, regardless of how much it may satisfy their individual interests. For these interests will someday no longer have the central meaning that they do today for the privileged upper classes of highly industrialized nations, when global economic, social, and ecological conditions worsen. In the future, critical inquiry will necessarily once again have to address the problems of society at large in order to avoid relapsing to universal barbarism brought on by intensifying crises. It is therefore important to recall the still unrealized postulate of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," each of whose individual components will surely have to be integrated much more rigorously than in the past.⁶ Liberty without both equality and fraternity led ineluctably to our present predicament—namely, liberty for the politically and economically advantaged as well as a special liberty for the academically privileged, while the socially disadvantaged still live in a society characterized by endemic economic dependence. In such a system, in which equality and fraternity cannot exist because of the structural

constraint of competition, liberty is not something that is common to all, but instead a privilege. Consequently, the three basic values of truly democratic relations--namely liberty, equality, and fraternity--simply fail to emerge in such a system, except for the most powerful or for social fringe groups.

In the Federal Republic, the potential for violence, which presently manifests itself above all in youthful vandalism, will therefore inevitably increase. It would be shortsighted to oppose such actions only with a larger police force, for it is ultimately not simple vandalism which precipitates the crisis but the economic and social conditions behind it. In some respects, these kinds of actions even provide cause for hope, since they express a deep dissatisfaction with the present form of society. This society does not even fulfil its most important promise--the satisfaction of basic material needs within a so-called affluent society--let alone satisfy the yearning for a different, better society in which the emotional and idealistic needs of all citizens would be addressed and provided for. The Federal Republic ultimately defines itself merely as "an economic framework," one which--in contrast to so-called totalitarian societies--needs no ideological foundation at all but instead sees its sole task in (to quote Ludwig Erhard, "Mr. Economic Miracle" of the 1950s) "erecting as few barriers as possible to the individual's personal drive for enrichment."⁷ Given such crass materialism, such eagerness to wipe out every manifestation of value and meaning, it should come as no surprise that discontent and vicious pleasure in aggression are on the increase.

I do not believe that these conditions can be improved through an even crasser materialism. Even if everyone in the Federal Republic shared in the feeling of prosperity, the crises would by no means end. Two reasons are primarily responsible for this dilemma. First, prosperity is always relative in a society based on planned obsolescence, in which one technical innovation rapidly succeeds another. Whatever satisfies the appetite for consumption today can be most unsatisfying tomorrow if the neighbors have already acquired the more technically perfect, more elegant model. Thus, a profit- and consumption-oriented materialism clearly cannot provide lasting satisfaction. Instead, it merely awakens an unslakable desire for the new and the different as long as no other values underlie it. Secondly, the craving for increased prosperity (in the form of more machines and more energy consumption) ensures that the economic expansion rate, the engine that drives all free-market econo-

mies, continues to accelerate at full throttle. At the same time, however, it promotes the murderous plundering of nature which must necessarily lead to as yet unforeseeable ecological catastrophes.

The Federal Republic needs a new political, economic, and ideological orientation if it is to have any hope of changing this course, slowing it down, or perhaps even halting it. This orientation would have to go beyond specifically selfish interests and once again regard society in its entirety. Instead of concentrating their energies merely on the further refinement of contemporary discourses on pluralism, academics in the humanities and social sciences should seek to develop a "discourse of discourses" opposed to the fetish of the economic expansion rate and its technological concepts of progress. Further, they should press for what Karl Marx termed "a regulated exchange of resources with nature" as well as the consequences that follow from it.⁸ It will not suffice to call upon the Federal Republic's populace, as did Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, to implement "a democratic asceticism" and then to fail to offer corresponding goals for fear of offending the prevailing concepts of pluralism.⁹ Without ideological concepts which apply to the entire society, most people will continue to see their own particular interest only in a selfish materialism—that is, individuals will continue to think only of themselves and their families. On the other hand, in order to foster any realistic hope of changing basic economic assumptions, the Federal Republic truly needs the vision of a social utopia, one concrete enough to inspire not only those who continue to live in poverty and hunger, despite all the promises of prosperity, but also those who are dissatisfied with the present ecological situation. Such a utopia must incorporate the idea of Christian brotherly love and the liberal postulates of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" as well as the ideal of a social utopia based on "freedom and order" as conceived by Ernst Bloch¹⁰ in order to pave the way for the kind of humane, egalitarian ecosocialism that authors of green utopias have envisioned since the novel *News from Nowhere* by William Morris appeared in 1890.

Anyone who wants to be taken seriously in the present debate over survival can hardly avoid including socialist concepts along with brotherly Christian and liberal-democratic values in his or her argumentation. Clearly, these must be concepts which are not beholden to the industrial system that gave rise to the socialist workers' movement in the second half of the 19th century. Because of these origins, communism

long insisted upon the same kind of industrial progress that characterized bourgeois liberalism and, to a certain extent, fascism. Obsessed with the fastest possible increase in the industrial rate of expansion, all three systems have stopped at nothing, not even the suicidal destruction of the natural foundations for all life, in order to realize that goal. We therefore must not continue dividing the world simplistically into open and closed societies, but should recognize the similarity among all systems which pay homage to the same notion of industrial progress. On this point, the capitalist system is in no way better than fascism or communism. These three systems are entirely different, however, when one considers their ideological ramifications. While Nazism strove for neither liberty, nor equality, nor fraternity, but subordinated everyone to an authoritarian Führer-principle, liberalism and socialism--at least in their noblest manifestations--always showed great respect for the postulates of humanity. Liberalism placed more emphasis on liberty; socialism revealed a greater concern for equality and fraternity. A new system of values would do well to use these ideological elements. If now imminent ecological catastrophes are to be averted, all highly industrialized societies must develop social models which incorporate a sense of collective responsibility for one's own region and its natural resources, a concomitant social identity, and a feeling of interconnectedness with all living things. Only in this way will it be possible to overcome that attitude which Christopher Lasch described as the "narcissistic" preoccupation with purely personal interests.

In such a society, the relationship to technology would have to be completely restructured. Neither so-called democratic nor so-called communist regimes have striven for a meaningful ecological balance in their respective societies. Instead, they have merely unleashed their economic power in a suicidal competition with one another, unscrupulously advancing the self-interest of their materialistic ideologies. It would not be enough, then, to find an alternative third way between supposedly democratic and supposedly communist economic systems--a way which would presumably combine freedom and equality, but in a purely anthropocentric manner. On the contrary, what a nation like the Federal Republic of Germany really needs is a model which would finally displace the prevailing anthropocentrism in favor of a biocentric stance, or at least one which more heavily favors the protection of nature. Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt, the earliest and

shrewdest critics of capitalism's reckless drive toward the domination of nature, spoke out adamantly in favor of such a position.¹¹ However, because the natural world in their day was still relatively healthy, they primarily engaged in philosophical and aesthetic contemplations of such problems. Today, on the other hand, truly drastic measures are needed to establish a protective relationship with nature. In its absence, the continued existence of nature as well as the continued existence of humankind become highly questionable. These radical measures would necessarily entail the personal willingness to sacrifice, including limiting births, rejecting unnecessary machines, dismantling nuclear plants, eliminating toxic waste, preserving forests, introducing widespread vegetarianism, abolishing private automobiles, limiting tourism, levying purposeful ecological and luxury taxes, and so forth. In the process, we would have to avoid notions of a nostalgic return to earlier stages of human development or establishing the sort of ecodictatorship advocated by Wolfgang Harich. On the contrary, with respect to the desired ecological balance, these ideas must preserve the degree of freedom that we have attained through thousands of years of human struggle; in short, we must serve not only the plant and animal kingdoms, but human beings as well.

In the Federal Republic, academics who would embrace such modes of thought could finally constitute an avant-garde which would no longer retreat from the problems of society at large into privileged fabrications of theory. By adopting a political position concerning industry and the population, they would be empowering that political party most capable of transforming progressive ideas into political, economic, and social practice—namely, the Greens. To be sure, scholars within these disciplines would have to transform the largely subjective syncretism of their pluralistic discourses into socioeconomic concepts of totality. In doing so, they would once again become critics, even fighters, who commit themselves to decidedly ethical postulates such as regional responsibility, the protective treatment of nature, and individual modesty, instead of dodging the urgent social questions that they dismiss as too dull by fleeing into the academic realm. They should resist the sort of resignation voiced by Dennis L. Meadows, who responded to the question as to why he had written no other apocalyptic book since his 1971 classic *The Limits of Growth*, commissioned by the Club of Rome: "There's no use arguing any more with a suicide who has already jumped out the

window."¹² All of those who parrot the mass media's ideologists and who consequently promise a better future only through a more hectic reflation of the economic growth rate must finally overcome their political passivity in the face of the continuing destruction of nature and show themselves worthy of the privilege of higher education as well as the relative freedom that they enjoy.

There are already models of such redemption. Petra Kelly noted that industrial growth is not really healthy growth, but instead a malignant tumor metastasizing throughout the entire world. Politicians, scientists, theologians, and writers have voiced similar sentiments, from Carl Amery to Jochen Bölsche, Hoimar von Ditfurth, Eugen Drewermann, Erhard Eppler, Joschka Fischer, Günter Grass, Robert Havemann, Robert Jungk, Jürgen Moltmann, Gudrun Pausewang, Günther Schwab, Dorothee Sölle, Antje Vollmer, and Günter Wallraff. The writings of all of these authors leave no doubt about technology's destructive effects on nature. The Club of Rome's most recent report even warns that formal democracies, which are controlled by conglomerates and which represent the prevailing form of government in today's world, should be replaced by social structures designed to protect nature.¹³ The report further claims that formal democracies have become politically obsolete because of their reckless obsession with profit and their merciless exploitation together with its attendant ecological havoc. I know that the present moment is extremely unpropitious for such ideas, because all state intervention into the economy has fallen into disrepute since the collapse of the so-called Eastern block. However, isn't this intervention taking place anyway in the form of arms contracts, space programs, public transportation projects, tax favors, and the like? Rather than merely touting the present economic system's superiority over Eastern block communism and thereby evading all other questions, it is time to measure it by its own standards, that is, by whether it indeed contributes to the welfare of the entire population and is, in that sense, truly democratic. Belated denunciations of communism to create a consensus for capitalism amount to "social engineering" in the worst sense and should finally be exposed as the anachronisms that they are. It is high time that German intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences bestir themselves to create a truly alternative, democratically and ecologically conscientious model for government and the economy, which would finally give their activity a relevant purpose in the larger social order. They should do so in a way

that best suits their disciplines, namely in a critically reflective manner encompassing a knowledge of history and leaving behind the sort of subjective indeterminacy that has permeated the academy over the last fifteen years, when reactionary speakers have unceasingly discredited all utopian alternatives. It will take the emergence of a collective consciousness for the Federal Republic to advance toward true democracy and simultaneously foster the survival of humankind.

Translated from the German by James Young

Notes

1 Cf. for instance Michel Foucault, *Von der Subversion des Wissens* (Frankfurt, 1987), pp. 18 ff.

2 Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979), p. 249.

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus* (Frankfurt, 1993).

4 Cf. Jost Hermand, *Grüne Utopien in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte des ökologischen Bewußtseins* (Frankfurt, 1991), pp. 186 ff.

5 Robert Welsch, one of the most vocal proponents of this attitude, states in his book *Unsere postmoderne Moderne: "Die radikale postmoderne Pluralität bricht mit diesen Einheitsklammern, die auf eine Totalität hoffen, die doch nie anders als totalitär ausgelegt werden können"* (Munich, 1987), p. 6.

6 Cf. my article "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. Die Postulate einer unerfüllten Revolution," in *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit. 200 Jahre Französische Revolution in Deutschland*, ed. Gerhard Bott (Nürnberg, 1989), pp. 31-40.

7 Cf. Jost Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1965* (Munich, 1986), pp. 221 ff.

8 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Hamburg, 1967), pp. 494 f.

9 Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, "Demokratische Askese," in *Stern* (1988), no. 33, pp. 50 f.

10 Ernst Bloch, *Freiheit und Ordnung. Abriß der Sozialutopien* (New York, 1946).

11 Cf. my article "Freiheit in der Bindung. Goethes grüne Weltfrömmigkeit," in Jost Hermand, *Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit. Ansätze zu einer ökologiebewußten Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 29-52.

12 "An Interview mit Dennis Meadows," in *Spiegel* (1989), no. 29, p. 118.

13 *Die Herausforderung des Wachstums. Globale Industrialisierung: Hoffnung oder Gefahr? Zur Lage der Menschheit am Ende des Jahrtausends*, ed. Club of Rome (Bern, 1990).

Robert C. Holub

**Fragmentary Totalities and Totalized Fragments:
On the Politics of Anti-Systemic Thought**

Totality has not been a popular concept in recent years, especially among humanists at Universities in the United States. Like other notions bequeathed to us by the enlightenment heritage--reason, tolerance, justice, equality, universal rights--for the past two decades totality has been considered a relic of a bygone era. The reasons for this dismissal of a once popular concept are not difficult to discern. Since the demise of student activism, civil rights activism, and anti-war activism, and the failure of any of these activisms to alter our social structure in a revolutionary fashion, most progressive thinkers have abandoned a leftist heritage that advocated examining phenomena as part of a social totality. During the late sixties and early seventies it had become an almost indisputable truth that the problems and inequities in the United States and in other Western societies could not be properly comprehended without recourse to the complex structure in which they were situated. To isolate one aspect was undialectical, thus one-sided, and at best misleading. To understand the world around us we had to have recourse to the mediations that explained phenomena as part of a process and of relationships with other societal manifestations. This view of a mediated and progressive social reality placed the notion of totality at the center of all progressive social analyses, whether these were undertaken as literary, cultural, or social studies. But this totality of Western Marxism, which formed the basis of much of the leftist thought of the sixties, and which Martin Jay does such an excellent job of explicating in his exhaustive study from 1984,¹ was discarded gradually during the course of the seventies. It not only became associated with antiquated and obsolete modes of comprehending reality, but sometimes was confounded in the most perverse fashion with notions of repressive political totalitarianism as well. In the wake of poststructuralism with its emphasis on nomadic thought, differences, différence, differends, and other such putatively non-totalizing concepts, even those who retained a progressive political agenda switched to the local, the marginal, and the socially emarginated.

Totality became synonymous with repression and obsolescence; at no time since it was first articulated in 1951 had Adorno's apothegm, "the whole is the untrue," appeared itself as the whole truth.²

If we consider modes of thought that reject totality, we will probably have to delineate two distinct groups. The first would consist of ideologues who abjure totality not necessarily because they do not aspire to a total view of society, but because they are theoretically incapable of grasping reality as a whole. In *History and Class Consciousness* Georg Lukács attributes this unwitting neglect of totality to the ubiquity of reification. Bourgeois ideology is characterized in general in the essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" as a non-dialectical way of thinking that treats phenomena with immediacy, rather than seeing their connectedness within a given society. Using jurisprudence as an exemplary realm in which reification is at work, Lukács argues that the cohesion of laws into a formal system obfuscates the fact that the legal realm is, as Marx had observed, an expression of definite economic relations.³ As a result, the particular disciplines and sciences that develop under the hegemony of reification refer their students persistently to a transcendent rather than an immanent domain, obscuring their origins in "the power relations between the classes" (109). Even philosophy, which holds the promise for comprehending the totality, falls prey to fragmentation under a bourgeois order: "The manner in which this transcendence is conceived," writes Lukács, "shows how vain was the hope that a comprehensive discipline, like philosophy, might yet achieve that overall knowledge which the particular sciences have so conspicuously renounced by turning away from the material substratum of their conceptual apparatus" (109). For my purposes it is irrelevant whether we subscribe to the base-superstructure model that informs Lukács' treatise. It is important only that we confirm along with him a series of disciplines in advanced capitalist societies that implicitly, and most often tacitly, regard themselves as autonomous realms of knowledge and social practice.

The inadvertent neglect of totality is not as interesting as a second mode of thought that consciously opposes the notion of totality. Advocating the fragmentary rather than the whole, the non-systemic rather than the system, and the non-continuous rather than the progressive and the successive, the thinkers in this tradition have challenged, at least overtly, the hegemony of "totality" as a dominant Western paradigm. As far as I can tell, the appearance of this challenge is of rather recent

vintage. Under the aegis of organized religions during the Middle Ages there was no effective alternative to thinking in terms of a complete and absolute organization of the universe under an omnipotent divinity. Only after this religious worldview was questioned during the Enlightenment does the first possibility arise to posit a non-totalistic arrangement of the social, intellectual, or cosmic order. For this reason the debate about totality has really been carried on for only the past two centuries, since just as there was no possibility of questioning a universal order before the shift from theocentrism to anthropocentrism, there was also no perceived need to justify totality until the absolute ordering instance was removed. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century thus witnessed both the first detractors from totality, most notably in the Jena romantics, as well as the most obdurate defenders of totality in Hegel and subsequent branches of Hegelian thought. In my remarks today, therefore, which will concentrate on three nodal points of the conscious opposition to totality, I must begin with German romanticism. From the inception of fragmentariness in this celebrated circle in Jena with its questioning and continuation of enlightenment thought, I will move to a second important manifestation of non-totalistic endeavor found in the prototypical anti-systemic writer of the German tradition, Friedrich Nietzsche, before finally turning to the most recent variants of fragmentariness in French postmodernism. In each case, however, I will try to show not only how embracing non-totally involves an unstated totalistic presupposition, but also that the price for fragmentariness can be the forfeiture of emancipatory politics.

The opposition to totality among the early romantics is most evident in their predilection for the fragment. Indeed, the fragment first becomes a legitimate literary and philosophical genre in German romanticism, in particular in the early works of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. Before that time the word fragment was usually employed to designate that portion of a complete literary or philosophical work that had survived intact. Fragments were understood therefore as parts of a whole, not as a genre unto itself. The romantics, however, elevated the fragment to genre status, spurning the previous sense of the word and altering its common usage. Quite obviously they did not draw so much on the tradition of the fragment as on a type of European writing that went under a variety of other names--the maxim, the anecdote, the aphorism, and the essay--and whose most illustrious proponents were Montaigne, La

Rouchefoucault, Lichtenberg, Shaftesbury, and Chamfort.⁴ When Novalis and Schlegel attach themselves to this tradition and adopt the word fragment for their aphoristic endeavors, they have something slightly different in mind than their European predecessors, and this has something to do with the designation "fragment." Their aphorisms qua fragments of the late 1790s are directed against a certain way of doing philosophy and a certain notion of literary achievement. In the most general sense we could call the fragment an anti-systemic genre. The romantics were not so much opposed to the notion of totality as they were to the form in which that totality was described and represented in the enlightenment heritage. Their reference points were Kantian philosophy with its three encompassing critiques and the Goethean novel with its emphasis on closure and harmony. The fragment was therefore introduced to contest a definite and restricted notion of totality, one which was inadequate because it seemed to claim something was completed that the romantics wanted to posit as open and ongoing. Because of this origin in opposition to systemic thought, the fragment fluctuates in meaning between a genre, a form, and a content, sometimes referring specifically to one aspect and at times encompassing all three.

In the writings of the early romantics--especially in their fragments--the notion of the fragment is itself part of a larger mosaic of provocative concepts that attempt to redefine the cultural project for a post-Enlightenment generation. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy situate the fragment in a variety of conceptual contexts: in relationship to a rethinking of poetry as universal poetry; with regard to chaos, particularly in its connection with the human condition as a cipher for "the state of the always-already-lost 'naïveté'" and of the "always-yet-to-appear absolute art"⁵; and in connection to the notion of a work, of which the fragment appears as *exergue*, that is simultaneously as the organic germ and innermost core and the always external and supplementary. Perhaps the most important concept to which it is proximate is "wit," which usually designates a power or ability to join disparate items and thereby to produce a novel effect. In the *Critical Fragments* Schlegel calls wit "unconditioned convivial spirit, or fragmentary geniality" and, at another point, "logical conviviality." In *Grains of Pollen* (*Blüthenstaub*) Novalis similarly associates wit with sociality, describing it as the product of fantasy and judgment.⁶ In these fragmentary treatments of the topic, the manner in which wit relates to the fragmentary can be most easily

grasped by the type of socialization to which it is implicitly opposed. Just as the fragmentary is contrasted with the systemic, so too wit as intuitive, spontaneous, and creative knowledge is juxtaposed with the completeness of education known as *Bildung*. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write: "*Bildung* as completion designates something that is removed from becoming and from the effort of *bilden* itself. In a sense, it constitutes the System as a pure conjunction of form with itself."⁷ Wit and the fragment both belong to the order of progression toward an infinite goal and for this reason are essential notions in the romantics' post-Enlightenment cultural project.

The fragment also has important connections with perhaps the most notorious word in romantic vocabulary: romantic irony.⁸ Schlegel's claim in the *Lyceum* fragments that irony should be accomplished and furthered in those instances in which one philosophizes "only not entirely systematically"⁹ indicates a first and common bond with regard to totality. There are, of course, other associations as well. Like the fragment, irony refers us to a realm of progress and a realm of the infinite. Unlike the normal usage of the term, which is based on one sort of deception or another, romantic irony suggests a continual overcoming through cancellation. As various commentators have pointed out, this term has implications for both the creative act and the structure of the work.¹⁰ On the one hand, it designates the freedom of the writer over her or his material as a dialectic of self-creation and self-destruction. Schlegel refers to this aspect of irony when he calls it "the freest of the licenses, because through it one puts oneself above oneself."¹¹ But it also informs the work of art and philosophy conceived as transcendental poetry. This aspect of this key romantic concept relates to an act of continuous upward displacement. For Schlegel irony is "a permanent parekbase"¹² likened to a model of infinity (*Epideiksis der Unendlichkeit*).¹³ In both cases what is essential for romanticism is the fragmentary or incomplete consciousness that reflects upon itself and its own activities only to be superseded by a subsequent consciousness that again endeavors to comprehend its own activities. I have dealt with romanticism's penchant for foregrounding its own awareness in another context.¹⁴ Here what is significant is that the romantic worldview is structured by a conceptuality whose essential characteristics are non-systemic, progressive, and infinite.

The close association of the fragmentary and irony, with their implicit reference to a transcendental realm, should indicate that the fragment is

not a simple antithesis to totality. Although the fragment appears as a critique of a facilely and hastily conceived system, it is opposed only to the normative or finite totality of enlightenment philosophy and art.¹⁵ If we view totality as a potential or possibility inherent in something individual, then we can understand how the fragment simultaneously critiques totality (as finite substance) and affirms totality (as infinite overcoming). This dual nature of the fragmentary with regard to totality accounts for the paradoxical references to it in early romantic texts. Schlegel's remark that "even the greatest system is really only a fragment,"¹⁶ reduces the substantive and totalized writings of his eighteenth-century predecessors to the status of a progressive romantic fragment. In another apothegm, he comments on the difference between the ancient and modern fragment: "Many works of the ancients have become fragments. Many works of the moderns are fragments from the moment they arise."¹⁷ In both instances, what is important is that the fragment implies a whole, in the former instance one that has been lost, in the latter, one that is still to come. And in perhaps the most famous reference to the fragment, Schlegel writes: "A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself, like a hedgehog."¹⁸ Although it is unclear why the hedgehog, which is hardly the most elegant or lovely creature, is Schlegel's preferred image for a work of art, the monadic or self-sufficient character of the fragment, the fragment as its own totality, is evident. In a variety of organicist metaphors the fragment is also viewed as not simply part of a previously existing whole, but as the germ or essence of a future whole. Exemplary is the final fragment of Novalis' *Grains of Pollen*, in which the fragment is likened to "literary seeds" that may take root and prosper. Because of this explicit connection between the fragment and totality, Gerd Ueding writes that the romantics, in contrast to Adorno, would have maintained that the true is the whole, but they would have added that the whole can only be tangentially approached and most adequately represented by means of the fragment. The romantic world view thus does not posit the incompatibility of fragments and totality at all. Rather, understood as a reaction against a certain type of totalized vision that is in turn associated primarily with the enlightenment, romanticism must be situated historically and intellectually as perhaps the first movement to propose and affirm a fragmentary totality.

The liabilities of such a paradoxical amalgam of fragment and totality are related to the transcendental realm to which the fragment directs us and in which the totality will be achieved. This realm is characterized not only by the fact that it is in the future, but also that it is not associated with this world. Inherent in the romantic fragment is thus a tendency toward religiously tinged eschatology. The Catholicism which Friedrich Schlegel embraced in the early decades of the nineteenth century and the religious province which Novalis willingly inhabited are fully in harmony with their penchant for the fragment. Despite the anti-orthodox stance that initially unites enlightenment thought and early romantic thought, the anti-totality of the romantics leads them back to a religious worldview that seems to antedate the break from a theocentric universe. Simultaneously, by abandoning the here-and-now for the great beyond, the romantics articulated a quiescent political view quite acceptable to the status quo. Once again Schlegel's drift into conservative circles associated with Metternich, or Novalis's mystical and patriarchal views of the Prussian monarchy, as well as his utopian hopes for a redemption of a Christian Europe do not represent a falling away from the romantic program, but rather its logical completion. Indeed, as W. Daniel Wilson has argued, Schlegel had already forsaken his early progressive political views by the middle of the 1790s, significantly before he penned his fragmentary thoughts.¹⁹ Novalis, whose early flirtation with emancipatory politics never went beyond empty revolutionary gestures, could easily join with Schlegel in affirming a poetic and philosophical form that postponed all worldly concerns into an other-worldly sphere. In their reliance on the fragment the romantics present us with a prototype for the assault on totality that would be repeated often in the following two centuries. In contrast to the enlightenment's substantive, but critical perspective, the totalized fragment propagated by the romantics winds up as a religiously recuperated totality.

Three generations after the fragmentary totalities of the Jena romantics a writer emerged who has affected, perhaps more than any other thinker, contemporary notions of totality. I am referring, of course, to Friedrich Nietzsche, who, like his romantic predecessors, propagates the fragment in both form and content. Indeed, Nietzsche's writings are more consistently devoted to the fragment than those of any previous philosopher. Although recent critics have sought to characterize Nietzsche by his plurality of styles,²⁰ even in this apparent diversity there is a dogged

adherence to abbreviated and concise thoughts that are semi-autonomous rather than sustained arguments developed from previous passages and in subsequent ones. The aphoristic works of the so-called middle period--*Human, All-Too-Human* (1878, 1879), *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880), *The Dawn* (1881), and *The Gay Science* (1882)--are quite obviously developed on fragmentary principles akin to those of the romantics, although it seems likely that Nietzsche was emulating the French moralists on whom the romantics drew, rather than the romantics themselves. But this same type of style predominates in both his early and later works. *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), his most sustained piece of writing outside of his strictly philological studies, as well as the four *Untimely Meditations* (1873-76), are essays divided into shorter sections that are often self-contained wholes. *Zarathustra* (1883-85) consists primarily of prophetic apothegms, parables, and short vignettes. And the last works, from *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) to *Ecce Homo* (completed in 1888), rarely contain sustained argument that extends beyond a few pages. Even *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), his most essayistic endeavor since the mid seventies, consists of three separate parts, which are further sub-divided into sections, none of which exceeds five pages in length. A glance at Nietzsche's notebooks will immediately reveal that his published works were an outgrowth of a non-systematic writing practice.

Like the romantics, Nietzsche obviously gravitated toward the exploration of a distinct thought; sometimes this could be stated pithily in a single sentence, sometimes it required a few pages. But the overarching unity of his work consists in his conscious avoidance of a complete, non-contradictory, and systematic exposition of these very thoughts. To this extent the notion of a totality is systematically excluded from his writing. Like the romantics, Nietzsche's arguments against systematic thought are presented unsystematically, but his rejection of notions connected with totality is nonetheless unmistakable. In *Human, All-Too-Human*, for example, he frames his discussion of totality in terms of philosophical systems and their inherently deceptive quality. He is concerned that contemporary students of philosophy believe that there are ready and simple answers to their questions. "To the man of science on his unassuming and laborious travels, which must often enough be journeys through the desert, there appear those glittering mirages called 'philosophical systems': with bewitching, deceptive power they show the

solution of all enigmas and the freshest draught of the true water of life to be near at hand." During this period Nietzsche associates the endeavor to present the world as a totality with a certain stage in the development of modern society, and he treats the topic reflectively, being more concerned with how shallow faith in systematic thought has become a staple in the profile of the educated man in Germany during the 1870s. Later, when his remarks shift from the pedagogical and the cultural to the anthropological and biological sphere, he adopts a more curt and dogmatic mode of condemnation. In *Twilight of the Idols*, for example, he asserts: "I mistrust all systematizers and I avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity." Thus in the late 1880s, in the characteristic language of his later writings, he heightens his anti-systemic rhetoric by switching from extended metaphors to apodictic statement, from a notion of deception to an indictment for dishonesty.

Missing from these two rejections on totality is their target. The romantics were obviously reacting to certain tendencies in enlightenment thought and culture, but Nietzsche, nearly a century later, is concerned with a slightly different set of issues. With his rejection of philosophical systems and the totality that they evoke he is almost certainly responding both to Hegelianism and to positivism, two tendencies that claim to encompass the ensemble of spiritual and natural phenomena. The direction of Nietzsche's critique becomes more apparent in his notes taken from late 1887 and early 1888. The context of the passage I am about to cite is an extended reflection about how "value" may function as a preservation, enhancement, and condition of life. Nietzsche first disputes that there are any "lasting unities, atoms, or monads"; all values associated with such totalities are added to that which exists (*Das Seiende*) for practical, useful, and perspectivistic reasons. Nietzsche continues by writing:

-- that in the *"process of the whole"* the work of humanity does not come into account because there is not any entire process at all (conceived as a system)

--that there is no "whole," that *all devaluation of human existence*, of human goals cannot be made in respect of something that does not exist

--that necessity, causality, purposefulness are useful fictions (*Scheinbarkeiten*)

--that the goal is *not* the increase of consciousness, but the enhancement of power, since in this enhancement the usefulness of consciousness

is included, equally with pleasure as with displeasure

--that one does not take the *means* as the highest measure of value (therefore not the states of consciousness, as pleasure or pain, if consciousness itself is a means)

--that the world is not an organism at all, but rather chaos: that the development of "spirituality" is a means for the relative continuance of the organization

--that all "wishfulness" has no meaning with regard to the entire character of being.²¹

It would be difficult to make complete sense out of all these cryptic assertions. At the very least, however, they indicate that Nietzsche's views on totality have to do with his skepticism with regard to historical process and human contributions to that process, to scientific laws and theorems, and to the supremacy of consciousness as the most important development in the human species and the focal point of human existence. As in romanticism, the repudiation of totality in Nietzsche's thought fits into a complex historical and philosophical world view that itself comprises something approaching a system while simultaneously denying systematicity.

The most interesting of these various pieces of Nietzsche's anti-systemic worldview is his radical reevaluation of consciousness. There were many critics of Hegelianism among Nietzsche's contemporaries and quite a few skeptics with regard to natural science. But only Nietzsche undercuts substantive totalities of the nineteenth century by drawing out a biologicistic worldview to its logical limit and thus destroying the legitimacy of all holistic intellectual endeavor. In contrast to the most popular philosophical systems of his time Nietzsche believes that consciousness is a secondary organ. All of the functions that are necessary for life can be carried out well--perhaps even better--without recourse to consciousness, which consists, in his view, of a mere mirror of these actions in the mind. "We could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also 'act' in every sense of that word, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness' (as one says metaphorically)." Indeed, for most of what we do consciousness is superfluous or, as Nietzsche will contend when he dissects moral values, pernicious. "Even now, for that matter, by far the greatest portion of our life actually takes place without this mirror effect; and this is true even of our thinking, feeling, and willing life, however offensive this may sound to older

philosophers" (GS 297). Nietzsche is thus claiming that consciousness is a late-developing feature of the species and something that is wholly unnecessary to life. Although it is lauded as the "genius of the species," in reality it is extra baggage, something that has no value for those actions that we usually consider most important in our lives. While most philosophers have considered consciousness a source of perfection, Nietzsche feels it is a symptom of immaturity; while previous thinkers count on consciousness to rectify mistakes and to bridle the wayward passions, Nietzsche believes it is the source of errors; and while common wisdom places thought above drives in their contribution to human behavior, Nietzsche overturns this hierarchy:

Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence what is most unfinished and unstrong. Consciousness gives rise to countless errors that lead an animal or man to perish sooner than necessary, "exceeding destiny," as Homer puts it. If the conserving association of the instincts were not so very much more powerful, and if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish of its misjudgments and its fantasies with open eyes, of its lack of thoroughness and its credulity--in short, of its consciousness; rather, without the former, humanity would long have disappeared.²²

The ramifications for systematizers and totalizers of all sorts are rather obvious. If our consciousness is founded on error and partiality, then the totalistic philosophies and theories that we propound must be at best functional illusions. To subscribe to a totality would be tantamount to falsifying reality. For this reason in both his early and late work systems are categorized as either deceptions or dishonesty.

Nietzsche's anti-totalistic stance is thus somewhat different from that of his romantic predecessors. While they thematized an excess of consciousness and an incomplete process that could not be encompassed by a totality, Nietzsche calls the reliability of consciousness itself into question. They are similar only in their inability to escape the totalistic conclusions of their own rejection of totality. His fragmentary style and aspirations notwithstanding, Nietzsche offers us nothing less than a totalistic worldview. This is particularly evident in his later writings when he turns from cultural critique to biologicistic pseudo-science as his central focus. In this period he sketches for his readers a picture of the world characterized by contrasting ethical systems. Whether these

antagonistic value scales are labeled the Dionysian and the Socratic, the Greek and the Judeo-Christian, or described by the oppositions good versus bad and good versus evil, they all share two common features. (1) In each case Nietzsche valorizes the first set of terms over the second. The Dionysian, the Greek (usually the pre-Socratic Greeks), and the value system of good versus bad are somehow more natural, better, more honest, or in some other way preferable to their counterparts. (2) The second and non-favored designation or category is viewed as an outgrowth of sickness, deceit, deception, or an illicit attempt to gain and secure power. Masquerading as ethics, goodness, truth, and beauty, the second terms are, like consciousness and the totalities it constructs, delusions and illusions of the human race.

Nietzsche's critical, genealogical view is thus also a total view, not only of human values, but also of human history and consciousness. Even his projection into the future, the overman, is based on an overcoming that is simultaneously a return, and it is surely not coincidental that his positing of the overman occurs in the same text (and at the same time) in which he develops the notion of eternal recurrence. Unlike the romantic progress toward the transcendental future, Nietzsche's future vision involves simultaneously a return to the anthropological past. Indeed, most of Nietzsche's theoretical positions, from the eternal recurrence to his will to power entail a totalistically conceived universe in which progress and emancipation are illusory. Within this universe Nietzsche's increasing reliance on a pseudo-biological view of humankind is most responsible for his reactionary political views. His apparent belief that Jewish, Christian, and humanist values are the product of an inherently less desirable social order and his concomitant encomia for arrangements in which brute force, instinctual behavior, and pre-moral values hold sway inform his published and unpublished opinions on European movements of the nineteenth century. The results are sometimes so entirely out of line with our sensibilities that many Nietzsche enthusiasts have been prompted to interpret disturbing passages metaphorically, or to dismiss his social views as a marginal dimension of a larger and more noble philosophical project. But, in fact, Nietzsche's social views are in perfect harmony with his totalistically conceived notion of value. Whether he is considering women as naturally inferior to men, or criticizing the ruling class's failure to maintain the proletariat as a slave caste, or advocating a European ruling class that will claim

hegemony over the rest of the world, Nietzsche's perspective is consistently one of natural gradations in human relations (*Rangordnung*) maintained by force.²³ Mediated by a total vision which opposes democratizing and emancipatory tendencies with a dystopian and determinist monism of power, Nietzsche's philosophy winds up advocating a more rigid and reactionary system than any of those he criticizes. His struggle against totality, like the romantics, winds up furtively affirming a totalized fragment of human experience whose implications predate the very movements he originally sets out to critique.

Let me turn now to the third and most recent anti-totalist moment in Western thought. With regard to the critique of totality poststructuralism is largely derivative from the two topoi I have already described. Relying either on a romantic notion of incompleteness and infinite progress (or regress), or, more often, on a more fundamental level of reality, being, or substance--often described in anti-foundational language--the poststructuralists have most often asserted their preference for non-totality in terms of the marginal, the parasitic, the nomadic, or the differential. Like the romantics and Nietzsche, they exhibit a range of anti-enlightenment thoughts and gestures, but their understanding of the enlightenment in the second half of the twentieth century is slightly different from the image of enlightenment in the late eighteenth and in the late nineteenth century. The "unremitting hostility towards totality"²⁴ in poststructuralist writings thus has a different value, function, and goal than the anti-holism of the romantics or Nietzsche. Conceived no longer primarily as an attack on Kant, Hegel, or empirical science, anti-totalistic directions in poststructuralism have focussed more often on various hallowed notions of modernity. In essence the attacks on the unified subject, on logocentrism, on phallocentrism, on continuous, linear history, and on grand narratives are all related to an anti-holistic, anti-modern, and anti-enlightenment stance. Most often poststructuralist positions on these matters are drawn from Heideggerian philosophy, whose overt holism in his theorizing about a profound realm of all-encompassing Being is either ignored or replaced by a barrage of anti-totalistic "anti-concepts." Motifs from Heidegger or from a Heideggerianized Nietzsche, however, are probably the strongest single factor connecting poststructuralists with one another, and to a degree their common derivation from Heidegger accounts for the similarities in their anti-humanist, anti-rationalist, and anti-holistic perspectives.

At its most political, where poststructuralism is most interesting and least derivative from Nietzsche and Heidegger, we can discern a further reason for rejecting totality. Events of the twentieth century, so the argument goes, have demonstrated that a universe that is conceived as a rational whole and that obeys rational rules or laws is simply counterfactual. Two World Wars, mass murders in the Gulag and the Shoah, the failure of economic rationality to solve elementary problems of want, and the inability of political rationality to provide genuine democracy are indications that totalistic solutions and perspectives are useless or, even worse, themselves part of the problem. Such is the reasoning we find in the reflections of Jean-François Lyotard, whose *Postmodern Condition* (1979) has justifiably been considered a central statement for a more politically aware French theory as well as a key document for the poststructuralist turn. The grand narratives that Lyotard explains are now not only refuted, but no longer an object of modernist nostalgia, are quite evidently connected with two alternative totalistic views of the universe. The first, identified as the "narrative of freedom," posits humanity as its hero, equal access to science, and the necessity of primary education. Lyotard appears to associate this narrative with the French educational system that concentrates more on primary, rather than on university education, and that intervenes in the training of the people under the pretext of progress. The second scenario is clearly German and involves a greater emphasis on the university and the idealist notion of *Bildung* or self-culturation. In contrast to the narrative of freedom, the subject of the "narrative of speculation" is not humanity, but the Spirit; a philosophical system and not a political state determines and administers knowledge. In either form these narratives presuppose a totality that has been destroyed not only by the thought of the twentieth century, but by twentieth-century reality. In his follow-up to *The Postmodern Condition*, *Postmodernism Explained* (1988) Lyotard clarifies as follows:

In the course of the past fifty years, each grand narrative of emancipation--regardless of the genre it privileges--has, as it were, had its principle invalidate: *All that is real is rational, all that is rational is real*: "Auschwitz refutes the speculative doctrine. At least this crime, which is real, is not rational. *All that is proletarian is communist, all that is communist is proletarian*: "Berlin 1953," "Budapest 1956," "Czechoslovakia 1968," "Poland 1980" (to name but a few) refute the doctrine of historical materialism: the

workers rise up against the Party. *All that is democratic is by the people and for the people, and vice versa*: "May 1968" refutes the doctrine of parliamentary liberalism. Everyday society brings the representative institution to a halt. *Everything that promotes the free flow of supply and demand is good for general prosperity, and vice versa*: the "crises of 1911 and 1929" refute the doctrine of economic liberalism and the "crisis of 1974-79" refutes the post-Keynsian modification of that doctrine.²⁵

Ignoring the provocative oversimplification in these "refutations," we should note that each fact or set of facts confronts a doctrine or system that has totalistic pretensions: in the first two cases Hegelianism and Marxism, which are perhaps the most notorious advocates of philosophical totality, and in the last two instances, liberal democracy and free-market economics, the twin bourgeois alternatives to a Marxist totality. Lyotard, like the new philosophers and other contemporary French theorists, locates the ills of the modern world in its totalistic dogmas, and his exclamation at the close of the English version of *The Postmodern Condition*, "Let us wage a war on totality," is a reflection of his fundamentally anti-holistic position.

Like his anti-totalistic predecessors, Lyotard is unable to extricate his own position from the very notion of totality against which he protests. If we consider the structure of his argument in *The Postmodern Condition*, it is easy to see that he himself cannot avoid recourse to a grand narrative that accounts for the decline of the grand narratives. Conceiving the history of knowledge as a struggle between science and narrative, Lyotard describes various stages during which the relationship between knowledge and narrative shifts. His contention is that ultimately all knowledge is based on narrative, but that over the centuries, and particularly since the Renaissance, science achieves an autonomy from its origin, which is then forgotten or repressed. This explanation, much like Gadamer's in *Truth and Method*, implicitly calls for a reconsideration and recalling of the scientifically accepted truths of the modern world. What is novel in Lyotard's account is the function he assigns to narrative after it has lost its epistemological legitimacy. From the Renaissance through most of the twentieth century he claims that narrative knowledge accompanies the rise and legitimates the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the sociopolitical sphere. The narrative of freedom and the narrative of *Bildung* became the two central legitimating narratives of the bourgeois

order. But while the modern era is marked by an amalgamation of the consensual scientific mode and the sociopolitical narrative mode, the postmodern age is characterized by a growing loss of our belief in any metanarrative. This process of delegitimation and distrust of metanarratives defines the postmodern condition. Indeed, at one point Lyotard characterizes postmodernity by the loss of nostalgia for the lost metanarratives.²⁶ What distinguishes Lyotard's narrative from most others of this ilk--Gadamer's or Heidegger's--is the absence of the recuperative moment. Nonetheless, Lyotard's postmodern metanarrative, like the metanarratives in which we no longer believe, entails a totality by its implicit claim to oversee all historical development; similar to the romantics and Nietzsche, the critique of totality appears unable to escape holistic modes of thought.

It is significant that the political consequences Lyotard draws from his narrative of postmodernity are located in the realm of aesthetics. Three years after the appearance of the French version of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard responds to the question "What is Postmodernism" by reference to artistic practices. In a misguided and ill-informed attack on Jürgen Habermas, Lyotard accuses the German philosopher of seeking "to suspend artistic experimentation" and "to liquidate the heritage of the avant-garde."²⁷ Since Habermas had held up Peter Weiss's *Aesthetics of Resistance* as exemplary in the essay to which Lyotard refers, he can hardly be accused of advocating realism as the only legitimate style or that "artists and writers must be brought back into the bosom of the community."²⁸ Lyotard is evidently reacting to Habermas's criticism of the surrealists, whose attack against the institution of art failed to achieve an emancipatory effect because, according to Habermas, it remained confined to a single sphere of human activity. An aesthetic revolt that contents itself with negations of aesthetic phenomena will always fail as a liberatory movement, Habermas claims, because it ignores the partiality of the aesthetic realm. Only if art has implications for the spheres of knowledge and ethics can it accomplish a revolution in human relations. Habermas's historical analysis of art and its emancipatory possibilities is countered by Lyotard's ahistorical reduction of art to problems of representation. The modernist produces art that makes us aware that the unrepresentable exists, while the postmodern artist "puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself."²⁹ The formal characteristics that Lyotard employs to make his definitions force him, in contrast to

Habermas, to take a leap of faith into political significance. Like the surrealists whose limitations Habermas tries to overcome, Lyotard makes the totalized fragment of permanent aesthetic revolution the yardstick for progressive political activity. His final call—"Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name"³⁰--recalls and repeats the radical gesturing of the quondam avant-garde. Ultimately in Lyotard's postmodern world the opposition to totality is reduced to a politics of aesthetic posturing.

If Lyotard, like Nietzsche and the early romantics, cannot avoid recourse to totality, there may be a good reason for this. In one of his earliest writings, the *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (1801), Hegel observed that "every philosophy is complete in itself and has, like a genuine work of art, totality in itself."³¹ Despite explicit denials, totality seems to reassert itself implicitly in philosophical thought, and we may suspect that the very activity of engaging in philosophical discourse entails recourse to the whole. As a set of postulates and contentions concerning the society, the world, and the universe, philosophy partakes directly of the general; thus even the contradiction of totality involves it in totalizing claims. It is perhaps more difficult to explain the political effects of consciously anti-totalistic thought. We have seen in the romantics, Nietzsche, and Lyotard (as a representative postmodernist) that the refusal to conceive of social totalities has led to dubious, retrograde, or partial and inefficacious political stances, but it is not clear whether these political stances were a necessary or a fortuitous consequence of positions taken against totality. I suspect that these deficient political positions are related to an inability and unwillingness to theorize social mediations. If we valorize the fragmentary, the non-systemic, and the partial, then the manner in which phenomena relate to each other, the interconnectedness fostered by an increasingly technologized and interlinked world will per force be neglected. The result is not false conclusions, but one-sided positions that themselves require mediation in a projected totality. The romantic flight into a transcendental realm is a reflection of an insufficiently analyzed desire to establish a just order on earth. Similarly the Nietzschean critique represents a trenchant, but partial understanding of sclerotic value systems as ideological barriers to fulfillment. And the aesthetic gestures of the postmodernist revolt, like its avant-garde

predecessors, anticipate emancipatory movements that will expand their purview from artistic form to social relations. To the extent that critiques of totality are themselves implicated in totality, there is no need to defend totality against the onslaught of totalized fragments. The task for progressive thought is, rather, to recognize that totality is always already at work in our analyses and interpretations, to demonstrate that we therefore require the concept of a mediated totality in order to achieve an adequate understanding of the societies in which we live, and to further the establishment of a political order in which peace, justice, and equality become concretized within the totality of social relations.

Notes

- 1 Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley, 1984). (Frankfurt, 1970), vol. 2, p. 19.
- 2 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt, 1951), p. 57.
- 3 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 108.
- 4 Gerd Ueding, in *Klassik und Romantik: Deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution 1789-1815* (Munich, 1987), also speaks of Herder and Hamann as predecessors of the romantics in this regard (pp. 130-31).
- 5 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cherly Lester (orig. Paris, 1978; Albany, 1988), p. 51.
- 6 Novalis, *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl and Richard Samuel (Munich, 1978), vol. 2, p. 239-40 (Blüthenstaub 29).
- 7 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, p. 55.
- 8 See Franz Norbert Mennemeier, "Fragment und Ironie beim jungen Friedrich Schlegel: Versuch der Konstruktion einer nicht geschriebenen Theorie," *Romantikforschung seit 1945*, ed. Klaus Peter (Frankfurt, 1980), pp. 229-50.
- 9 Cited in Ueding, p. 124.
- 10 The most complete book on the topic is still Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen,

1960). A convenient summary of Strohschneider-Kohr's thesis can be found in her essay "Zur Poetik der deutschen Romantik II: Die romantische Ironie," in *Die deutsche Romantik: Poetik, Formen und Motive*, ed. Hans Steffen (Göttingen, 1967), pp. 75-97. Also helpful is Ernst Behler, *Klassische Ironie, romantische Ironie, tragische Ironie: Zum Ursprung dieser Begriffe* (Darmstadt, 1972).

11 Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Erste Abteilung, vol. 2, Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801), ed. Hans Eichner (München, 1967), p. 160. (Lyceum Fragment 108).

12 Schlegel, vol. 18, Philosophische Lehrjahre 1796-1806, Erster Teil, ed. Ernst Behler (1963), p. 85.

13 Schlegel, vol. 18, p. 128.

14 See chapter one of *Reflections of Realism: Paradox, Norm, and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century German Prose* (Detroit, 1991), pp. 19-35.

15 I am borrowing Jay's distinction between a normative and a non-normative totality, although I am altering the terms of the distinction slightly. Jay equates normative totality with "a desirable goal that is yet to be achieved" (p. 23), while non-normative totality is a more heuristic construct that is introduced for methodological purposes. I am using normative totality to refer to any present or future whole that is substantive and dogmatic rather than heuristic. In contrast to these terms, romantic totality is formal (non-substantive and non-normative), but also non-heuristic.

16 *Literary Notebooks 1797-1801*, ed. Hans Eichner (London, 1957), Nr. 921.

17 Schlegel, vol. 2, p. 169. (Athenäum Fragment 24).

18 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 197. (Athenäum Fragment 206).

19 W. Daniel Wilson, *Geheimräte gegen Geheimbünde: Ein unbekanntes Kapitel der klassisch-romantischen Geschichte Weimars* (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 212-255.

20 In this regard, see especially Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 18-19.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden (Munich, 1980), vol. 13, pp. 36-37.

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1974), p. 85.

23 With regard to women, for example, he becomes especially harsh in the 1880s. He repeatedly affirms the intellectual inferiority of women,

who are "dangerous, creeping, subterranean little beast[s] of prey." He reserves his most venomous remarks, however, for the notion of "emancipation of women." For Nietzsche this ill-advised slogan "is the instinctive hatred of the woman who has *turned out ill*, that is to say is incapable of bearing, for her who has *turned out well*--the struggle against 'man' is always only means, subrefuge, tactic. When they elevate *themselves* as 'woman in herself', as 'higher woman', as 'idealist' woman, they want to *lower* the general level or rank of woman; no surer means for achieving that than high school education, trousers and the political rights of voting cattle. At bottom the emancipated are the *anarchists* in the world of the Eternal Feminine, the underprivileged whose deepest instinct is revenge." (EH 76).

Similarly Nietzsche suggests that the movement toward democracy and socialism among the working class is a perversion of the primeval human nature he has discovered. For this reason the workers' question is "a stupidity--at bottom, the degeneration of instinct, which is today the cause of *all* stupidities--is that there is a workers' question at all. Certain things one does not question: that is the first imperative of instinct. I simply cannot see what one proposes to do with the European worker now that one has made a question of him. He is far too well off not to ask for more and more, not to ask more immodestly. In the end, he has numbers on his side. The hope is gone forever that a modest and self-satisfied kind of man, a Chinese type, might here develop as a class: and there would have been reason in that, it would have been a necessity."

Even Nietzsche's notions of the good European and of great politics, which have been viewed naively by some as an anticipation of the Common Market and increased understanding among nations, is in reality a much more troubling notion, if we bother to probe Nietzsche's thoughts. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he expresses the hope that Russia will become such a danger that the European nations will be compelled to band together and carry out their appointed task: "*to acquire one will*, by means of a new caste to rule over the Continent, a persistent, dreadful will of its own, that can set its aims thousands of years ahead; so that the long spun-out comedy of its petty-stateism, and its dynastic as well as its democratic many-willed-ness, might finally be brought to a close. The time for petty politics is past; the next century will bring the struggle for the dominion of the world--the *compulsion* to great politics. (BGE 146). 24 Jay, p. 515.

- 25 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*, trans. by Don Barry et al. (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 28-29 (orig. *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* [Paris, 1988]).
- 26 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, 1984), p. 41.
- 27 Ibid, p. 73.
- 28 Ibid, p. 73.
- 29 Ibid, p. 81.
- 30 Ibid, p. 82.
- 31 G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt, 1970), vol.2, p. 19.

Klaus L. Berghahn

**Mourning Becomes Utopia
Utopian Thinking and Representation
in Modern German Literature**

The principle of hope and utopian thinking have fallen on hard times. It has become almost a common place that utopian visions are out of touch with our times. In a survey on the question "Does Hope Still Have a Future?,"¹ most of the twenty intellectuals interviewed (among them not one woman!) had grave doubts and only a few dared to argue for utopian thinking. The present state of world affairs seems to paralyze any utopian vision: In an age of technological disasters (Chernobyl), of worldwide exploitation and destruction of nature (Greenhouse Effect), and of new epidemic diseases (Aids), the future of humankind appears bleak and apocalyptical images dominate our imagination. Especially the collapse of Communism in eastern Europe, if that was supposed to be a Utopia at all, has shattered the dreams of century-old social Utopias. Utopia is draped in a mourning veil and Postmodernism, we are told, is ringing in the end of Utopia. Would it not be wiser, under these anti-utopian circumstances, to say also farewell to utopian thinking?

And yet hope appears to be a human propensity. If it could be repressed or even forgotten, it would not have been a part of the human experience or a factor in human history. If there existed only a world of facts governed by technocrats, how boring it would be. But the human mind has the power of imagination to anticipate what has not yet been. The utopian impulse becomes most visible during productive moments, when the human mind is not satisfied with the world as it is; then it explores possibilities, envisions new concepts and projects itself onto the future. Each creative thought, be it in the sciences, in technology or in the arts, transgresses reality as it is, invents new tools and opens new perspectives. Our world is not just a conglomerate of facts and figures, as the technocrats would have us believe, but it needs to be transformed according to new concepts, ideas and visions.

"Can hope be disappointed?" Ernst Bloch asked in 1961 in his

inaugural address, at age 76, in Tübingen, after leaving the GDR.² Yes, of course, certainly, he answered. Naive optimism, wishful thinking and daydreaming are easily disappointed, and even well-founded hope can be frustrated by the contingencies of history. When we speak of hope, there is no certainty, only possibilities that have to be explored and projected onto the future. Hope is not discouraged by setbacks, it only becomes wiser and corrects its course. Despite all the disappointments it encounters, well-founded hope aims for the *bonum optimum*, a society where human dignity and freedom flourish.

But why has utopian thinking always provoked so much criticism, if not outright hatred? Do not the social and literary Utopias with all their idealistic intentions belong among the best inventions the human imagination has produced? What are the enemies of Utopia so afraid of? Looking at their arguments, it soon becomes clear, that they are not so much opposed to the fictional blueprints for a new society, as to the utopian intention itself, i.e. the implicit or explicit criticism of the existing order of the state or society. Conservative critics conjure up the dangers of a realized Utopia or of the utopian intention as revolution. They either laugh at those irresponsible dreamers or they warn against their dangerous ideas. They take the fictitious blueprints of Utopia for real--and cry totalitarianism. Their argument usually runs as follows: Utopia as a totalitarian system represents the final stage of a developed society, in which the individual is controlled and manipulated through perfect tools of power. Through the most advanced technology a powerful elite manipulates society as a whole and controls it in its own interest. Although this model is more applicable to Orwell's *1984* than to More's *Utopia*, there is something intriguing about this criticism.

Indeed, even benign critics cannot deny that Utopias are constructed by an instrumentalized reason which seeks to control antisocial emotions and to harmonize conflicts in society through well organized institutions. The result is order instead of freedom, communal spirit instead of individuality, unity instead of plurality. The visual expression of these formalized living conditions is the architectural order of Utopia. Everything is geometrical, uniform and transparent. The impression one receives from such an interpretation of Utopia as a closed system is reminiscent of a bleak Kafkaesque penal colony. The purely formal description of Utopia, an abstraction without any historical perspective, results in a negative Utopia, which is truly a monstrosity.

There is yet another interpretation that is not so much concerned with the utopian city or the new order of society (which would be tainted by the contradictions of the old one anyway), but with the utopian intention. Utopian thinking aims at a condition of perfection which has not yet been realized and which Bloch calls "utopian totum". Since it would be totally different from our experience, we cannot make any predictions as to what this state of perfection would look like--except for its most formal aspects: i.e. it should have a final purpose, permanence and unity.³ If we project these formal categories onto Utopia we get a different picture, which does not necessarily elicit the specter of totalitarianism. The unity of a society without conflicts is represented in the geometry, order and harmony of the isolated place; the static description of institutions, laws and mores transmits a feeling of permanence; and the final purpose would be the perfectibility of life in freedom, equality and peace where all individuals could develop their potentials to the fullest.

The mode in which we speak about this ideal society/state is that of a *conjunctivus, irrealis or potentialis*, and it is this ambivalence between imaginary projection and possible practice which characterizes the utopian impulse. The strongest tendency of utopian thinking is its criticism of the existing social order and its longing for change. But that is not what conservative critics fear of Utopia. They believe that Utopias could in fact be realized and that they would lead to revolution and terror. The critics conveniently overlook three aspects of utopian thinking: It is not a blueprint for a future state; it is merely a fictitious projection into the future; and it only experiments with possibilities. This last aspect is most important, yet too often overlooked. Utopian thinking is governed by the logic of modality and it has four modes of possibility: It looks at the future as a formal possibility--and anything is conceivable (nonsense as well as Utopias); as a hypothetical possibility, which can be predicted with reason (i.e. Utopias as experiments with reality); as an objective possibility, which is a task that could be solved (i.e. revolution); as a real possibility, which combines the subjective intention with objective tendencies (i.e. a person is the real possibility of him/herself). Contrary to those who can think of the world only in positivistic or pragmatic terms, Bloch conceives reality as unfinished, open-ended and full of possibilities which point to the future.⁴

The ideological criticism of Utopia proper, as a master narrative of an ideal state/society (from More to SF-literature), has run its course and has

exhausted itself. As early as 1892, Engels criticized the abstractness of utopian socialists like Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen, whose Utopias were pure products of phantasy and of immature theories. They confront the deplorable state of affairs with their ideal order and idealistically hope that the power of reason will change things for the better.⁵ Bloch shares this critical attitude, although he considers these "old utopian fairy tales" to be "venerable precursors" of socialism. But they fail because they criticize existing conditions merely through fiction and want to change society by means of ideas. Like all idealistic reformers they make a fool of themselves vis-à-vis reality. Bloch's utopian thinking is no longer bound to social utopias and he forgoes ready-made blueprints for society. Instead, Bloch establishes the principle of hope as the foundation of utopian thinking which permeates all living conditions and governs all human relations. This wider and larger concept of utopian thinking enables Bloch to search for all traces of hope in life and to collect all material that testifies to the utopian propensity of humankind--and this is what makes his "Principle of Hope" truly an encyclopedia of hope. In this philosophy of hope, aesthetic theory and art play an important role, quite independent of the utopian genre.

For Bloch, art is the purest expression of the utopian consciousness. Art articulates and anticipates what is hidden or yet uncovered in reality as a real possibility. The "anticipations of imagination" and the "pre-figuration of art" (*Vorschein*) are, therefore, key concepts of his utopian thinking. The utopian impulse becomes most visible in the projections of imagination, when the artist is dissatisfied with reality as it is, presents it critically and transcends it with his artistic vision. Even wishful thinking and day-dreaming are primary stages of art, fantastic expressions of creative activity which wants to envision the not yet experienced or even the unknown. Daydreams find their poetic expression in fairy tales and fantastic stories which are genres that present to us a world as it could be. The imagination has always a tendency to transcend reality and invent images or stories of perfectibility which it projects on a distant horizon, be it as paradise or land of Cockaigne. And great art points in the same direction: It expands our view of the world, it is a fantastic experiment with the "not yet" and it illuminates the space of future possibilities. Art as the product of imagination anticipates that which is latent in reality. In Bloch's words, art is *Vor-Schein* (pre-figuration).⁶

That art is appearance, illusion, make-believe, but without truth, has been a trope ever since Plato warned against the dangerous influence of poets on the republic. The opposite viewpoint, which, roughly speaking, has prevailed since German idealism, presents the artistic illusion as a veiled truth. As Schiller put it: "The truth exists within the illusion."⁷ He points to the aesthetic function of the artistic illusion, which is autonomous of reality, resists it critically and anticipates what has not yet come about. The ideal paradigm for this understanding of art is theater. It is a place, where the audience subjects itself willingly and knowingly to an illusion, because it expects more than merely make-believe—namely truth through the illusion of art. For Bloch, the aesthetic illusion, in which the truth is sublated, is even more: It is *Vor-Schein* (pre-figuration) of real possibilities which are hidden in reality as a realizable future. Great art is "an experiment of imagination with perfection;" it illuminates the realm of future possibilities. Accordingly, the motto for this kind of aesthetics is: "How could the world be perfected?"⁸ In order not to overcharge aesthetic theory with too much utopian optimism, Bloch includes an admonition here: "Whether this call for perfection becomes to some extent practical and remains not merely an aesthetic illusion, is not in the hands of the artist but of society."⁹

Bloch expands the concept of Utopia, which as a utopian function is no longer limited by genre, but permeates all forms of human activities. Especially art, as an aesthetic Utopia, regains its cultural pre-eminence since it fulfills a double function: The aesthetic illusion retains a critical distance from reality and anticipates what is latent in it. All great art of the past shares this utopian quality, it is "a future in the past", which keeps the unfulfilled promises of the past alive. Even realistic art is more than just an artistic mirror image of reality or a meaningful totality, as Lukàcs would have it, but also a view of the world as it could be, "reality with a future in it."¹⁰ Therefore Bloch rejects all forms of naturalism, be it photo-realism, Socialist Realism, or documentary literature. What bothered him about the products of the culture industry was their superficial copying of reality, their empty illusions and their shoddiness. They do not have any utopian substance. Only great art has a utopian function that points toward a utopian totality without which there would be no meaningful practice. That literature and the arts have a useful function in society and that they also show what could be, we know since Aristotle and Horace, but it was Bloch who really discovered the utopian

dimension of art as its most important quality. If we take this relation between utopian thinking and literature seriously, our engagement with literature can gain a new perspective: Literature can sharpen our critical view of reality, it can encourage our resistance toward it, and it can motivate our practice. Literature, to quote Bloch once more, is "l'art pour l'espoir."

The aesthetic dimension of Bloch's *Principle of Hope* was introduced at length because it enlarges the concept of Utopia and gives a meaning to literature that was unknown before. It was More, who gave us the genre, but to limit utopian thinking to the norms of the genre would be the same as to reduce myth to its original religious meaning. Literary Utopias did not always exist and it has become obvious by now that we can live without them. Even the classical genre has changed in the course of history: From More's island Utopia via time Utopias to Science Fiction and anti-Utopias. While the colorful images of other and better worlds paled and the monotony of their structure became stale over the centuries, utopian thinking has permeated modern literature, so much that we can now speak of utopian literature instead of literary Utopias. To be sure, Utopias are still written and read, but the critical discourse on Utopia has shifted and now takes place in aesthetic theory and modern literature. Bloch's utopian function has become a key concept of modernity.

When we finally take a look at the utopian function in literature, there are still many discoveries to be made—especially in modern literature, where we can find an abundance of texts with a utopian tinge. Although modern literature deliberately avoids projecting its hopes, wishes and dreams onto ideal states and optimal societies, it remains "an experiment of the imagination with perfection" (Bloch). Against all odds, hope demands what makes life worth living or what allows individuals to fulfill their potential, even if it is only anticipated in the happiness of a fulfilled moment. "Poetry is related to the essence of Utopia," Christa Wolf once wrote, "it has a bitter-sweet longing for the absolute."¹¹ The complementary concept to perfection is the wish-dream. As long as need and want prevail in the world, human beings will express their life projections in day-dreams. In literature these utopian wishes find their representation in fairy tales, dreams or utopian moments; and even the happy endings of comedies or trivial literature signify this justifiable longing for happiness. Literature here becomes a special form of dream-work. How do these dreams, wishes and projections find their

representation in modern literature? Since the old fairy tales about utopian islands have lost their fascination and the monotony of their geometrical structures bore us now, we have to look for their traces in modern literature. Modern utopian literature no longer has a clear normative structure like the classical genre. The colorful images of a better world have faded or were crossed out by a ban on those images. Rudiments of these images can still be found in modern novels which also use utopian settings, but modern literature, although tinged by utopian thinking, avoids any images of perfection. The utopian intention can still be detected in idyllic, satirical or ironic representations of reality. But instead of speculating about the utopian possibilities of modern literature, let's look at some examples.

It is by now a common place that Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities* (1930/32) is as much a paradigm of modern utopian literature as Bloch's *Principle of Hope* is of utopian thinking.¹² It is not so much the utopian elements and set-scenes of Utopia but rather the experimental thinking in possibilities and the satirical structure, which give this novel its utopian dimension. The plot of this essayistic novel is extremely simple and only provides a frame for the reflections of the narrator and the main character. Ulrich, the man without qualities, has been a mathematician and engineer, who at the age of thirty takes a leave of absence from life in order to observe the reality that surrounds him in Vienna at the eve of World War I. He renounces all activities, becomes a voyeur and concentrates on his thought experiments. Ulrich has a mental faculty, which the narrator calls "a sense of possibility": "Such possibility-men live in a fine web of imaginations, dreams and subjunctives."¹³ They are never satisfied with reality as it is, but think that the world could/should probably also be different. Ulrich, the mathematician, thinks in modalities and probabilities, and the object of his thought experiments is the ever sameness of "Kakania". The first part of the novel is a satire of the declining Hapsburg Empire, which is also a case study of the modern world. The social reality of Vienna is observed with ironical distance and narrated in an indicative mode, but the narrator's satirical gesture demands with necessity to transform this boringly ignorant society, to treat it as a "problem and invention", and to transcend the imperfect indicative of reality into an experimental subjunctive. The novel is filled with thought experiments, an ongoing process of patterns, outlines, drafts of possibilities, and a constant play on

the logic of modalities. Musil carefully avoids, however, to map out a utopian state/society, which would merely exist in a *conjunctivus irrealis*; instead he prefers the *conjunctivus potentialis*, which for him is the *conjunctivus utopicus*: "Utopia is a direction,"¹⁴ not a blue print for society, it scans the possibilities of an existing society and illuminates the path for a better future. Even that is too optimistic in the context of Musil's novel, since the utopian function can only be experienced in the individual subject. Accordingly Musil's utopian visions are all transferred to the subject (one could even speak of subjective Utopias in contrast to the social Utopias). At least three such Utopias are discernible in the novel.

Ulrich is not just playing with possibilities, his thought experiments are not just fantastic, their aim is to explore and discover new possibilities of living. He, who has taken a one year leave of absence from life, is only interested in one problem which is worth solving: What are the possibilities of life and what is a meaningful life. Each person is a given, born into certain circumstances, but at the same time full of potentials which have to be realized. This Utopia of "exact living" considers life to be a hypothetical experiment that is open-ended, and treats it in the manner of an essay. As the essay deals with a problem from many perspectives without offering a final conclusion, the Utopia of "exact living" examines different perspectives on life, as if they were not yet discovered intentions. The form of narration in this part of the novel fluctuates between the reflections of the narrator and the self-reflections of Ulrich, and its style becomes indeed essayistic, but without any definite results.

Since Ulrich's Utopia of meaningful life remains undecided and has of necessity to be undecidable, he tries out another possibility, which has become known as the Utopia of the "other condition" (*der andere Zustand*, or *AZ* in short). It is based on the incestuous phantasies between Ulrich and his sister Agathe, which Musil calls "the journey to the limits of the possible."¹⁵ This borderline case of the subjective Utopia is nothing less than a mystic moment, a utopian totum of timelessness, permanence and happiness. It would be a moment of ecstasy, in which individual and world feel in unison and harmony. The place for this utopian moment is a garden in early summer, when the siblings only touch each other without consummating their incest. Here Utopia is reduced to its most extreme form of a utopian moment, and only its

idyllic representation gives it a larger context of the *acadia* Utopia. This Utopia has to fail since it is not transferrable to society as a whole, as Musil well knew, but as a Utopia of "motivated living", which is based on love, it seems to be practical for the individual person.

Musil's last Utopia, which is only sketched out, comes closest to what Bloch called the "utopian function"; it is the Utopia of the "inductive mind (or thinking)". This more practical Utopianism is oriented toward reality (and its possibilities) and has a moral as well as social intention. Induction means that this Utopia is based on certain assumptions which also have to be adjusted constantly. One of them was the collapse of the Austrian Empire after World War I. Although Musil like many other writers had great hopes for a renewal of society, he could not find an Archimedean point for judging history. Musil's satirical criticism of the "ever sameness" of Viennese society is clearly recognizable, and the novel has a utopian perspective, it follows and reads traces that lead to Utopia. But his subjective Utopia, like the utopian moment of *AZ*, can never be grounded in society--and Utopia never comes into sight.

The monumental novel of more than 1600 pages (with hundreds of fragments), on which Musil worked for over twenty years, remained a fragment, and we can surmise that the novel by its very nature could not be finished. The creative process itself was an ongoing experiment in utopian thinking and writing. "It could be different," is not only the leitmotif of the novel it is also the reason why it could not be completed. This project of modern Utopianism had to be a fragment. How could it be otherwise?

"Why did we allow Utopia to degenerate to an invective?", Christa Wolf asked 1979 in her Bettine von Arnim essay.¹⁶ To speak about Utopia at that time in GDR was political, theoretical, and formal sacrilege. Politically, since the GDR promised to be on its way to fulfill humanity's dreams; theoretically, since scientific socialism had replaced Utopianism (according to Engel's); and stylistically, since the official theory of Socialist Realism censured all forms of utopian literature as empty illusions. Against these dogmas, Christa Wolf dared to sublimate utopian thinking and writing into socialism; in so doing, she follows the footsteps of Ernst Bloch, whose student she was at Leipzig.¹⁷ The more the social and cultural conditions hardened in the late 1970's, the more she insisted on her utopian intentions, both as criticism of everyday life in the GDR and as anticipation of a democratic socialism. "I see myself

confronted with an ossified reality," she said in an interview in 1978, "and only in writing I see the possibility of introducing Utopia or elements of hope, to use this outmoded word."¹⁸ How does she use "elements of hope" in her novels?

Although traces of Utopia can be found in all her writings, it may suffice to concentrate on one example which already in its title conjures up More's *Utopia*, namely *No Place on Earth* (*Kein Ort. Nirgends*, 1979). The short novel does not, however, deliver what the title promises. It is not another description of Utopia, the no-where land of geometrical order and organized happiness; instead it is an idyllic tableau of a typical romantic salon around the turn of the 18th century, which is overshadowed by the failed French Revolution, the gathering clouds of the Napoleonic wars and the crisis of the Prussian state. Against this bleak backdrop, the narrator observes a group of Romantics during a summer afternoon in the house of a rich Frankfurt merchant, where they converse about the affairs of state, society, science, and art. Among the guest are the poets Kleist and Günderröde, outsiders in this circle of important men who can speak about everything with confidence and who are able to hide the crisis of society and of themselves behind smiling lips. Kleist, the officer without an order, civil servant without a post, and author without a finished work, feels alienated among the guests. He has failed in all social or private matters or has fled them, his misfortune being, "that he depends on commitments which suffocate him if he endures them, and which destroy him if he brakes them."¹⁹ These contradictions tear him apart and make him an outsider. The ambivalence of the novel's title is revealed by Kleist when he bursts out in despair: "Unlivable life. No Place. Nowhere."²⁰ Here his suicide is already anticipated.

Karoline von Günderröde, the young canoness and poetess, suffers from the same syndrome, which is even further aggravated by the conventions of the times that do not allow for her emancipation as a woman or as a writer. "Marked by an irreparable discord," observes the essayist Wolf, "gifted to express the inadequacy of herself and the world, she lives a short and uneventful life, which is overburdened with inner conflict, yet she refuses any compromise--and commits suicide."²¹ She wants to live a fulfilled life: being accepted in society as a woman and a writer, but in this "pygmean age" that defines the woman's role by subordination, self-denial and devotion, her wishes are unlivable. Her

only hope for self-realization is self-cultivation and writing, in order to excavate the deep layers of her unlived life. But even her best friends, present at the tea party, misunderstand and misjudge her. She already feels that she can not fulfill her innermost dreams. There is no place on earth for her. "We know, what follows," is the laconic end of the novel.

In spite of this ending and the foreshadowing of Kleist's and G nderrode's suicide, resignation and pessimism are not the moods of the novel. To the contrary, the last part of the novel, that slowly brings the two poets together, is a wishful experiment by the author to show at least as a hypothetical possibility how their encounter illuminates the hope for a life worth living. It could have been different, if there had been an alternative for them which Wolf reconstructs as a fictitious possibility. Their encounter, which takes place outside society in nature, is the fulfilled moment they wished for. "Once in my life," thinks Kleist, "I would like to meet a person, who, without secret reproach, would allow me to be who I am." And at the same time G nderrode wishes for herself: "Once someone should meet her of whom she knows nothing. From whom she can learn nothing but to experience herself to the bottom of her being, to the limits and beyond."²² It would be self-recognition in the other, the experience of wholeness they both are longing for. Their scene of recognition is truly the "shadow of a dream", that lets them experience a possibility of happiness they will never attain. Unlike Musil's utopian moment of the "Other Condition", this reduction of Utopia to a fulfilled moment does not promise a happier future, but it is a moment of hope nevertheless.

When we see Christa Wolf's Utopia of ideal communication against the background of a hopelessly alienated world of technocrats, and when we also consider the tragic ending of the protagonists, "We know what comes," modern Utopia, even in its most reductive form, seems to be draped in a mourning veil. The experience of modernity finds expression only in negative images, which do not even become positive during the utopian moment since this moment is overshadowed by a threatening reality. Utopia is rapidly fading in modern literature, which forbids images of a better world and permits only fleeting moments of hope that can no longer transform society. Modern poetry is full of utopian imagery that share both of Wolf's perspectives: Looking through a glass darkly at reality and transcending it only for the duration of a utopian moment.

To be sure, there are still triumphant Utopias depicted in modern poetry, as in Enzensberger's *Utopia* (1957), but these emphatic images of hope are the exception. This early poem is not a modern Utopia (in More's tradition) but a celebration of anarchy. It is young Enzensberger's "jubilant utopian vision of pleasure, plentitude, and presence, conjured up by desire and hope," as Karla Schultz so aptly put it.²³ Poetry has to speak, "as if the future were possible," Enzensberger wrote in his famous essay "Poesie und Politik" (1962), "as if it were possible to speak freely among unfree people, as if alienation and speechlessness didn't exist."²⁴ And the poem is just that, "productive anarchy." It starts and ends with the famous lines from Wolfram von Eschenbach's dawn song: "Der Tag steigt auf mit großer Kraft / schlägt durch die Wolken seine Klauen."²⁵ (The day rises with grand force and tears, lion-like, through the clouds.) The utopian day is a euphoric moment that satirically transforms the social order. The milkmen, bums, and bridegrooms have more power than managers, chancellors, and popes. "Like a mutiny, happiness is unleashed." And in the end all climb into balloon-baskets, as if they wanted to leave this world behind. This is, however, no flight into Utopia, rather another expression of the jubilant mood that carries everybody up, up and away--to no-where. *Utopia* is Enzensberger's most hilarious vision which is not his last word on Utopia, as we will see.

"Utopias? Sure, but where?" Enzensberger asked in 1980. "We don't see them. We only feel them, like a knife in the back."²⁶ In contrast to his poem "Utopia" (1957) which was an celebration of pleasure and plentitude, "Furie" his latest visit to Utopia is gloomy and pessimistic: Enzensberger is peering into the abyss of progress. The "Fury" watches passively as everything increases: people, work, GNP and hunger. She neither speaks nor acts, and keeps her terrible thoughts to herself: "Hope, so much hope, but none for you." "Like gravity, she gravely exists, and everything capable of falling falls to her."²⁷ In the end only "The Fury of Disappearing" remains who observes silently our empty progress that rushes history to its end. This apocalyptic vision is for Enzensberger merely the darker side of utopian thinking: "The idea of Apocalypse has accompanied utopian thinking from its beginning, (...) it is nothing else than a negative Utopia."²⁸ "Utopia" and "Fury" complement each other, balance each other and show the freedom of human imagination. What Enzensberger reminds us of, is the fact, that utopian as well as dystopian visions are in the last analysis word games, as visions of happiness or

warning posts of history. They are, as Karla Schultz has demonstrated, "utopias of writing." In her words: "Writing provides an endless, bottomless freedom to use words, making them mean things, taking the meaning back, keeping it in suspense, foiling it, making new meaning ad infinitum."²⁹ If this sounds more like Derrida than Bloch, it would also mean, that the utopian function of modern literature has fallen back on its last bastion: language. Perhaps, this is the postmodern condition of modern poetry.

By contrast Volker Braun's "Tagtraum" (Daydream) is the last trumpet sound of Utopia as revolution--or so it seems. Braun's laconic title is in truth a Blochian concept brimming with significance. The notion of "Tagtraum" occupies a central position in Bloch's encyclopedia of utopian thinking, his *Prinzip Hoffnung* (1959). His critique and expansion of Freud's analysis of dreams, "Grundsätzliche Unterscheidung der Tagträume von den Nachträumen," (Fundamental differences between daydreams and nightdreams) is especially important here.³⁰ In contrast to nightdreams, which are confused and coded digestions of the subconscious, daydreams are a free play of the imagination, conscious anticipations and projections. The night-dreamers, according to Freud, do not know, what is going on; the daydreamers, Bloch expands, know what they wish / want. On the wings of imagination they transcend the confines of an oppressive reality, chart out a better world and anticipate what is not yet. It is a utopian activity par excellence. All this and more is well known to Volker Braun and he plays with the Blochian expectation. Braun's "Daydream" is, in part, a dreaming into the future that is nourished by a promising revolutionary past. The poem speaks of the "Seltenzeit" (rare time) of revolutions and it is composed of quotations from Hölderlin, Brecht and Lenin that all allude to revolutions, be they in France, Russia or the Third World. But the situation, in which the lyrical "I" finds itself, is anything but revolutionary: "Im Niemandsland zwischen den Grenzen stand / mein Wagen." (In no man's land between the borders my car stood still.) Like in Brecht's "Radwechsel", the lyrical "I" does not like where he comes from or where he is going to. Worse yet, he has stopped his car in no man's land between mine fields and is observed from watch towers. Caught between the geographical, economical, and ideological frontiers of East and West, the solitary I contemplates his uneasy situation: "Ein Leben lang hab ich es gewußt: es wird. / Jetzt glaub ich nurmehr." (All my life I have have known with

certainty: it will come true. / Now I merely believe it.) The contradiction between a revolutionary past and a deeply disturbing present overshadows an uncertain future. The conviction of a revolutionary development of history is gone and what remains is merely a skeptical belief. And yet he knows, he has to take sides--he must! But he has only a vague inkling of words at best. What started out as a utopian daydream, spiced with revolutionary memories, has turned into a nightmare of uncertainty. The forceful Alcaic rhythm ends in an elegiac tone. Mourning becomes Utopia. The mood of postmodernism obviously permeates even the poetry of one of East Germany's most political poets.

Although Postmodernism in the former GDR seems to be an unlikely proposition, there are strong indications in the text that the poetics of Postmodernism are at work here. Most obvious are the many quotations and allusions, which Reinhold Grimm has carefully dissected and attributed to the revolutionary fabric of the poem.³¹ As if Braun no longer could speak with his own authentic voice, when he writes about the progress of history, he uses quotations and weaves them into a pastiche, in order to conjure up a revolutionary past. What emerges is a "Posthistoire" that is unable to decipher the meaning or direction of history. The result of this language game--dealing with past works, forms and ideas--is a historical hangover, so to speak, and an overall postmodern gloom. Even the vast arsenal of utopian thinking seems to be consumed, and any optimistic revolutionary predictions are out of place. The lyrical "I", caught between the borders of East and West, has arrived at an empty space of history. The utopian daydream of "Seltenzeit" is fading and turning into a nightmarish situation--he can already hear the barking bloodhounds of the border guards. For Braun it is a "zerreißen-der Schwebezustand" (an extremely painful condition of being in limbo) and yet he does not want to recant. In his borderline situation he is not only threatened by the approaching border guards but even more by his own uncertainty. Sooner or later he has to cross the border at all costs, even though he can barely make out or remember his words (the pass word?) any longer. Or does the last line also contain a shadow of an answer to his predicament, his "Zerreißprobe" (a most cruel endurance test or ordeal), as he called it. In lieu of a real decision or action, he only surmises words now, and nothing else anymore. Is this, what is left of his utopian daydream: merely a "Utopia of language", as Karla Schultz also discovered in Enzensberger's "Fury"? A surprising convergence of

East- and West-German poetry under postmodern conditions, even before the Wall fell.

What I have tried to demonstrate is the slow fading of utopian visions in modern German literature. The glimmer of hope is barely recognizable any more, and yet poets like Musil, Wolf, Braun, and even Enzensberger cling to the principle of hope, even if it is no longer a promise of a "State of Freedom," as Marx and Bloch hoped for, but only a negation of the unbearable conditions of modern society. And how could it be otherwise? How could we ever dismiss the principle of hope? "If we stop hoping," Christa Wolf admonishes us, "that, which we fear most, will certainly happen."³²

This would be a good ending, but also a closure for something still quite undecided. Wolf's warning is well taken, but not used as a punch line here. I quoted her with the hope that utopian visions are still possible and indeed necessary. For how poor would we be, if we had no more needs for daydreams in our lives, if poetry no longer anticipated moments of happiness, and if we were content with the world as it is. The end of Utopian thinking and writing would mean the acceptance of a triumphant capitalism and a consumer culture. And what a hopeless proposition that would be!

Notes

1 *Die Zeit*, Jan. 2, 1987

2 Ernst Bloch, *Literarische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt, 1965), p. 385 ff.

3 Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt, 1959), p. 1654.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 258 ff.

5 Friedrich Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1973), vol. 19, p. 189 ff.

6 Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 242 ff.

7 Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and H.G. Goepfert (Munich, 1960), vol. 5, p. 594.

8 Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 248.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

10 Bloch, *Literarische Aufsätze*, p. 143.

11 Christa Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben* (Neuwied, 1980), p. 282.

- 12 See Albrecht Schöne: "Zum Gebrauch des Konjunktivs bei Robert Musil," in *Euphorion* 55 (1961), pp. 196-220; and Hermann Wiegmann: "Musils Utopiebegriff," in *Literatur ist Utopie*, pp. 309-334.
- 13 Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Frankfurt, 1952), p. 16.
- 14 Ibid, p. 1594.
- 15 Ibid, p. 777.
- 16 Christa Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben* (Neuwied, 1980), p. 313.
- 17 See Klaus L. Berghahn, "Die real existierende Utopie im Sozialismus. Zu Christa Wolfs Romanen," in K.L. Berghahn/H.U. Seeber, eds., *Literarische Utopien von Morus bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 275-297.
- 18 Christa Wolf *Materialienbuch*, ed. Klaus Sauer (Neuwied, 1979), p. 55.
- 19 Christa Wolf, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (Neuwied, 1981), p. 41.
- 20 Ibid, p. 108.
- 21 Christa Wolf, "Der Schatten eines Traumes. Karoline von Günderode--ein Entwurf," in *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 225.
- 22 *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, p. 106.
- 23 Karla L. Schultz, "Writing as Disappearing: Enzensberger's Negative Utopian Move," in *Monatshefte* 78 (1986), pp. 195 ff.
- 24 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Poesie und Politik," in *Einzelheiten* (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 353.
- 25 Enzensberger, *Gedichte 1955-1970* (Frankfurt, 1971), p. 7.
- 26 Enzensberger, *Die Furie des Verschwindens* (Frankfurt, 1980), p. 46.
- 27 Karla Schultz, p. 197.
- 28 Enzensberger, "Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang," in *Politische Brosamen* (Frankfurt, 1983), p. 225.
- 29 Schultz, p. 201.
- 30 Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 86 ff.
- 31 Reinhold Grimm, "Experimenting with Tradition: Volker Braun's Poem 'Tagtraum,'" in *German Quarterly* 63 (1990), pp. 490 ff.
- 32 Wolf, *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, p. 148.

Hans Adler

**Obligations of Literary Scholarship:
A Reminder**

The following remarks deal with that part of cultural scholarship which pertains to literature. They do not represent an attempt to make the study of culture congruent with the study of literature.

The possessive case in the title of my contribution is ambiguous. It suggests not only obligations which are imposed upon literary scholarship, but also obligations which literary scholarship imposes upon itself. This is no pedantic play with the *genitivus objectivus* and the *genitivus subjectivus*, but rather the expression of interferences which themselves lie within the task of a scholarly discipline as a social institution. Scholarship as an *activity*, on the one hand, is determined by its object, its method, and its function. Scholarship as an *institution*, on the other hand, is determined by the expectations which are placed on it. The "function" of a field of scholarship is the joint between the activity and the expectations--between the "internal" and the "external." The problem in determining the obligations lies in the fact that--as with all fields of scholarship--the "internal" and the "external" can be viewed as separate only to a limited extent, since there are no "pure" scholarly subjects. To engage in scholarship means to subject oneself to a concentration and a disciplining whose exclusivity is limited. The *homo scientificus* may suffer from the life-world or with regret find himself or herself marginalized from it--but he or she is unable to escape it. In short: the obligations which are imposed upon literary scholarship overlap with those which are imposed by the "nature of the thing."

This is a strange relationship which is not quite free of risk, because from both sides a lively trespassing back and forth across the boundaries takes place. With this, however, the boundary itself is put into question, even more to be sure in areas of the humanities than in the natural sciences, but to a particularly large degree in those disciplines which have to do with art and literature. In fields like psychology or sociology an immunization against encroachments by means of borrowings on the part of the strict sciences of mathematics and the natural sciences can be

discerned, which prevents common sense from gaining access to the object of the discipline. Literary scholarship has also been quite inventive in this area, as it seems to stand closer to common sense but precisely for this reason insists upon distance, scholarly distance. It shows this demarcation, for example, by hindering the reading flow of its texts through jungles of footnotes or by erecting a marked barrier of terminology ("specialists' jargon"). Through such procedures literary scholarship in no way gains respect among non-specialists. But on the other hand, nothing negative is thereby said about the quality of a field which has been cordoned off in this way. The commonplace demand for an understandable language is from the point of view of a scientific discipline first of all nothing other than an encroachment upon that discipline. In a positive case this is motivated by the curiosity of a non-expert, and in a negative--and by far more frequent--case the encroachment denies the discipline its own area, its own subject matter, more specifically: its facts, namely what a discipline makes out of a thing. A field of scholarship should not zealously offer itself to the public for opportunistic reasons.

To be sure, fortification behind barriers of footnotes and terminology is naturally also no guarantee of quality, since both without further ado can have the mere function of signaling affiliation with a group--as a rule it amounts to a reduplication of that which was known anyhow in gurgant. Nevertheless: knowledge without concepts may be wisdom, but knowledge without concepts in the form of a specific terminology does not become scholarship. In short: scholarly understanding must subject itself to the strain of concepts. Not everyone who reads, hears, or sees literature is a literary scholar.

It is strange enough: just imagine two scholars--I am simplifying--in the vestibule of a building at an institution which disperses public funds, an institution which spends taxes to initiate, guide, and influence developments. Every public university has to do with these institutions. One of our scholars is a nuclear physicist who is working toward the construction of a new particle accelerator; the other one is a literary scholar who would like to establish a national institute for the study of literature and literary history. What interests me in the following is less the result of their conversation, but rather its hypothetical course.

Money is in short supply. The two are called simultaneously for an interview with the referee. Both, convinced of the necessity of their

projects, explain the amount and use of the support they have applied for by presenting once more the basis, necessity, and goal of their projects. And then, in the course of this phase, something remarkable takes place: the referee understands neither of them and finds himself nevertheless capable of evaluating unequivocally what they have presented. He does not understand the nuclear physicist because his terminology seems strange to him, and he does not understand the literary scholar because his terminology seems bewildering to him. Both scholars, however, are not newcomers to research management. They know that they are dealing with a person responsible for decisions who is no specialist. Therefore they simplify for the influential layman. The nuclear physicist brings into play basic research, world formula, and technical applicability in the future. He argues offensively. The literary scholar argues defensively, defends the necessity of literature and art and their study for humanity, brings in the ubiquity of literature and basic aesthetic needs and the necessity of rational penetration which could lead to a controlled change or organization of the life-world. The referee listens attentively to the physicist but rather jovially to the literary scholar: attentively to the physicist because both the bases and the applicability sound auspicious; jovially to the literary scholar because the value of the aesthetic is evident, i.e. something which everyone can experience--but, to be sure, as something of secondary importance. Both applicants may be turned down because of an economic recession. That is a blow for natural scientists as well as humanists; but for my considerations in this context it is not decisive. It is decisive, however, that the arguments of the physicist are incomprehensible but nevertheless convincing to the referee, while the arguments of the literary scholar seem likewise incomprehensible but not at all convincing.

An encounter of this kind--between experts and lay people--subsists less on the power of the experts' arguments than on the prestige enjoyed by the discipline. This is nourished by a onesided inheritance from the Enlightenment drawn from the criterion of "rationality," a rationality which has effected and continues to promise controlled social progress. In abbreviated form this prestige is sold today under the concept of "social relevance," whereby to an increasing extent one understands the pragmatization of the disciplines, whose practical application appears to the common sense as their legitimation. This pragmatization is valid for the natural sciences, whose progress is characterized by the intertwining

of industry and research. But this is also true in literary scholarship.

For *Germanistik* in Germany the volume which appeared in 1989 with the title *Wozu noch Germanistik?* seems to me to make this clear, above all on the part of the three editors, Jürgen Förster, Eva Neuland, and Gerhard Rupp. The subtitle, which reads "Wissenschaft--Beruf--Kulturelle Praxis," ("Scholarship--Profession--Cultural Practice") indicates the direction. The last of these, the "cultural practice," is supposed to be the realm of "future *Germanistik*" (p. 8), of the "*Germanistik* which is related to the present and to society, but which is neither precisely in line with the market nor quite oriented toward the consumer" (p. 11). The editors are able to imagine a kind of

municipal social worker who is educated in language and in literary scholarship [...], who helps to explain and understand ethnic and social cultural conflicts and to stimulate the articulation of socio-cultural interests, the *free-time pedagogue* who works in literature, writing, and history workshops to guide older and younger citizens in the working up of their autobiographies and in mediating their historical experiences and in verbal-literary self-presentations and self-reflections [...], or also a cultural mediator with an education as a medievalist--rather than the culture expert with a philological education or the "trainer of executives" (p. 11).

The editors also offer a "language and communication advisor," who works in administrations to provide for citizens "free language advice" (p.12), or who helps to formulate medical or legal texts more clearly. To be sure, the "'market for *Germanists*' must to a great extent still be created" (p. 11). This market for *Germanistik* which is not in line with current market conditions draws its "notions concerning its purpose" (p. 8) from an analysis of the changes in social language and communication practice. As goals of *Germanistik* the following are formulated, in the words of the editors:

- the stimulation of autonomous, interest-driven ability to act,
- the improvement of everyday[,] intersubjective processes of understanding,
- the transmission of productive[,] cultural participation and of reflective intercourse with traditions, and the enrichment of historical awareness,
- offerings of verbal and literary experiences of reality and of the potentials of language and literature to deal with contemporary

issues and to instigate action,
--the promotion of self-reflection and of the development of
personal and social identity (p. 9).

Confronted with this list, I consider *Germanistik* incompetent to solve the stated tasks for two reasons: (1) Experience in the early 1970's with language-compensatory education has shown that emancipatory refinement of consciousness and behavior must remain unsuccessful unless there is also a change in the conditions which first of all cause the need for this education. (2) It seems to me in the case of the above-mentioned formulation of goals that *Germanistik* is overtaxed not only by pressure from representatives of the discipline threatened or affected by unemployment but also by the demand from outside that the discipline be practical and relevant, to the extent that the designation for the field--*Germanistik*--is completely meaningless, or perhaps more precisely--helplessly misleading. Without a sociopolitical specification of goals which goes beyond "emancipation," "improvement of self-reflection," "identity-development," and so on, the product of this education is nothing but a kind of narcissistic, middle-class communications-athlete. Woe to society if he or she does not declare *emancipation per se* but *an emancipation, his or her own emancipation*, as a German, as a man, as a representative of the exclusively legitimate! It becomes apparent that for the editors of the volume *Wozu noch Germanistik?*, who are doing the splits between the salvation of the emancipatory claim of the field of *Germanistik* on the one hand and the pressure in the direction of the pragmatization of the field on the other hand, emancipation becomes a kind of pompous banner which, as it flaps, precedes the address of loyalty to "the circumstances."

The impression is forced upon us that this "future *Germanistik*," which seems to be situated between applied communication sciences and social technology, no longer defines itself from the scholarly perspective, but rather as an institutionalized field which has allowed its flanks to be torn open by attempts at legitimation to such an extent that its core components have been softened up for an assault. Let me cast a glance on that which I call "core components." In the following I will concentrate largely on literary scholarship and literary history and will simultaneously turn my back on the special realm of *Germanistik* in Germany.

Like all scholarly disciplines, the study of literature should be able to answer three questions: (1) *What* is being dealt with (what is the object domain)? (2) *How* is the object domain dealt with (methods)? (3) *Why*

(for what purpose) is the particular object domain dealt with methodically (function)? Because I have been educated in the field of modern German literary scholarship, I will place my emphasis on this area. One is less apt to become amateurish with familiar material.

1. The object domain of literary scholarship.

It is not necessary that the object domain of literary scholarship coincide with that of the institutionalized field. When Karl Lachmann began engaging in Lessing-philology in the nineteenth century, and when Wilhelm Scherer and Erich Schmidt taught modern German literature, they broke out of the boundaries of the field of that era, which were defined as historical philology of the German language and older German literature. What Scherer and Schmidt were doing can be stated today without the stigma of violating the frontier: they were dealing with modern German literature, even though there was no institutional framework for this new object domain.

What does modern German literary scholarship deal with today? The boundaries of the field seem to become blurred. We have lost the naiveté of the "art of interpretation," a naiveté which was legitimized by the ability of the interpreter. Nevertheless, it is probably still not quite false to state that modern German literary scholarship deals with German-language literature of the modern era. And still one hears a slip of the tongue. Of course the attribute "German-language" is progress in the direction of ideological unburdening as compared to "German" literature. But despite this, the concept "German-language" easily calls up associations of national provincialism, and the term "literature" itself has been of ill repute since the late 1960's, without justification, in my opinion. The fact that something Siren-like and dysfunctional clings to literature has long been argued. But I will for the time being leave this aspect aside. I mean here "literature" as an object of scholarly activity.

The reason for the bad reputation, it seems to me, lies in a philistine short-circuit in which literature and life, secondary and primary roles, luxury and basic needs are played out against each other, so that the connection between these poles is broken. It is no coincidence that at the end of the 1960's the "death of literature" was proclaimed (by writers, incidentally, who confidently continued and continue to write) and that at the same time literary scholarship began putting itself under bombardment. The "death of literature" was a slogan, a fighting slogan, not

against literature in general, but against specific forms of literary occurrences. Without going into this in detail, I contend that the object domain of literary scholarship has in no way slipped away since that time, but rather has expanded wildly. For one thing highbrow canonical literature has been attacked again and again as the exclusive object of literary scholarship, so that texts of popular literature have come into consideration as candidates for scholarly treatment. However: whether lowbrow or highbrow--it always still had to do with literature. The attack against the basic material of literary scholarship became more overt, as texts of advertising and propaganda were included as legitimate objects. At this point a qualitative leap took place, namely not only from literary scholarship to *text*-scholarship, but also from literary scholarship to literary sociology. The key words are "structuralism" and "reflection" (Widerspiegelung) or "literary sociology." In both cases, whose mediation has only seldom been attempted (for example by Lucien Goldmann), the *text*, the language document--independent of its literary quality--was declared the object of literary scholarship.

Here structuralism--on which and on whose consequences I would like to concentrate--was particularly inventive in the expansion of its object domain. Since texts are language creations, as the argument at that time ran in abbreviated version, linguistic treatment is appropriate. However, because linguistics, particularly in the successful Saussurean variety, understood itself to be part of a more inclusive science of signs (semiology), potentially all those human activities which manifest themselves semiologically came into consideration as candidates for treatment: street traffic, myths, music, film, and many others. The concept "text" (like also the concept "grammar") was transformed into a *metaphor*.

Under these circumstances, literary scholarship found itself confronted with a scope of tasks which went far beyond its capacities. For now every statement concerning a literary text not only had to refer back to a general system of signs, of which it was a dependent part, but also through this referring back had to provide information concerning the social systems which surround it. Who was supposed to be able to do that?

Interdisciplinarity was and to this day is the--as it seems to me--helpless slogan for the integration of knowledge. However, interdisciplinarity seems to me to have a range which is extremely limited. Letting representatives of various disciplines cooperate between book covers does

not mean displaying the exploded object in its new wholeness. Instead, results of interdisciplinary cooperation leave the impression of a multiperspectivism, which to be sure allows a multiplicity to become visible, but does not allow that which is viewed to become visible as a unity.

I intend here to interrupt my short historical retrospective, because I am certainly at a decisive point: since the early 1970's, the object of literary scholarship has no longer been unambiguously describable and for this reason has hardly been capable of consensus.

The reaction of the institution was hesitant. That is, mainly new fields of research were added to literary scholarship, but the object domain was not differentiated through making the specific more precise. In a certain sense, to be sure, the creation of institutes for media research (theater, film, television) and for cultural studies, the swing of comparative studies from comparative to general literary scholarship, and the establishment of positions or departments for Women's Studies can be seen as institutional differentiation. Nevertheless: it continues to be demanded of literary scholarship that it cover the realms of media, general literary theory, social history, art history, didactics, and much more.

Here I am not asking whether modern German literary scholarship is a discipline, but whether it still has an object which corresponds to its name. I am not clinging to the name for reasons of tradition, but rather because I am of the opinion that "literature" as the object of the discipline has something peculiar only to it as opposed to other symbolic or semiotic human activities. This peculiarity is limited by medium and includes its processing. The medial specificity of literature is its language manifestation, which is different from all iconical signs because of its abstractness, i.e. because of the distance between perception and representation. (I am here leaving music aside.) The processing of the arbitrary language signs is distinguished from the processing of iconical signs by the "longer path" from the *signifiant* to the *signifié*, which expressly because of this distance gives privilege to language as a means of presentation and expression.

Thus I am for the present putting forward a traditional limitation of the basic subject matter of scholars dealing with modern German literature to those texts which display literariness. "Literariness" is here to be that quality of texts with which semiotic complexions of arbitrary signs, on the one hand, and self-referentiality as thematization of

language as a medium, on the other, is designated. This determination of the object domain of literary scholarship is insufficient because it takes as its point of departure the notion that there is an object domain for literary scholarship, which is simply waiting to be revealed, which to a certain extent is lying ready and merely has to be picked up. Such is not the case, for the object of literary scholarship is only created in the execution of its "treatment." Literature as the object of literary scholarship is no piece of data, nothing which is given; literature as the object of literary scholarship is a fact, something which is made. For this reason, considerations concerning the way and manner of scholarly dealings with these texts must be included. The field of modern German literary scholarship is not only connected to an object, but also to the procedures of constituting that object which are peculiar to it.

2. *Theory and method of literary scholarship.*

Methods are good for the controlled transformation of experiences into knowledge. *Theories* incorporate object and method into a context which allows an orientation of the scholarly activity and a localization of the scholarly activity. Modern theories are characterized by an inevitable futility; therefore, it is good to remember that *theoria* in Greek meant "viewing" and "scrutinizing," whereby the spectator took part in that which was viewed in such a way that to a certain extent he became absorbed in it. The ancient *theoria* thus includes becoming engrossed in a thing, an event, a festival perhaps. Modern theories, on the other hand, are complexes of rationally controlled procedures actively brought to bear on a thing which as entireties lay claim to a function for mastering and orientation. However, the problem since Kant's critical turning point and the modern linguistic turn is that according to our view the things themselves, i.e., the things in their singularity are removed from our cognitive access. We do not know "things," but rather "circumstances"; and their claim to validity differs according to the different schools. It is no coincidence that philosophy, the nearer it comes to the present, constricts itself more and more to epistemology. With all the differences in the approaches, one can hold firm to the notion that cognition is either understood as the formation of models, that theories are models which are similar in some way to the world of our experience, or, in the case of followers of the "linguistic turn," they are not similar, thus no model, but rather only helpful or interesting in some way. I will in the following

concentrate on the correspondence paradigm of cognition as the formation of models.

That is a far-reaching claim, for in any case an extensive range is being reclaimed: theories have an orienting function to the extent that the elements of knowing are bound together into a systematic interlocking construction, and invasion of the merely accidental is prevented by the homology of the model. In this respect each coincidence points either to the limits of the system (and thereby perhaps to a more comprehensive system), or it is a proof of the invalidity of the system. Thus a theory makes a frame of reference available for our knowledge. For this reason every theory must thematize more than its set of circumstances. A literary theory which does not state what it understands as literature--as opposed to other things--cannot comprehend what it thematizes, namely literature. One can probably go further and declare that a literary theory which does not put its object into a plausible relationship with human activity as a whole misses its theme. Gadamer's hermeneutics and Foucault's discourse analysis are in this sense theories, just as Lyotard's considerations concerning the postmodern. A social history of literature, on the other hand, is no theory, but rather a method with a limited range; reception-aesthetics, on the other hand, is a theory, since it explains the constitution of its object within its context.

In summary I can say that literary theories attempt to portray the state of affairs of "literature" in a context and marked off from other human activities, in a way which is consistent, exhaustive, and topological. Stated in another way, theories create totalities; they bring together to a whole what presents itself to our experience as a confusing multiplicity. To give up this claim to totality is tantamount to giving up the desire to determine one's position; and in the final analysis this means the dissolution of one's identity.

What happens when we come to the conclusion, on the basis of our knowledge of humanity's previous experience, either that human beings are not at all capable of theories, or that the leading values of human activity have regularly in practice called forth their perversion? Here, in my opinion, a loop in the thinking comes in. It consists of the fact that the claim of theoretical incompetence itself has a theoretical status and that the criticism concerning orientation on leading values ("grands récits," "master narratives") can orient itself only on that which is negated and thus produces anti-values, or else renounces orientation. Totality is

always desire, claim, model, but never objective reality. It is always the *framework* of experience, never experience itself. The rejection of totality, however, seems to me to be less a paradigmatic change in thinking than a resignation within the framework of what has been attained, a resignation which I understand in its serious version as a recognition of human limitation. The experience of modern man, that small causes have large effects, is after all probably an expression of the globalization or even of the cosmization of experiences and stands in contradiction to the call for regionalization and subjectivization, which seems to me a precipitous self-limitation.

In this turmoil, literary scholarship threatens to lose its understanding of what is unique to it. The methodical retreat to the text as the self-contained reference system blessedly resting within itself seems to me to be a reaction which is just as inadequate as the social-historical reduction of literature to the document of that which history in another way already yields more clearly. To paraphrase *Faust*, "history says it somewhat like that, too, but with slightly different words"; that is the reduction of literature to embellishment, which one can do without. But we know no society which has not cultivated "literariness" in some form or another and does not continue to do so. Therefore, it might not be exaggerated to demand of a theory of literature that it be anchored anthropologically. I do not mean here Emil Staiger's understanding of the "lyrical," "epic," and "dramatic" as basic anthropological constants, and I know that the risk of the anthropological perspective is similar to that of the structuralist perspective, namely a neglect of history. If the historical perspective drops out of literary scholarship, then all cats are grey, and arbitrariness makes its entry on the back of similarity, so that everything can be compared with everything else and the informative value of analogy is naught. Wild analogies, on the other hand, mark a lack of bearings on the part of those who make them. For this reason a "wild analogist" can arbitrarily juggle with dummy paradoxes, as if contradiction were nothing other than an amusing figure of style for the entertainment of the reader. Nevertheless, when it comes to arriving at hypotheses, the "wild analogist" may be helpful like the blind chicken, and that does not necessarily have to be the swan song of scholarship altogether. It seems to me that the question of how a statement is elevated to a hypothesis is still waiting for an adequate answer.

An anthropological foundation for literary theory, connected with a

typology of historical ways in which literature has appeared in context, places a barrier of responsibility before a random way of dealing with literature without orientation, an associative-amusing chit-chat across the centuries. Literature, understood as an organon of mankind for appropriating the world with expressions, can be dealt with by literary scholarship only in the mode of seriousness. The playfulness which literature unfolds along the long path from the *signifiant* to the *signifié*, this playfulness itself is what is serious in literature, its own thing, its contribution toward humanity's understanding of itself and toward an understanding of its position in the world. I believe that this alone is reason enough to concern oneself with literature as a scholar. This self-understanding of literary scholarship is the obligation which the discipline imposes upon itself as an activity, an obligation which draws its power from the long-range framework of orientation: literature can be spoken of as the object of literary scholarship only when humanity and history are included in the idea. Without including this presupposition, literature would not only be without bearings, but also without a goal. To think of humanity and history without the principles of self-preservation, the intrinsic value of life, and improvement of the conditions of its unfolding, is senseless; it makes clear that the imagined relationships of "humanity" and "history" are *facta*, artificial things, which do not describe what is there but rather of necessity imply what it should be. One may call that utopia, ideology, or philosophy; it is of no consequence to me. Without these--let us say--attitudes or habits, we would fall back into a fatalism which pays homage to contingency, whereby the figure of thought of coincidence as a principle does make me suspicious, after all.

3. *The function of literary scholarship.*

A. Literary scholarship has the function of *preserving* literature. That sounds simple, but it is not. Our libraries are archives of humanity, not only of *all people*, but rather also of *the human being*. Libraries are ill served if their texts do not appear in their original form. Literary texts are not documents of an obsolete past, but rather of *our* past. Either they articulate linguistically transformed experiences and related visions, which indicate a better future. Or they subject themselves to the status quo of their genesis and unfold it in order--through this unfolding--to show that it will not remain what it was. Or they annihilate the possible by praising through language that which scorns them and tolerates them only as

embellishment. In any case, this is true: literary scholarship has the task of preserving texts in a reliable form. I cannot get the conclusion of the film *Fahrenheit 451* out of my head, and also the efforts on behalf of the work of Georg Büchner in recent years are an example of what is meant by the preservation of literature.

Preserving literature, however, not only means conserving it, but rather also keeping it alive. The trend toward shortening literary history to one's own century, if not less, creates a deficit in knowledge which by no means can be described merely in quantitative terms as an easing of the burden. In order to understand literature from an anthropological perspective, the situation from which literature originates and into which it speaks must be comprehended as a condition for creating literary facts. That becomes more interesting as *weltanschauungen* which bring forth literature and which themselves are brought forth by literature become stranger. What is our own can only be profiled against that which is strange. This seems to me one of the noblest tasks of all historical scholarly endeavors, one in which literary scholarship also participates.

B. Literary scholarship has the function of teaching *reading*, or, more precisely, even though metaphorically: *seeing*. The concept of "reading" has experienced a broadening which mixes together in a dangerous way activities which would better remain separate. The apprehension of a text and the explicit analysis of a text are two different activities. Apprehension stands in relationship to explicit analysis as object-language stands to meta-language. The mixing of these levels in a positive form is the essay, whose current inflation often brings forth only the zero grade of flowery inexactitude. A bad essay, however, not only is earmarked by arbitrariness in the fluctuation of levels of argumentation, but also by the fact that it exposes the thematized texts to arbitrary references leeward of this theoretical imprecision, for example, by bringing to them current, fashionable, or subjective questions. That may be suspenseful and witty as a feat of association, but as a rule it contributes little to the analysis of the text. The *theoria* mentioned above demands something different, namely in-depth consideration of the text, even if it is in the modern sense a carefully distanced attentiveness devoted to the text, its origin, and its effect. Every one may develop an opinion concerning a text, but not every one can analyze a text. Literary scholarship should teach that only the analysis and the positioning of literary texts in that which is *their*

own shows us *our* own, i.e., that the specific and particular of the present becomes clear and receives a position from the whole of literary activity at other times and in other places. Only the conscious "seeing" of that which we do not know can give us an impression of a totality which is more than the allotment of our own opinions and preferences which we take to be the world.

C. Literary scholarship has no morals, but it does have virtues, specifically old ones, such as honesty, seriousness, and commitment to a goal. This goal is called *differentiation* in two specific respects. On the one hand, literary scholarship is obligated to distinguish that which is particular to its object from that which is particular to other objects. On the other hand, literary scholarship is obligated to distinguish its activity from that of other disciplines. That which is particular to its object is its literariness, whereby I am not interested in the question of whether it is inherent in the object or whether it is brought to it from the outside. The expression of freedom in thinking which does not bind--or scarcely binds--the wings of imagination is the way and means in which literature communicates through signs whose *signifiant* and *signifié* are connected more or less freely up to the diffuse production of *signifié*. This "way and means" is the core of literary discourse.

Not freedom in appearance per se or the unfettered imagination per se is the object of literary scholarship, but rather that freedom and that imagination which lie between the pressure of experience and that which is desirable: the historical imagination which manifests itself in the text is the object of literary scholarship. With this I am not *describing* the field, but rather making a decision, postulating an axiom which cannot be derived from the discourse of literary scholarship itself. The field itself can only have meaning in relationship to something which is outside itself; it is only a field when there are other fields and each one of them relates to the realm of experience, from which each one again should clearly be distinguished.

Together with the decision of choosing imagination in its historical-literary expression as the object comes also the decision to want to treat the texts according to this proviso. The anthropological framework sets conditions for the treatment of historical-literary manifestations. Whoever finds this too general should just look through the history of literature for all the attempts at binding the wings of imagination, politically, theologi-

cally, scientifically, philosophically, practically, and so on. The fact that literature, and with it literary scholarship, is a political matter, is obvious from this perspective. The axiom that literature as an object of literary scholarship manifests the historical imagination through language, implies the notion of literature as a human activity which is aimed at freedom. Literature not infrequently offers in its historicity a more narrow, or better, a more concrete picture. In comparison with the axiom of the discipline, a scale of values can be derived, according to the degree to which the particular which is presented in a literary way is absolutized.

It is no criterion for literature that literary texts please only the ear because they somehow interestingly murmur along deeply to themselves or please the understanding only because of their "correctness." Those which only please the ear Goethe once named "narcotic," and those whose correctness is in order should express themselves differently. A reduction of literature to an aestheticism or to its "message" means the fall of literary scholarship past its object and into the ideology of the respective literary scholar. In such cases literary scholarship runs the risk of being distorted into an "approval science" or of boundlessly overestimating its activity in misjudgment of its object. Criticism as the obligation of literary scholarship is according to this the permanent self-determination--of the place, the time, and the power or weakness of imagination. This consideration is what enables us to oppose the economic boom of reductive "theories"--or things that consider themselves to be theories--with sovereignty.

In conclusion, I do not want to make proclamations, but rather on the contrary to remind of something that current experiences are urging us to do. Modern experience of binding the individual case to global or cosmic connections which we do not comprehend (not yet or never, it does not matter), seems to me to increase the meaning of concrete activity enormously. Literary scholarship which perceives its object from an anthropological perspective and which offers it as the understanding of human activity in expression is in this connection very useful and meaningful. Its object demands--and I wanted to remind of this--a contentment which is no subjugation to lay people or to common sense. Scholarship can achieve relevance only when it is firmly grounded in itself. Literary scholarship is only firmly grounded in itself when it is presented with compelling arguments by convinced literary scholars.

The more literary scholarship obligates itself--and I am coming back

to the title of my contribution--to the emancipatory aspect of its object, the more it is secured against obligations which are imposed upon it. Its strength increases with the degree of its critical contentment. Despite all divergences, I see within the framework of post-modern debates concerning the role of the imagination, good chances for literary scholarship. However, it will change, I expect, by entering into a closer connection with other disciplines, such as philosophy, anthropology, history, and psychology. Modern German literary scholarship I could imagine under such conditions as a special historical discipline with the status of a ancillary field.

Translated from the German by Cora Lee Nollendorfs

Hans Peter Herrmann

**Totality and the Subject
in Peter Weiss' *Ästhetik des Widerstands***

Introduction

The status of the subject and totality in Peter Weiss' most controversial work would seem to deserve further attention.

The first volume of Weiss' *Ästhetik des Widerstands* appeared in 1975 and immediately found itself in the cross fire of critique in the Bundesrepublik. Reinhard Baumgart of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called it a "communist Bildungsroman"; *Die Zeit* critic Fritz J. Raddatz referred to Weiss' novel as a "lifeless concoction." The same tone accompanied the arrival of the second volume in 1978: "A collection of material with moral and political themes" (Raddatz); conceived around a "closed, concluded, and complete world view" (Gerd Ueding).¹ The tide of critical reception did not turn in the novel's favor until the publication of the third and final volume in 1981.

The early charge of political myopia has recently regained currency--and with a clear relation to the issues of totality and the subject at hand. In 1990 Wolfgang Welsch cited *Ästhetik des Widerstands* as an example of a thematically biased, so-called "input-hermeneutics" against which he proposed an open Lyotardian model preserving the integrity of the aesthetic. According to Welsch, only a postmodern aesthetic like Lyotard's can resist the desire for totality whose structure leaves the door open for terror. The article continues by asserting that an aesthetics of resistance adequate to the current situation must be postmodern in the sense of a resistance to totalization and all forces tending toward uniformity.² As the immediate critical response was quick to point out, Welsch's article is hastily argued and very superficial as a contribution to Weiss scholarship.³ Nevertheless, the piece has once again drawn attention to the concept of totality in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* despite the fact that the two previous responses to Welsch's article neglect precisely this issue.⁴

Totality and the subject play an important role in Weiss' novel as an explicit concept and implicitly as an organizing force behind his aesthetic

and political project. Weiss is concerned with reality as a whole, but in a way that cannot be grasped by facile oppositions like modernism-postmodernism or totalitarian whole versus oppositional part. On the contrary: *Ästhetik des Widerstands* develops an original aesthetic and world view of modernism that points beyond its own historical limits and invites us to reconsider the notion of totality.

I would like to appeal to Robert Musil in order to suggest the kind of rethinking that Weiss' novel encourages. The following quote deals with a concept of truth related closely to that of totality. Musil's notion of truth, however, is one that explodes the borders of the traditional concept. He writes: "The truth is not a crystal that one can put in one's pocket, but rather an infinite fluid into which one falls."⁵ I will return to this image in a later section.

The Word "Totality" and the Problematic of Totality

If I counted correctly, the word "totality" appears three times in important passages in the first volume of *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.⁶ The first occurrence is in an artistic/theoretical consideration of the Pergamon altar in which three friends belonging to the proletarian anti-fascist resistance demand independent and complete access to art and culture: cultural products and practices are to be wrested from the oppressors and appropriated by the previously unpropertied. The available categories of marxist cultural theory, however, are insufficient for this purpose. Still indebted to the logic of the ruling class, they do not correspond to the "totality toward which we strive."⁷

The second reference occurs in connection with the narrator's dispute with his father over political questions. Both generations of socialist opposition make claims to a comprehensive emotional and rational access to reality: in light of fascism's forced separation and isolation, they were compelled to remain open to the commonalities among themselves and wary of the power structures of their common enemy:

Wir waren Vereinzelte und gleichzeitig von einer Totalität umfassen, unsre Aufgabe war es, uns so viel wie möglich bewußt zu machen von dem, was ringsum geschah, auch von dem, was uns bevormundete und maßregelte, was nicht nach unserm Kommentar verlangte, was uns stumm und gefügig haben wollte. (I: 137)

The third reference is located at the beginning of the report on the Spanish war. Describing this historically unique situation, the narrator

claims to have perceived the complete concentration of all antifascist forces:

Mit unserm Eintritt in die Stadt waren wir in eine Totalität gelangt, die alle Konflikte in sich enthalten mußte und in der die Lösung stets die bewaffnete Aktion an der Front war. Nicht mehr als einzelne nahmen wir die Erscheinungen wahr, was wir sahn, wurde ergänzt durch die Blicke vieler andrer, jeder unserer Schritte war Bewegung in einer organischen Gesamtheit. In Albacete empfingen wir die ersten Eindrücke von der Kraft, die uns lenken würde. (I: 203)

These three passages represent three aspects of Weiss' concept of totality: the right of the oppressed to a comprehensive access to culture, the striving for a comprehensive access to reality, the desire for unification in struggle. These three aspects inform the entire aesthetic, epistemological, and political conception of *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

The word "totality" disappears from the novel. The latinate expression of the concept that would seem to point to totalitarianism is rejected with the narrator's increasing scepticism vis à vis a communist party marked by the ideology and praxis of Stalinism.⁸ The **problematic**, however, does not. The text appeals emphatically and repeatedly to the "das Ganze," the whole.⁹ It refers to the entirety of resistance and the necessary unity of communism, to the whole of reality, to the entire individual, and to a complete access to an expansive and diverse culture--in other words, to the totality of social reality and the subject.

Even where the German form "Ganzheit" does not appear, the concerns remain the same. At issue is the true wholeness of that which has been separated, overcoming divisions, the search for the *Ganzheit* of the subject, and solidarity in resistance. The text is concerned with a perception of reality as a whole--despite the fragmentation that power produces in the interest of its own stabilization. The notion of "totality" remains central to *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

In the following I want to discuss the different aspects of the concept in more detail as they arise in the novel's various levels before describing the specificity of Weiss' totality concept in a final, more theoretical, section. First a note on the title of this text. I have expanded the topic of this workshop by introducing the concept of the subject, because Weiss' notion of totality is clearly inconceivable without a corresponding perceiving subject. I will restrict myself to a theoretical consideration of

the concept of totality, however, and save a more detailed treatment of the subject for a different occasion.

I.

Forms of totality and the subject in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*

I.1. The unity of resistance and the totality of reality experience

I would like to begin with a passage at the end of the novel in which totality as the desire for *das Ganze* is raised for the last time. Lotte Bischoff, a communist in the Berlin underground recalls a point in time a few months earlier before the murder of the imprisoned members of resistance organization "Roter Kapelle":

Im November und Dezember zweiundvierzig, als Bischoff noch nicht wußte, wer von den Gefangenen hingerichtet worden war, schien ihr manchmal, als seien alle von einem Wahn befallen gewesen, als sie geglaubt hatten, sie seien ein Ganzes und könnten sich als ein Ganzes halten. (I: 229)

The "whole" being referred to here is the community of those men and women fighting in the antifascist underground. Reality would appear to contradict the confidence in a strong and unified whole: the Nazis are stronger, the resistance divided. The resistance against oppression and the superiority of a unified whole characterizes the entire novel.

This idea is a primary organizing principle in the novel. It determines Weiss' selection of events and characters and is the object of innumerable dialogues. The actual existence of a unified resistance and the possibilities of establishing one are persistent topics of discussion. Even Lotte Bischoff's scepticism and her realization that such hopes are an illusion is only one view among others in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* and is by no means the last word on the subject.

The notion of resistance in terms of a *Ganzes* in the novel has two levels. On the political level, the novel makes an explicit demand directed at the communist party for an antifascist front among communists, social democrats, and humanist-minded segments of the bourgeoisie--the same concept that played such an ambivalent role in the history of German exile after 1933/35. The slogans of the antifascist front were ambivalent insofar as they were repeatedly used by the communist party to further their own power claims. In this way, the antifascist front became synonymous with a problematic will to totality in the pursuit of particular, tactical interests couched in a persuasive and extremely vague

political rhetoric.

Figures like Wehner and Rosner are the representatives of just such a strategy for a communist dominated front in the novel. Other characters, like Markauer, Münzenberg, or Hodann are used to demonstrate the questionable nature of the praxis accompanying this strategy, while Hodann and the narrator's father reject it. The notion of a "whole of resistance," a "Ganzes des Widerstands," is discussed, but it is neither rejected nor put forth as the novel's project.

A second level concerning the totality of resistance deals with an individual, existential experience rooted in the basic state of the narrator, as opposed to the party's political slogans. The narrator's experience is one of helplessness and inferiority, which he interprets politically as a collective fate determined by a certain economic and political distribution of power. The narrator suffers under the isolation imposed by the ruling class. He longs to meet others sharing his fate. The self-identity of the first person narrator is based upon practically living this kind of group consciousness of the oppressed and realizing it in his own consciousness.

It appears to me that this desire for self-identity in the community of the oppressed is what supplies the psychic energy behind the massive structure of *Ästhetik des Widerstands*. A psychological interpretation might benefit from exploring the roots of this astonishing energy in the author's relationship to his father Eugen Weiss.¹⁰ I am more interested in the manner in which Weiss deals with the psychic energies that he brings into the text. The novel incorporates the unsatiable desire for contact with others and the longing to be a part of a larger, orienting whole into a concept of reality in a productive way. This desire can unfold as a wish in the most varied situations; it can be brutally frustrated or uncover relationships in a fortuitous way. But this desire must continuously prove itself in the real world, a reality whose political content--with one important exception--is continuously investigated.¹¹ The novel argues tirelessly for a unified resistance that supersedes every individual and concrete relationship and which remains open to experience. Also important in this regard is that the experience of *das Ganze* in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* is always individual, but always more than an individual experience.

It would be impossible for the novel to thematize a unity of resistance without taking into account the whole of oppression and thereby social reality as a whole. They condition each other reciprocally. The notion of

a divided society characterized by domination and oppression, winners and losers is the precondition for a concept of the individual defined from without in terms of its oppression and whose self-identity is derived from the active struggle against the oppressor.

Weiss avoids a reductive account of this dichotomy. He describes the history of oppression from antiquity to the present as the displacement of power from people to structures, a process by which the source of oppression becomes increasingly obscured and anonymous.¹² So it is that bourgeois and patriarchal structures are revealed in the communist organization of the oppressed. Bourgeois culture, for its part, is not described as a monolithic force of oppression, but as similarly divided by the contradictions characterizing the larger historical context.¹³

Still, Weiss leaves no doubt about a common experience of oppression among the slaves of ancient Greece, the peasant farmers in the late Middle Ages, the workers of the 19th and 20th Century, and the Jews under fascism; the oppressors derive material and cultural gain from their dominant position as a class and as individuals. This situation exerts a fundamental influence upon the fate and consciousness of each and every individual. Further, I would concur with Weiss that only those who restrict their view of the world to the reality of the world's highly industrialized urban centers can succeed in ignoring the reality of domination and repression.

In sum: When Weiss writes of resistance and reality in relation to an overarching *Ganzes*, he is not referring to a predetermined and closed totality. Weiss is not interested in creating an image of reality, but in something that would precede its possible representation: namely a different experience of reality. The novel is concerned with the possibility of an authentic **experience** of reality capable of breaking through the violent divisions produced by power in the interest of its own legitimization. *Ästhetik des Widerstands* projects an experience of reality that includes the excluded. Thus, if this experience pursues a representation of reality as a whole, then this *Ganzheit* does not lie in its closure. The possibility of experiencing reality as a whole, reality's *Ganzheit*, lies in its postulative nature; the reference to an experientiable whole requires that a form of "we" also play a part in this still-to-be-created representation of reality.

Experiencing reality in this way requires that divisions in the subject be overcome as well. The most important of these divisions historically

is that between action and reflection, or, in the novel's language, the distinction between political and cultural actions.

1.2. The whole of the subject

Weiss treats the problem of the totality and unity of the subject in an extremely complex way and remains conspicuously cautious in his choice of words. The term "totality" does not arise in this context at all, the notion of a "Ganzes des Menschen" only on a few occasions.

Not surprisingly, one of these scarce references occurs in the first volume. Here, Hodann, the doctor who runs a medical hospital for the Red Brigade behind the lines, defends his practice of addressing sexual problems when treating soldiers for psychological disorders before a high-level party commission. The party functionaries have little regard for the doctor's inquiry into the private sphere. They consider his therapy to be inappropriate for a class conscious worker and informed by a petty bourgeois concept of the individual. The party's remedy for the sexual problems of their soldiers looks very different of course: physical training, military instruction, and an increased dose of class consciousness. The doctor, however,

widersprach dem Gedanken, die Arbeiterklasse sei Herr über die Triebkräfte und habe Harmonie aus ideologischer Disziplin gewonnen. [...] Bei einer Aussprache über Empfängnisverhütung, Schwangerschaftsunterbrechung oder Masturbation, sagte er, setzen wir uns mit den Vorurteilen und Zwängen auseinander, die der bürgerliche Sittenkodex auferlegt, und unterm System der Ausbeutung haben die am schwersten Betroffenen auch am schwersten an Konflikten im Sexualleben zu leiden. [...] Für Hodann hatte der Mensch, der sozial tauglich genannt werden konnte, ein Ganzes darzustellen, und dieses Ganze war undenkbar ohne die Einbeziehung der psychologischen Realität. (I: 262)

Today this is a familiar and rather conventional notion of the "whole person." When the first volume of *Ästhetik des Widerstands* appeared in the early 1970s, however, this idea was widely discussed in the American and European student movements and considered to be new and politically relevant. Left authors like Wilhelm Reich, Magnus Hirschfeld, or Max Hodann himself were vigorously attacked for their views by communist party officials during the Weimar Republic. Weiss picks up on this undogmatic left tradition by giving the dissidents in the commu-

nist party a place to voice their arguments in the novel. The result is the idea that denying the proletarian's sexual desires and needs is itself a product of bourgeois ideology and that this same ideology continues to exist in the very party apparatus that was involved in political and economic struggle with the bourgeoisie.

This passage is the only one in which Weiss writes so programmatically about the whole individual. But Weiss is less interested in an ideal of an attainable *Ganzheit* than in overcoming specific divisions and rifts. He identifies these divisions and the suffering they cause, seeks possibilities for conquering them, and describes the joy that results when they are overcome. The novel's preoccupation with totality and the unity of the subject does not result in a static model or abstract metaphors of wholeness. *Ästhetik des Widerstands* comprises a dynamic response to concrete manifestations of fragmentation.

In the preceding quote the narrator Hodann maintains that social health involves both psychic and physical well-being. He insists that political and cultural practice must be taken together and relates his bond to the party as a liberation of his own subjectivity. The development of the narrator combines the mastering of the political and economic problems confronting an emigrant in everyday life with an increasing openness--both of the narrator and the narration--to emotions, the abysses of the human soul, and the individuality of every person's singular path through life.

The necessity of conquering division and fragmentation appears in many forms. The individual history of the first person narrator represents an important first dimension of the notion of the subject's *Ganzheit*. This history is a passage that begins with his unmediated political activity during the war in Spain and continues with the experience of a new kind of artistic production which results from the confrontation with Brecht. Brecht provides a stimulus for his own literary efforts, which are conceived of as a form of political praxis and a critical thematization of contemporary struggles. This is not a linear process in the book. The reception of art plays a significant role in the novel from the very beginning, and the narrator is preoccupied with the artistic problems posed by his own work well before his political engagement in Spain. But it is a long way from the narrator's early reflections on art to the realization that there can be no contradictions between political and artistic practices, i.e. that artistic and political activity are of equal status

as forms of political praxis.

This realization is important for the individual history of the first person narrator. In freeing himself from the total fixation with political action as a resistance to fascism, he clears the way for a more productive exploitation of his powers of observation, reflection, and reporting for the common political cause. In this way, the narrator not only finds himself and his purpose, but also acquires the ability to experience himself and others in emotional dimensions and complexities that were previously closed to him. The novel develops a new depth and seriousness with respect to the private individual in the third volume. Weiss demonstrates a special sensitivity to the experience of loss and failure, debilitating suffering, and melancholy. But these broadly portrayed emotions never become autonomous or disassociated from political events.

So it is that the helplessness with which father and son are forced to watch the catatonic wife and mother expire is a part of an individual experience and "coming to terms" with the Holocaust. The conversations in the novel turn on the recognition that speechlessness was perhaps the only adequate response to the horror of the Holocaust and the terrible fate of the mother.¹⁴ And the insurmountable despair that drives the writer Boye to suicide represents the downfall of a homosexual woman in the face of a reality in which she is marginalized as a part of a minority group, but this despair is also the result of an individual experience of the Nazi state and Stalinism.¹⁵

The first person narrator also develops a new awareness and capacity for understanding through such experiences. He is able to imagine his friend Münzenberg's last hours with great sensitivity; private problems involving the narrator's own sexual desires or lesbian love are the objects of reflection and thematized as to their communicability.¹⁶ Weiss leads his narrator down a path away from one-sidedness to a richer balance of individual capacities. On this level, *Ästhetik des Widerstands* functions something like a classical *Bildungsroman*--but there is more to it than this.

Investigating Weiss' relationship to the concept of the individual informing Goethe's novel would be a task unto itself. Needless to say, it is quite complex. I will restrict myself to only two moments in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* in which Weiss' concept of the individual overcomes one-sidedness and differentiates itself from Goethe's classical concept of *Bildung* and the notion of the development of the individual *Persönlich-*

keit that accompanies it. These have of course strongly influenced our idea of the individual and it is important for what follows to distinguish Weiss' project from these notions of the individual and education.

Unlike Goethe's protagonist Wilhelm Meister, Weiss' first person narrator is a member of the working class and not the bourgeoisie. His education neither prepares him for an occupation--he is already a worker--nor does it unfold in a hermetic sphere sealed off from economic concerns. Weiss' narrator tells his story from the perspective of a factory worker's working day and the political fight against fascism. The richer human existence that he attains results from his struggle in the face of social disadvantage. His development is not based primarily on the ideal of the self inherent in the unfolding of the *Persönlichkeit*. As opposed to the concept of the individual characteristic of German Idealism, Weiss' narrator is conditioned by the urgency of intellectual self-assertion in a dominating and depraved environment.

On the other hand, the narrator's education also distinguishes itself from that of the traditional marxist program in that his development is also a function of individual experience. For the narrator, Heilmann, and Coppi, it is not a matter of acquiring a classical bourgeois education, but rather of better understanding their social existence. This means respecting individuality and incorporating all mental capacities into the process of education and understanding. It is therefore not surprising that the experience of dreams and art--which have been the object of much attention in the novel's reception--play such an important role in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*. I will return to this aspect.

Weiss' novel sets itself apart from the project of German Idealism in another way in the idea of the education of the "whole individual." Overcoming the one-sidedness that bourgeois society forces upon the individual is a collective--not an individual--undertaking in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

This is signalled most clearly by the rhetorical "we" that permeates the novel. Although the narrator speaks in the first person as in a classical autobiographical novel, the pronoun "I" appears rather rarely in favor of a more collective "we." An important distinction: on the one hand the 18th and 19th Century concept of individual *Bildung*, on the other Weiss' notion of a collective education. It is, of course, important to see the static opposition above in a more differentiated way.

The protagonist of the classical *Bildungsroman* clearly does not live

a monadic existence in the world, and Goethe's often-cited notion of "Entelechy" is but an abstraction of his own concept of *Bildung*. In the more recent literary scholarship on the *Lehrjahre*, the hero's complex interaction with his environment has received considerable treatment. A special focus has been the diverging moments of his character and the inconsistencies in his consciousness,¹⁷ but it is precisely here that it becomes clear that he is always his own point of reference. The individual remains the continuous source of orientation in the midst of the world's confusion.

The novel approaches the concept of the self from a different direction. Weiss' first person narrator develops in a highly individual way. He learns how to take himself seriously and to recognize his capacities and limits. But the measure of his existence and actions, the reference point of which he remains conscious is not himself, but rather the collective of the underprivileged.

Weiss finds compelling situations and expressions for the original combination of the individual and the collective that informs *Ästhetik des Widerstands* from beginning to end. Hodann's efforts to treat the emotional suffering of members of the international brigade during the Spanish War is an especially well-wrought scene in this regard. The doctor tries to help the psychologically distraught brigadiers find their way back to themselves and their faculties, and to help them find a language for their experience by giving them a roles within a community and its quest for political orientation:

Da weder Medikamente vorhanden waren zur Beruhigung psychisch angegriffener Patienten, noch schmerzstillende Injektionen gegeben werden konnten, da viele an Ruhr litten und die hygienische Ausrüstung unzureichend war, mußte die Frage nach der Bedeutung der eigenen Person fast lächerlich wirken. Doch da gerade setzte Hodanns Argumentation an, jeder, sagte er, gehöre zu den Kräften, die an der Zukunft arbeiten. Niemand dürfte hinter den Beschlußfassenden zurückstehen und sich bevormunden lassen. (I: 233)

And Weiss finds a fitting expression for the radically democratic humanism which he asserts against the practice of party commissaries. In connection with those muted by the horror that they have experienced, he writes: "[...] they were the challenge to the promise of community" (I: 221).¹⁸

The appeal to *Ganzheit* in Weiss' roman is not only important for the individual, the community, and interpersonal relationships. The sublation of human divisions derives its importance as a part of the novel's concept of reality only because the sublation of divisions and one-sidedness also represents an epistemological and political category. It is once again important to think these two terms together.

1.3 The totality of revolutionary practice: "cultural revolution"

The importance of Weiss' conscious implementation of surrealist elements in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* has been well described. The many short montage pieces accompany broadly conceived surrealist passages. The appearance of the father—who is in reality actually living in Czechoslovakia—in a Berlin kitchen,¹⁹ the narrator's vision of a night flight over the same city,²⁰ and the long conversations between the father and son are all characterized by the intertwining of political facts (as related by the father) and the streams of consciousness of father and son.²¹ Nevertheless, the mixture of reality and experience levels remain linked to political reality. The psychic energies represented in these passages are not merely occasions for flights into dream, memory, or emotion. The fluid divisions between psychological and political levels—the use of dream as well as understanding, of intuition and memory—are part of the novel's vigorous attempt to access the invisible world and to provide orientation in the nightmare of history.

Surrealistic passages such as those cited above link distance to proximity, what is known to that which is remembered, the past with apprehension. The narrator's theoretical reflections on Brueghel's painting provide the theoretical grounding for this mixture of levels.²² Describing the reality of war requires a mode of representation that suggests a unity of perception and hallucination, and the interpenetration of inner and outer observation.²³

It is no accident that these issues recall the Expressionism debate of the 1930s. Weiss conceives of Surrealism and Expressionism as legitimate modes of representing reality in much the same way as Brecht, Seghers, and Bloch. He, too, regards the problem of the adequate representation of reality as the problem of its adequate perception. The individual and collective comprehension of the reality of war and oppression is only possible to the extent that individuals are able to exercise **all** of their

capacities.

The concept of realism suggested by *Ästhetik des Widerstands* clearly has its immediate political modality. The originality with which the author underscores its political function has been admired and commented upon often before. A good example is the manner in which Weiss has Willy Münzenberg, communist party functionary and newspaper baron during the Weimar Republic, report his simultaneous encounter with Lenin and the Zurich Dada artists in 1916. The connection made between Russia's war preparations and the beginning of the artistic revolution in Europe is fundamental, forming the basis of Münzenberg's "Idee der Kulturrevolution" (II: 63), his concept of cultural revolution. This notion of a totality, or unity, of political and artistic revolution occupies a central place in the narrative--both in compositional and topographical terms. Münzenberg searches for its historical roots:

Aus dem russischen Untergrund kam der revolutionäre Strom, mit seiner politischen Kraft, auf uns zu, und aus Paris der Strom der künstlerischen Revolution, beide schlugen in Zürich über uns zusammen, doch nicht, um uns zu betäuben, sondern um uns reinzuwaschen, zur Klarheit zu bringen. (II: 57)

Münzenberg describes this brief moment of true unity--a model for future political praxis--as a contradictory reality. The tension between political plans and artistic openness that determines the relationship between Lenin and Dada arises once again in the quarters of the political revolution itself--in the opposition between Lenin's dominance and Weiss' adventurously anarchic portrayal of Trotsky:

Mit ihren Streitigkeiten, wie sie vor allem publizistisch ausgefochten wurden, ergänzten Lenin und Trotzki einander. Trotzki war der einzige, der Lenin gegenüber eine eigene Meinung zu äußern wagte. Gerade dieser Selbstständigkeit wegen schätzte Lenin ihn. Nicht von Unversöhnlichkeit zeugten die heftigen Zusammenstöße, sondern von einer unbezwinglichen dialektischen Vitalität. Wie der Augenblick der Revolution nur aus Antagonismen, aus paradoxalen Vorbedingungen entstehen konnte, so war auch die künstlerische Entwicklung undenkbar ohne Spannungen, Konflikte, Zerreißen. (II: 61)

Weiss consistently conceives of totality, or unity, as an internally contradictory complex.

The reflective thematization of this historical moment characterizes the

entire novel.²⁴ More important, perhaps, is the fact that Weiss represents the unity of political and artistic revolution both as an objective event occurring against the background of the need to transform reality and as a process transforming the subject who perceives the urgent need for change. In this context, Weiss furnishes Münzenberg with a quote from Lenin to the effect that "that the revolutionary must have the capacity to dream" (II: 62).

Weiss employs this quote in a way that is both original and which contributes significantly to the project of the novel. It is not projected outward as a revolutionary demand for a visionary or utopian vision; it is construed as a inward-pointing appeal to the revolutionaries to free themselves from their own rigid and inflexible positions. Dream and cultural revolution are privileged as a vital "force against the bureaucratic, revolutionary party apparatus" (II: 62).

I. The Totality and the Work of Art

By now it should be clear that the reception and production of art enjoy a privileged position in Weiss' novel. The fact that the novel accords equal status to dealing with reality on conscious/rational and subconscious/emotional levels--both of which are linked to notions of the subject's *Ganzheit* and the totality of reality experience--necessarily leads to a paradigmatic role for the artistic access to reality.

The unity of political and artistic revolution associated with Zürich in 1916 was a singular, unrepeatable moment. In the novel this example is important in terms of methodology, namely the interplay between the rational experience of reality on the one hand and intuition, dream elements, and associations on the other. This structure is realized in many places in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, especially in situations in which the narrator relates conversations between characters or participates in them himself. The reception of exemplary works of European sculpture, painting, and literature allows the narrator to reflect explicitly on the issue of the unity of the subject and the totality of reality in a number of narrative passages.²⁵

I want to avoid restating my theme with respect to the many art works in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*--a broad and fruitful topic in its own right. Weiss' treatment of Picasso's "Guernica" could clearly be used as another occasion to expand what has already been suggested regarding the author's relationship to Surrealism and his concept of a "nonrealistic"

representation of war, death, and destruction.²⁶ Weiss' account of the Romantic painter Théodore Géricault's biography could be used to show how the novel illuminates the complexity and obscurity of artistic production and to demonstrate the sophistication with which he describes the mixture of chaos and order in the biographical and historical conditions of the artist around 1800.²⁷ While one could easily find further examples, I would like to move on to another aspect of totality in the novel.

Ästhetik des Widerstands is concerned with domination and oppression. In the context of German fascism, the novel describes central stages in human history as a part of the ongoing history of subjugation: ancient Greece, medieval Cambodia, the Peasant Wars in Sweden, and the early 19th Century. While the notion of history as the history of terror is not foreign to the European novel, Weiss' focuses on this perspective with unparalleled rigor. Especially unique is the way in which he succeeds in describing this history from below, from the perspective of the oppressed. Weiss does not pass judgement from the outside but seeks to explore the inside of events in order to find possibilities and forms of opposition. Art, according to Weiss, plays an indispensable roles in the search for resistance.

For the present and recent past, there are other paths--such as the reports of survivors and eyewitnesses in the collective reconstruction of the past--that lead to the disclosure of mechanisms of domination and possibilities of resistance. The novel follows these paths often and in detail.²⁸ Skillfully woven into the text, Weiss' extended narrative accounts are not aesthetic devices implemented in the interest of the flow of the narrative, but rather necessary tools for accessing a reality that is by no means immediately available. The available reality bears the mark of the conqueror, the history of the conquered requires laborious reconstruction. The memories of the participants are cluttered with the rubble of lost battles, and what's more, the history of the defeated does not comprise a unified picture, but is also full of contradictions and ambiguities. Each reconstruction of history remains incomplete and bound to individual perspectives and aspects. History is not constituted in an arbitrary field of forces, but in a contradictory whole of forces that exerts structuring pressures upon the subject.

Thus history would seem to present itself only as the history of the victors. But an access to the reality of the conquered and oppressed can

be found here as well. In the novel, Weiss' contributes to a more complete representation of history by introducing the three friends from the proletarian resistance in Berlin in a passage in which they reflect upon the Pergamon altar and the history of past class struggles.

The altar is described as a historical document in which the victorious Greek elite represents its power in the form of mythological images. Despite the fact that the monumental temple is linked to domination, it nevertheless opens up a perspective on the sufferings of past generations. The figures depicted in the temple's ornamentation express the vigor and suffering of the conquered, the earth-goddess Ge, the Giants, and other figures offer a mythological representation of the defeated and an access to the real life situation of those upon whose oppression the Attalite's power was founded.

The artists who created the mythological scenes and imagery of the altar were no strangers to the alleyways and quarries of Pergamon. In the novel's description, the laborers they saw cutting building stone and toiling in the fields--the same ones "that rose up against the city rulers under the leadership of Aristonikos after construction was completed" (I: 13)--were the inspiration for the figures that eventually found their way onto the decorative surfaces of the temple. The work of the temple artists incorporated their reality and spirit into the figures whose destruction by the gods was being depicted. Weiss writes:

Sie, die eigentlichen Träger des ionischen Staats, des Lesens und Schreibens nicht kundig, ausgeschlossen vom künstlerischen Wirken, taugten nur dazu, einer kleinen Schicht von Begünstigten den Reichtum und der Elite des Geistes die notwendige Muße zu verschaffen. Das Dasein der Himmlischen war für sie unerreichbar, in den knienden vertierten Wesen [of the altar] aber konnten sie sich erkennen. Diese trugen, in Grobschlächtigkeit, Erniedrigung und Geschundenheit, ihre Züge. (I: 13)

In this way, the work of art opens up a more complete picture of historical reality with all of its contradictions, or "Zwiespalt," as Weiss puts it. A frequently occurring word in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, the "work"

gehörte immer noch der selbe Zwiespalt an, der zu der Zeit galt, als es entstanden war. Dazu berufen, königliche Macht auszustrahlen, konnte es gleichzeitig befragt werden [...] nach seiner plastischen Überzeugungskraft. (I: 13)

The art work's "concrete persuasiveness" announces the reality of the disempowered in their helplessness and oppositional potential.

During the course of the novel's long and detailed treatment of the Pergamon altar's origins and reception, the three friends arrive at the connection between the contradiction inherent in Greek history and those of their own political struggle.²⁹ In the novel, great art projects a historical past in which those engaged in the fight against fascism can recognize their own histories. The destruction of Ge and the trust in Heracles take on special importance in this regard. So it is that great art attests to the contradictory totality of historical reality and offers a form of understanding that allows individuals to recognize their roles in the course of history. In giving form and expression to the oppressed, the work of art also allows the oppressed to recognize themselves as subjects in a reality marked by suffering. This is precisely the process of self-recognition described in the preceding quotes referring to the Pergamon altar.

Weiss elaborates on this idea in the narrator's consideration of Picasso's "Guernica." The novel conceives of the painter's artistic production as a form of political work:

Er setzte den Kampf um die Wahrheit in der Kunst der Auflehnung gegen die Demagogie gleich, für ihn war die künstlerische Arbeit untrennbar von der sozialen und politischen Realität. Das Zerstörerische, das sich über Spanien hermachte, wollte nicht nur Menschen und Städte, sondern auch die Ausdrucksfähigkeit vernichten. (I: 335)

The potential of great art lies in its ability to maintain or restore our expressive capacities as human beings, its ability to act upon the subjectivity of the subject. Weiss demonstrates this in an exhaustive analysis of the painting's imagery in the course of its creation. Kafka's *Schloß* (The Castle) is subject to a similar process. In Weiss' interpretation, the novel's depiction of the desperate reality of the oppressed becomes the occasion for a liberating and empowering self-insight.³⁰

Brecht's "Engelbrekt project" suggests another of art's capacities in revealing reality as a whole. In the 20th Century, a period in which domination is becoming more and more anonymous, more and more structural, art offers an exemplary space for naming and exposing the individual oppressor. This act of localizing oppression sheds light on a historical process precisely because the personalization of power is not perceived as a part of our historical present.³¹

Culture, to paraphrase Weiss' character Max Hodann, is "the received and conserved history of humanity." A simple definition, but one with far-reaching implications.

II. The Meaning of Totality in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*

Weiss holds fast to a concept of totality, to a *Ganzes* of reality, the subject, and art that lends the novel its specific aesthetic force. But the notion of totality has fallen into disrepute. It raises the suspicion of totalitarianism and the violation of the individual by the whole. These issues would seem to become especially urgent in the context of a novel whose author identified himself as a Marxist and a first person narrator who joins the communist party in the fall of 1941 despite his reservations.³² But even in the context of these preliminary considerations of Weiss' concept of totality, I would nevertheless like to insist upon the fact that none of these concerns or accusations compromise *Ästhetik des Widerstands* in the least.

Weiss' novel is not an argument for party communism. On the contrary, the novel subjects party functionaries to sharp criticism for ideological stubbornness and political, aesthetic, and philosophical dogmatism without privileging the opposing, more complex and sympathetic positions as the truth. The novel's many and divergent conversation passages remain contentious and open processes of discussion. *Ästhetik des Widerstands* cannot be so easily construed as a foil for a postmodern aesthetic.

Weiss is neither an ideologue writing in the name of some class or ideology, nor an individual proposing a subjectivistic notion of truth. The novel seeks path beyond party dogma and party opposition in the historical situation between 1936-45, i.e. between the rise and collapse of National Socialism on the one hand, and the dissolution of the proletariat and Stalinism's destruction of worker's communism on the other. The well known close of the novel represents a final departure from the certainty that the proletariat or the party represents the authoritative locus of resistance, albeit without renouncing all hope for change. In the original, the passage reads "kein Kenntlicher wird kommen, sie müssen selber mächtig werden dieses [...] Griffs." The novel's end anticipates a political situation that have only become irreversible since the end of state communism, namely the disappearance of a real alternative to the dominant capitalist order and the end of the notion of a concrete utopia

in its previous sense.

One could identify other moments in *Ästhetik des Widerstands* that one would characterize as "postmodern" today. Welsch could have found any number of examples in the novel supporting his own aesthetic position had he delved more deeply into the text's aesthetic structure instead of restricting himself to two isolated quotes from one character and identifying them as the author's program. Large portions of the novel deal with the disappearance of reality in the forms in which it had previously been perceived; it deals with the breakdown of political and other categories; it treats the problematic and disappearance of the subject.

On the other hand, the novel reasserts the notion that the disintegration of various categories and forms of reality and the subject does not mean the disappearance of domination and oppression, but only a formal transformation. Despite the problems accompanying the project, Weiss' answer to the persistence of injustice is to continue to name and describe it for what it is. The reason that the novel insists upon this distinction lies in the way that the novel's situates the first person narrator on the side of the oppressed and powerless and not on the side of power. But self-identity among the disempowered requires that they take their own experience seriously in the form of resistance. Weiss' definition of resistance situates the concept within the horizon of community and solidarity.

Rather than perpetuate the unproductive discussion surrounding the border between modernism and postmodernism, I want to continue to describe the function of Weiss' totality concept in the novel. A comparison with Lukács' notion of the totality, which is well-defined and which has played such an important role in the history of aesthetics, can be helpful here since Weiss addresses his concept of art in the novel.³³

In his book on Balzac, Lukács credits the 19th Century novelist with adequately describing the totality of objective conditions. According to Lukács, the great novelists of this period succeeded in illustrating the totality of society's contradictory development in their main characters. In this sense, the protagonists of such a novels represent a certain model, or "Typus" in Lukács vocabulary.³⁴ In *Geschichte und Klassenkampf* (History and Class Struggle), Lukács puts forth the thesis that the 20th Century proletariat is in a position to comprehend the totality of capitalism's historical development and therefore put an end to it.³⁵

Lukács clearly employs the concept of totality in a much different way than Weiss in both cases. Lukács conceives of totality as a "Wesen," or "essence," that can manifest itself in a typical representative, or be revealed in its particularity from a specific perspective. Lukács describes the contradictions inherent in the capitalism's essence in detail. In his model, contradictions are sublated and conserved in a totality that manifests itself or is perceived. They appear as the contradictory unity of character in the case of the novel's protagonist; in the case of the proletariat, they manifest themselves in this class' historical role in the abolition of capitalism.

The "Typus" concept of Lukács' later period is but a convenient pole for Weiss. The author of *Ästhetik des Widerstands* is far removed from any logic of essences. His notion of totality is not situated beyond or above contradiction, nor can it find expression as a whole in an individual. Weiss is closer to the early Lukács. In *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (History and Class Consciousness), for example, Lukács introduces the concept of the "standpoint of the proletariat" as the historical situation of the oppressed. The positionality of history's oppressed allows for the perception of structures of social domination that remain invisible to members of the ruling class--regardless of whether they experience suffering of their own. But in describing the situation of the marginalized proletariat, Lukács winds up establishing a position from which the entirety of capitalism's history can be understood as a totality which must come up against its limit--even if it is only as the anticipation of a still unrealized and uncertain future.

With restrictions that are not relevant here, Lukács describes the content of the future victor's position and thereby posits the totality of history as an essence that realizes itself in the proletariat as it recognizes its historical role and right to power. The theoretical possibility of this development cannot be questioned although it was clearly impossible to elaborate on its practical fulfillment in 1922. The concept of the historical standpoint of the proletariat is the theoretical basis for Lukács later development toward Stalinism.

Weiss neither projects history's "victor" nor does the experience of the oppressed that informs *Ästhetik des Widerstands* disclose some essence of history, the subjugated, or individual historical epoch. The novel rejects all conceptual and aesthetic anticipations of a future ruling class whose present definition is a function of its oppression at the hands of the

powerful. Where the novel sketches out a free world--especially in the first volume--the descriptions remain visions of individual characters from which the novel as a whole distances itself. So it is that the insistence on totality and the access to reality as a whole never refers to a definable or possessable entity. Instead, the appeal to totality indicates the attempt to break down obstacles, divisions, and exclusions. Totality is not a condition of reality. In the novel, articulating a notion of totality is the way in which the self continuously formulates its resistance against the totalitarian claims of fascism and party bureaucracy. The insistence on *das Ganze* asserted by the narrator and his friends is a part of the desire for freedom and the rights, experiences, and identity of which they have been deprived.

Weiss' situational and dynamic notion of totality poses conceptual problems. If it is true that Weiss' novel is written from the perspective of the underprivileged as I have maintained, then our own conceptual framework will also reach certain limits in describing it. For the language of our academic and philosophical tradition is itself the language of power and the ruling class. This consideration led me to begin my discussion with a quote from Musil in the hopes that an image might be more adequate for representing the content at hand: "The truth is not a crystal that one can put in one's pocket, but rather an infinite fluid into which one falls." Taking the cue from Musil, perhaps it is possible to characterize Weiss' notion of totality in the following way: totality is not a crystal that one can put in one's pocket, but a fluid in which one moves.

The central experience mediated by *Ästhetik des Widerstands* is the experience of moving in this fluid. Standing in the way of an experience of the whole of social reality are the hierarchies, conventions, and psychic impediments to understanding and community produced by the world's elites. Bearing on millions of people today, the issues that the novel thematizes point far beyond the fictional world of Weiss' narrator and other characters. In this way, the whole of reality and resistance assumes a central place in the novel; the notion of opposition derives its constitutive meaning. The reality of exploitation and oppression must be experienced in its coherency as a structured and possible *Ganzes*. This is the only way that a form of resistance can develop that goes beyond subjective protest and individual separatism and offers real alternatives for political or artistic praxis.

Perhaps one final attempt at a definition to complement the image adapted from Musil. Weiss' *Ästhetik des Widerstands* does not develop a positive concept of totality with a propositional content. Where a content is posited, it is always transitory. Weiss conceives of totality in relational terms. More precisely, totality is a critical concept; it interrogates established hierarchies in which certain spheres of reality are generalized in the interest of excluding the other and others. The novel's insistence on totality directs itself against precisely these kinds of exclusions.

Like all critical concepts, however, Weiss' totality concept is not without content, but this content defines itself negatively as the negation of a concept of reality that denies the existence of oppression and domination. Weiss' concept of totality never offers us a picture of what a reality without injustice might look like. The departure from all manner of positive utopias is perhaps the only sense in which one can speak of a utopian dimension in *Ästhetik des Widerstands*. And the "realm of freedom" that makes one brief occurrence is not a formula that offers any guidance. Nevertheless, the novel never ceases to insist that reality is not completely determined by domination. This "utopian" moment has far-reaching consequences. It leads to the idea, for example, that human beings should have compassion for one another and that the sum of political and artistic practices should comprise a whole.³⁶

In the preceding, I have tried to show how a particular literary text negotiates the problematic of totality. I have emphasized how the Weiss' neither falls into a totalitarian rhetoric nor invests in an ambivalent postmodern aesthetic. I would like to close with a note on the discipline of literary studies. The study of literature must continuously interrogate itself by taking into consideration what the practice of academic work has to do with the object of literary work. Weiss' novel suggests three points of orientation for the interpretation of culture: it offers a critical concept of the totality of reality and history; it proposes a notion of the unity of artistic and political practice; it appeals to the cause of the oppressed and the marginalized in the struggle against the powerful and their institutions.

Were cultural studies to proceed in these ways, it might become the guarantor of an authentic notion of culture as "the received and conserved history of humanity."

Translated from the German by Stefan Soldovieri

Notes

- 1 Regarding the reception of *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, see: Alexander Stephan, "'Ein großer Entwurf gegen den Zeitgeist.' Zur Aufnahme von Peter Weiss' *Ästhetik des Widerstands*," in *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, ed. A. Stephan (Frankfurt/M., 1983), pp. 346-366. See also Jürgen Kuttner, "...kein Buch, das einfach zum Leser gelangt?"--Zur Aufnahme der *Ästhetik des Widerstands* in der BRD," in *Ästhetik des Widerstands. Erfahrungen mit dem Roman von Peter Weiss*, ed. Norbert Krenzlin (Berlin, 1987), pp. 154-76. The quotes in the text refer to these editions.
- 2 Wolfgang Welsch, "Für eine postmoderne Ästhetik des Widerstands," in *Ästhetisches Denken*, ed. W. Welsch (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 157-67. The article appeared first in 1989.
- 3 Michael Hofmann, "Die Ästhetik der Postmodern und die *Ästhetik des Widerstands*. Vorüberlegungen zu einem Vergleich," in *Literatur, Ästhetik, Geschichte. Neue Zugänge zu Peter Weiss*, ed. Michael Hofmann (St. Ingbert, 1992), pp. 147-163.
- 4 In addition to Hofmann (see note 3), see: Jens-F. Dwars, "Archäologie der Befreiung. Zu Welschs postmoderner Lesart der *Ästhetik des Widerstands*," in *Erinnerungsarbeit: Peter Weiss und Uwe Johnson*, spec. issue of *Das Argument* 192 (March/April 1992), pp. 179-90. For secondary literature before 1989, see Robert Cohen's meticulously commented bibliography *Bio-Bibliographisches Handbuch zu Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands* (Hamburg, 1989), pp. 165-186. Since I do not aim to provide an overview of the literature on the novel, I refer only to those texts that were important for the current study.
- 5 Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Rudolf Frisé (Berlin, 1951), vol.2, p. 546.
- 6 All references in the text (volume: page) and notes are to the following edition, Peter Weiss, *Ästhetik des Widerstands* (Frankfurt/M., 1983). See I: 55; I: 137; I: 203.
- 7 In this context, Weiss refers to Lunatscharski, Tretjakov, and Trotski. The passage is clearly directed at Lukács, rejecting his concept of totality--in its formulation in the expressionism debate and his books on realism--as a concession to the ruling (bourgeois) ideology. The passage

proposes an original and different notion of totality. Cf. Lukács below and Dieter Strützel, "Georg Lukács und Peter Weiss. Ideologie und Erfahrung bei der Entstehung proletarischer Kultur," in *Alltag—Kunst—Proletarische Selbstwerdung. Kolloquium über die Ästhetik des Widerstands. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität* 36.3 (1987), pp. 383-388.

8 In light of the movement of the novel as a whole, a single self-reflection should serve as sufficient evidence: "Immer war ich davon ausgegangen, daß die Parteilichkeit nicht mit dem Dogma verbunden, die Selbstprüfung nie aufgeben, nichts als fertig, endgültig hingenommen werden dürfe. Wenn die Bourgeoisie Fortschrittlichkeit herausstellte und dabei ihre Klassenjustiz betrieb, so hatten wir uns desto mehr für die Wiederherstellung des Begriffs der Menschenrechte einzusetzen. Dies zu erreichen war für Hodann, solange die Partei in ihrer gegenwärtigen Form bestand, eine Unmöglichkeit" (II: 243). This innocent looking passage is full of complex allusions: in the communist party's self-understanding, communism is the sole proprietor of "progressiveness," which in turn ensures the party's historical superiority; Weiss exposes this concept as a questionable remnant of bourgeois ideology. In this way, the quote brings bourgeois "class justice" into revealingly close connection with Stalinist party justice; "human rights" takes the place of "progressiveness." This is the position of the first person narrator (the "ich"); the ensuing critique of the party stems from Hodann. The opposition between democracy and totalitarianism is thematized in an explicit way at the end of the second volume in the expressed critique of Lenin's party concept (II: 278). Frederik Ström, the narrator's importer reporter regarding the history of the Swedish worker's movement, is the character that voices this critique, but by no means represents the narrator's own political stance; Brecht "regards him with ridicule" (ebd.). Here as well, the problem is addressed from many sides, but is not resolved.

9 Hereafter the German "Ganzes" or "das Ganze," meaning "whole" will be used (in italics) where appropriate to avoid confusion with the latinate "totality." In some places "the whole" serves the same function. "Ganzheit"--literally "wholeness," "entirety, or "unity"-- appears in italics in the text where, for example, constructions like "the wholeness of the subject" would have been especially awkward and "unity of the subject" perhaps too close to the idea of a "monolithic" subject.--Trans.

10 See Carl Pietzker's brief remarks on Weiss' extremely multi-faceted

relationship to his father in his "Blick gegen Blick. Szenen eines Schauspiels. Zum *Marat/Sade* von Peter Weiss," in Carl Pietzker, *Lesend interpretieren. Zur psychoanalytischen Deutung literarischer Texte* (Würzburg, 1992) pp. 207ff.

11 Heilman's love for Libertas (Schulze-Boysen) at the end of volume three is an exception. He hopes that she can escape despite her betrayal: this is the one time--and in the person of Heilmann of all people--that individual love for a single person is placed above the political responsibility for the many (Cf. III: 206).

12 The "Englebrecht project" (II: 176-257) marks an important point in the novel. What makes it so fascinating is due in significant degree to the way in which historical forces can still be represented by characters, while the drama itself treats the shift from feudal to mass society (as the contradiction between the first and second parts). In contrast, compare the "Quadrat" and "Pyramide" in Rosner's abstract presentation: the names of military and industrial leaders appear only as the names of exponentials (II: 224); throughout the course of the book, Hitler and Stalin are referred to only indirectly.

13 This is also made explicit by the historical models that the novel constructs. See the examples of ancient Greece (I: 37ff.) and Late Medieval Sweden (II: 188ff.).

14 See esp. III: 123ff.

15 III: 24ff.

16 The motif and image of Dürer's "Melancholia," which is dealt with in some detail in the third volume (III: 132f.), is already touched upon in the first volume (I: 76) and should also be seen in this context.

17 This point has been recognized before by earlier research, albeit from the perspective of the "passive hero," but recent critics have accorded it more emphasis. See, for example, Friedrich Kittler, "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters," in *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel. Studien zu Goethe und Keller*, ed. G. Kaiser and F. Kittler (Göttingen, 1978), pp. 13-134; and Monika Born-Wagendorf, *Identitätsprobleme des bürgerlichen Subjekts in der Frühphase der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zu Anton Reiser und Wilhelm Meister* (Pfaffenweiler, 1989).

18 The short scene in front of the open window represents another case in which the subjective side of the "unity of political and aesthetic praxis" is connected to the objective side of resistance's diversity and unity: "Und hatte die Spannung eben noch zu gereizten Auseinandersetzungen geführt,

so stellte sich beim Eintreten der Stille jener Zusammenhalt her, der alle Meinungsverschiedenheiten vergessen und nur das Gemeinsame noch gelten ließ. Wie oft zuvor, sah ich alles, womit ich mich befaßte, als eine einzige, zusammenhängende Anstrengung, die Behinderungen zu überwinden, und hier bestanden keinerlei Widersprüche zwischen politischen und künstlerischen Handlungen, jedes Ausdrucksmittel diente der Möglichkeit, zu verstehen, zu urteilen, zu verändern, Bischoffs Reise, Hodanns Kampf gegen die Krankheit, Rosners Geduld, die Bemühungen meines Vaters, die Würde seiner Arbeit aufrecht zu erhalten, Stahlmanns Großzügigkeit, mit der er mich, um mich in meiner eigenen Suche zu bestärken, in seine Träume sehn ließ, Funks, Armdts Grübeln und Brüten über den Planzeichnungen eines Verbindungsnetzes, und all das, was drüben, im Land, wie wir sagten, in den Höhlen entworfen wurde, es gehörte jener Gemeinschaft an, in der nicht nach der Art, sondern der Zielrichtung unsres tuns gefragt wurde, und in der das Durchhalten der vielen, das Beste, was ein jeder zu leisten vermochte, den untrennbaren Wert ausmachte. So legten wir, in unsren kleinen Gruppen, vielleicht den Grund zu dem, was sich Münzenberg als Kulturrevolution vorgestellt hatte" (II: 133).

19 I: 92-95.

20 I: 93-95.

21 I: 150-55; I: 157ff.; I: 165-68. Quite an ensemble of themes, times, and levels of reality. On the topic of surrealism, see Christian Bommert, *Peter Weiss und der Surrealismus. Poetische Verfahrensweisen in der Ästhetik des Widerstands* (Opladen, 1991).

22 II: 148.

23 II: 149-151. It is no accident that this reflection takes place in Brecht's work place.

24 For an interpretation of the "Spiegelgassen-Episode," see Sigrd Lange, "Kunst und Politik in der Erzählerfigur. Ein Beitrag zur Avantgardediskussion," in *Alltag—Kunst—Proletarische Selbstwerdung*, pp. 246-264 (see note 7).

25 On Weiss' treatment of art works, in this context especially with regard to Géricault's "Floß der Medusa," see Klaus Herding's important article "Arbeit am Bild als Widerstandsleistung" in Stephan, pp. 246-264 (see note 1).

26 I: 332ff.

27 II: 10-33. For further evidence see the list of persons in Cohen's

bibliography (see note 4).

28 One example is the way in which the narrator and the father reconstruct the history of the failed worker's revolution of 1918/19 using the Bremen uprising as an example (I: 100ff.); this is also how the long narratives of the Swedish socialists--introduced in part by means of a skillful parallel montage--function in reconstructing the history of the Swedish worker's movement from 1917 to the present (II: 259-310; parallel montage II: 279).

29 I: 37-52.

30 "Während der Tage, an denen ich das Buch las, lernte ich Züge, Eigenschaften meiner selbst und meiner Angehörigen kennen, die ich früher von mir abgeschoben oder mit denen ich mich nur flüchtig befaßt hatte" (I: 175). The book "beängstigte, bedrängte den Lesenden, weil er die Gesamtheit unserer Probleme aktualisiert sah" (I: 176). This is precisely how it makes a liberating contribution to resistance.

31 See note 12; for general reflections on the relationship between the artistic intervention in the process of history and current social conflicts II: 213ff.

32 III: 59.

33 See Strützel's article above (note 7).

34 See, for example, the preface to "Balzac und der französische Realismus," in Georg Lukács, *Werke* (Frankfurt/M., 1964ff.), 6: 433ff, esp. pp. 436ff.

35 See esp. "Der Standpunkt des Proletariats," in *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, in Georg Lukács, *Werke* 2: 331ff. For a more recent consideration of the problem of totality, see Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, 1981). Jameson offers a detailed treatment of Althusser's concept of totality--an aspect which I was unable to incorporate into my text and to which I will have to return on another occasion.

36 In his nearly-completed Masters Thesis, Christof Hamann argues that the only way in which Weiss' novel develops a utopian dimension is in its unification of intellectual and sensual forces--that of the spirit and body. It is only in this dimension that the novel moves beyond the projection of utopian potential toward its realization.

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The present volume contains contributions to the Wisconsin Workshop on "Postmodern Plurality and Totality." For more than fifty years these two terms have been in the center of a world-wide controversy, be it in political speeches, mass media declarations, newspaper articles, or works of literature. Instead of conforming to conventional patterns of an unquestioned "democratic pluralism," the speakers at this conference tried to rescue certain concepts of totality from meaningless notions of an "open society" which has given up all hopes for a political, social, and cultural communality, based on concepts of the common good. And they did this not only in regard to political and socio-economic theories, but also in view of discourses such as feminism, ecology, utopian thinking, philosophy, German studies, and materialist theories of literature.

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